Strategic Communication for Rural Development

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In collaboration with the

Communication for Sustainable Development in Operations Unit

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Contents

FOREWORD

The Development Communication Division at the World Bank was established in 1998, and since then it has been working to facilitate dialogue between governments and their constituencies, encouraging their full participation in economic reform programs and the design of Country Assistance Strategies and Poverty Reduction Strategies. Of even greater visibility and impact is the Division's communication support for projects co-financed by national governments, comprising hundreds of efforts throughout the world to eliminate poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The study behind this publication, conducted by Fabio M. Santucci in cooperation with the Division's entire staff, has increased the team's practical knowledge of communication activities within a variety of rural development projects in Central America. These projects are heterogeneous, involving several types of institutions, non-governmental organizations and private firms, and have provided some interesting experiences and useful suggestions.

We hope this publication, *Strategic Communication for Rural Development*, will help clients and task managers understand the complexity of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of strategic communication activities. It is also our small contribution towards the two Millennium Development Goals to "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger" and to "ensure environmental sustainability". These goals are closely connected, especially in the more fragile ecosystems where poor, rural people struggle to give their families a chance to survive.

Our division is active in several aspects of strategic communication: We help clients to disseminate timely, accurate and updated information to specific stakeholders and to the general public; to raise the general awareness of issues related to project formulation and implementation; and to integrate communication into development approaches. We believe that rural development is possible as long as it empowers those who will be affected through knowledge sharing and education. Communication for development is not the simple transmission of information nor the teaching of skills, but the search for a common ground, where people can agree on how to achieve a better future.

Lucia Grenna

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication is only partially the product of my personal efforts. I still remember when Lucia Grenna, Head of the Communication for Sustainable Development Unit, first called me several months ago. She had the clear idea that rural development operations had to be made more effective through a strategic communication approach. I hope that I have met at least some of her expectations.

This work has greatly benefited from the skilled suggestions of several people who are deeply engaged in communication for development: G. Atanasio, K. Chaman, D. Calabrese, P. Mazurkiewicz, M. Mozammel, E. Santi, and Caby Verzosa. They come from different countries and backgrounds, and operate in several countries and in the many fields where the World Bank is involved. Their wide knowledge and wealth of field experiences have been the source of several suggestions that have opened new paths for reflection. Without N. Elaheebocus, M. Anjali and J. Martinson, I could have been lost in the mysteries of cyber-space.

Last, but not least, is Paul Mitchell, Head of the Development Communication Division, who successfully manages this heterogeneous group of people, traveling around the world at lightening speed. His Canadian precision has been mellowed by a few years in Italy, where he learned that chaotic order can exist and still bear fruit too.

Without the support and understanding of some Task Team Leaders, this booklet would have remained too theoretical to be of any real use: I wish to express my thanks to M. Austin, N. Khouri, J. Muñoz, I. Lavadenz Paccieri, F. Pichon, N. Piccioni, J. Smyle and to their Sector Leader, Martin Raine. I hope that during my visits to the projects which they manage I was able to give helpful suggestions to improve the project operations.

In the countries I visited, I had the opportunity to meet and talk with dozens of people, at the ministries and agencies, non-governmental organizations and profit-oriented companies. It is really impossible to list them individually, but I have to thank them all.

Even more, I want to express my thanks and best wishes to all the farmers, men and women, to the rural people, the youth, the middlemen, bus drivers, small restaurants owners, extension agents, teachers, social workers, rural animators and street vendors, who are struggling to improve their lives and to shape a brighter future for their children. I have tried to speak, off the record, with all types of individuals, in an attempt to gain their insight and transform their feelings and aspirations into something useful.

A final expression of gratitude goes to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Italian Government, which provided the funds that made it possible for me to work at the World Bank. The Italian Cooperation to Development has a long tradition of being engaged, with bilateral and multilateral agreements, to improve the livelihood in rural areas. Italy was a rural country until WWII and Italians know what it means to move from a mostly agriculturally-based economy to a diversified post-industrial society in less than 50 years.

Fabio Maria Santucci

RECOMMENDATIONS

Most people working in rural development agencies are convinced of the need for communication. Yet very often, their definition of communication is the old-fashioned agricultural extension-type activities, i.e. technical or socio-economic advice disseminated to farmers, or the production of mass media, such as leaflets, posters or radio programs, once a policy or a project has entered into the implementation phase. Most people are convinced that communication activities need to be implemented only during the life cycle of the project, from identification and formulation, to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. There is, however, an increasing awareness that both internal and external communication should be carefully planned, implemented and continuously improved.

Our thesis is that the above-mentioned activities, although very important, are insufficient. At times, these efforts are fruitless and the money is wasted, because the policies or the projects have been poorly conceived.

Strategic Communication should be an integral part of any design procedure from the very beginning. It is a comprehensive and holistic vision of the communication activities needed for designing and implementing successful policies and projects. Strategic communication ensures that development policies are properly designed, with the participation of all parties concerned, that their goals are, to some extent, shared by all the stakeholders and consequently that their implementation will most likely be successful.

Strategic communication should not be considered a cost, but rather a resource-saving device which reduces the risk of less than optimal design, wrong measures, poor implementation, poor results, and even social unrest in the countryside or towns.

Mainstreaming communication into rural development projects is not a tremendous task, and it does not increase costs. Most rural development projects pay for field-level personnel, produce an impressive variety of printed material, contribute to radio programs, produce TV ads and sponsor public relation activities. However, most of these activities are done with little planning, monitoring or evaluation. There is a lot of creativity, but not much order, which results in a waste of resources, the sharing of little or no knowledge, and very slow improvements. For this reason, some of the following recommendations may appear simple, but with a little effort and some professional skill, great improvements can be made.

Have a communication expert on the project formulation team

A communication expert should be an integral part of the project formulation team, in order to ensure that the communication problems are approached from the very beginning. This person should have two main tasks: a) to ensure that communication activities are properly planned and budgeted, and b) to ensure that proper communication activities are implemented during the project formulation, to ensure full, conscious participation of all likely stakeholders.

Establish a team of communicators

Whenever a project involves more than one agency, at least one communicator per agency should be designated as a member of the communication team. This should be done either during the formulation or later at the beginning of the implementation.

Complete a communication audit

People living in rural areas already receive information from a variety of sources: radio and TV stations, newspapers and magazines, NGOs, churches, ministries, friends and middlemen. Knowledge of the available communication channels is extremely relevant for designing a communication strategy. One option is to introduce communication aspects into the Social Impact Assessment, which is a compulsory document for every project. It could also be useful to include a chapter about the communication behavior of the stakeholders and their opinions about current sources of information and communication channels. Quantitative data would serve as indicators in the project baseline.

Identify likely stakeholders

Identifying and understanding stakeholders is fundamental for designing the technical part of the project, as well as the communication strategy. Social and economic variables should be included in order to have a clear idea about who will be involved in formulating and implementing the project.

Include opinions, beliefs, attitudes and knowledge into the baseline

The aim of projects is to change some aspects of the present situation by modifying people's attitudes and behavior. Agricultural projects increase yields, land titling projects increase the number of registered properties, and conservation projects support more environmentally friendly agricultural techniques, while other projects stop rural people from killing endangered species.

These are technical objectives which, however, can only be achieved if individuals and communities are willing and able to change their behavior. Behavior is

influenced by beliefs, attitudes and knowledge. Project design, therefore, must take into account stakeholders' thoughts about the institutions, their living conditions, perceived problems, perspectives and beliefs.

Set quantitative communication objectives

At the beginning of project implementation, once the baseline has been established, in part through the Social Impact Assessment study and in part through specific surveys, intermediate and final quantitative goals should be established. These are goals which will be reached after one, two, and three years, and at the end of the project.

These intermediate and final targets are the primary objectives of the communication activities and should not be confused with the technical objectives of the project (e.g., increase the income, improve water use efficiency, establish new legislation, reduce overgrazing, etc.). In fact, achieving the project's technical objectives relies not only on improved knowledge or a change of opinions, but on additional factors, such as availability of inputs, market fluctuations, climatic conditions, political stability, etc.

It has been proven that in many cases, stakeholders' knowledge and attitudes had improved, and that they had developed an active desire to change, but that behavioral change did not occur due to other impediments. By establishing appropriate communication indicators and by monitoring their evolution, it will be possible to determine if the absence of behavioral change is due to poor communication or to other causes.

Design a strategy and program of communication activities

The overall communication strategy outlines the main purpose and the general directives for communication activities, while the annual programs give more specific details of the activities to be undertaken.

Specify a communication budget

The financial resources available for communication activities should be clearly established in the Project Appraisal Document, and the funds should be used accordingly.

Establish monitoring and evaluation procedures

Continuous monitoring and evaluation is fundamental for the effective management of any project. If the communication strategy is converted into a program of activity, monitoring its implementation is easy, in terms of the use of budget and of output. The impact of the communication activities should also be evaluated, via specific surveys, focus groups and opinion polls.

Pre-test all media and avoid logo confusion

All media that is to be produced on a large scale should be pre-tested before being mass produced, so as to avoid the dissemination of incomprehensible messages. Furthermore, institutions remain long after projects close. With this in mind, projects should not have their own logos or slogans, but should use their resources to strengthen the image of local agencies.

Ensure internal communication

Knowledge management systems should be established to ensure that knowledge generated by the project is not lost. The flow of knowledge should be horizontal (between partner agencies), vertical (between the different levels of the same agency), diachronic (through time) and should contain feedback mechanisms.

Educate for communication

Short training courses on communication skills and techniques should be organized for high- level officials and for technical staff, including those who do not belong to the communication unit. Most of these people are conscious of the need for good communication, but they lack the necessary skills.

Ensure technical assistance for communication

The agencies implementing the projects might need specialized support to design and implement the communication strategy. Provision for a communication expert should be made in the technical assistance budget as well as in the supervision missions and in the midterm review mission.

1

RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNICATION

For more than 30 years, rural development has been a significant challenge for both developing and developed countries. Since the early 1970s, this multi-sector concept has been used to address the particular problems facing rural communities, but much remains to be done.

According to World Bank estimates, 1.2 billion people still live in severe poverty on less than one dollar per day, and many more have limited access to basic necessities. Approximately 75 percent of poor people can be found in rural areas. Their quality of life, by most indicators, is worse than that found in urban areas because they receive roughly half the level of public services. The very poor have been classified into five categories: i) the landless, ii) those with minor assets, iii) nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoralists, iv) female heads-of-families and v) ethnic minorities and indigenous populations.

Almost 1.3 billion people live in areas that are classified as environmentally fragile. In Latin America, only 25 percent of the population lives in rural areas, but both urban and rural poverty are extreme. The rural poor account for over 60 percent of the total poor in Mexico and Central America, and approximately half are small-scale subsistence farmers and members of indigenous communities.

The World Bank is the world's major funding agency of rural development projects and also acts as the coordinator for multilateral and bilateral interventions. Its most recent publication *Reaching the Rural Poor,* found that, out of 724 investments with around US$ 61 billion in financing approved during the fiscal year period 1999–2001, "about US$ 15 billion, (or 25 percent) for 383 projects, was specifically directed to rural areas". Approximately one third of this amount supported agricultural development, and a similar share was committed to three sectors combined: education, health and social investment. Around 20 percent went to infrastructure. Thirty percent of the projects had a participatory and community-based approach and promoted capacity building. Nearly half of the projects supported reforms in the public sector, and many tried to enhance the role of the private sector. Less than 10 percent favored non- agricultural income sources.

In the Latin America and Caribbean region, where this research project took place, and where the proposed case studies were identified, each country had distinct rural characteristics. Although agriculture accounted for only 8 percent of the region's Gross Domestic Product in 1998, its weight increased to 15 percent in Colombia and 24 percent in Nicaragua. Agriculture still provides a large share of employment: 20 percent in Mexico and 57 percent in Central America. Consequently, rural areas have the highest incidence of poverty (63 percent). Demographic projections show that urbanization will continue, but due to population growth, the absolute number of people living in the countryside will remain the same. In this region, agricultural development must incorporate environmental protection and rehabilitation because decades of inappropriate practices and growing demographic pressure have already severely affected natural resources.

Still, the concept of "rural" (as distinct from "urban") is challenging to define. Scholars from different backgrounds (economists, geographers, sociologists, anthropologists, etc.) have been unsuccessful in reaching a consensus on a single definition. Different variables (physical, human, economic) have been considered, with several multi-criteria approaches, to define and stratify rural areas according to different needs and goals.

Even within the same country, rural areas exhibit vastly different characteristics and trends. Disparities may be quite large, in terms of ecological aspects, human typologies and settlements, economic variables, past trends and future potential. Rural areas that are closer to small towns and cities can participate in a growing labor market and can develop higher-value horticultural crops for the urban consumers. In some areas, financial support from those who emigrated to towns or abroad allows the remaining family members to overcome difficulties and even make small investments. Some rural areas are classified as natural parks, rendering intensive agriculture impossible (although organic farming and rural tourism could be viable alternatives). Other areas might be better suited to agro-food industries. Water scarcity affects vast parts of rural areas and consequently limits human settlements, agricultural capability and industrial development, while other areas are characterized by deforestation or erosion.

Another important heterogeneous aspect relates to institutions: Ministries in the various countries exhibit varying degrees of efficiency and effectiveness, and different governing structures. Some countries are more decentralized than others, and the method of devolution of political authority may vary greatly. Similarly, in civil society and in the private sector, some associations are very strong and they can become (or already are) good service providers, while other associations still need time and assistance to develop the same capabilities. In some areas and countries the private sector is well established and already plays an important role, whereas in some cases private operators still need assistance.

Consequently, development policies for rural areas are marked by different perspectives, sectors of intervention, and goals. Some policies tend to be more agriculturally focused whereas others use a more articulated food-chain approach. Some policies recognize the need for infrastructural investments first, in order to reduce bottlenecks that impede economic growth. In other cases, diversification of economic structure is studied, and non-agricultural activities are pursued to create wealth that the primary sector could not generate. In some cases, emphasis is placed on structural problems, such as access to land or land registration, or on institutional aspects, such as public sector reform or institution building.

Due to demographic growth, pressure on the land will remain high and will possibly increase, with a heavy impact on the environment. Furthermore, there is severe inequity in vast portions of rural areas in terms of access to resources such as land, credit, markets, education, and social services.

In addition to these pressures, over the next few decades, rural areas will have to produce enough food to feed an additional two to three billion people globally and improve the diets of two-and-a-half to three billion people, who currently live on less than US$ 2 per day.

In recent years, greater emphasis has been placed on the local dimensions of rural development, with the emergence of concepts such as community-driven development, participatory project design and evaluation, decentralization, empowerment of local authorities, empowerment of local communities, and involvement of civil society organizations.

The stakeholders of rural development projects are numerous, but the relative importance of each category depends on the type of project. A likely list of stakeholders could include several different categories of agricultural producers (men and women, landless people, farmers and ranchers, landlords); informal and formal rural leaders (teachers, clergy, local level union cadres, etc.); local formal institutions (municipalities, districts, etc.); local and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs); national ministries and authorities with different interests; financial institutions; private companies; agricultural producer associations and non-agricultural economic associations; universities and research centers; foreign NGOs working in the country; other projects financed by a variety of different sources; the general public; local and national radio and TV stations; and local and national policy makers.

Considering the spatial dimension of rural development and the plurality of sectors that could potentially be involved, each rural development project has a unique identity and requires a tailor-made analysis. The only rule is that there are no standardized rules. Sustainable rural development requires a comprehensive approach that should enhance the energies of all stakeholders and provide the necessary tools for overcoming difficulties.

Communication for development must be implemented during all the phases of a project lifecycle, from project identification and formulation, to its imple-

mentation, monitoring and evaluation. Both internal and external communication should be carefully planned, implemented and continuously improved.

During the project identification and formulation phase, different categories of stakeholders should be consulted to empower them and design a project that meets their needs. Once the project is implemented, internal communication procedures are needed to allow the project management to supervise and manage the various activities and to keep all the involved agencies informed about progress, results and changes.

To achieve the project objectives, several communication activities are usually needed, which take into account the technical content of the messages, the educational level, information needs and communication behavior of the stakeholders. A wide variety of methods and media can be used—from the most traditional, labor-intensive field visits (agricultural extension) to radio and TV; from the most traditional media (folk theater, story tellers or puppet theater) to information technology. Attending decision-making communication events, such as village meetings or specialized workshops are common activities, but consultation through the internet is also beginning to emerge as a way to receive feedback from stakeholders.

Since the actors in a development program may be extremely heterogeneous, each project requires a strategy and should devise a proper plan of action in order to elaborate and transmit information and receive feedback from various stakeholders. Furthermore, since most projects are divided into components and subcomponents, they may be implemented by several different agencies, which may vary in size, scope, interest, geographic coverage, and communication skills. The communication activities of these agencies should be coordinated and should be subject to individualized monitoring and evaluation.

BOX 1.1: Strategic Communication

Strategic communication is a comprehensive and holistic concept. It includes all the activities needed for identifying and assessing critical issues, designing and implementing appropriate strategies, and monitoring and evaluating the results. It is an active and empowering solicitation of the stakeholders' perspective, ensuring that mechanisms are in place for a two-way flow of information.

A strategic communication approach does not add costs to the project cycle, at least not in the long run, but rather it reduces the costs of useless, often unplanned communication activities and, most importantly, ensures that the project is designed with the consensus of a majority of stakeholders, that its goals are shared, and that its implementation is successful.

Over the past 30 years, there has been a fierce debate over development approaches and the relationship between the people and field-level project staff. The traditional "extension agent", the French "vulgarisateur", who spread the gospel of undifferentiated technical change to farmers, women and youth, was replaced by the "advisor", who instead designed tailor-made solutions for (and sometimes together with) individuals and groups. Since the technical and economic dimensions alone were perceived as being too narrow in many circumstances, the word "change agent" (in French "animateur rural") was also frequently used to describe professional figures who were not transmitting any given technical message, but were rather helping people to organize themselves and find the best solution to their own problems. In Latin America, the need for basic education and for greater participation in political decision-making led to an emphasis on the educational role of the field level staff. "Animación" and "participación" were the words often used for defining their roles. Finally, there arrived the figure of the "facilitator", who did not teach any given truth, but rather helped the people to develop their own solutions.

A similar evolution can be found in the words defining the people involved in the projects: They were defined as "beneficiaries", because they were expected to benefit from the projects, or they were classified in military terms such as "target groups", or even as "addressees" ("destinataires" in French or "destinatarios" in Spanish). In all these cases, the terms reflect a top-down approach, with the people playing an almost passive role, and development coming from outside or from above. Later, when the limitations of these concepts became clear, new words appeared which are still largely used: "clients" and "stakeholders". The first term reveals an evident commercial relationship between the individuals and groups and the supplier of a given service (the advisor, facilitator or educator), while the second is more undefined, leaving room for categories of people who are not directly influenced by the project. For example, the stakeholders in a biodiversity project in Mexico could be advocacy NGOs in the USA or Europe.

What are the consequences for communication activities, and how does this impact strategic communication? When problem analysis and solution design were carried out by technocrats or political scientists, and the major problem for communicators was to design clear and effective, mostly one-way, communication activities, extension agents had to be good speakers, posters had to be properly drawn, leaflets had to be understandable, and radio programs had to be attractive because the beneficiaries had to be convinced to accept the changes being proposed by the project. These aspects are still valid, but a profound change has occurred in the way projects are designed and implemented, with much more and direct participation of the stakeholders. Opinions and attitudes of the stakeholders are becoming part of the baseline of the projects along with indicators of health, agriculture or biodiversity. In addition, a greater volume of information exchange is expected between agencies, with the general public, and even with stakeholders based abroad.

Increasingly, people in rural and urban areas want to know what is being decided, and they want to take part in the decision-making process, both at the macro-level, during identification and formulation of the policy or project, and at the micro-level, when the project is being implemented. For this reason, strategic communication also implies empowerment, because it helps to design tools for facilitating consultation with and full participation of the stakeholders. Whether they are farmers, technical experts, trade union representatives, university professors, local and national politicians, NGOs or private companies, they all must be considered. Consequently, strategic communication helps to mitigate the political risks that the project may face.

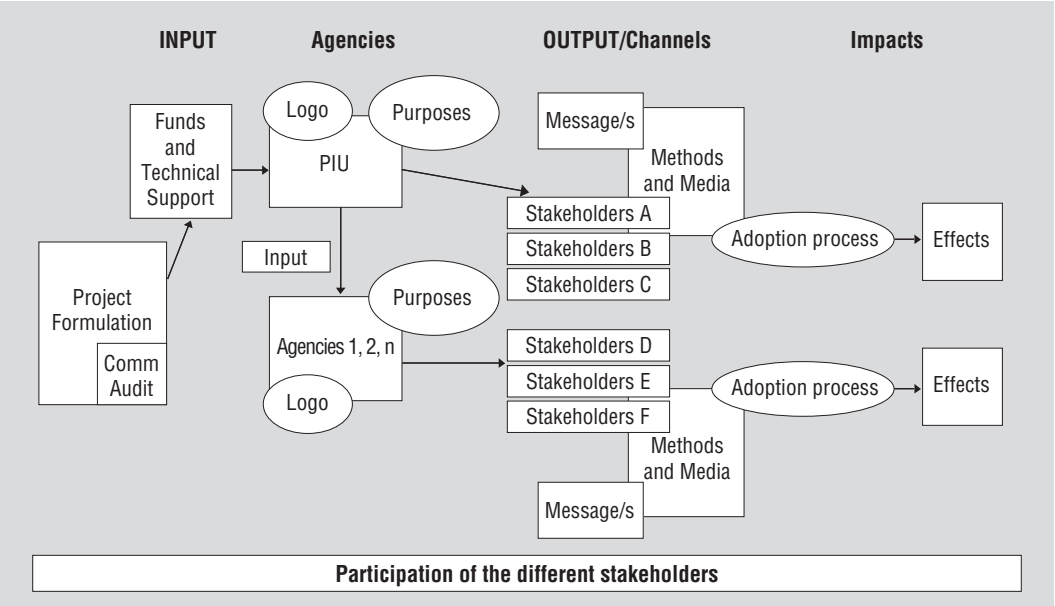
2

OVERVIEW

Strategic communication is a logical process (Figure 2.1), a part of the project cycle, composed of several, linked components. It can be described and/or measured, because some aspects are of a qualitative nature, whereas others are of a quantitative nature. Consequently, either in the planning or in the monitoring and evaluation, qualitative and quantitative indicators should be carefully devised. The components are described below in a logical order, which does not necessarily reflect their sequential order: For example, problems and stakeholders obviously exist before the project, and some agencies exist before the project, while others are established by the project itself.

- **Project Formulation** refers to the activities carried out by national and international experts to define the project; in this phase, it is relevant to consider the presence of a communication expert, the establishment of the communication team (if needed), the activities to be implemented to

Figure 2.1: Some components of a communication strategy.



involve stakeholders, the communication audit, the baseline of communication indicators, the planning of a budget for communication activities and for communication-related technical assistance.

- **Agencies** are the actors of the project and are normally involved in the project formulation. Some projects evolve during their implementation and may involve some new agencies. Often the project itself establishes a new agency. A project typically includes: a) the project implementation unit, b) public bodies, c) NGOs, and d) private companies. Some relevant communication aspects are: the presence / absence of a communication unit in each agency, the quality of staff of the communication unit, the available budget, the coordination mechanisms between agencies, and the internal knowledge management system.
- **A logo** can be a tool for communicating the existence of a development project and each participating agency. Sometimes, however, project-related logos can generate confusion, and it is better that the use of logos be confined to specific campaigns by a single agency. Logos are generally placed on stationery, folders, publications, vehicles, banners, clothes, etc. These items may be for staff use only, or all or some of them may be distributed free of charge to the public. Some items can be sold to generate income (as is the practice of many NGOs). The logo could be placed on products made by producers in the project area, serving as a kind of verification of the origin of the product.
- **Stakeholders** are the various categories of people involved in the project. Rural people were once called *beneficiaries* (also split into different groups: women and men, literate and illiterate, rural and urban, young and old, etc.) or *clients*. Other groups of relevant stakeholders are the formal local leaders, the field-level extension agents and other field-level personnel, other agencies, the government, the policy makers, the opinion makers (the press, for example), and the general public. All these categories should be clearly identified and quantified, their socio-cultural profile should be investigated and their communication behavior should be studied.
- **Purpose** refers to the most important of all questions: What is the real purpose of communication? In the traditional, top-down approach the goal is **a)** to persuade identified target groups to adopt behavior that is intended to be beneficial to them. In a more participatory approach, communication is used **b)** to encourage dialogue about specific initiatives during the project formulation (participatory rapid appraisal, for example) and later during its implementation and evaluation (participatory evaluation). Another purpose, common to both the top-down and bottom-up approaches, is the need **c)** to communicate the existence and the mission of the agency (public relations). We can then add the goals of **d)** having effective management and coordination within the project and between the various agencies and of **e)** generating the support of decision-makers. Increasingly, communication activities are also implemented **f)** to create a general aware-

ness or to build up public consensus, aimed at developing a positive social climate about a given topic (environment, land reform, new legislation about parks, etc.).

- **Channel** refers to the way communicators intend to reach, inform, and involve the stakeholders. Channel, method and output **are not** synonyms, although in some cases they are used indiscriminately, and this can lead to misunderstandings. **Channel** is a qualitative concept that describes how the sender wants to transmit the message or involve the stakeholders. Radio, TV, print media, internet or change agents are channels. **Methods** or **formats** are the specific approaches selected, and these too are qualitative concepts: radio and TV broadcast news programs, dramas, comedies, and talk shows. Print media include posters, leaflets, handbooks, etc. The change agents can reach their target groups with individual meetings, group meetings, demonstrations, guided tours, etc. **Output** is a concept used to quantify the number of events or media which have been produced by the agency during a given period and using a specified amount of resources. X individual meetings, Y group meetings, XY demonstrations, XW leaflets for women, XC leaflets for men, XT radio programs of 10 minutes each, XZ TV spots, WX press releases, XX posters, XN issues of the monthly bulletin for policy makers, etc.
- **Message** refers to the content(s) transmitted. These are obviously specific for each group of stakeholders. The specificity regards both content and encoding: **Content** is the technical message ("environment should be preserved for the future generation", or "this project has achieved these results" or "how to raise a good crop with integrated pest management"), but different stakeholders might be interested in different levels of detail, or in completely different messages; **Encoding**: The same content should be transmitted with different codes, according to the cultural level, language or dialects, used by the different groups of stakeholders.
- **Participation** refers to the various levels and types of participation of the different groups of stakeholders throughout the life cycle of a project. For example, the involvement of stakeholders in the elaboration of the project, or their participation in the message generation, or in the monitoring and evaluation processes.
- **Adoption process** refers to the stages individuals and communities go through emotionally and rationally before modifying their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, skills and eventually behavior.
- **Impact** refers to the intermediate and final consequences of the communication strategy. It is important to emphasize that the project can have different impacts on various stakeholders, or consequential generations of impact for the same group. For example, an impact could be the elaboration and approval, by the national parliament, of new legislation governing water-user associations, or a law establishing an independent land registry. For a group of farmers involved in a productive project, learning new methods

of integrated pest management (IPM) is the first impact, and adoption of the techniques is the second. This may generate a change in yields and cost of production (third generation), which leads to a different (hopefully better) income (fourth generation).

Box 2.1: A strategy without evaluation—a case from Honduras

The Rural Land Management Project has been active since 1997 and is nearing completion. It has two components: a) land registration and b) natural resources. The latter is divided into several subcomponents, one of which is the management of natural forests, an activity headed by a strong proponent of communication for development.

The project supports the activities of CHODEFOR, the national authority for forest management in 11 areas and 32 municipalities. In each area, with the help of local forest agents and with *animadores* employed by the project, a participatory analysis of the existing situation was developed. This was mainly based on individual contacts with local formal and informal leaders and on meetings with villagers. To ensure continuous popular support and transparency, several times per year the municipalities organize a *cabildo abierto*, an open council, in which anyone can participate.

To support the action of the field personnel, mass media such as leaflets, posters, stickers, and billboards along the major roads were produced. For field technicians and educated farmers, handbooks and booklets were also made, in several formats and with different levels of difficulty. In the schools, the project promoted the establishment of environmental clubs where children could learn about good practices. Training courses were organized for field personnel, ONG technicians and farmers, and 22 structured toolkits on different subjects were designed. Each was complete with guidelines for the trainer, overhead projector slides, and handouts for the participants. Videos with different technical content were also produced. A 30- minute radio program was transmitted daily in one pilot area and a weekly 60-minute TV program was transmitted in another.

The person in charge of the communication activities was an enthusiastic practitioner, but not an expert, and consequently there was no baseline survey taken on stakeholder knowledge, opinions or beliefs before the project began six years ago, and communication objectives were not defined. There was no monitoring or formal evaluation of the activities. Consequently, the potential knowledge about the impact of the communication strategy on the behavior of the different groups of stakeholders was lost forever.

Another example is opinion about an environmental problem: there could be a change in what people think (awareness), as a result of the communication activities, but there may be (for several reasons) no impact on their behavior. Or, if there are some individual behavioral changes, what is the overall impact of the collective social change? In order to be able to respond with facts and figures, the project should have a qualitative and quantitative baseline, followed by a list of objectives established from the beginning, with a proper M&E system set up to record these indicators. Likewise, the strategic communication should have its own objectives and an adequate M&E system.

3

THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Communication is the essence of human society, and human beings have developed the most complex systems for exchanging information. Our societies are defined by our communication systems, such as the development of the alphabet some 3,400 years ago by the Phoenicians; or the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg in 1452;[1] the radio waves discovered by Marconi in 1899; or the telephone patented by Bell in 1872; the inter-carrier sound system that allowed the television to function, developed in the mid-40s by Parker; or the computer invented by Stibits in 1940; and now the information super-highway of the internet.

Yet people also communicate in very simple ways: by their clothes or jewelry, by their posture or facial expressions, by their car or their haircut. Basically, communicating means sharing knowledge, an opinion, a skill, or a feeling, with one or more people. The communication can be voluntary, i.e. the consequence of a planned decision, or involuntary, i.e. without any precise intention.

Communication is not necessarily always good or effective at achieving the expected results.

3.1. Purpose of communication

Interpersonal communication may be used for different purposes. Some of the most common purposes can be classified as follows:

- **To obtain something** as when we order food at a restaurant, or a child desires something from his mother;
- **To control the behavior of other people**, as when officers give orders to their subordinates, or the director of an agency describes the tasks that the staff members are expected to accomplish in the following weeks;

[1] It must be remembered that the Chinese had already been using printing blocks made out of wood or ceramics for several centuries, but the enormous number of ideograms prevented a massive production of texts. In contrast, Gutenberg only had to combine 26 major characters and a few minor ones.

- **To inform somebody**, as when a teacher delivers a lecture to students, or an extension agent explains a technical topic to a group of farmers;
- **To satisfy a desire for knowledge**, as when we ask a question about something, or students surf the internet to get information;
- **To express a feeling**, as when a friend hugs another friend when they meet after a long time;
- **To express the pleasure of being with somebody else**, as when a group of people sings together;
- **To express a psychological condition**, as when people cry at a funeral, or laugh while watching a comedy;
- **To respect a social status**, because the situation requires that one communicates, as when visiting a project we are invited to "tell the community something", or when the oldest of the invited guests feels obliged to express the gratitude of the community.

In project work, most communication falls within the first four categories because information is researched, elaborated and distributed to acquire knowledge about a given situation in order to change it. However it is equally important to recognize that human relationships will demand that the other forms of communication be used during the lifecycle of the project: There will be moments for hugging friends, laughing, crying, singing, dancing, and delivering speeches that were not planned.

3.2 Forms of communication

Three major forms of communication have been identified: verbal, non-verbal and symbolic.

Verbal communication occurs whenever the word (written or spoken) is used. It is the most important form of human communication and is the foundation of the human societies, but it is also one of the major causes of misunderstanding. Not only are different languages spoken, but people using the same language may use different dialects or pronunciations. People with a lower educational level know and use relatively few words, while more educated people use a richer vocabulary. Furthermore, individuals with the same educational level might use different technical jargon. Difficulties sometimes arise when different meanings are attributed to the same word: "house" means a simple hut for a nomadic goat breeder, while it is an igloo for an Eskimo, and a huge castle for a noble Englishman. Languages evolve: words disappear from daily use while new words are invented and become popular. The English used by Shakespeare was different from modern English. The construction of statements can also be barriers to comprehension: complicated sentences are less understandable than short statements.

Non-verbal communication has different forms, such as paralinguistics: i.e. the use of the voice: loud or soft, with pauses or without, to emphasize a passage or to capture the attention of the listeners. Some people, such as preachers, teachers, actors, TV anchormen or politicians, are famous for their ability to use their voice. It is important to stress that the same statement can have different meanings, when different tones are used.

Another important form of expression is kinesics: i.e. the use of the body or facial expressions (mimics) to give more importance to some verbal communication. This use of the body while speaking varies greatly from country to country: People from northern countries generally move much less than people from southern countries. Latinos, Italians and Africans traditionally move their arms much more than people from Northern Europe. A smile sometimes communicates much more than spoken words. Likewise crowds shaking their fists are expressing their anger and dissatisfaction. A third form of non-verbal communication is called proxemics and it covers all messages sent via the use of space: Communicators who physically move towards people express the wish to approach their minds, while those who rigidly sit behind a desk clearly indicate that they want to keep a distance that is not only physical. In the same way, positioning people in a circle during a village meeting indicates the desire to share knowledge on an equal level, whereas lining up chairs, as in school, indicates that people are simply invited to listen, rather than participate on an equal basis. Each community has its own rules, and indigenous groups pay particular attention to these.

Finally, there is **symbolic communication**, based on the symbols people have on their body, such as scars and tattoos, the length and style of hair, or the jewelry or clothes they wear. These so-called status symbols communicate messages, such as level of income, or political opinion. In rural development activities, it is important to respect the rules and conventions of the social environment, to avoid offending the people we want to integrate into the development process.

Some forms of non-verbal communication (paralinguistic, for example) might be involuntary, (i.e., people might reveal much more with their voice than they wish to express with their words: fear, anger, suspicion and love are sometimes communicated more clearly with tone, or with silence, than with actual words). Many symbolic forms of communication may be false, meant to mislead others: High quality or expensive dress and a luxury car do not necessarily prove that a person is wealthy.

These three ways of communicating are always at work whenever two or more people meet, and every effort should be made to avoid initial misunderstandings that could undermine subsequent communication activities. Especially in cases of intercultural communication, whenever the experts do not belong to the same cultural, racial or religious group of the project area, knowledge should be acquired about how to behave properly. Great attention should

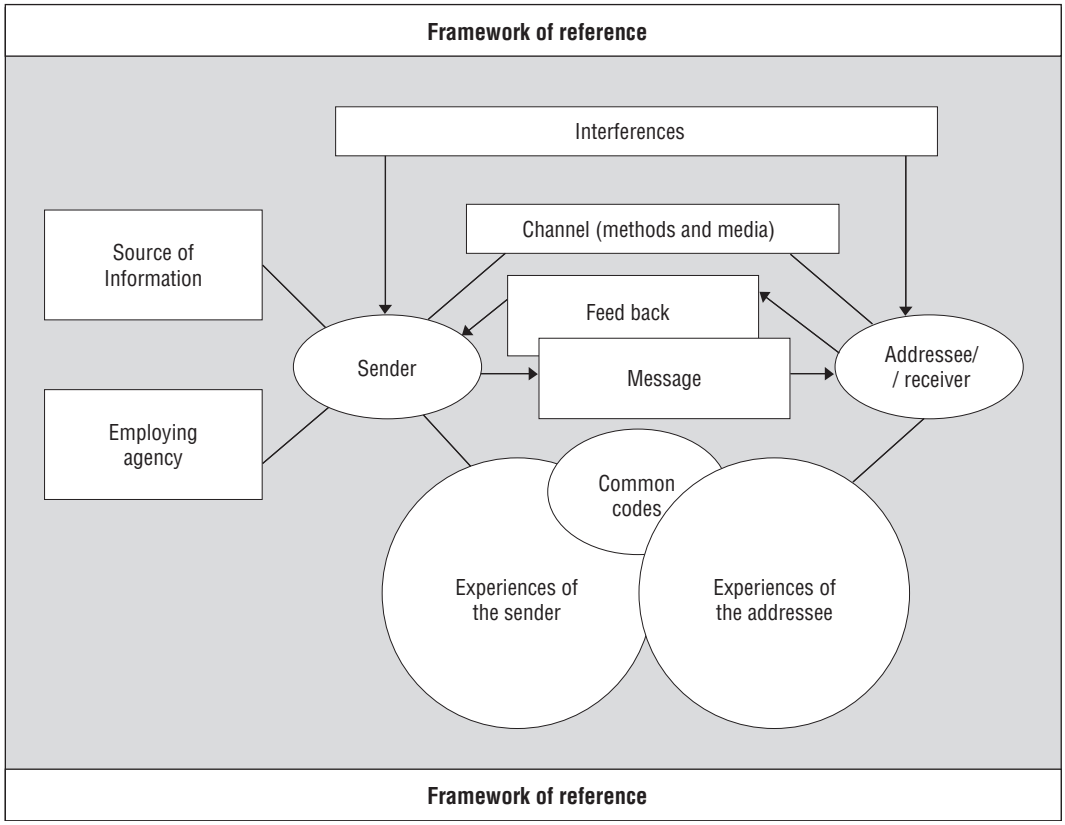
be paid to body language and symbolic communication: some gestures or behavior with a friendly meaning in one culture could disturb or even offend people belonging to another.

3.3 Elements of communication

Several elements shape communication. These are depicted in (Figure 3.1) and can be described as follows:

- The **framework of reference**: refers to the general situation, in time and space, of the people—whatever has happened and is happening around the communication event itself. For example, if several projects have failed in a particular area, most people there have likely developed a negative attitude towards foreigners who propose new initiatives, and this opinion is the first element to consider when entering the area. Or, there is the case of the ongoing coffee crisis that is affecting the lives of tens of thousands of people in Central America. In this situation, people are eager to find some feasible solution, and whoever appears with some credible ideas is likely to capture at least the initial attention of the producers. Knowledge of such situations and attitudes reduces the risk of non-participation, due to the well-known behavior called "selective exposure" (nobody wants to pay attention to something which is deemed useless).
- The **source of information** is the person or agency which has supplied part or all of the message. The prestige that the source enjoys in the minds and hearts of the participants will greatly influence the attention and acceptance of the message.
- The **employing agency** is the entity for which the communicator works. It could be the same agency that is employing the communicator, or another agency. In the case of independent advisors, this element does not exist. If the recipients of the communication consider this agency positively, they consider the message more credible. On the other hand, if the prevailing sentiment is mistrust, their attitude will be negative and the value of the message and the knowledge of the communicator will become irrelevant. Unfortunately, in many countries, the first objective of communication strategies must be to rebuild trust in institutions that has been lost.
- The **sender** is the person in charge of sending the message, i.e. speaking at a conference, writing an article, talking on a TV show, drawing cartoons for children, etc.
- The **addressee** is the person to whom the message is aimed who becomes a **receiver** only after the message is understood in its totality. It is important to distinguish between these two concepts, because it is quite common to suppose that they coincide. Actually, only a small fraction of addressees ever become receivers.

Figure 3.1: Elements of the communication process.



- The **code** is the particular shape or meaning of the communication. Only meanings which are fully shared by the protagonists of the communication are understood properly, minimizing the risk of misunderstanding. A major concern of the sender should be that of using words, drawings, symbols, or non-verbal communication appropriate for the participants, so as to allow a full and complete understanding of what is said, written or communicated with pictures;
- The **area of common experience** represents what is known (or has been experienced) by both the sender and the addressee, and consequently allows and facilitates communication. This area does not only include the common code, which allows most of the communication to be properly understood, but the entire life and background of the communicator and addressee. The larger the area of overlap, the greater the chance that the communication will be successful.
- The **noise** or **interference** includes all the factors that can have a negative impact on the quality of the transmission of information. These can be natural (heavily falling rain pounding on the roof of the meeting hall) or they can be technical (electricity failure which affects visual aids or a faulty sound system); interference can also be of a human nature: people moving

continuously or important people arriving during a meeting, disrupting communication.

- The **channel** (or means) of communication: can be oral, written, or a combination of the two. It includes the various methods, events and media that are described in Chapter 5. The channel should be selected according to the communication profile of the addressees, the relative difficulty of the message, and the number of addressees (see Chapter 6).
- The **message** is the content of the communication, and refers to the types of changes that the project is trying to introduce (see Chapter 4). Sometimes it can be very simple, composed of only a few basic units of information, e.g. the news that a meeting about rural credit for women farmers will take place the forthcoming week. Sometimes it can be complex (e.g. new crop cultivation techniques) including hundreds of basic units of information, formulated into concepts and guidelines that the addressees must understand, accept and adapt to their own situation. Sometimes messages are even more complicated, because they did not exist in their entirety before the communication was presented.
- **Feedback** is any means by which the addressee influences the sender. This can be done consciously, for example by raising a question, or unconsciously, by falling asleep. Individual, interpersonal communication between one person and another is characterized by continuous feedback; in a dialogue, the roles change continuously, with the sender becoming the addressee and vice versa. In group communication, the sender should try to encourage all the people to participate fully and should ask open questions[2] i.e. to stimulate the feedback. In mass events, or with mass media such as posters, books, and TV programs, it is difficult to get immediate feedback, and appropriate mechanisms should be put in place, to determine the real impact of the communication. Within a project, properly planned and executed participatory monitoring and evaluation, (see Chapter 8), is a powerful form of feedback that allows the project management to implement the changes required by the stakeholders.

3.4 The communication process

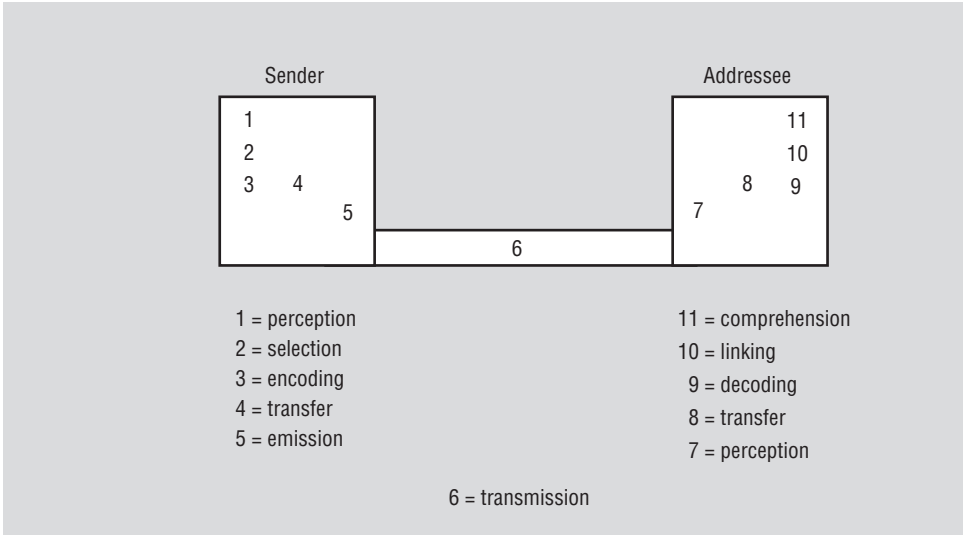
The communication process is extremely complex, because it includes neurological, psychological and physical functions. Sometimes it involves external means and is influenced by anthropological and sociological factors. One model

[2] Open questions require an answer to be articulated and consequently reveal the opinions or the level of understanding of what is being discussed at the moment, whereas closed questions only require a yes or no answer and do not clearly indicate what the people are thinking.

of the communication process can be simplified in the following eleven sequential steps:

- **Perception of the message**: the sender feels the need or the desire to send a message, but the ideas are not yet clear;
- **Selection**: the sender chooses the information and the concepts to be transmitted and also selects the communication method and medium (oral, written, non verbal, etc.);
- **Encoding**: the sender transforms the ideas into a code made up of words, drawings, movements of the body, etc., believed to be properly understood by the addressee(s);
- **Transfer**: the brain orders the external organs to produce the communication signals, which are sometimes accompanied by involuntary non-verbal communication;
- **Emission**: the external organs attempt to satisfy the orders received (a person with a bad voice will never sing as the brain wishes);
- **Transmission**: the signals are transmitted through the selected channels (voice, hands and body movements) and /or media;
- **Perception**: the external sensorial organs of the addressee receive the signals;
- **Transfer**: these signals are transmitted to the brain;
- **Decoding**: the brain translates the signals according to the codes known by the addressee;
- **Linking**: the decoded message is confronted with all the stored knowledge, beliefs and feelings already owned by the addressee;

Figure 3.2: Steps of the communication process.



- **Comprehension**: the message is emotionally accepted and rationally understood and becomes part of the knowledge of the addressee, who finally becomes a receiver.

Due to the complexity of the communication process, several problems may arise in each of the steps described above: The selected information might be wrong, or the selected channel could be inappropriate; the non-verbal communication may contradict or interfere with the verbal communication; the transfer could be limited or damaged by unplanned events (mail not delivered, sound system in bad condition, audio-visual aids not working, noise from the road drowns out what people say, etc.), the code might be inappropriate or the message might not fit into the pre-existing knowledge of the addressee, or the addressees may think they have understood, but in reality the concept has been misunderstood.

The only way to minimize the above, unintended negative consequences is to properly plan the communication, know the codes used by the people who will be involved, reduce the risks of technical noise, and most important, always provide an opportunity for fast, clear feedback.

3.5. Biases in communication

A communication is not an isolated event. Rather it takes place in a given context, marked by the personal history of the individuals who—voluntarily or involuntarily—are in contact. In particular, there are psychological biases which influence attitudes of both the sender and the addressee, which may facilitate or obstruct the positive result of the communication itself.

These three prejudices correspond to the following questions:

- **What do I think about myself** (as a farmer, woman, small entrepreneur, politician, advisor, learner, teacher...)?
- **What do I think about the other person** (as a farmer, woman, small entrepreneur, politician, advisor, learner, teacher....)?
- **What do I think about the message that I think the other person will send me**?

A group of landless farmers with little formal education and a declining income, who feel neglected by their governments and who have lost trust in their advisors, may have a mistrusting attitude towards newcomers. This type of social capital—trust in institutions—has been recognized as fundamental in development work. If it is missing, it is likely that people will not participate in meetings, or that they will arrive with a negative attitude. Communication events should not replicate past negative experiences, but rather should build bridges. In these conditions, development projects must begin by trying to

remove, with patience and time, the prejudices which could undermine communication.

For these reasons, when designing a rural development project, during the project formulation it is important to collect information on people's opinions about the local and national institutions and about their own situation. This information could be qualitative or quantitative and can become part of the baseline of the project.

During project implementation, all communication activities should be planned with these three biases in mind; our opinions of other people can influence our thoughts and actions. All messages and events should be planned and designed to overcome the natural skepticism of the potential receivers and likely participants. Communicators must think positively and should organize everything in a way that fosters the same attitude among the participants.

4

CHANGES AND COMMUNICATION

Most projects introduce innovations, and so communicators must be conscious of attitudes towards change.

A new law concerning land tenure and registration will be drafted by experts who then submit it to legislators, who modify or accept it. The law must then be adopted and enforced. The law was produced by relatively few individuals, but it is intended to benefit hundreds of thousands Most people living in the country may not even be conscious that a new law has been debated and approved by the Parliament. When the local land office agents go out to talk about this new law, they need to be informed about the concept of property, about rights and registration procedures, costs and advantages, about risks in case of non registration, etc. These are all difficult concepts for people who may be illiterate or have had a very limited education. The new law is a common good, because it benefits the entire society, but its application is a private good, because it will only benefit the people who register their property rights.

The concept of innovation is relative: something common to people in one region may be unknown to those in another. This is unrelated to education or culture; PhD holders in physics may be ignorant of rabbit breeding techniques. Or a highly skilled Italian chef may be unaware of the methods used to prepare food from tropical ingredients.

New agricultural techniques are developed by scientists, tested by qualified personnel, and disseminated by extension agents to farmers who will analyze their advantages and disadvantages. If the farmers attempt to use the techniques, they will verify their technical validity and economic efficiency, before adopting or rejecting them in the end. Most agricultural innovations are **private goods** because they benefit the farmers who adopt them.

An improved road is a **common good** because it benefits an entire community, although at different levels: traders may move more quickly and safely, becoming the first ones to gain from this change, but transaction costs might decrease, and the people living along the road may benefit. New economic activities would likely become feasible, and other categories of stakeholders might appear: small handcraft producers, small shop owners, small restaurants, etc., the entire community may see their conditions gradually improve.

Nature conservation, biodiversity or natural resource management projects also require changes which are sometimes **public goods** and sometimes private goods. They also involve different categories of stakeholders and require decision-making at various levels. National policy makers pass legislation that local policy makers adapt to the specific circumstances and then implement. Farmers and people living in areas which will be regulated as parks should be involved in finding appropriate technical and economic solutions to increase their income, while respecting environmental legislation. The general public should be kept informed about what is going on and should receive information about the value of the natural resources.

4.1 Classifications of change

The above examples also allow innovations to be classified in other ways, as follows:

- **Individual** innovations, which require the decision of one person;
- **Collective** innovations, which demand the cooperation of more people, in some cases the majority, in others the totality of the people involved.

Another classification considers the "distance" between the present situation and the desired new situation. Consequently it distinguishes the following three categories:

- **Continuous** innovations, whenever the distance between the current practice and the desired practice is minimal, and the individuals or the communities only have to make small changes in their habits;
- **Semi-continuous** innovations, when only a fraction of the present practice and knowledge is applicable to the desired, future situation;
- **Discontinuous** innovations, when radical change is required.

It is evident from a communication point of view that proposing changes in the first category should be relatively easy, using the mass media and mass interpersonal contacts. Most people will probably have a positive opinion without having received excessive input. In the second category, the communication effort will require more energy. More attention must be devoted to feedback, and a proper information approach must be implemented. In the third case, some categories of stakeholders do not know anything about the innovation, which consequently is riskier to implement. Detailed information must be provided; negative attitudes towards change must be overcome; time consuming and labor-intensive communication strategies need to be implemented.

Another useful classification is between **process** and **product** innovations. The first refers to changes introduced in the techniques for producing a given

item. It can be in agriculture, manufacturing or in services; e.g. a new plowing technique for avoiding soil erosion, a new processing method for reducing water consumption in coffee-bean processing, a new simplified procedure for facilitating small credit applications. Since most of these innovations are continuous or semi-continuous, they do not include much risk and are relatively easy to propose.

The second category includes all the changes that occur when entirely new products[3] are introduced to people who were previously unaware of their existence; e.g. extension agents propose that farmers grow a new vegetable which can attract a higher price, or new foods are introduced to consumers. These modifications are more difficult and require a longer time and a more labor-intensive approach to communicate.

A final classification distinguishes between **soft** and **hard** innovations; the first category includes changes based on local resources and knowledge. In agriculture, this could mean animal tracking, local varieties and breeds, the use of green manure, local processing, fair trade, etc. The second category includes external inputs such as tractors, seeds, chemical products, etc. It is important to emphasize that, from a communication point of view these two categories present similar difficulties. Some soft technologies, such as solar energy or biological pest control, might be even more difficult to explain and to teach than hard innovations, which are sometimes easier to use.

4.2 Genesis of innovations

In the past, especially in agricultural projects, most innovations were conceived at public or private research centers and were transmitted to producers via traditional top-down agricultural extension services. This approach still prevails in the private sector, where input suppliers of seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, machinery, etc. promote their products by an extensive array of communication activities. To some extent, the same top-down approach exists in many commodities, where contract farming covers an important role; the buyer of the commodity imposes a given production technique on the producers, who are taught by advisors and are constantly monitored.

In recent years, at least in some public research centers, a growing number of experts have begun to question this approach, and more attention has

[3] In recent times, much has been said and written about “diversification”, concluding that rural poverty can only be alleviated with new products and services: poor farmers should grow new crops, new on-farm and off-farm sources of income should be found, such as agro-tourism, environmental services, food processing, etc. In any case, this is something that is new for most people. Not only farmers, but even local agents, local leaders and national politicians should be informed and educated about such changes.

been given to closer cooperation between farmers, extension agents and scientists—which has consequently changed the type of communication required. Other studies have emphasized the role of farmer-to-farmer communication for disseminating innovations which were developed by the producers. These so-called **endogenous innovations** surely play an important role in many parts of the world, especially in low input agriculture such as organic farming.

If we consider the definition of innovation itself, i.e. something that is perceived as new by a given person or community, it is evident that most changes, either of a technical or socio-economic nature, are **exogenous**, coming from the "outside". Even in Community Driven Development, which by definition should be based on decisions made by the community, it is often necessary to

Box 4.1: Farmers Field Schools, where local people produce the message

Farmers Field Schools (FFS) emerged in the late 1980s in Asia, in part as a reaction to the Training and Visit System, from the experiences of participatory research activities on Integrated Pest Management. Their methodology is based on Kolb's experiential learning cycle: Concrete experience, observation and reflection, generalization and abstract conceptualization, active experimentation. The schools represent one approach to partially solving the common challenges of technology generation and innovation diffusion in developing countries.

FFS are not, in fact, schools. They are typical fields, made available by one farmer or by the village, where a small group of farmers convenes each week to meet with the extension agent or the field scientist. Throughout the growing season the farmers observe and experiment, suggest their own solutions to problems, and compare the results in the experimental field with nearby fields. Participants are committed to sharing what they learn from each other and from the extension agents.

The pros and cons of this approach are currently being analyzed. The positive aspects are the responsiveness to local conditions, the use of local knowledge, capacity building, the farmer-to-farmer information exchange, etc.; the negative aspects, as one might expect, regard the economic sustainability of the approach, which is highly labor intensive and entirely supported by project funds. Many years of experimentation are needed before innovations can really be deemed trustworthy, and there are the problems posed by long-term innovations in areas such as animal husbandry, permanent crops or landscape management.

introduce changes in production techniques, in the social organization itself, and in the relationships between the community and the surrounding social systems. All of these innovations are normally based on experiences from elsewhere. In many cases the role of emigrants has been emphasized in the proposal of innovations, either technical or organizational. Emigrants can act as a bridge between the community and the outside world,

Innovations, although exogenous, should never be imposed or simply transmitted from the top (the project, the government, the agency). Rather, they should be shared with the stakeholders of the project, appraised, re-elaborated, validated and finally diffused. This is important to emphasize, because it greatly modifies the role and the activities of the communicator.

4.3 Innovations, agrarian and social structure

Another aspect to consider, especially in agriculture-based rural development projects, is the relationship between innovation and land tenure. Many proposed changes (terracing, orchard planting, tree planting, etc.) increase land value and are consequently appreciated by those who have previously registered and obtained fully recognized property rights. The same innovations are of no interest to the landless or the sharecroppers, who are motivated by shorter term goals, such as higher yields.

Even the best communication campaign and the most experienced extension agents will not achieve positive results until the land tenure situation is modified and property rights are fully attributed.

Some innovations, although beneficial to some stakeholders, could be perceived as a threat to others: Middlemen could oppose the idea of setting up a marketing cooperative, or landlords may not like the establishment of labor unions. The elderly in a village might not like the idea of a cultural club managed by the youth. A literacy campaign might reduce the social position (and perhaps the income) of the few people who can read and write.

In order to prevent opposition to and boycotting of the project, such aspects must be considered, and appropriate measures taken. All stakeholders should be informed that there are benefits for everyone, e.g. landlords could be told that the value of the land will increase with higher productivity of the land, consequently counterbalancing the higher wages. The elderly could be involved in some dialogue with the younger generation, and middlemen could be told that with agricultural development there will be new business opportunities for them as well.

In many parts of the world, common lands and common sources of water still prevail, and the decisions of the individuals must respect the rules and practices imposed by the community. Agreements must therefore be made between the individuals and the community that will ensure proper use of the common goods.

Even a rural road benefits different categories of stakeholders to different degrees, and consequently not all categories may want to contribute equally to its construction and maintenance. Agreements should be made, recognizing such disparities, and the burden of improving such a common good should be divided accordingly.

It is important to remember that the history of development is a history of small-scale and large-scale social conflicts, some of these even dramatic and bloody. Inclusion of stakeholders in the project identification and undertaking adequate communication are not always sufficient to anticipate all of the potential negative reactions, and only some barriers can be eliminated.

4.4 Innovation packages

Changes rarely occur in isolation. Rather they are an integrated package of interdependent and consequential modifications that should be adopted as a whole, if they are to achieve the best possible results.

A simple example can be taken from conventional agriculture: An innovation might include a combination of new plowing techniques, new high yield variety seeds, different seed density per acre, new fertilizers distributed in a new manner, new pesticides distributed at different times, new weed killers given with new machinery, and a new contract with an agro-food company. Another example could be developing a diversification project which involves applying for a grant, farm building modification, setting up a restaurant, respecting hygienic regulations, promoting this activity, proper bookkeeping, etc. Or we can imagine a situation which involves new national legislation, a new national agency, decentralization to local authorities, more active NGOs, pro-active farmers, and a full package of sustainable innovations devised by a local research center.

Unfortunately, in most cases, stakeholders (from the national government to the individual farmer) only partially adopt complex innovations, and consequently the results are less than expected. This apparently illogical behavior is sometimes due to poor communication (the combination of innovations was not properly explained), but, in most cases, it is due to other causes such as politically unfeasible measures, input unavailability, a perception of unreasonably high prices or difficult practices, lack of resources, poor enforcement of some legislation, etc.

Again, properly planned communication activities should include all relevant aspects. Follow up should be properly planned in order to verify the full adoption of the entire package. It is important to establish a two-way communication system in order to obtain information from the stakeholders regarding the obstacles to full implementation and their suggestions for removing them.

4.5 Characteristics of innovations

Innovations can be analyzed according to some of their distinct characteristics, which can influence the rate of their diffusion. The following are some such aspects:

- **Relative advantage**: the more advantageous the change appears to be, the more will it be adopted. The advantages, as well as the disadvantages, should be communicated clearly; individuals and groups can then ponder costs and benefits and make up their minds, even before beginning to participate in the process. Obviously, the concepts of costs and benefits are quite vague, because they refer not only to monetary aspects, but also to labor requirements, social status, short-term and long-term consequences for the whole family or for the local and national policy-maker;
- **Compatibility:** innovations should be compatible with local values, objectives and beliefs, the pre-existing technological level, as well as the level of integration with the external society. In a Muslim country, the breeding of pigs is clearly against the Faith and it would be illogical to propose the introduction of such a project. More subtle mistakes are often made, due to the lack of knowledge of such human aspects;
- **Test-ability:** people like to try things before making permanent changes and consequently this aspect is very important. Producers like to try planting small plots before adopting the innovation on a larger scale. Although the communication agent may try to supply all the information and ensure that the results will be positive, people never believe 100 percent of what they are told, and consequently, time and space for small, first-person experiences must be allowed. Individual results may be different from those presented by the promoters of the innovation, and the individuals and communities will make their decision based on their own experiences, not on what they were promised. Many rural development projects are defined as "pilot projects" for the same reason, because the decision-makers want to be sure about the results of a given approach before expanding this innovation to an entire country;
- **Observe-ability**: when something cannot be pre-tested, some communication methods will allow the concerned stakeholders to at least obtain first hand knowledge: e.g. demonstration days, field days, visits to experimental farms, study tours to a nearby community or even abroad, allow concerned parties to observe what can be achieved when the innovation is adopted in a similar ecological and socio-political situation.
- **Complexity** refers to the level of real or perceived difficulty of the innovation. It is related to the concept of continuity or discontinuity seen above. For some people, a certain change could be very difficult to understand or to manage, while others might find it easy. There are cultural, genera-

tional and gender aspects that make the same innovation appear to be more or less complex to different groups of stakeholders.

4.6 Adoption process and communication

In order to implement a decision, a person goes through a logical process that compares the past situation with the likely future situation. This process has been defined by the following five steps:

- **Awareness**: the person begins to be aware that the present situation is not good, or that there are some problems;
- **Interest**: the individual searches for more information about the pros and cons of some feasible changes;
- **Appraisal**: different hypotheses are compared with the present situation;
- **Trial**: the most promising option or options are tested on a small scale;
- **Adoption**: if the person finds that the trial was successful, the innovation is adopted.

This famous five-step adoption process has been taught for decades all over the world, but already in the early 1970s there was criticism about its positive and deterministic nature. Furthermore, it has been noted that some innovations cannot be tested on a small scale or that there are often rejections of or modifications made to proposed changes. Consequently, the following model was proposed:

- **Knowledge**: individuals are exposed to an innovation and an initial idea that something might change;
- **Persuasion**: more information and experiences cause the individual to develop either a positive or negative attitude about the innovation itself;
- **Decision**: an individual decides whether and how to act. A decision could be to not adopt, or to wait and watch the results obtained by somebody else;
- **Implementation**: people decide to adopt the innovation, even on a small scale. Sometimes the proposed change cannot be implemented as proposed and needs to be refined and modified; this is the so called re-invention;
- **Confirmation**: if the results are positive as expected, the innovation is definitively accepted, but if the contrary happens, the innovation may be rejected.

There are clear relationships between the adoption model and communication. Through appropriate communication activities, it is possible to attract the attention and participation of the stakeholders. At the beginning, mass media and methods should be used to transmit simple notions to the greatest number of people at the lowest cost per contact. To facilitate the adoption process,

more complicated information subsequently becomes necessary, and this can be delivered with other mass media or with more labor-intensive contact methods. In many cases, whenever decision-making is at the group level (a community driven development project, new legislation, an action to be coordinated by different agencies), group methods are required, such as meetings, study tours, workshops, working groups, etc. In some cases, interaction must be interpersonal and limited to one person: e.g. an individual meeting with the Minister of Agriculture, to be informed about the design of a new proposal, or the meeting with the mayor of an important rural municipality.

4.7 Diffusion process and communication

The same innovation is rarely adopted by all individuals of a group at the same time. It has been observed that some are faster than others, while some never change their behavior. Different social categories have been identified, based on the standard deviation from the average moment when change occurred:

- The **innovators** include a small minority of people (about 2–3 percent of the population), who, by education, economic situation and/or personal psychological attitude, are comfortable taking risks. They like to try new things and do not have a fear of failure, or their economic situation is such that they can risk a partial loss of income. Innovators are normally more advanced than the average local advisors or change agents. They introduce innovations into their farms, households, and lifestyles even before institutions begin to consider such changes. The communication behavior of innovators is quite open. They travel extensively, have direct relationships with other innovators, read foreign journals, and participate in fairs and exhibits. Because of their status and behavior, they can be somewhat isolated from the local community, tend to have few social relationships, and are often viewed by community members as extravagant;
- The **early adopters** have more or less the same characteristics as the innovators: good education and higher economic status. However they are more risk-adverse. They represent about 10–15 percent of the population and seek to emulate the innovators, but also desire the support of local advisors. They hesitate before experimenting with an innovation, but they are open to change. They have a good relationship with those around them in the community or workplace. To some extent, they could be considered informal leaders, because they enjoy the respect of their peers, and their behavior is taken as an example by the majority;
- The **majority**, by definition, includes most of the people concerned with the proposed change. They comprise almost two-thirds of the population and, by comparison, are even less willing to take risks than the early adopters. The majority have a lower level of education, read less than the previous categories, and participate less in meetings. They wait to see the results

achieved by the early adopters, want to be assured that almost no risk is involved in the proposed change, and slowly adopt the new behavior;

- The **laggard**[4] are again a small minority of individuals, generally with limited or no formal education, low income and few resources, sometimes old, poorly informed or entirely uninformed, and economically extra-marginal. They fear change and have almost given up any hope in the future. The laggards have contacts almost exclusively with people of the same group and refuse to expose themselves to new ideas.

This briefly outlined categorization, although criticized by many scholars, has been proven valid in various situations, rural and urban alike, for several different categories of innovations. Consequently, what are the implications for the communication activities in a rural development project?

First, not all people can be reached with the same methods or media: laggards tend not to participate in events or to read printed materials. Consequently, in some cases it has been suggested that most of the labor-intensive activities (group methods and individual contacts) should concentrate on the early adopters, using them as multipliers of the action. In other cases, special units have been set up with the specific purpose of helping the so-called "laggards", who are normally at risk of being ignored entirely.

4.8 Resistance to change

With few exceptions, most people do not like change. Innovations are often traumatic: Farmers are skeptical about new varieties or new products, mayors do not like to impose local taxes, public officers do not like to modify old, inefficient procedures.

Several factors coincide with this resistance to change, some of which can be prevented with proper communication activities before and during project implementation.

- **Psychological factors** are values and attitudes that may block behavioral change. For example, some ranchers believe that agriculture is a lesser activity than animal breeding, or that the agro-tourism business is beneath their dignity. Some hunters believe that killing endangered species is a "mas-

[4] This definition is sometimes misunderstood and interpreted as negative, but it simply refers to the fact that some people adopt the change very late or never. This does not mean that they are stupid or ignorant, because sometimes their behavior is fully rational. Resistance to change also affects people with very high education and very good incomes: university professors could be more resistant to change than illiterate marginal farmers. Add to this that many innovations are not "neutral" and require capital investments or demand scale economies, which small operators simply cannot afford.

culine" act, while some older people think they are too ignorant to learn new concepts and simply refuse to open their minds to new information;
- **Situational factors** are linked to the physical environment where the stakeholders operate: soil types, size of land holdings, size of families, shortage of labor, unclear land tenure mechanisms, complex social regulations, or distance from the processing plants or market, etc. These factors are obstacles to people who would like to change and are aware of the positive consequences of the innovations, but simply cannot adopt what is proposed by the project;
- **Institutional factors** are external to the people and their personal situation; e.g. prices are too low, credit rates are too high, conditions are too difficult to comply with, etc.

Many of the limiting factors listed above can be identified as early as the project formulation stage through opinion polls, expert consultations, or focus groups, and they should be considered in the project design. Strategic communication, with its attention to participation and empowerment, not only limits the negative consequences of the psychological factors, but also prevents the project from traveling down the wrong path. Participatory monitoring and evaluation, another important aspect of communication for development, provides continuous feedback for adapting the project to meet local challenges as they arise.

CASE 4.1: Reaching the farmers with the Training and Visit System in El Salvador

The problem of technology generation and dissemination to farmers is at the heart of every rural development program. During the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the World Bank sponsored the Training and Visit system (T&V), based on a labor intensive program of meetings between change agents and selected groups of farmers, who then agreed to disseminate the message to other farmers. Every two weeks the change agents had group meetings with subject matter specialists who supplied the field agents with the messages to be spread during the next weeks. During these meetings, the field agents also reported the problems encountered on the farms, and the questions posed by the contact farmers. The T&V system had positive and negative methodological aspects which have been extensively studied. Unfortunately, its labor-intensive approach was costly in terms of salaries for the public administrators and now has been almost entirely abandoned.

The CENTA (National Centre for Agricultural Technology) in El Salvador is an illustrative example. It was established as an autonomous institu-

tion in February 1994, with the purpose of developing technologies and disseminating them to farmers with a T&V approach. Since then, as part of a World Bank project, it has conducted 725 studies which have generated several leaflets, nine technical guides and nine technical bulletins. It has also compiled a catalogue of the available technological innovations. To favor cooperation between extension agents, researchers and producers, 18 working groups were established.

Every two weeks, each field agent was expected to meet several contact farmers, reaching 30 in total. Each contact farmer was then supposed to repeat the suggestions to nine friends, resulting in a contact agent/farmer ratio of 1:300. This ratio however was never achieved, with the highest value being 284. At its peak, in 1994, there were 394 field extension agents, 36 percent lower than the planned 608. The extension agents, about 12 percent of them women, were distributed in 77 local agencies.

Since 1996, the number of agents employed by CENTA has progressively declined and, in 2000, there were only 263. In the last three years, no new personnel have been employed. Fifty-two local agencies have been closed, and their personnel have been moved to the remaining agencies or to other projects. The directives have been to reduce the field and research personnel and to progressively decentralize technical assistance, which is being delegated to the Producers Associations or to other projects of MAG or other agencies. The number of advisors directly employed by CENTA has decreased to 103, and today they are concentrating their action on rich commodities, such as vegetables and fruit. Taking into account the greater technical difficulties of such intensive crops, the number of contact farmers and other farmers has been halved, bringing the total number of assisted farmers to about 10,000.

At present, about 40 advisors are employed by producers associations, such as PROLECHE. Their salary and minor costs are entirely paid by public funds, while other items are paid for by the associations themselves. For example, PROLECHE employs six advisors with funding from CENTA and supports 32 percent of the whole extension budget. Other extension agents are employed by or within the framework of several projects which are being implemented in different parts of the country, such as PRODENOR, PRODAP, PRODER, etc., which are also experimenting with other more participatory extension approaches, with a greater involvement of farmers. To some extent, CENTA continues to be involved in training and sometimes in technology generation or extension activities, but it is evident that it no longer has a monopolistic position in technology generation and transfer and that a national overview of the advisory services offered is missing.

Conclusions (lessons learned)

The budgetary constraints of the agencies play a key role in communication strategies. Building sustainable institutions should be the primary objective in rural development projects, and it is evident that since 1996 the Government of El Salvador has decided to use its resources differently.

State-managed, labor-intensive and costly communication approaches, such as the T&V, are being abandoned, and costs and responsibilities are being transferred to Non-Governmental Organizations, like the producers associations. Will this work? Again, the economic sustainability of such new approaches depends on the proper combination of effective communication methods and media and of greater attention to sound economic management. The farmers' willingness to pay for information has been studied in several situations, but it depends on the perceived utility of the messages, and this is linked to the capacity of the extension and research system to produce useful innovations and to communicate them in a timely manner.

Furthermore, what will happen to the marginal and extra-marginal people who cannot afford to pay for advice? Which agency is going to cover the cost of providing information to older, or illiterate people, many of whom are women? And can their economic situation and their livelihood be improved at all? In this case communication should probably focus more on advocacy and give some voice to people in these categories, who are at risk of being ignored in the search for more balanced public budgets.

5

METHODS AND MEDIA: AN OVERVIEW

There are several classifications of ways to involve stakeholders in the development process. The following distinguish between methods and media,[5] with slight overlapping when teaching aids are considered.[6]

Methods include all activities with an interpersonal contact whenever one or more persons are exposed to the professional communicators. Methods can be grouped as follows:

- *Individual methods:* when one person is contacted through an office, home or farm visit, or the person visits the change agent's office. Another common version is to invite the person to a face-to-face business meal in a restaurant. Communication can be very effective, interaction dense, and feedback continuous;
- *Group methods:* when a limited number of people meet the person in charge of the communication for various types of meetings including method and result demonstrations, study tours and structured courses. The possibility of interaction decreases; some people participate more than others; feedback is limited—but on the positive side is the interaction amongst the participants themselves;
- *Mass methods or mass events:* when a large number of people is reached and exposed to some new concept. The possibility of interaction is much less than in the smaller group events; this category includes conferences, fairs, field days, open days, competitions, information trains, information booths, etc.

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[5] Media is the plural form of the Latin word medium, or "mean"; communication media are all the physical means used to communicate.

[6] In other textbooks or manuals, the word *channel* is often used as a synonym for method or media, but as mentioned in Chapter 2, this is a mistake. Another different concept is that of *format*, i.e. the specific shape of the same medium. For example, calendars can be produced in several different formats: one sheet with all months, or 12 sheets, with one month per sheet. A radio program can have different formats: 5', 10', 30', and can have different internal time use, etc.

Next, there is the communication means or media, from simple to complex, which amplify or replace interpersonal communication.

This category includes all the means that help to make oral communication more effective, also known as *teaching aids*, like a blackboard, slide projector, overhead projector, computer/ projector combination, posters, scale models, etc.

Print media, based on both written words and images, in most cases are used as a replacement for interpersonal communication. Information in the form of leaflets, booklets, handbooks, magazines, calendars, press releases, articles in the independent press, posters and comic books, can be stored for future use.

The Twentieth Century saw an increasingly important role for *electronic media* for mass and individual communication, including radio, TV, the programmed answering machine, and obviously, the internet in the last decade.

Last but not least, are the *traditional media*, like Chinese shadow presentations, puppet theater, story tellers, theater and *dramatizaçoes*, which are again being used to spread modern messages towards particular groups of stakeholders.

All methods and media have both advantages and disadvantages, which make their use feasible in some situations and impossible in others. They must be selected according to the type of stakeholders, their cultural level and communication behavior, the nature and complexity of the messages, and the scope of the communication. The value and efficacy of methods and media depend on the cost/benefit analysis of their use, comparing the human and financial costs with the quantity, nature and relevance of the results.

Printing leaflets and glossy handbooks to explain new growing techniques in an area where most residents are illiterate would be a waste of money, as would be the production of a radio program to reach a target audience of only 1,500 people. On the other hand, if the number of stakeholders is very high, a strategy based solely on individual visits would be impossible, and a more articulated approach, including mass media and group methods, would be the best option.

5.1 Elements of a strategy

There is no fixed recipe for the best mix of methods and media. They must be selected (see Chapter 6 for more details) after a careful analysis which should include the following aspects:

- number of stakeholders, in the different groups, to be involved
- type of stakeholders and their geographical distribution
- purpose, with respect to the adoption process

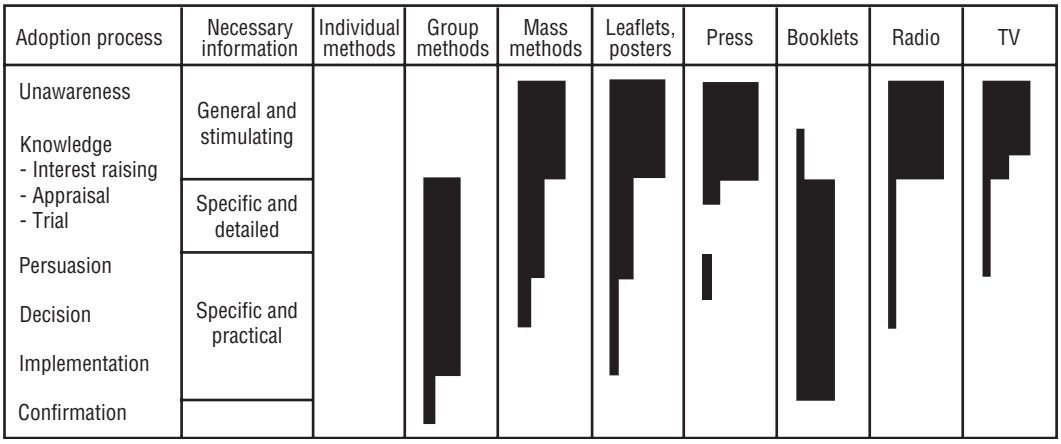
- difficulty of the content of the communication (that is generally linked to the complexity of the message and is in relation to the previous knowledge of the stakeholders);
- available media and communication behavior of the stakeholders
- available resources

Whenever the content of the communication is considered relatively simple[7] (Figure 5.1), the number of people to be reached is very high, or the goal is only at the beginning of the adoption process, the use of mass media, such as radio, TV, posters, leaflets, etc. should have a high chance of success. With a relatively high production cost, but an extremely low cost per contact, most people are likely to be exposed to the message and consequently become aware of it.

Whenever the content of the communication is relatively difficult (Figure 5.2), i.e. if there is a complex problem to analyze, if the desired goal is to achieve a change of behavior, or if the stakeholders have limited access to radio and TV, time-consuming and labor intensive methods, such as group meetings, or individual demonstrations, are required.

Some methods and media have been analyzed according to the purpose of communication, proximity to farmers in developing countries, level of abstrac-

Figure 5.1: Suggested use of methods and media for the diffusion of a simple change.



[7] The concept of "simplicity" is relative, because something simple for a given person could be difficult for somebody else. Literacy, education, previous experiences, and individual attitudes play a role in determining what is "simple" and what is "difficult" to communicate. Participatory planning, focus groups, pre-testing of media, continuous monitoring and evaluation are all methods which allow a better focus on this very important aspect and help to shape communication activities in the most effective way.

Figure 5.2: Suggested use of methods and media for the diffusion of a simple change.

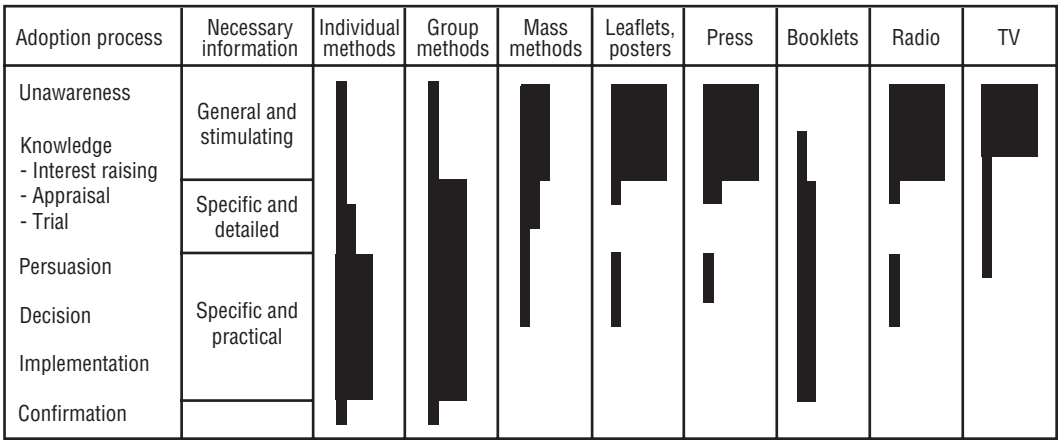


Table 5.1: Functions, asvantages and disadvemtages of some methods and media

Aspect considered	Individual contact	Demonstrations	Group Meetings	Study tour	Village meetings	Mass media	Folk media
Stimulate awareness about local problems	XX	XX	XX		XX	XX	XXX
Imform about existence of feasible change	XX	XX		X	XXX	XX	
Transfer knowledge	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX	XX
Modify behavior	XX	XX	XXX	XXX	XX	XX	XX
Sharing knowledge with other persons	X	XX	XXX	XXX	XX		X
Activate learning process	X	XX	XX	XX	XX		
Proximity to stakeholders' problems	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XXX	XX	XXX
Level of abstraction			X	X	XXX		
Cost per contact	XXX	XX	XX	XXX	X		XX

tion, and cost per contacted person (Table 5.1). Mass media have a cost per contacted person that is almost negligible, but the level of abstraction is generally excessive. Consequently, such media should only be used to raise awareness and to inform about simple concepts. On the other hand, individual advice is very close to the stakeholders' problems, is useful for understanding the specific problems of the place, and can be used to transfer or to elaborate complex changes, but is very costly. Group methods fall in between these two extremes and favor fruitful exchange among participants.

5.2 Methods, media and the adoption process

As a preliminary conclusion, whenever the primary goal of a communication action is simply to raise awareness about a situation, problem or likely solu-

tion, or to spread simple information, cost-effective communication means should be selected: i.e. radio and TV, posters, easy-to-read leaflets, articles in the press, calendars, billboards, fairs and exhibitions, gadgets, field days, village meetings for hundreds of people or conferences.

If the goal is more ambitious, requiring audiences to grasp a complex concept (for example why some animal species are on the brink of extinction) and identify a solution or make a decision, either individual or collective, a more participatory approach is needed, with fewer participants. Meetings should be held with select groups of people. Study tours should be organized to gain knowledge and share experiences. In many developing countries, where rural people live in remote locations, and community driven development methods are most commonly used, meetings are typically held at the village level, in cooperation with local leaders, often enhanced with visual aids and sometimes with distribution of materials or gadgets.

If the purpose of the communication is to devise a complex solution to a perceived problem or to teach a special skill, group methods are required. These can be meetings, demonstrations, vocational training courses, or participatory experimental design. In some cases, even individual training will be required.

Changing attitudes is the most ambitious goal, because attitudes develop as a result of individual and group experiences. Farmers may be adverse to risk because they have experienced the negative results of inappropriate innovations, or because they have heard stories about what happened to others. Indigenous people may be suspicious about development programs because of past experiences of being exploited by outsiders. Some people do not cooperate in land registration programs because they fear that the only consequence will be taxation. Modifying these attitudes is much more complex and challenging than informing farmers about a new variety of beans or teaching them how to breed an iguana.

A real change of attitude comes after a long, slow process, when new successful experiences have convinced them, and past experiences have been overcome. It is important to understand the origin of such attitudes in order to find ways to overcome them. In fact, past negative memories cannot be entirely cancelled, and if something negative happens, it is likely that the new proposal will be classified as “one more lie”, and the older attitude will again prevail.

Within the same project, different groups of stakeholders usually find themselves at different stages and express different needs. The communication for development strategy recognizes such heterogeneity and implements different methods and media, tailored to each group.

5.3 Local leadership and communication

Within every social group, be it an urban neighborhood or a village community, there are individuals who influence the opinions and often the behavior

of the others. Some are defined as “formal leaders”, such as the mayor, political representatives, the local clergy, teachers, doctors, a local agricultural advisor or a veterinarian, the traditional authorities and the local medicine man. These can be easily identified. Then there are the “informal leaders”, who do not hold any official position, but are recognized as authoritative and wise by the majority of their social group whenever a decision must be made in their field of authority. An informal leader may be the best hunter, or the best farmer, or the best cook.

Even within an apparently homogeneous group, there are leaders. In a group of mayors, surely there is the one or the few who are considered the wisest, or the ones with the best knowledge about a given problem. Formal and informal leaders are relevant stakeholders in any rural development project, and their cooperation is very important. They should be involved from the beginning of the project formulation, so as to get their in-depth knowledge about the local situation and some suggestions about likely or desired changes. The methods used to insure their involvement depend greatly on their number, location and time availability. Group meetings, individual meetings and study tours could be arranged. Information should be prepared and distributed in the language used by the different groups of leaders. Meetings with leaders should be organized by area (all the leaders of the same zone, from the mayor to the veterinarian), or by sector (all the people involved in agriculture), or by professional category (mayors, veterinarians, hunters, traders, etc.)

Furthermore, in any environment, different forms of social capital exist—including groups and associations, unions and cooperatives—which constitute important social networks that strengthen the society and often offset its lack of financial capital.

The cooperation of all these people is most important in the project implementation; some are essential for the explanation of regulations or national legislation; others facilitate the organization of events, such as fairs and conferences. Local leaders must be contacted before organizing any event at the village level and they must be given due respect during the meetings with the population. Informal leaders in agriculture and animal husbandry can cooperate in the dissemination of innovations and can host experimental activities. Their cooperation allows the change agents to gain the confidence of the majority of the farmers. The same can be said of activities for women; if the woman who is recognized as the wisest in the village cooperates with the project, it is very likely that most of the other women will also participate.

It is important not to concentrate solely on the leaders, because of the risk that they will not transmit the information or training received to everyone in their community. Furthermore, some leaders could try to use the support provided by the project to increase their own power or increase their wealth. In addition, some leaders are not representative of their society, and some may even try to misuse the resources of the project.

It is important to keep in mind that local leaders are not always willing to cooperate with a project. While in some cases they sincerely disagree with the project goals or strategies, in others they fear that their role could diminish once the project achieves its results. Opposition and resistance can be publicly manifested or exercised more subtly, with little or with false cooperation. In both cases, it is important to hold discussions in order to understand why they disagree and attempt to find a solution that will benefit all the parties.

5.4 Individual methods

Individual methods are used when the person[8] in charge of the communication meets face-to-face with one stakeholder. There are several sub-categories: meetings at the stakeholder's office, house or farm; at the communicator's office; at another place, such as a restaurant or bar, to talk in a pleasant setting or a casual meeting in some other place. A further distinction is made between planned and unplanned meetings.[9]

These methods allow only a limited number of people to interact, and their use should be confined to important individuals or issues. Regarding the communication process (see Chapter 3), this form of interpersonal communication can be very effective, because it allows rapid feedback, continuous interaction, and the elaboration of person-specific or location-specific suggestions. Individual methods can allow a particular problem to be fully understood increasing the likelihood of agreement.

It may be necessary to have individual meetings with high-level government officers, mayors, and formal and informal leaders at the village level to analyze important issues, establish a plan of action, and anticipate possible points of disagreement. In some cases, considering what is known about the adoption and diffusion processes (see Chapter 4), the proposed action may require further analyses of the situation at the farm or household level, and consequently field level change agents may spend a good portion of their time in individual meetings, especially with individuals who are believed to belong to the category of early adopters.

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[8] This person is by definition "the communicator". He or she could be an extension agent, or the director of the local agency implementing the project. In some cases the communicator has received formal training on how to make effective talks, but in most cases he or she has no special communication training and this reduces the probabilities of good communication.

[9] In some manuals, individual telephone calls, letters or e-mails are also considered individual communication and are listed as possible contact methods usable by the communicator for exchanging messages with some other people. For the purposes of this document, they are simply mentioned.

These methods are labor-intensive and time-consuming.[10] They allow interaction with only a small percentage of the stakeholders, and their use should be limited to the most important cases.

5.5 Group methods

Group methods are used most often in rural areas in both developed and developing countries. They have been proven extremely effective for elaborating and implementing Community Driven Development projects and for the diffusion of innovations in all sectors.

By definition, a group consists of 15 to 20 people. When there are more participants, communication problems arise; some people do not participate fully, and the feedback from others is lost. When there are more than 20 people, we enter into the category of mass methods (see next paragraph). Group methods are quite numerous, and there are several variations of the same method. A full review is almost impossible, but the following is a fairly complete list.

Meetings are the most frequently used interpersonal communication methods. They have been used in all environments since the beginning of human societies. They are defined as an active method during which all participants have the opportunity to intervene, raise questions, express their opinions, interact with the conveners and other participants, and potentially receive answers to their questions. *Staff meetings* are a fundamental working tool within all companies and agencies. Meetings are a powerful communication method, for the following reasons:

- **Possibility to face the problems of a group**, in the same span of time, with rapid feedback from all participants;
- **Synergic effect of simultaneous participation**, that allows more detailed analysis, sometimes the definition of better solutions, and rapid group decision making;
- **Involvement of people who, individually, would not participate**, or would refuse to change;
- **Reduction of the cost per contact**, because a relatively high number of stakeholders can be involved in the communication.

[10] Time consumption includes the time spent by the communicator to reach the stakeholder's office or farm. Especially in rural areas, where distances are great, roads are in bad shape and development agents are sometimes obliged to walk, ride a bike or use a mule, individual meetings should really be the least-used contact method. The same obviously applies to stakeholders' time, which is also precious; they should never be obliged or invited to a meeting that is not worth the effort spent.

Meetings can take place anywhere: indoors or outdoors, at an office or in a rural school, in a hotel room rented for the occasion or in the community center of the village. The most important aspect is that everyone should feel comfortable and be able to see and hear what the other people say or write.

An important distinction is made between an *isolated meeting*, which happens only once, for a specific objective, and a *series of meetings*, with the same people, each one planned with partial objectives in order to achieve a final, often very complex, decision.

Not all meetings have the same goal, and consequently they should be organized and managed differently; a simple classification could be the following:

- *To give information to participants:* this is typical of the so-called top-down approach, when one person (the sender) gives a message to a group of addressees: it could be an *extension meeting* organized to inform the farmers about new farming techniques, or a *press conference* organized to inform a group of journalists about a recent or future program of the agency;
- *To receive information from participants:* these events are organized to collect first-hand information from a group of people: the women of a village, the experts of a given sector, or the representative of the local unions. What these people have in common is that the organizer of the meeting thinks that they are carriers of meaningful messages that could help him/her to know what is happening;
- *To analyze a given situation and sometimes to elaborate solutions: this category includes study meetings or problem-solving meetings*[11], when people convene to reflect together about what is happening in their area or sector. Each one has partial knowledge of the situation and the group can achieve more than the sum of its parts. All the participants are there with their limited experience and knowledge that is to be shared with the other people and with the organizers of the meeting. The final result may be a better understanding of what is going on and sometimes (if this is the purpose), a proposal for change worked out together. This type of meeting empowers the participants because it makes them active

[11] This type of meeting is fundamental during project identification and project formulation, because it is when experts convene to consider what is happening and share their knowledge and expectations. It is common in community demand-driven projects, where groups of villagers sit together to talk about their own situation and attempt to find paths for development. It is increasingly important in sustainable agriculture or forestry projects, in biodiversity projects, and in all cases when the knowledge of the local residents is considered at least as important and worth of attention as the knowledge of the development agents

analyzers of their own situation and active contributors to the proposed solutions.

- *To achieve a decision*: as in a staff meeting, an expert meeting, or a village-development committee meeting; participants are empowered to make a decision that will affect all or most of them. A decision for changing or not changing, drawing up a list of priorities, the level of participation and decisions about cost sharing, are not imposed by the organizer of the meeting. He/she only acts as the facilitator.
- *To solve a conflict between two or more people*: sometimes the primary purpose of a mzeeting is to resolve a dispute that may have arisen within a social group or between two or more social groups. This could be, for example, conflicts over water or land access. In this case, the role of the organizer is to manage the debate and guarantee that the rules are respected, according to local traditional norms or existing legislation.

Several techniques can be found in communication and didactic methodology handbooks including *informal meetings* without a prefixed program, *seminars, workshops, clinics, buzz sessions, simulation games, role playing, case studies, study groups, study circles* and *interest groups.*[12] These are all variations of the group meeting method and each one has its particular application in a specific situation. In development communication, active methods are preferred, and consequently all these methods can be used.

Study tours are another powerful method for showing a group of people the results of innovations which have already been adopted in another similar area. This is an expensive method that must be used wisely, because travel, board and lodging costs can be relatively high.[13]

[12] Many of these approaches have been practiced in various countries and regions (France, Italy and in Northern Europe) since the mid-1960s, and they can be considered the ancestors of the participatory approach that has been theorized more recently.

[13] For example, a study tour abroad could be organized for selected decision-makers in order to show them the results of new legislation that has already been implemented in a bordering country. During the study tour, the participants can interact with local policy makers, with officials of corresponding Ministries, with representatives of the civil society and gain direct knowledge of the benefits that their own country could obtain with new legislation. At the grass root level, study tours for groups of small farmers allow them to speak with other small farmers, who have already successfully implemented some technical or organizational innovations. Another interesting option is a study tour to an important fair (see below), where participants can get information from the exhibitors or attend short conferences. Study tours could also be organized for journalists and representatives of the civil society, guiding them to visit the achievements of the project, so as to have a positive relationship with the media and with national organizations. In all cases, supporting documentation should be prepared before the visits, to be distributed to the participants for their own use once the visit is over.

Another powerful group method is a demonstration, which can be divided into two categories: demonstration of a method and demonstration of results. They are both group meetings that allow participants to learn and practice a given skill under the supervision of a trainer.[14]

A structured sequence of meetings, demonstrations and study tours, with the same participants, takes the name of a vocational training course. This is another frequently used method that is used to cover a complex, articulated topic.[15]

Finally, we should remember, as a combination of one method and one medium, the **listeners club** or the **viewers group**, which is a group of people who meet regularly in the same place to follow together an educational radio or TV program. After the program, a discussion follows that is generally facilitated by the local development agent, who should have been informed about the content of the transmission beforehand and supplied with printed material about what has been heard and seen.

5.6 Mass events

This category includes several types of events, which are characterized by the use of direct communication in the presence of a high number of people. Here we include fairs, conferences, open days and field days, organized and managed to attract hundreds or thousands of people. Sometimes these events are organized within the communication program of the project, and sometimes they are organized by a separate entity, with the project or the agencies which are implementing the project simply participating in the event.

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[14] Demonstrations have always been widely used in agricultural extension and home economics, all over the world and their positive impact has been studied and quantified on several occasions. The two types of demonstrations can be very close in time to each other, or very distant, according to the type of innovation under analysis. In home economics, for example, a cooking demonstration (how to cook) can be followed after a few moments by testing of food = the result demonstration, with a fast appreciation of the results of the new procedure. In agriculture, by contrast, the demonstration of a new pruning technique generates the results only after a few months, once the fruit is harvested and farmers can compare results. In resource conservation, techniques used to reduce or eliminate erosion, give comparable results only after years and the same happens with re-forestation projects, especially in arid areas where growth is extremely slow. In these latter cases, study tours to nearby areas are suggested, where such results are already visible.

[15] There are several formats for training courses, each one with its advantages and disadvantages. The most frequent formats are a) intensive residential, b) extensive residential, c) non-residential. Many other organizational and didactic aspects are extremely interesting and should be properly considered when planning such activities, because they are strictly inter-related. These aspects include the type of participants, the content, the length, the scheduling and timing, the teaching methodology, the type of trainers and speakers and the budget.

In most cases, it is necessary to set up an **organizing committee** with representatives from all the concerned parties. The committee will work out the program and the budget, to be paid by public and/or private sponsors or with fees paid by the exhibitors. Local authorities should obviously be involved, and they must be invited to the event. Mass events are also a great public relations opportunity and should be communicated with all possible media in the weeks and days before the events. Journalists should be involved well in advance and should be guided through the event, properly briefed, and supplied with press releases about the various aspects.

Box 5.1: National conference as a promotional tool—an example from Panama

The Rural Poverty and Natural Resources Project began its activities in 1998, and after two years, the project management felt strongly that it was time to share experiences and achievements. Two evaluation studies had been carried out by independent consultants on environmental and economic aspects of micro-projects and social capital formation, and their results were quite interesting.

For this purpose, the project organized a one-day event in Panama City in June 2001, entitled "Local Self-Management for Rural Progress". The Minister of Agriculture was invited to chair the meeting, which was attended by over 150 people, most of them from national and local administrations, NGOs and foreign embassies. Representatives from 13 of the 75 Committees for Sustainable Development, established within the project, also attended. Following the Minister, speeches were given by the coordinator of the implementation unit, the task team leader and two consultants. This was followed by question and answer time that was very interesting and lively, with participants directing their questions to speakers and other participants alike. During the coffee and lunch breaks, it was possible to see people from different agencies interacting with the CSD representatives or with field agents, asking what was happening in their villages. The press coverage in the national newspapers was extremely good and several radio and TV interviews took place, giving the project, and its methodology of empowering local communities, a visibility that it had never previously enjoyed.

Conclusions (Lessons learned):
A timely conference with an interesting content, organized with the partner agencies, can achieve several objectives: It can promote the methodology of the project, publicize its achievements and allow participation.

During an "open day", one agency opens its doors to its clients, users and the general public. It is a typical public relations activity that allows the value and quality of the agency to be observed firsthand. Research centers, universities, or even a Ministry in town, may decide to let the people enter, to see how it works. During the open day, all employees are in service to show the visitors what they do. Posters, handouts and leaflets should be prepared for distribution. Demonstrations of the activities performed by the agency should be offered, with a programmed schedule. Throughout the day there can be selected short conferences or the projection of videos that inform the visitors about the functions of the agency.

A Field day is a combination of several demonstrations on the same day, in the same place. As a mass event, it requires even more careful organization than that described above. In the middle of the countryside, hundreds or thousands of people must be provided with everything including food and beverages, toilets, shelters against sunshine or rain, parking lots, paths to go from one demonstration area to another, security and safety, mobile health clinic, etc.

Other common events are local, regional or national **Fair**s, ranging from the weekly farmers market at the village level, which last a few hours, to the annual week-long national fair, taking place in a big town. Fairs are a powerful communication event and can also be a marketing outlet for the produce harvested by the farmers or objects made by the artisans involved in the project. Fairs are an educational event for consumers and for the general public, since they help raise awareness. They are also a public relations event for the agency or the agencies involved in the project, because they can promote themselves and their messages to a large number of people, of all ages and social strata. Fairs are an information event for the producers, who can meet other farmers, the suppliers of modern inputs, and the representatives of buyer and agricultural services.

Conferences are useful for debating important issues with certain categories of stakeholders. The majority of people do not typically like them, unless the theme is very interesting, the speakers are very good and the language simple[16]. Still, in many cases it is quite common that conferences are organized to analyze technical, political and organizational aspects, or to debate the achievements of the project itself. Conferences may have different formats, ranging from a short local event lasting half a day, with a few invited speakers, to an

[16] Extension lectures have been organized since the early days of popular education: in 1866 the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford (England) began to organize mass meetings, with the aim of bringing university knowledge to the common people. Participants mostly belonged to the upper and middle classes, while the working class remained largely outside of this outreach effort.

international conference lasting a full week, with several simultaneous sessions, hundreds of speakers and thousands of participants. For large events, the organization is normally contracted out to specialized agencies.

In the case of smaller events, organized by the agencies involved in the project, the usual attention must be paid to involving local leaders and associations, finding a proper location, inviting the right people, setting up the communication aids, arranging the rooms so as to facilitate participation, catering, etc. Furthermore, all conferences are a good opportunity for public relations, so local or national media coverage should be ensured.

Competitions are another common method for stimulating the participation of some categories of stakeholders, from rural women to youth groups, from field personnel to scientists. Committees should be set up, and the rules should be communicated well in advance through the most appropriate methods, so as to stimulate the largest possible participation. The announcement of the winners could take place during another large event, such as a fair or a conference, in order to maximize the pride and self-esteem of the winners.

A simple and relatively inexpensive way of reaching hundreds or thousands of people is by an **information booth** at fairs, markets or conferences. The booth can be organized by the agency or by the project and adorned with attractive pictures, maps and decorations. It should be staffed with personnel who give information to interested people, distribute leaflets and other educational or promotional material (gadgets, booklets, calendars, stickers, etc.). Videos are used to attract the attention of the people passing by, and interactive programs are often available on computers.

An **information train** is a tool for informing the general public about important subjects. This model has been used widely, although not often in developing countries. An information train, composed of several coaches, is a sort of mobile exhibition, with each coach containing posters, photographs, educational materials, products, etc. In each coach, there are trained personnel who provide visitors with detailed information. The train moves from town to town, following a well-defined schedule, and at each stop, events are organized with local authorities, schools, universities, NGOs, etc. Press conferences at each stop increase the dissemination of information about the train and its purpose.

Organizing an information train is a major challenge, in terms of personnel and financial resources, but it can be well worth the effort. The same, although on a much smaller scale, applies to an information coach, that is equipped as a small mobile exhibition. If required, a tent or a light wooden structure can be set up in proximity to the coach, to expand the available area.

5.7 Printed media

Long before the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg, written materials were favored for the circulation of ideas and culture, but the quantity of the

printed materials was extremely limited. The increase in literacy is expanding the potential of the printed media, and the use of computers (desktop publishing) is lowering the production costs of most media. Printed media can either reinforce oral interpersonal communication or replace it, as is often suggested. In the biggest agencies, there are printing units with hardware for producing all or most of the materials, whereas smaller agencies contract out this type of work.

This category includes several types of products, which correspond to different contents, purposes and addressees. The following is a tentative list:

- Press releases for the local and national press, radio and TV stations;
- Paid articles or inserts, in the national or local press;
- Standard letter for a high number of addressees;
- Printed postcard with one short, clear message;
- Leaflets, of various sizes, with a short message and a lot of space for pictures;
- Newsletter, generally not longer than four pages, devoted to a specific theme, containing briefs, short articles and pictures, published regularly.
- Bulletin or journal, of various sizes, normally between 16 and 32 pages, more or less specialized on a given subject, with articles, news, comments, pictures, etc.;
- Handbooks of various types, with soft or hard cover, with a detailed description of a specific subject, with tables, pictures, graphs, references, etc.

The materials listed above have different production costs and impacts, and can be used for different categories of stakeholders at various times of the adoption and diffusion process (see Chapter 4). A press release for radio or local newspapers has a very low production cost because it can be written quickly and sent by fax or e-mail, but it contains only limited information and (if retransmitted) may only serve to spread a simple message: e.g. that there will be a fair, or that a new bridge has been inaugurated, or that land registration procedures will begin in a week. On the other hand, it may reach thousands of people and may (partially) influence the attitude and behavior of many of them.

In contrast, handbooks require a long time and painstaking work to be written, corrected, tested, edited, printed and distributed. Each copy has a relatively high cost, and consequently only a few hundreds are printed. They are designed for a few users, those with a better education, and for the field level personnel, who can then spread the message through direct personal communication.

There are at least six barriers which may limit the impact of media, both printed and electronic:

- *Selective publication*: a lot of information is simply not published, because it is considered irrelevant by the director or editor, or because there is other more important news, or because the editors or owners of the media have a poor relationship with the sender of the news or with their agency;
- *Selective attention*: people do not like to expose themselves to something they think might disturb their status quo, or beliefs or opinions and consequently either they do not buy the newspaper, do not grab the leaflets, or simply skip the news or throw away the leaflets;
- *Selective perception*: people decode and interpret the message through their own filter, so as to avoid putting their own situation out of balance;
- *Selective memorization*: people tend to memorize only interesting and non-disturbing subjects;
- *Selective discussion*: people tend only to talk, with friends or advisors, about subjects they like or that they suppose other people like to talk about;
- *Selective acceptance*: people rationally accept and begin to put into action only a very limited part of the message.

Since the different groups of stakeholders have different communication behavior (see Chapter 6), the above-listed printed media should be used wisely, implementing the communication strategy in a way that provides the correct, timely information to each category.

5.8 Graphic printed media

What was said in the previous paragraph also holds true for printed media that base most of their effectiveness on images: posters, calendars, flip charts, comic books, billboards, etc.

Posters are used widely in all countries[17] for the general purpose of improving oral communication or for transmitting simple messages: i.e. the best practices, what is forbidden, how a piece of machinery works, a list of endangered species, the best flowers of the region, or to inform people about a forthcoming event, such as a fair or conference. They are distributed to selected categories of stakeholders, to decorate offices, classrooms, community centers, etc.

[17] It has been erroneously believed that illiterate people can be easily reached with graphic messages. This opinion has been proven wrong because illiterate people, who are used to learning by experience, also have enormous problems in decoding two-dimensional drawings and pictures. Consequently, pre-testing is absolutely necessary before the mass production of any type of poster.

A large version of the poster is a **billboard**,[18] put up in town or in the countryside, to inform the people passing by about a given subject: a recently completed public work, an ongoing experimental field, the boundaries of a natural park.

Flip charts are a series of posters bound together, that are normally used as a visual aid to support and improve interpersonal communication, whenever the use of more sophisticated teaching aids, such as an overhead projector, slides or videos is not possible.

Calendars are a familiar tool, useful for transmitting simple messages with short texts and colorful images. Calendars with one page per month can be used to remind the users of bureaucratic deadlines, or to give technical suggestions and timely health messages.

Comic books have been used quite widely in communication programs because they attract the attention of younger generations and adults alike. In this case, the major challenges are to invent a character, write the script, and have a skilled artist produce the books.

5.9 Electronic media

Since their invention, radio and television[19] have been perceived as powerful means for educating people and for spreading political propaganda. Commercial radio and television stations support themselves with paid advertisements, and consequently they are increasingly used to transmit publicity. In the last few years, due to the decreasing costs of technologies, community radio and TV stations are sprouting up everywhere, and their educational and empowering role is quite evident.

Both radio and TV can be used to transmit simple information (weather forecasts, commodity prices, the timing and content of a forthcoming conference) or to educate people on more complicated matters (a literacy campaign, cooking techniques, or agricultural techniques). They can be used to change attitudes and behavior, about nature conservation, health, family planning and so on. There are no conceptual limits, and some programs have shown that even university-level education can be taught through a combination of TV

[18] Billboards are useful mass communication tools which are quite common all over the world. Consequently a budget should be allocated for their production and positioning, keeping in mind that they have a technical life span. When this time is expired, they should be removed. A faded or rotten billboard transmits the message that the agency responsible for them is not effective.

[19] One of the most famous radio programs for rural dwellers was “The Archers”, a soap opera comedy used to teach agricultural techniques, home economics, health and general knowledge. It was produced by the British BBC and lasted for over 40 years.

programs, printed handbooks and individual tutorship. On the other hand, there are some limitations that should be mentioned:

- The **audience cannot interrupt** nor can it repeat what it has seen or heard, (unless the program is recorded by the listener or viewer on tape or video-tape) and consequently if a logical sequence is lost, there is the risk that the next steps will be misunderstood;
- There is **no possibility for rapid feedback**. In some cases, some programs allow the listener or viewer to call by telephone or to send messages via e-mail, but these modalities are very rare in developing countries;
- **Radio listeners only use one sense** for understanding the message and therefore they must visualize what is being described, whereas this is not required with television;
- In many countries, **geographic coverage is not yet complete**, or there are areas where the signals that arrive are very weak;
- Wherever **several languages and dialects are spoken**, most messages are sent encoded in the official or in the most important languages, cutting off the linguistic minorities.

Fortunately, as with the printed media production, radio and TV broadcasting are becoming increasingly inexpensive, opening the door to an enormous expansion in the number of national and local stations, which are extremely useful for reaching people dispersed in vast rural areas.

The project or technical agency involved in the project rarely undertakes the production of radio or TV programs. They usually cooperate with national or local stations within the framework of legal and often paid agreements. Whenever educational programs are considered necessary to achieve the best results of the project, it is important to remember at least some of the potential challenges:

- **Geographical coverage** is the area covered by each station. In several countries, due to technical or geographical problems, national coverage is not possible and only through the involvement of many local stations it is possible to reach the entire national population;
- **Scheduling** refers to the time of the year the program or the ads are going to be aired. In land registration programs, for example, there can be annual programming, with a concentration during the weeks before and during the field operations;
- **Timing** refers to the time of the day the program or the spot should be aired; again, this must be planned after gaining information about the habits of the audiences. Most programs for farmers, for example, are transmitted very early in the morning, but programs for other types of stakeholders should be aired at other times of the day. This point has important

consequences for the budget, because some times of the day (peak times) are very expensive;

- **Frequency and length** are strictly interrelated and refer to how many times a week or month the program is planned and consequently the length of the program. Most information and educational programs on agriculture or the environment last from 15 to 30 minutes and have very diverse frequencies. In some countries, rural radio programs are transmitted every day, while in other countries TV programs about agriculture, environment and nutrition are presented only once a week;
- **Format and content**: programs for rural people and/or about rural space can have different formats, from a purely informational program about weather forecasts, prices and events, to the radio or TV comedy. In between, there are broadcasts of all types, where agricultural information is combined with music, talk shows, interviews, etc. A typical list of likely contents could include: a) the news, b) a political commentary, c) a technical subject, d) a survey or inquiry, e) an interview, f) a panel or round table, g) a comedy, h) questions and answers, i) music, documentaries, ballets, etc., according with to length of the program and the budget available.

Information spots are another way of reaching a large number of individuals with very simple messages. Clearly, this format can only draw the attention of the people or encourage them to implement some simple behavior, like contacting the local development agent. These can be used in rural development projects to increase awareness about a given problem (the scarcity of water, the risk of forest fires, a new legislation for promoting rural enterprises, land registration activities, etc.) and can precede or accompany the more labor-intensive activities, such as group contacts or individual meetings.

Another useful and time-saving medium, at least where telephone networks are widespread, is the **programmed telephone**, where the caller can listen to pre-recorded messages of different types and also leave a message for the development agents. Pre-recorded messages can be of any kind, but since they should be very short, a maximum of 2 or 3 minutes, the most common ones are suggestions about pest and weed control, weather forecasts, and forthcoming meetings. Obviously, the messages should be updated regularly.

The internet is now the most powerful instrument, not only for conveying or sharing information, but also for creating new knowledge. Chat rooms and e-conferences allow professionals living all over the world to pool their experiences and find solutions to problems. Theoretically, there are no limits to its use, even at the grass-roots level and in the most remote places. With solar energy and cellular telephones linked through satellite systems, communities which were unreachable a decade ago are now linked to the entire world. People living in these areas can now call friends and relatives, sell their products, receive orders, ask for suggestions and provide solutions. With the internet,

farmers and field agents can connect to research centers, and rural people can find solutions to many of their problems.

Yet other than a limited number of exciting success stories, the widespread utilization of the internet in most rural areas is still years away, and local problems can rarely be solved without more direct contact in the field. Although an increasing number of ministries, agencies, NGOs, private firms and projects have web sites, their field-level utilization remains limited.

Box 5.2: Internet and local knowledge — the AIS experience in Nicaragua

Since 2001, the Government of Nicaragua has been implementing a long-term investment in an agricultural technology program aimed at integrating public and private research, extension, education and training in an integrated agricultural knowledge system. The program is supported by various donors, including the World Bank through the Agricultural Technology Project. Within this complex program, which has several communication components, an internet-based agricultural information system (AIS or SIA in Spanish) is being piloted to bring together several sources of information available nationally and internationally. The system is intended to provide timely information on markets, agro-meteorology, agricultural services, business opportunities and best practices to: i) agricultural researchers, technical staff, subject matter specialists and trainers at all levels; ii) farmers, directly or through local advisors, to enhance their decision-making ability; and iii) policy decision-makers.

The AIS component has created a portal and a website with a wealth of information about the different partners and with links to other websites, such as those of the Ministry of Agriculture and of the National Institute for Research in Agriculture and Forestry.

Furthermore, it has established several study groups across the country, connecting field experts with various backgrounds (farmers, farm managers, extension agents, private advisors, scientists), who meet regularly to exchange experiences and analyze local problems. These groups have also produced over 20 technical booklets with practical guidelines about a variety of subjects. These materials have been published and are available on the website.

This is an interesting example of local knowledge generation and information technology—linking traditional approaches with the powerful instrument of the internet.

Another aspect of the internet that could be useful for projects is **facilitating internal communication** within each agency and between all the agencies involved (see Chapter 7) with a specific intranet, and for **transparency purposes**, allowing external users to access a limited quantity of information. Using the internet for **sending press releases and newsletters**, etc. is another option that increases the speed and reduces the costs of keeping a steady communication with some categories of stakeholders: journalists, formal leaders, NGOs, and other public entities.

Some factors still hamper the generalized use of the internet: cost of the hardware, low efficiency of telephone lines, high tariffs, unskilled personnel, and out-dated information due to the difficulty of sustainability. On the other hand, the pressure to increase the use of this medium is enormous, and significant funds are available for its expansion. There is a real need to link schools, health centers, local offices of the different ministries, rural municipalities and training centers. It is not only a technical problem, but a matter of decentralization and democratization, of efficiency and accountability. Consequently, it is likely that in a few years its use will increase exponentially, at least for connecting the field level personnel with their headquarters and for getting or sending simple or complicated messages.

5.10 Traditional methods and media

In recent years, more attention has been given to the use of traditional media and methods to involve people at various levels of the adoption process, but also to ignite interest and increase awareness. These methods refer to the cultural roots of the people and have a friendly appeal that facilitates emotional participation and acceptance. Puppets, Chinese shadows, singing contests, story tellers, itinerant theaters, and dramas (or *dramatizaçoes*), are being used to disseminate different messages.

Within the framework of rural development projects, their use should be considered and favored, also with the aim of enhancing cultural traditions that are at risk of disappearing. Furthermore, taking into account that diversification of economic activities is related to tourism, and that national and foreign tourists appreciate traditional events, efforts to keep local cultural traditions alive will also contribute to this effort.

5.11 Logos and their use

Logos can be important and relevant marketing tools that give recognition to products, companies or public institutions. Civil society organizations use logos to reinforce their messages and for fund-raising. Many projects have adopted logos as symbols that represent the project. They are reproduced on stationary, and on various items from t-shirts to caps, pins and pens, bags and vehicles.

The first question is very basic: when should a project have its own logo? Is the logo always useful and needed? The answer is definitively, no. The logo could be misleading and transmit a distorted message. Projects aimed at increasing the visibility of one or several national or local institutions should not have a separate logo, but should rather maintain a low profile. In these cases, logos should be created and promoted for the institutions, which will remain in place after the end of the project. In other cases, logos could be created to launch a new park, or to establish a certification body that will verify the origins and quality of certain produce.

Many projects spend significant amounts of money to print logos on goods and gadgets. Many of these goods (t-shirts, shirts, caps, jackets, etc.) constitute the uniform of the personnel and are needed in order to be recognized by the people, while others are used for public relations, for children and adults alike. Likewise, positioning the logo on vehicles, banners or billboards allows easy recognition.

In fact, most people like to receive gifts, and consequently the distribution of small and relatively inexpensive gadgets, with the logo and sometimes with a short sentence, might help to strengthen the messages of the project, from nature conservancy to organic farming, from health issues to land registration. It is important to consider the logo issue within the context of the communication strategy, which should favor conscious and well-informed participation and not create confusion.

Case 5.1: Promoting environmentally sound development in Panama

The National Authority for the Environment—Autoridad Nacional del Ambiente (ANAM) was established in 1998 as an autonomous public authority which inherited all functions and purposes of the pre-existing *Instituto Nacional de Recursos Naturales Renovables* (INRANARE). Its domain of action has been greatly expanded, so as to include all aspects for the protection and improvement of the environment, in urban and rural areas, at industrial sites, as well as in agriculture and food processing. ANAM is responsible for the formulation of the national environmental policy and for its implementation. ANAM is very active and, at present, is implementing several projects with international cooperation. Two of them, the Rural Poverty and Natural Resources Project and the Meso American Biological Corridor, are supported by the World Bank.

In order to achieve the numerous goals, several categories of stakeholders had to be addressed: i) the general public, ii) the local and na-

tional policy-makers and formal leaders, iii) the younger generations of students, iv) poor people and others living in protected areas or in the buffer zones surrounding them. The Communication Unit of ANAM has implemented a strategy based on different contact methods and media. Since community-based rural development is considered the only way to achieve sustainable growth, the participation of the local people was emphasized.

Activities for the general public

The general public refers to urban dwellers and people living in large villages in areas untouched by the project or not classified as protected areas. It is important to generate a sense of commitment to and ownership of the common good represented by parks, wildlife, clean waters and large forests. This may be seen when members of the general public begin to visit the parks, or when they begin to encourage their expansion and improvement. For this group of addressees, communication has been mainly through the mass media, such as radio, TV and periodicals. The project has established a website which offers information about ANAM, legislation and ongoing projects.

Activities for national and local policy makers

Environmental protection requires modern and updated legislation for several purposes: to avoid institutional conflicts; to ensure appropriate funding for ongoing activities and future projects; and to define the borders of existing parks, which in many cases are not yet clear. Therefore ANAM needs to convince national and local policy makers that these natural resources must be protected, and that they can generate economic growth and be beneficial for the sustainable development of the project area and the country as a whole.

In this case, most of the communication has been through interpersonal meetings with high ranking people, and group meetings, during which leaflets and the ANAM quarterly magazines are distributed. These activities have led to new legislation and to the development of management plans for several protected areas. Feasibility studies for the development of eco-tourism in some areas have also been developed in cooperation with local administrative bodies.

Activities for pupils and teachers

For the educational system of Panama, several actions have been undertaken to create a more favorable attitude toward environmental issues. There was a drawing competition in 2000 which received entries from

hundreds of participants. The best drawings were selected and used to decorate the cover page of notebooks which were then distributed to children all over the country. Similarly, in 2003 a calendar with the best drawings was produced and distributed widely. Comic books which explain some environmental problems (pollution of streams, the challenge of defining a park, etc.) were produced for children ages 6–10, and were also distributed throughout the school system.

The most relevant activity has been the production and distribution of Methodological Guides for Environmental Education, which include the environment as a cross-thematic subject, to be covered by all other subject matters from geography to literature. The Ministry of Education has formally recognized these Guides and distributed them to teachers who are now participating in training meetings to learn how to use them.

Activities for poor and rural people

Most poor people in Panama have a limited formal education, and are often illiterate. In order to achieve desired results (change of attitudes or behavior), most communication must be done through direct interpersonal methods, with intensive and time-consuming individual and group meetings, attended by field staff and supervisors. Poor people, especially in some park areas, live far from roads and travel by foot or mule. Lack of all-season roads sometimes forces ANAM staff to walk or ride by mule or horse to such scattered communities and families. Meetings take place in a variety of settings: indoors in churches or community centers, wherever possible, or in the open air, under the shade of trees.

These activities have been particularly effective and have achieved very high impact in the Project area: recent research found that the consciousness about the Meso-American Biological Corridor was good in the Boca del Toro Province (82 percent), in Chiriqui (46 percent) or in the Kuna Yala (72 percent). Knowledge of the Project was particularly high among the indigenous people: 91 percent of the Naso-Teribe, 75 percent of the Ngobe-Bugle‘ and 71 percent of the Kunas

The approach to Community Driven Development introduced by the project has led to the establishment, at the village level, of 24 Committees of Sustainable Development. These CSD (*Comite de Desarrollo Sostenible,* or CDS in Spanish) have formulated development plans for the areas where they live and have selected 73 micro-projects, which have not only been executed, but co-financed by the communities. These micro-projects directly benefit almost 10,000 people and mostly deal with productive and income generating activities: agro-forestry, breeding of endangered species such as the iguana, tree nurseries, etc. The richness of the different

experiences (an evaluation is ongoing) will make it possible to develop models to be used in the future.

Conclusions (Lessons learned)

Within the framework of a natural resources and poverty alleviation project, communication activities must be devised to reach different types of stakeholders: urban dwellers, policy makers, technicians, poor, rural people, etc. Although the ultimate goal may be common, such as the sustainable eradication of poverty, distinct categories of stakeholder have unique needs and roles to play. Legislators draft legislation and ensure funding; urban dwellers must share this vision and believe that natural parks do belong to the entire nation; rural people should not feel the burden of prohibitions and should be given appropriate solutions to improve their standards of living; etc. Different categories of stakeholders also have different levels of education, communication behaviors and decision making processes, which must be determined before the communication strategy is designed.

The communication strategy must be articulated, with different methods and media, to facilitate the human development of the various stakeholders, and should be highly participatory in order to empower the rural people, i.e. those who actually live in the areas where the natural environment is at risk. Local leadership, all forms of social capital, and gender and indigenous aspects must be properly considered in order to have a community-driven approach, favoring the empowerment of the real drivers of sustainable development: the people themselves.

Monitoring and evaluation (*ex ante*, on-going and final) are equally important to offset possible errors or to orient resources towards newly arising problems. Continuous coordination with other projects, within the same agency or with other agencies is another factor of success, because such synergy allows scale economies and favors optimal use of scarce resources.

6

FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

Project identification and formulation are phases during which the project goals, components, subcomponents, budget, etc. are gradually shaped. Involvement of stakeholders is a necessary condition for successful planning, and consequently during these two phases, increasing attention must be given to the full participation of all likely stakeholders.

Since time and resources are always scarce, most analyses and planning remain at the macro level without going into extensive detail. In fact, because only a fraction of project proposals ever receive financing, and the process sometimes requires several years, there is no need to invest significant time or money in a detailed communication strategy during the early stage of project formulation. Furthermore, whenever rural development projects enter into implementation, what has been initially defined during the project identification phase needs to be further reviewed and probably modified to meet the changes that might have occurred in the time span between the formulation of the project and its funding and the beginning of activities.

Finally, some projects must be modified during their implementation due to significant developments, such as natural events (hurricanes or earthquakes); prolonged market crises; changes in governments and consequent new economic policies; or new donors coming in with additional funding.

A simple template known as the "five management decisions" has been developed for designing a communication strategy:

1. What types of stakeholders should be involved?
2. What is the desired change in behavior?
3. What messages would be appropriate?
4. What method or media of communication would be most effective?
5. How will the communication process be monitored and evaluated?

In the following paragraphs, several of these aspects will be analyzed, all of them inter-related.

6.1 Communication unit

A communication expert should be integrated into the project formulation team, in order to ensure that communication problems are approached professionally from the beginning. This person should have two main tasks: a) to ensure that communication activities are properly considered and budgeted, interacting with the other technical experts; b) to ensure that proper communication activities are implemented during the project formulation so as to ensure full and conscious participation of all likely stakeholders.

Once the project enters into implementation, the communication expert[20] should report directly to the coordinator of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU). In the partner agencies (ministries, agencies, associations, etc.), communication units are normally found at top administrative levels to ensure that communication support is guaranteed at all levels.

The number of staff and their skills can vary greatly[21] according to the dimensions of the project and the agencies, the budget available and the attitude regarding internal production or contracting out.

Furthermore, there are situations where the communication expert is alone and responsible for almost all tasks whereas, much more rarely, he/she is supervising a large staff which includes writers, editors, graphic artists, radio crew, etc. It is impossible to give a blanket recommendation, but the following tasks are normally envisioned:

- **Coordinate with the communicators of other agencies** involved in the project;
- **Analyze and understand the technical aspects of the project components**, because each project is unique, and developing a strategy for short term agricultural innovations is quite different from, for example, a rural resettlement program;
- **Cooperate with the Social Impact Assessment** studies, with specific reference to the communication assessment;

[20] At present, communication degrees are offered almost everywhere, at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Vocational courses and continuing education opportunities too, are not lacking. Unfortunately, in a period of mass communication and globalization, most courses are market-oriented and students are taught that people are not considered stakeholders, but clients, to be served properly so as to keep them satisfied, or to be targeted, to motivate them to buy a given product. People are audiences, listening passively, not protagonists. Communication for development requires all the skills of a professional communicator, and a sincere wish to involve people, to have them decide by themselves, and to shape their destiny together.

[21] In my limited experience, I have found from zero to 18 people within the communication unit of a Ministry. Unfortunately, their operational budget was almost nil.

- **Develop the communication strategy** through a dialectic process with the other units;
- **Develop the budget** and keep track of expenditure flow;
- **Implement the communication strategy** by doing some work "in house" and by outsourcing the rest;
- **Supervise other collaborators** of the communication unit (if this exists);
- **Cooperate with the administrative offices** for the development of terms of reference and consequent selection of external consultants or service providers;
- **Organize and manage communication training** courses for agency personnel to improve the communication skills of the entire structure;
- **Organize and manage the monitoring** of the communication activities, sometimes also outsourcing some specific communication evaluation to independent third parties;
- **Elaborate the annual report of the communication activities** in terms of inputs, output and some outcome indicators;
- **Analyze with the management and implement the suggestions** from the monitoring and participatory evaluation.

6.2 Planning by agencies

Most rural development projects are designed and implemented by several agencies. Due to the various concepts of rural development and to complex approaches to its achievement, different ministries and authorities may be involved. In some cases, new authorities are established or the old ones go through profound modifications, with decentralization and privatization being rather normal features.

During project formulation, at least one communicator per agency should be designated as a member of the communication team, in charge of the participatory elaboration of the draft of a communication strategy.

Once the project enters into implementation, the PIU should never ignore or bypass the existing agencies, which it has been committed to improving and strengthening. The person in charge of communications within the PIU (if he/she has been foreseen in the project appraisal document) should set up a working group with one representative from each agency involved. This group should remain active throughout the life of the project. Whenever a single person has not been identified to take this role, all concerned parties should be invited and one person should be designated as coordinator.

Planning and implementing the communication strategy together allows full use to be made of existing communication channels (magazines, newsletters, radio programs, etc.) and allows resources to be saved via the synergistic management of new initiatives. Another common pattern is that many activities are increasingly contracted out to private, profit oriented firms or to NGOs.

Box 6.1: Working together and measuring change—Agrobarometro in Nicaragua

Since 2001, the Government of Nicaragua has been implementing a long–term investment that aims to combine public and private research, extension, education and training in an integrated agricultural knowledge system. This program is supported by various donors, (including the World Bank through the Agricultural Technology Project). Several institutions are workingtogether: the Ministry of Agriculture, the National Institute for Agricultural and Forestry Technology, the National Institute for Technical Education, the newly established Nicaraguan Foundation of Agricultural Sciences and the System of Agricultural Information.

Originally, each agency was responsible for designing its own communication strategy, with consequent administrative problems and an irregular flow of information in all directions. In October 2002, a communication working group was formed, which developed a common mid-term strategy (18 months), based on media and methods designed according to the different types of stakeholders and the different messages that were projected.

Consequently, with one single bid and contract, it was possible to outsource the entire communication program. Scale economies were achieved, and better internal communication was established.

Furthermore, in order to quantify the impact of all types of communication, periodic independent opinion polls were planned to verify the evolution of opinions about the above institutions held by the three groups of stakeholders: a) poor people, b) agricultural personnel in public administrations and in the private sector, and c) the general public living in the major towns. This instrument is called *Agrobarometro*, because it measures the pressure of public opinion regarding institutions and indirectly evaluates the quality of the communication program.

6.3 Identification and involvement of all stakeholders

During project identification and once the project enters into implementation, the primary concern should be to identify all institutions, groups, associations, formal and informal, that will be affected by the project. Some of them represent a core group of people who would normally be expected to take part in the project design. The important task is to expand this concept to identify groups which were not traditionally considered protagonists, but as simply “targets”, or “beneficiaries”.

All relevant civil society organizations should be involved: parent teacher associations, cultural groups, consumer unions, worker unions. Churches play a major role in almost all countries, and their presence is ubiquitous in rural areas: representatives of all or major denominations could be invited to participate. Another important form of social capital, with value in all strata of the population and in all settings, is represented by the political parties. In situations of intense political competition, the involvement of all major parties should be sought. It is important to move beyond traditional involvement and open the project formulation and implementation to new categories[22] of stakeholders.

Of course, not all stakeholders are the same and will require different levels of involvement and types of participation which are briefly described below.

- **Types of participation** can be *direct* or *indirect*. In the first, all individuals of a given group are invited to participate, while in the second, only representatives are invited. Another aspect to consider is how the representatives are selected: they could be those elected specifically for the project activity, or they could be existing, formal representatives. It is not possible to formulate a blanket recommendation and it is important to anticipate possible causes of conflict, due to exclusion;[23]
- **Level of involvement** depends[24] on what is actually sought by stakeholders' participation. Three major levels of involvement are: a) **information**: Using various methods and media, stakeholders are simply informed about the project. This form of participation increases awareness, stimulates attention and future adhesion to project or agency activities, but it is increasingly considered insufficient in project planning; b) **consultation**: Stakeholders are involved in the analysis of the situation (natural, social, economic, technical, etc.), in the identification of priorities, and in the

[22] For example, in a rural development project foreseeing economic diversification, it may be fruitful to also involve representatives of the tour operators or the representatives of the major airlines operating in the country.

[23] In some cases, there are easy solutions: for example, whenever the Ministry of Agriculture wants to organize a forum with the producer associations, a letter of invitation is sent to all registered associations and they send a representative. In other cases, it could be more difficult; for example, in a CDD project that wants to establish an action plan for an entire region, it might not be possible to organize a meeting with the entire population of several villages scattered in the area; consequently the problem of inviting only one or two representatives per village arises. Who should they be? The community president or somebody chosen by the community for this specific event? Should there be a representation of the women? And a representative of the youth?

[24] Note the similarity with the five categories of meetings that are described in Paragraph 5.5.

identification of feasible solutions; they suggest actions and communication strategies, and they are invited to fully express themselves and participate in the project design; c) **decision making:** Stakeholders are fully empowered and can decide what to do and how to use the project's resources; this is seen when the Members of Parliament discuss and approve new legislation, or at the micro level, when the members of a cooperative vote for a new investment plan, or all the adults of a community determine the list of priorities for a CDD project.

Once stakeholders have been identified, and the level and type of participation have been determined, their actual involvement must be facilitated in ways that favor physical and intellectual participation.

- **Forms of participation:** The most common are meetings and workshops with representatives, experts or, in some cases, with the entire population; information can also be given through the most diffused media, press conferences, press releases, full articles and special supplements. Increasingly, news about the ongoing project design may be made public through a web page, and by inviting people to send comments and suggestions via e-mail;
- **Procedures:** These should ensure that people can participate. Meetings should be planned sufficiently in advance, for appropriate days and hours, and all participants should be informed in a timely manner; the purposes and agenda of meetings should be communicated in advance; necessary documentation should be made available; time allocation during the meeting should allow all participants to share their opinions and suggestions; the number of participants should not be excessive (or the whole group should be split into smaller working groups); the outcomes of the meetings should be stated in final formal documents, and constitute the platform for the next meeting. Memos with the outcome of the meetings should be sent to those absent as soon as possible;
- **Practical arrangements**: Meetings require a proper space for accommodating all invited people, the optimum positioning of tables, chairs and visual aids to allow hearing and visibility from the most distant points; check that visual aids function and that there are spare parts in case of break down; remember refreshments or catering for all participants.

6.4 Understanding the project and its components

The communicators must be aware of the political, administrative, technical and economic components and sub-components of the projects. In rural development projects, components can be widely varied (restructuring of agencies, production of new legislation, changes of agricultural techniques, improvement of rural roads, empowerment of rural communities, etc.) and each one can

have several stakeholders, with different educational levels, attitudes and opinions.

Communicators should participate in the most meaningful meetings held by the management of the project or by the various agencies, and have substantive exchanges with the other staff members.

If it becomes clear that the information gap is excessive or that the opinions, beliefs and attitudes of some categories of stakeholders are absolutely opposed to the project or some parts of it, communicators should also exercise their influence in order to change or modify the project.

6.5 Understanding the stakeholders

Stakeholders belong to various social groups, and several quantitative and qualitative aspects should be considered, as they will affect the communication strategy. Whenever such characteristics are not properly studied, the communication strategy is in danger of being inappropriate, poorly designed and implemented, and consequently, imposing needless costs. Here some relevant points to be considered:

- **Category:** Who are the stakeholders of the project as a whole and for each component? Policy makers at the national level, members of Parliament, high ranking public officials, mayors, top level farmer representatives, average producers, landlords, squatters or owners of their parcels, or indigenous people? How many different ethnic groups? What about journalists, opinion makers, religious leaders, civil society organization leaders, students and school children, field level extension agents, professionals or volunteers? Are they women or men?
- **Quantity:** For each category, at least a tentative quantification is required to verify the technical and economic feasibility and/or the need for different methods and media (see Chapter 5);
- **Geographical distribution W**here do the stakeholders live? Are they concentrated in one or in a few towns, or are they spread in dozens of small towns and villages? Do the rural people live aggregated in villages or are they scattered in single family settlements at relatively large distances from each other? What about rural roads? Are they usable throughout the year or are they impassable during the rainy seasons?
- **Education and communication behavior:** As already discussed, regarding the communication process (Chapter 3) and the various methods and media (Chapter 5), to achieve the best possible results with any given method or medium, it must be selected to meet the communication behavior and the codes used by the addressees. Consequently, the planners of the communication strategy should know the level of literacy of the different stake-

holders, the language they speak, the radio programs they listen to, or the daily or weekly journals they read, if they like to attend village meetings or if they have easy access to the internet;

- **Opinions, beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behavior:** These aspects are also extremely important and refer directly to the situations to be improved by the project. Unfortunately, in most rural development projects, such aspects are not properly considered, and there are only descriptions of some technical indicators. What people know, why they behave as they do, or what people think about the future contents of the project, remains largely unknown; again, for the proper planning of adequate and fruitful communication strategies, such aspects should be investigated, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

The communicators' working group should try to respond to all of these questions in order to design a tailor-made strategy. Some information may be found in official statistics, in existing studies, in previous project documents, or within the ministries or universities. Other information may be contained in the Social Impact Assessment documentation or annexes. Whenever possible, there should be resources allocated for this purpose, specific studies should be carried out at the very beginning of the project, with surveys, focus groups, consultations of experts, participatory meetings with groups of stakeholders, etc.

6.6 Establishing the baseline

The previously described activities allow not only a clearer, more in-depth view of several characteristics of the different categories of stakeholders, but also become a management tool that is often missing or used too late in projects: the baseline of the project itself, that will then be the starting point for defining the activities and the achievable objectives.

The baseline is represented by a select list of quantitative variables, which are some of the project indicators. Such a baseline is needed to assist in monitoring the project communication activities and to measure their impact in the long run.

Table 6.1 represents a simplified example of a likely baseline,[25] where some behavior, opinions, knowledge and attitudes are listed and quantified. In this case, various categories of stakeholders are considered, and for each of them some aspects are indicated and quantified as a percentage of the corresponding total.

The data have different years because some are from preexisting studies, while others were collected during the project formulation. It is evident that

[25] The example is totally fictitious and there are no references to ongoing or past projects.

Table 6.1: Examples of baseline for communication

Stakeholders and Indicators	Year	%
Urban dwellers		
People who know that iguanas are at risk of extinction	2001	25,3
Urban youth who know that NAEP means National Agency for Environmental Protection	2002	12,0
Women > 30 who are worried about quality of dinking water	1999	68,0
Teachers		
Teachers who know the meaning of the word "biodiversity"	2000	54,0
Teachers with courses on sustainable development	2000	10,0
Teachers willing to oganize new courses on sustainable development	2000	43,6
Rural people and farmers		
Rural people who know that iguanas are risk of extinction	2001	34,8
Farmers who know what "organic" means	2002	0,0
Farmers practicing organic agriculture (without certification)	2002	34,0
Women who know how to make organic compost	2002	12,0
Women doing organic composting	2002	10,0
Landlords thinking to diversfy into agro-tourism	2002	5,0
Landlords with agro-tourism activities	2002	0,0
Farmers thinking that NAEP only blocks all their initiatives	2002	67,0
Farmers very pessismistic about the future of their farm	2001	54,0
Women who think that Ministry of Agriculture extension agents do not work for them	2001	68,0
Mayors		
Mayors in the project area willing to establish natural parks in their municipalities	2002	67,0
Natural parks in municipalities	2002	0,0

this NAEP is not well known and that many farmers see its activities as only reducing their freedom. The environmental problems are perceived differently by the different categories: teachers are open but are not very well informed. Many farmers practice traditional agriculture that could be easily recognized as organic and, consequently, search for richer niche markets, but they do not know what "organic" means.

6.7 The communication environment[26]

Stakeholders have access to a variety of information sources. No person or area is without functioning communication channels or external influences which supply news, stories, ideas and suggestions. Assessing existing information sources and their coverage in the project area is a fundamental task for the communication working group during the project formulation, and even more so when the project enters implementation.

[26] This is also called communication assessment.

For the design of the communication strategy, for each category of stakeholders it is important to verify the **offer of information**, the sources of information which already exist and which methods, media and formats are already in place.

Other interesting aspects are the **utilization** of such methods and media, and also the **opinions** that stakeholders have about them.

- **Sources of information**: Primarily, these are the same agencies involved in the project, other agencies, and/or some NGOs. The primary sources are those that generate information, and the secondary sources elaborate on the primary information and diffuse it much further. For example, the National Institute for Agricultural and Forestry Technology in Nicaragua is the primary source of technological information, whereas local radios, retransmitting information to rural dwellers, are secondary sources;
- **Methods, media and formats:** A single source might convey messages via several methods, media and formats. Identifying what is already produced in the project area allows synergies to be found as well as the cheapest way to reach the stakeholders;
- **Utilization:** Which methods, media and formats are actually used by the stakeholders? Do stakeholders really use all sources and all existing channels? For example, we could find that a monthly newsletter produced by the Ministry and sent to all national policy-makers is never opened by most of them, or we could find that a national radio program is regularly heard by 85 percent of households. For designing the communication strategy, these data are of major importance, because they allow resources to be channeled into the communication media that are most highly utilized;
- **Opinions about sources, methods, media and formats:** This concept refers to stakeholders' opinions of the source of information and the channels which have been used to date. Sometimes, for example, farmers use the agricultural extension agents as a channel of information, but they do not trust them, because the farmers do not believe that the Ministry of Agriculture is an efficient agency. Alternatively, we could find that a daily national TV program greatly influences young people. In both cases, such information facilitates designing the strategy that best fits the needs of the stakeholders.

Unfortunately, in many circumstances all these types of data and qualitative information are not available, or were collected several years earlier. Updated information could be collected during project design, to shape a preliminary strategy and budget. In this case, resources should be allocated for a proper analysis after the project starts. Once the project begins, this study must be carried out as soon as possible, in order to feed into more detailed planning.

Later, other information can be collected as part of the monitoring and evaluation system.

6.8 Defining objectives and strategies

Objectives are determined by the communication experts through a dialectic process with the technical staff of the project and the partner agencies: There is a clear link between the targets of the project and the amount of resources allocated for communication activities. On the other hand, if the technical or socio-economic design of the project (or of one of its components) is poor,[27] communication alone, although provided with substantial budget, can not counterbalance such negative aspects.

Some objectives are **intermediate**, i.e. they are not useful *per se*, but constitute a necessary step to reach the next objective, that may also be intermediate, or it may be **final**. Keeping in mind what was said in Chapter 4, the communication activities represent a necessary supporting tool for achieving the objectives that the different stakeholders should have agreed on. In rural development projects such objectives, as seen in Chapter 1, can be at different levels and of an extremely heterogeneous nature: new legislation, delegation of power to local municipalities, the establishment of new agencies, the introduction of competitive funds for agricultural extension or for the establishment of private, off-farm enterprises, the reduction of erosion, the re-forestation of some parts of the country, the increase of agricultural productivity, etc.; the examples are numerous.

In the communication activities, some objectives are intermediate and are fully under the control of the communication unit, whereas other objectives are only partially dependent on the effectiveness of the communication. Consequently, the objectives that the communication unit can establish are:

- **The flow of resources (inputs)** it will invest: the planned amount of money made available by the agency, per year, per group of activities, per stakeholder group, per project;
- The **output** to be realized, per year, per group of activities, per stakeholder group, per project, in terms of type of method and media that will be produced, and the amount of each type;
- The **outcome**, in terms of number of stakeholders, per type, who will be exposed to the messages;

[27] It should be clear that if a project was poorly designed and communication experts are called in only at a later phase, it is rather hard to imagine that the situation can be profoundly modified, without reformulating the project itself. Equally, if something happens that changes the surrounding environment of the project, communication activities alone cannot help the ultimate achievement of the original objectives of the project.

- The **impact** in terms of changes of opinions and attitudes, basing this projection on the existing baseline.

Table 6.2 shows a simplified example[28] of the impact expected by the planners of a communication strategy, who have been working with technical experts. Some objectives belong to the sphere of knowledge, attitudes or opinions, while other objectives already suppose that some beneficiaries will implement some changes. For example, it is indicated that the number of people living in town who are aware of the iguanas' fate will double; this is only represents knowledge and does not indicate further action; the same is true for the youth, whose knowledge about the National Authority for Environmental Protection is expected to increase enormously. Will this happen or not and to what extent? Only careful monitoring can answer these questions.

Table 6.2: Examples of baseline and objective for communication

	Baseline		Objective	
Indicator	**Year**	**%**	**Year**	**%**
Urban dwellers				
People who know that iguanas are at risk of extinction	2001	25,3	2008	50,0
Urban youth who know that NAEP means National Agency for Environmental Protection	2002	12,0	2008	80,0
Women > 30 who are worried about quality of dinking water	1999	68,0	2008	
Teachers				
Teachers who know the meaning of the word "biodiversity"	2000	54,0	2008	100,0
Teachers with courses on sustainable development	2000	10,0	2008	75,0
Teachers willing to oganize new courses on sustainable development	2000	43,6	2008	75,0
Rural people and farmers				
Rural people who know that iguanas are risk of extinction	2001	34,8	2008	90,0
Farmers who know what "organic" means	2002	0,0	2008	50,0
Farmers practicing organic agriculture (without certification)	2002	34,0	2008	50,0
Women who know how to make organic compost	2002	12,0	2008	80,0
Women doing organic composting	2002	10,0	2008	50,0
Landlords thinking to diversfy into agro-tourism	2002	5,0	2008	10,0
Landlords with agro-tourism activities	2002	0,0	2008	20,0
Farmers thinking that NAEP only blocks all their initiatives	2002	67,0	2008	10,0
Farmers very pessismistic about the future of their farm	2001	54,0	2008	20,0
Women who think that Ministry of Agriculture extension agents do not work for them	2001	68,0	2008	20,0
Mayors				
Mayors in the project area willing to establish natural parks in their municipalities	2002	67,0	2008	100,0
Natural parks in municipalities	2002	0,0	2008	30,0

[28] The example is totally fictitious and there are no references to ongoing or past projects.

The next steps, in terms of behavioral change, are not fully within the sphere of influence of the communication activities and can be introduced as objectives of the communication strategy only as indicative direction. They will be achieved only if the other necessary goals are achieved. For example, it is planned that 75 percent of the teachers will give courses on sustainable development in 2008, but there could be a reform of the school system that makes this impossible. It is also indicated that the number of large farms with agrotourism activities will expand from zero to 20 percent, but this prediction would not materialize if a contemporary credit line is not activated or fewer funds than predicted are received.

Table 6.3: Example of a strategy and budget

	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4		Total	
Item	**000$**	**%**	**000$**	**%**	**000$**	**%**	**000$**	**%**	**000$**	**%**
Urban dwellers	101	36,1	129	35,1	136	35,9	134	36,5	500	35,9
Radio programs *			25	6,8	25	6,6	25	6,8	75	5,4
TV programs *	50	17,9	55	15,0	60	15,8	65	17,7	230	16,5
WEB site	20	7,1	5	1,4	5	1,3	5	1,4	35	2,5
National Ecological Fair *	15	5,4	16		17	4,5	18	4,9	66	4,7
Billboards *	0	0,0	10		10	2,6	0	0,0	20	1,4
Inserts in weekly magazines **	8	2,9	9		10	2,6	11	3,0	38	2,7
Paid pages in daily journals **	5	1,8	5		5	1,3	5	1,4	20	1,4
Press releases										
PR activities with press	3	1,1	4		4	1,1	5	1,4	16	1,1
Teachers			36	9,8	36	9,5	27	7,4	99	7,1
Seminars			14	3,8	14	3,7	15	4,1	43	3,1
Study tours			12	3,3	12	3,2	12	3,3	36	2,6
Videos on environment			5	1,4	5	1,3			10	0,7
Booklets			5	1,4	5	1,3			10	0,7
Rural people and farmers	140	50,0	152	41,4	152	40,1	146	39,8	590	42,4
Technical support through NGOs	100	35,7	105	28,6	105	27,7	105	28,6	415	29,8
Workshop with leaders	10	3,6	10	2,7	10	2,6	10	2,7	40	2,9
Study tours					5	1,3	6	1,6	11	0,8
Participation in National Ecological Fair	5	1,8	5	1,4	5	1,3	5	1,4	20	1,4
Videos on technical subjects			7	1,9	7	1,8			14	1,0
Calendars	5	1,8	5	1,4	5	1,3	5	1,4	14	1,0
Posters	5	1,8	5	1,4					20	1,4
Leaflets	10	3,6	10	2,7	10	2,6	10	2,7	40	2,9
Booklets	5	1,8	5	1,4	5	1,3	5	1,4	20	1,4

(*continued on next page*)

Table 6.3: Example of a strategy and budget (*continued*)

	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4		Total	
Item	**000$**	**%**	**000$**	**%**	**000$**	**%**	**000$**	**%**	**000$**	**%**
Mayors	24	8,6	30	8,2	30	7,9	30	8,2	114	8,2
Individual meetings	5	1,8	5	1,4	5	1,3	5	1,4	20	1,4
Study tour abroad			6	1,6	6	1,6	6	1,6	18	1,3
Booklets	4	1,4	4	1,1	4	1,1	4	1,1	16	1,1
PR activities	5	1,8	5	1,4	5	1,3	5	1,4	20	1,4
National workshop for staff	10	3,6	10	2,7	10	2,6	10	2,7	40	2,9
E. Not planned	15	5,4	20	5,4	25	6,6	30	8,2	90	6,5
Total	**280**	**100,0**	**367**	**100,0**	**379**	**100,0**	**367**	**100,0**	**1.393**	**100,0**

* = will also impact rural dwellers and mayors

** = will also impact also andlords.

Table 6.3 gives a general idea of the strategy that has been devised. It includes four groups of stakeholders (urban dwellers, teachers, rural people—small farmers and large landlords—and mayors). For each category, a four-year strategy has been planned, using different types of methods and media, taking into account the type of messages, their communication behavior and the expected impact.

The activities for the first category, which actually includes also teachers, mayors and landlords, are mostly based on mass media, while the action for and with the small farmers and rural women is mostly labor-intensive. Study tours in the country are foreseen for teachers and rural people, while for the mayors a study tour abroad is projected, to visit places where the proposed innovations have already been successfully implemented. With such planning, both the coordinator of the communication strategy and the director (of the project and of the agency) can easily monitor the evolution of the activities and redirect the actions and the budget, whenever needed.

6.9 Annual planning

In most agencies, the strategy must be converted into Annual Programs of Operations, where each unit states what it is going to do, why, where and the budget required. In the case of the communication unit, the plan might look something like Table 6.4.

The example[29] mixes input (planned expenditures) with output (media and products or activities) and outcome (people involved or reached with mass me-

[29] The example is entirely fictitious and there are no references to ongoing or past projects.

Table 6.4: Example of annual plan for communication

	Plan		
Product	**no.**	**Copies or Participants**	**Total**
Leaflets in Spanish	4	5.000	20.000
Leaflets in native languages	6	5.000	30.000
Posters in Spanish	2	500	1.000
Posters in native languages	3	400	1.200
Calendar in Spanish	1	2.000	2.000
Calendar in native languages	2	1.000	2.000
Game for children in Spanish	1	2.000	2.000
Technical Booklets	3	500	1.500
Annual Report	1	500	500
Budget for printed media 000XX			35
Workshop with field personnel	6	15	90
Regional Conference (1day)	1	100	100
National Conference (2days)	1	100	100
Budget for events 000XX			40
Radio spot in Spanish	2	5.000	10.000
Radio spot in native languages	6	2.000	12.000
Budget for radio 000XX			20
T-shirts	1	100	100
Cups	1	1.000	1.000
Jackets	1	100	100
Bags	1	2.000	2.000
Other godgets		not defined	
Budget for godgets 000XX			25
Press releases			50
Visits with journalists	5	4	20
Visit with visitors	5	4	20
Budget for PR 000XX			10
TOTAL BUDGET 000XX			130

dia), but in one single table it gives the idea of what this unit thinks it should be able to accomplish in the forthcoming year and provides useful quantitative elements for monitoring. Consequently, the director of the agency will be able to manage the resources in a more effective way.

6.10 Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (see Chapter 8) must be planned and budgeted from the beginning or they will be almost impossible to realize.

The collection of relevant data must be organized from the beginning of the activities, or they will be lost forever. For example,[30] the number of people attending village meetings, as well as their gender or age group, could be interesting data, but such information must be collected at the meeting, not two years later. Likewise, the number of leaflets produced and printed, as well as the number of copies of each leaflet, should be recorded.

Once the project and the agencies have a complete communication strategy and an annual implementation plan, the next step should be to develop a regular data collection and storage system (see Chapter 7), to have this information available for monitoring and evaluation (i.e., for properly managing the whole process).

Furthermore, the budget should plan for specific, in-depth communication studies, for evaluating in detail all those aspects of the outcome and of the impact that cannot be easily observed: opinions about media and methods, radio or TV audience, opinions about the agencies or about specific policies, etc. It could also be wise to introduce questions about the communications activities inside other impact evaluation studies, to know, for example, to what extent the adoption of new agricultural practices is due to information activities managed by the project, or to other information sources.

[30] These might seem like obvious examples, but the reality of many projects and many agencies is that such data are not gathered, or are not available; the people in charge of communication activities leave the project; the acquisition records are lost; etc., and it is almost impossible to carry out any monitoring.

7

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Another important aspect of strategic communication, which can also be considered a tactical tool for empowering the stakeholders who work within the agencies implementing the project, is the internal communication system. With this system, the various actors can collect, store, elaborate, organize, share, retrieve and use relevant knowledge.[31]

The reasons for setting up an internal communication system, also called knowledge management system (KMS), are:

- **To manage the project**: This is clearly the most important issue, because the coordinators or directors of the PIU and of the partner agencies should be able to base their decisions on timely and accurate information;
- **To keep partner agencies informed**: Most projects are implemented by several agencies, within or outside the public sector, and transparency should be a priority in order to anticipate and avoid criticism;
- **To allow access to information**: Lower levels of management and field personnel should be able to access most of the information contained in the system for use in their daily duties, or simply to be informed about what is happening in other agencies or in other units;
- **To store knowledge for future users within the life span of the project**: A major problem in many projects and administrations is the relatively fast turnover of personnel. A proper knowledge management system allows the newcomers to have easy and complete access to what has been achieved and learned to date, avoiding or reducing inefficient transition time;
- **To store knowledge for other projects**: Through this instrument, the planners of a new project, in the same area or in the same sector, could take advantage of all the knowledge acquired by a completed project, avoiding duplication or mistakes, saving time and money, or implementing the best practices elaborated by other people.

[31] In this context, the word "knowledge" includes all types of knowledge accumulated in a project, from the single raw number to a full document.

The difference between a KMS and a management information system (MIS[32]) is not only in its name, but also in concept: the MIS is mainly designed and implemented to bring the information from the bottom up, so that managers can make decisions, while a KMS is designed to favor information flow in all directions.

7.1 Knowledge management system

Taking into account the project life cycle, the KMS depository could contain:

- All documents which have been used, consulted and produced during formulation of the project; in case of the physical non-availability of some documents consulted, there should be an indication about where they can be found;
- The project appraisal document in its final version;
- The strictly defined management information system (see Section 7.2);
- All documents and studies produced with resources from the project, from the annual plans of operations to specific studies, terms of references, monthly reports, annual reports, information material for stakeholders, etc.;
- Studies about the project made by independent scientists or experts, with funds not provided by the project;
- Documents useful for project implementation, that are produced by other agencies not directly involved in the project;
- All documents and memos produced during the missions, the mid-term review, the technical assistance and finally the implementation completion report.

Presently, most KMS are computer based, with access guaranteed through the internet, and with some sensitive areas reserved for selected stakeholders supplied with security passwords. Furthermore, there should be an archive for hard copies of documents not provided in electronic format or that could take too long to scan, or for materials which cannot be computer-stored, such as samples of gadgets.

Computer-based KMS cannot fully satisfy all communication needs and, consequently, some traditional communication activities retain their relevance, like staff meetings (weekly, monthly, annually) and internal newsletters (monthly,

[32] In marketing textbooks, the same acronym is used for Marketing Information System, because information mainly deals with market issues.

bimonthly, quarterly), which can be both distributed through the internet and printed, to circulate at all stages of the project, and even outside of it.

7.2 Management information system

A management information system is like a nervous system within the human body; it connects all the components and allows the system to work better. Information is the critical resource in the management of an organization, and some characteristics of the information are particularly important:

- **Relevance**: Information must cover the subjects needed by management, and must allow either previous decisions to be confirmed or improvements to be introduced;
- **Timeliness**: Information must be provided rapidly, when it is needed, otherwise its value is reduced;
- **Cost effectiveness**: Gathering and processing the information should not be too costly, otherwise other sources of information could be used (proxies);
- **Reliability:** Information must be trustworthy; there should be no doubts or discussion about the truthfulness of the information;
- **Usability**: Information should be in a format that is truly useful;
- **Exhaustiveness**: The information should cover all or at least most relevant issues, or it should simply be considered a proxy;
- **Aggregation level**: The level of analysis can be institutional (data are collected and/or elaborated by an agency or unit), geographical (data by farm, municipality, province, region, state, etc.), temporal (by day, week, month, semester, etc.), by gender or any other type of likely aggregation.

At this point, the connection between the Management Information System and planning of the project should be evident, with its baseline and objectives, and with the monitoring and evaluation system. The MIS should be designed as soon as possible and should be considered an essential tool for proper monitoring and continuing evaluation.

Taking into account the extreme heterogeneity of rural development projects, which differ in scope, activities, type of agencies and physical settings, it is impossible to provide a blanket recommendation, but it is possible to give some logical and clear steps to follow:

- **Assess information needs of management**, at low, medium and high levels: What type of information and about what? With what precision? What level of aggregation?
- **Design data collection**: Where, when, and how will raw data be collected and who will be responsible? Appropriate forms will need to be produced

and the building of certain capacity will also be necessary to train people about some procedures. In some cases, when data collection proves to be difficult or expensive, the management may decide to eliminate some variables and select new, easier and cheaper ones;

- **Design data entry**: Who will put the data into the system? The same individuals who collected the raw data, or others? When and where? If the system is centralized, the data collected in the field or in the periphery of the administration, or in other agencies, must be conveyed by telephone, e-mail, fax or normal mail, and then put into the system by one or more operators; whereas, if the system is decentralized, data could be put into the databank directly by the collectors. In both cases, there are advantages and disadvantages, risks and benefits that must be pondered carefully;
- **Design data processing**: This part of the software transforms the raw data into something useful for the management in order to meet the needs expressed in the first point of the list. It can be ratios (number of farmers per extension agent, total and per district), sums (total loans accepted in the first semester, total amount, total number of beneficiaries), percentages (women receiving training per subject), etc.;
- **Be flexible**: At the very beginning of the project, it is impossible to know all of the information needed by the management, the incoming consultants or the interested policy makers; the system (database and processing software) should be flexible enough to allow some changes to be implemented;
- **Design output format**: Presentation should be in the form and format required by the end user; this means graphs and tables to be used as inputs to elaborate a text, where some other qualitative information can also be included, to give a clear picture of the phenomenon analyzed;
- **Be ready to change**: Many projects might expand their action, or they could experience managerial turnovers, or new information needs might arise, requiring new raw data to be collected or major modifications to the data processing to be made.

7.3 KMS, MIS and strategic communication

Knowledge management is, by definition, information sharing, and this essentially means encouraging communication between stakeholders. The communication expert should work together with the experts who are setting up and managing the KMS to ensure that it is clear and user friendly. The parts of the system accessible by field-level operators and by rural communities, children, women, etc. must be designed in a way to facilitate, rather than hamper, their access. Pre-testing with a sample of final users, focus groups and ongoing evaluations should facilitate this process. Furthermore, the communication experts

can help the technical units produce understandable messages for the different categories of stakeholders, and finally, they can produce all the corporate communication (press releases, newsletters, progress reports, etc.), that can be made available to all interested parties.

Data gathering and processing for strategic communication is a part of the project and consumes part of its budget. Annual plans and outputs, outcomes and impacts, specific studies, etc., must be collected and processed by the management information systems. The management has to decide, as has been seen in the previous paragraph, what they want to know, when, and with what level of aggregation.

The relations with MIS do not end here, because, as seen previously, a good deal of final information coming from the MIS could be used by the communication unit as input for press releases, newsletters, educational documents for staff, handbooks, etc. Ideally, there is a circular process, or a spiral, with the communication unit being at the same time both object and subject.

Case 7.1: Communication at the Ministry of Agriculture in El Salvador

The Agricultural Sector Reform and Investment Project PRISA began its activities in April 1994 and had three extensions before closing in January 2003. Its initial objectives were to a) support the Government of El Salvador in implementing its agriculture policy; b) reorganize the Ministry of Agriculture (MAG) and the National Agricultural Technology Center (CENTA); c) generate applied technologies for improving productivity; and d) improve productivity of small and medium size farmers through agricultural extension. Later, other objectives were added, such as to e) implement a pilot project for land registration; f) develop financial rural markets; and g) take charge of some of the post hurricane Mitch reconstruction activities.

Implementation of PRISA has encountered several problems: frequent changes in political orientations, changes in Ministry and World Bank personnel. Furthermore, El Salvador experienced the devastating effects of hurricane Mitch in 1998 and of two earthquakes in 2001.

PRISA as such never had its own communication strategy, but it supported the communication activities of the two main agricultural institutions in El Salvador, the MAG and CENTA.

A Communication Unit operates at the Ministry of Agriculture. Its main task is to communicate with the general public through radio, television and print media; since 2001 the Minister has employed a communication advisor who has devised a fairly detailed strategy. The Ministry seems to have successfully improved the communication strategy towards the press

and the civil society associations, mainly of the agro-food chain, trying to involve all interested parties as much as possible. All sectors of the MAG are encouraged to produce positive information, which is channeled through the Communication Unit or released directly. Most technical press releases are sent without any formal control, whereas press releases perceived to be politically sensitive are checked by the Communication Advisor of the Ministry and sometimes by the Minister himself. The main stakeholders of MAG communication activities are considered to be the general public, the national and local policy makers and the decision makers of the different producer associations. Technical and political meetings take place quite frequently.

The unit produces an impressive number of press releases for the national press (up to 10 per day), which are often accompanied by pictures. About 2–5 per day actually appear in the major daily papers. The Ministry has no official journal. Printed documents are produced by the different offices of the MAG within the framework of projects which are financed by several donors or initiatives. The unit supervises the production, but there is not a complete list of such materials.

A radio program *Buonos Dias Agricultor* (Good morning farmer) lasting 30 minutes has been produced by the unit itself since January 2002. It is transmitted at different times, very early in the morning, free of charge, by two public national radio stations (*Nacional and Cuscatlan* – the latter owned by the Ministry of Defense) and by eight national and local private stations, which also include some advertising. It is structured into several parts, with interviews, recent events, market prices, music, etc. The CENTA contributes some technical news. No formal evaluation of the radio program is made, but since the number of radios asking to transmit the program is growing, the general feeling is positive.

The Ministry has its own stands at the major fairs of the country, at several local fairs and whenever it is invited by private organizers. Public relations activities of the Minister, Vice Minister and other high ranking Ministry personnel are carefully planned and reported to the press.

Recently PRISA supplied the Unit with modern video technology and it is now producing short productions, to be given to private TV (all TV stations have been privatized) together with press releases. A video about the MAG is under progress. The Ministry, of course, has a web site.

Cooperation with the private sector is sought, in particular for sharing the cost of producing information activities and developing communication media.

According to a Gallup poll, the MAG ranks among the best Ministries, in terms of communication ability, with a score that changed from –3 a few years ago to +4 or +5 (the best is 10, but no Ministry even achieves a 6).

Conclusions (lessons learned)

Public administrations have only recently understood the need for more transparent behavior and for better public relations, and it is not an easy change to make. Furthermore, it is difficult to move from a paternalistic, top-down approach to a participatory, policy-making approach, involving all stakeholders. It is even more difficult to implement a communication strategy during a time of shrinking resources, when the budget for such activities is reduced nearly every year. In this case, the MAG tries to cope with these challenges via close collaboration with some public and private radio stations, with private firms and with extensive use of the press. Other resources come from various projects, creating an irregular availability that sometimes causes an uneven flow of outputs. Finally, continuous involvement of producers associations with working groups or consultation committees on all subjects, is an attempt to bridge the gap between the administration and the civil society.

It could be useful to conduct a formal study to evaluate the opinions of the different categories (urban dwellers, peasants, landlords, CSO leaders, agro-food industry people, etc.) about the Ministry (i.e., what do they really know about its intervention, do they access the communication channels used by the Ministry, and do they have suggestions for improvement?).

8

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of communication activities do not differ from the M&E of other interventions, although there might be some conceptual, theoretical and consequently operational differences. M&E can be implemented with the usual approach that includes at least four logical sequential steps:

- **Input**: The quantity of resources (financial, human) invested in a single communication activity or in an entire program;
- **Output**: What has been produced, in terms of number of events and media produced;
- **Outcome**: The number of stakeholders involved or exposed to the communication;
- **Impact**: This is defined as the expected chain of transfers of knowledge, opinions, attitudes and behavior, in accordance with the project's objectives, as for example, new national legislation, new regulations facilitating bureaucratic processing of credit applications, number of properties formally registered, increase in crop yields, introduction of new crops, initiation of new economic activities, increase in income, etc.

Monitoring and evaluation of the communication activities should already be outlined in the project appraisal document, with a clear list of at least some macro indicators along the lines of those identified for the technical or social dimensions of the projects. In case this is missing, it should be outlined at the very beginning of the activities, together with the design of the strategy (see Chapter 6).

Once the project begins operations, one of the first tasks of the experts in charge of the communication should be to incorporate the communication M&E into the overall MIS of the project. The M&E plan should be an integral part of the general planning and consequently implemented as forecasted.

8.1 Definitions

In order to avoid misunderstandings, following is a list of definitions which allow some basic concepts to be clarified and recalled.

- **Evaluation** can be defined as the elaboration and expression of a judgment or opinion about a given phenomenon, based on a set of variables considered to be important, relevant and meaningful, in relation to some references. Evaluation is relative and depends upon the context and situation. It is based on a planned and timely monitoring of the chosen indicators, their elaboration and their comprehension, with reference to the planned targets and taking into account the general situation (interferences);
- ***Ex ante* evaluation** is the judgment about the whole project or a single action, based on anticipated input utilization and expected results. Since it is based on future tentative data, it is also called **appraisal**. In media production, ex ante evaluation is called **pre-testing** and allows the decision makers to select the best medium, format, text, etc., based on data coming from polls or from focus groups;
- **Targets** are quantified achievements expected from the projects. They can be intermediate or final. For example, intermediate targets of a strategic communication campaign are the planned disbursement and the programmed output per year (or semester or month) per channel or per agency. Another set of quantified targets could be classified as outcomes: the number of people attending conferences, meetings or other events. Other targets are related to the scope (or goal) of the communication and can be classified as impacts: changes in knowledge, attitudes, or opinions. After this step may come behavioral changes, which are partially due to the success of the communication activities, partially to other factors (legislation, political stability, general economic situation, availability of inputs, prices of output, etc.) which later induce third generation impacts: for example, acquired awareness and new knowledge and skills (first generation impact) allow a group of people to set up a cooperative (second generation impact) that sells their products in town (third generation impact) and consequently their income increases (fourth generation impact);
- **Monitoring** is the periodical collection of selected variables (indicators). Meteorological data are collected with standardized procedures, which are the same throughout the world. Monitoring can be continuous, if enough money, technology or personnel are available, or it can be done periodically. Disbursement for communication activities can be controlled daily or weekly, while the number of people attending village meetings is counted at each event and the total can be monitored weekly or monthly. In some cases, the administrative system of the project automatically generates the

required data (it must also have been designed for this purpose), while in other cases or for some information (as the opinion of the farmers in a given area) a specific survey should be made;

- **Indicators** are the variables that indicate project performance. They should make sufficient reference to the project baseline (as well as other data) and they should be selected as soon as possible, to allow the management and field staff, as well as involved stakeholders, to monitor the implementation of the plan in terms of inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts;
- **Interferences**: projects, as well as the communication activities supporting them, do not exist in a vacuum, but rather in an environment characterized by other actors, forces and circumstances. To some extent, some of these can be reasonably foreseen and incorporated into project design, but unexpected events could occur, changing (positively or negatively) the project output, the dissemination of the messages, their adoption or the final impact. It is not always possible to set up a system for monitoring interferences, but the communication expert should have the sensitivity to recognize such events and incorporate them as soon as possible into the decision-making process;
- **On-going evaluation**, also called continuing, formative or permanent evaluation, allows the management to verify that the planned activities have been undertaken as planned, if the targets are being met, and eventually to take the necessary measures to decide, if necessary, the appropriate corrections. Some of these decisions may be made by the people in charge of the communication activities or by their supervisors, on a daily basis, whereas other decisions are made on a weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis. In World Bank operations, the supervision missions and the mid-term review represent stages of formal, on-going evaluation which require updated information for adjustments;
- **Final evaluation**, also called terminal or summative evaluation, takes place at the end of the project. It is possible to verify if the communication targets have been achieved and to learn from the experience for future projects. Comparing the baseline data with the final data, and taking into account the interferences which may have occurred, a general opinion can be formed on the relationship between the communication activities and the evolution which occurred in the area, sector, stakeholders groups, etc. This data can inform the Implementation Completion Report, which is a necessary document for World Bank operations.
- ***Ex-post* evaluation** should be made five or more years after the project has finished. Its purpose is to verify the long-term impact on the behavior of the stakeholders, on their income or health habits, and on the area or sector affected by the project. It quantifies and describes the sustainability of the interventions from the technical, economic and sociological point of view. Within the World Bank, this is the task of the Operations Evaluation Department.

Box 8.1: Good field results, with some confusion: a case from Panama

The Rural Poverty and Natural Resources Project (1998–2003) was implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture in 556 communities, widely scattered in 75 *Corregimientos* in three provinces and one indigenous *Comarca*, where more than 100,000 people lived in conditions of extreme poverty. Illiteracy was widespread, and infrastructure was very poor. Taking into account the local situation, the difficulty of the content, and the need for capacity building, most communication activities were based on group and individual methods. This required direct intervention of project personnel and the involvement of contracted NGOs, which had their own field workers and supervisors. Men and women living in the villages attended about 1,900 workshops and meetings, involving about 41,000 participants.

The project supported the creation of 75 Committees for Sustainable Development (CSD), with about 6,000 members (one per family—almost all families were represented). Assisted by the NGOs and PRRA techniques, the committees assessed their situation and listed their priorities. Later, the CSDs made an open bid for carrying out the community works and selected the best contractor. Altogether, 1,216 infrastructure and productive micro-projects were approved. Furthermore, 66 percent of these CSDs are already searching for other donors and sources of funds (13 percent have already submitted more than four micro-projects to different agencies). In terms of empowerment and capacity building, the project was quite successful. This was confirmed by two studies on social capital formation conducted in 2000 and 2002. The roles of women and youth have become very important in decision making and micro-project implementation. Opinions about local and national institutions have improved, and all these modifications are more marked than in similar locations outside the project area.

The same studies revealed, however, that many people did not have a clear understanding about which entity was co-financing the micro-projects, nor did they know how the micro-projects were selected. Many people thought that the CSDs were financed by the project, or that the project was different from the Ministry of Agriculture, while many confused the NGOs with the project or with the government. Why is this? The answer is that rural dwellers were contacted by too many people, with too many logos: extension agents of the ministry, the project, the NGOs, everybody with the same message, but sometimes with slight differences. Leaflets and other printed materials had never been pre-tested, nor was there ever an evaluation of their comprehension or impact.

Conclusions (Lessons learned)
It is important to avoid generating institutional confusion; projects close, but institutions remain. Projects should not be considered separate from the Ministries that are implementing them. Contracted NGOs should not be allowed to use their own logo or to hide the fact that they are acting on behalf of the Ministry.

8.2 Informal and formal M&E

Informal monitoring and evaluation occur continuously in the minds of stakeholders, who reveal their judgment through their behavior.[33] Innumerable examples of this exist and should inform development agents and have an impact on the managerial decisions of the agencies involved in the project.

Yet this informal evaluation should not be considered sufficient, and formal procedures for more systematic and objective evaluation should be established. The formal evaluation should be based on a set of select indicators of performance (input, output, outcomes and impacts), and can be divided into two components:

- **Continuous M&E** allows almost daily monitoring of the operations of the project. It is conceived as a flowing stream of inputs and outputs. The MIS established by the project and by each partner agency should facilitate the timely flow of information;
- **Specific evaluations** are based on focused studies, limited in subject, space, time and type of stakeholder involved; they are extremely important for fine-tuning the communication activities. For example, they could be: the readability of booklets by farmers; the opinion of women's groups about radio programs; the appreciation students have for the national parks they have visited; the information sources most used and most appreciated by a select group of producers; or the opinions of participants at a workshop or conference. All these "minor" evaluations, if quickly transformed into operational decisions, allow a constant improvement of activities.

[33] Village women or mayors failing to attend events designed for them indicate that they are not interested in the topics, or that the events had been planned at an unsuitable time. Farmers sleeping during a meeting reveal that they are too tired, or that the speakers are boring, or that the subject is perceived as useless. People failing to read the newspapers or watch the TV program reveal that they find these media or their content useless or boring

8.3 Purposes of M&E

Experience has shown that most people do not like M&E because they focus on its negative aspects: They fear that M&E will be used for judging their behavior, and that they could be blamed, punished, or fired. This concern is likely innate in human behavior and reveals the fears and attitudes developed since childhood, when parents praised or punished. On the other hand, adult and professional experiences sometimes do not help, because misuse of M&E can lead to the same conclusions. Box 8.2 emphasizes the previous statement, amplifying what many people feel.

M&E are important features of any organization and should be considered not only for their managerial consequences, but also for their human and educational implications. M&E also allow in-service training to be improved, career development to be better planned, and performance to be rewarded. Stressing the positive aspects can facilitate M&E activities.

The motivations and purposes of M&E of communication activities are multiple and can be briefly summarized as follows:

- **Determine stakeholders' opinions and knowledge** about on going or past communication activities: this is the most important issue—stakeholders' opinions about the media and methods used, about the language and images, about the behavior of field personnel, and their suggestions for improvement;
- **Improve forthcoming communication** activities already planned: the suggestions arising from stakeholders consultations are transformed into action for fine-tuning future activities;
- **Plan future strategies**: stakeholders' opinions and suggestions are incorporated into a new communication strategy. It could be that some methods and media should be eliminated, because they are not effective, or that more budget should be used for some media and methods that are considered more fruitful;

Box 8.2: Six phases of a project

Enthusiasm
Disillusionment
Panic
Search for the guilty
Punishment of the guilty
Praise for the non participants

- **Produce inputs for training**: evaluations, whether positive or negative, provide suggestions that can be incorporated into training programs and training materials; for example, if farmers do not like how extension agents manage the meetings, a training program could be developed to teach this skill; if urban dwellers do not like the way Ministry officers have behaved on a TV program, their communication behavior can be improved; if the leaflets produced by an agency are highly appreciated, their format should be taught to all staff, also to partner agencies in charge of producing such materials;
- **Motivate personnel**: internal communication is as important as external communication; the internal psychological climate, the staff's attitudes and behavior, are as relevant as the attitudes, opinions or behavior of the other stakeholders. A study of such aspects, if properly elaborated and executed, with its recommendations shared and implemented, is very important for motivating all staff;
- **Justify the use of resources** (human and financial): This aspect is of vital importance, because the concepts of accountability and transparency are increasingly used in all administrations. Furthermore, in a period of shrinking budgets, only those structure which can demonstrate the effectiveness of expenditure and the positive consequences in the achievement of final targets, have hope for survival;
- **Obtain more resources**: if it is possible to show that resources have been used appropriately, that there has been efficient production of outputs, and that they have achieved outcomes and possibly impacts, more resources may be forthcoming, even in a period of reducing budgets;
- **Produce materials for public relations**: if the results are positive, in terms of positive outcome and initial impacts, this information could be disseminated to the various categories of stakeholders so as to further strengthen the position of the agency or of the project.

8.4 Indicators

Indicators might be simple pieces of information (first generation), which inform the decision maker of the status of the situation. They are closely linked with the intermediate and final targets of the project. Indicators can be digital (numeric) or analogical (non-numeric). Some indicators can be further processed and elaborated for ratios, which are second generation indicators.[34] Indicators are necessary but not sufficient components of the evaluation, because

[34] For example, the level of the fuel in the car tank is analogical, whereas the speed is normally digital and it is calculated by the computer that considers two indicators: distance and time.

they only represent some signals, which the management must carefully ponder, also taking into account several other aspects. Indicators should be selected according to each logical step (input, output, outcome and impact), based on the intermediate and final targets of the project, and should respect the following criteria:

- **Timeliness**: they must give rapid signals in a short time, so as to make corrections as quickly as possible;
- **Meaningfulness**: they must be indicative of the phenomenon they are supposed to measure;
- **Clarity**: they must be understandable, user-friendly and shared by all concerned stakeholders to avoid misunderstandings;
- **Cost-effectiveness**: their collection should be easy and relatively inexpensive.

Whenever it proves too costly, technically impossible or sociologically unacceptable to obtain a certain indicator, another indicator (**proxy**) should be found, with close relationship to the previous one.[35]

8.5 Evaluators

It has been seen that all stakeholders informally elaborate their opinion and conform their behavior accordingly, but this informal evaluation alone is not sufficient to have real consequences for the project implementation. Evaluation, especially on-going evaluation, is an integral part of the project cycle, and consequently it should be planned and implemented from the very beginning. Regarding the communication strategy, the individuals most involved in communication evaluations, for formal purposes, are:

- **The person responsible for communication** within each agency and the coordinator within the PIU are the people who should consider proper M&E their priority, because only through adequate M&E can they justify their position and other communication expenditures and efforts;
- **The field staff** should also be involved in the M&E process as much as possible, at various times: for its design, for data collection and interpretation, and for discussing the results and recommendations;

[35] For example, the number of fishing permits could be an indicator of the number of tourists coming into a given area. Or the quantity of beer sold could be a proxy of the people who participated in a fair

- **The directors** of each agency and the coordinator of the PIU have the overall responsibility of guiding the project towards its best implementation and consequently should support the M&E process, providing any information that may complement the rough data coming from the monitoring;
- **The stakeholders** themselves are the most important protagonists[36] in the evaluation, because the success of the project depends on their opinions and behavior. They should be involved as much as possible, not only as suppliers of information, but also in the design of the evaluation and in the discussion of its results;
- **External evaluators** are frequently called in to avoid the bias that in-house M&E could exhibit. These may be national or international experts, private firms specialized in this type of study, local or foreign universities. They should have a) administrative confidence, b) objectivity, c) understanding of the program, d) willingness to ensure that evaluation results are translated into action, e) autonomy. These five factors are not always available in the same way; the selection of external evaluators should therefore be carefully considered.

8.6 Participatory M&E

In recent years, growing attention has been paid to the progressive involvement of stakeholders in the M&E process because of the failure of traditional procedures which were typically designed by outsiders and removed from ordinary planning and implementation. The earlier, top-down procedures focused on resource use and program control, alienating people from the project itself. They did not focus sufficiently on qualitative aspects, did not motivate stakeholders, took too long, and were costly and ineffective.

These arguments have led to a more qualitative and participatory approach that involves the various categories of stakeholders in the evaluation process. This happens in structured ways (interviews, focus groups, surveys, committees) or in less structured ways, such as meetings held at all levels for the various categories of stakeholders. In fact, due to the heterogeneity of rural development projects, it is evident that the different categories can enter into the evaluation process in order to improve the next phases of the project, or to validate its final results in different ways.

[36] Some 20 years ago, a comparative study of evaluation methods was made in the USA and it was found that agricultural extension directors considered the formal knowledge of farmers' opinion the most useful method for evaluating the performance of their agencies, followed by the opinions expressed by the Advisory Committee, where farmers were also represented.

Particular consideration should be given not only to poor or rural women, but also to field and intermediate-level staff of the partners in the project, the scientific community, other ministries, the general public, civil society organizations, the agro-food industrial sector, services, etc. i.e., all the categories which have been involved in the communication activities. The question is how to involve them in order to obtain their honest and unbiased judgments and suggestions.

In a participatory evaluation of a single communication activity or of the entire communication strategy, the participation of stakeholders can be included a) in the pre-testing of media; b) in the ex-post evaluation of media and events; c) in the final evaluation of the whole strategy; and d) in the formulation of recommendations for future improvements.

8.7 Areas of M&E

Countless methods exist for monitoring and evaluation using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. In communication activities, the most important areas of monitoring and evaluation are as follows:

- **Input**: the economic and human resources which are budgeted or have been actually spent for one given activity, for one year, or for the entire strategy. Attention should be paid to considering all costs, fixed and variable, or to make a clear distinction between total costs and additional costs. Effective monitoring can determine if funds were disbursed as forecasted, if the costs are becoming excessive, or if there are savings to be used for other activities;
- **Output**: the quality and quantity of the products of the communication campaign, in terms of activities and media. It includes the number of group meetings, individual contacts, mass events, newsletters (and copies produced per issue), radio programs (and their length), etc. Output is the easiest area of monitoring because it requires a minimal effort and is entirely within the project administration. Comparing the output produced in a given period (quarter, semester, year, whole project) with the quantities planned for that same period, can determine the accuracy of initial forecasting. At a later stage, once the reasons for discrepancies have been analyzed, actions may be taken to correct (if needed) the forthcoming program;
- **Outcome**: the number of stakeholders who were exposed to the communication activities. This area of communication already exhibits some difficulties: Some data are of an internal nature and can be easily collected, such as attendees of meetings, conferences, or demonstrations; number of people who visited during the open days; number of people on the newsletter distribution list; number of visits to the website, etc. Other data are

more complex to obtain and require surveys, such as the number of listeners to radio programs or the number of people watching TV programs. Consequently some data can be obtained almost daily from the normal administrative data collection undertaken by the agencies, while other data, due to the cost of collection, can only be obtained periodically.

Another aspect of measurement regards the qualitative description the stakeholders provided about themselves: age, gender, income level, ethnicity, education level, etc. Again, some of these extremely important data (age, gender) can be easily collected by the organizers of the events themselves, but other information (education, income, ethnic group) is more delicate and people may refuse to give it. For the stakeholders involved with mass media, such information can obviously only be collected through surveys. The comparison between the predicted number of people that each event or medium was expected to involve, and the number of stakeholders actually involved, should thus be accompanied by justification of discrepancies and appropriate corrections should take place immediately.

- **Impact**: an initial impact might be a change in knowledge, but measuring this variable requires formal questioning that often causes adults to feel as though they are being tested or humiliated. Memorization for future use is a second impact, but again its quantification is almost impossible to measure, without an in-depth study.

  Utilization of knowledge for a real behavioral change is the ultimate goal of most communication activities, but this outcome depends heavily on other factors: political feasibility, availability and cost of inputs, prices of outputs, opportunity costs of rivaling behavior, etc. Still, for managerial purposes, taking into account the indicators set for measuring the project impacts, information collection should be planned for such indicators, to rapidly determine if the project is achieving its intended goals. This leads us to consider what has been written about baseline design and project targets (see Chapter 6). If they were properly elaborated and clearly defined, some impact measurements could be collected via an internal management information system, while others would require surveys or other procedures.

Finally, comparing the measured indicators with the established targets for a given period can indicate appropriate corrections to the communication activities or to other components of the projects, and even to the targets themselves. Table 8.1 reports a simplified example[37] of MIS allowing the implementation of the annual POA of a communication unit to be followed. With this basic information and the knowledge of what has happened during the year, the person

[37] This example is entirely fictitious and there is no reference to existing projects.

Table 8.1: Example of monitoring for communication

	Planned			Achievement			Δ
Product	**no**	**Copies or Participants**	**Total**	**no.**	**Copies or Participants**	**Total**	**%**
Leaflets in Spanish	4	5.000	20.000	3	5.000	15.000	–25
Leaflets in native languages	6	5.000	30.000	7	5.000	35.000	17
Posters in Spanish	2	500	1.000	2	600	1.200	20
Posters in native languages	3	400	1.200	4	400	1.600	33
Calendar in Spanish	1	2.000	2.000	1	3.000	3.000	50
Calendar in native languages	2	1.000	2.000	2	1.000	2.000	0
Game for children in Spanish	1	2.000	2.000	1	2.000	2.000	0
Technical Booklets	3	500	1.500	3	500	1.500	0
Annual Report	1	500	500	3	500	500	0
Budget for printed media 000XX			35			40	14
Workshop with field personnel	6	15	9	5		82	–9
Regional Conference (1day)	1	100	100	1		107	7
National Conference (2days)	1	100	100	1		67	–33
Budget for events 000XX			40			34	–15
Radio spot in Spanish	2	5.000	10.000	2	5.000	10.000	0
Radio spot in native languages	6	2.000	12.000	6	2.000	12.000000	0
Budget for radio 000XX			20			34	–15
T-shirts	1	100	100	1	100	100	0
Cups	1	1.000	1.000	1	1.000	1.000	0
Jackets	1	100	100	1	100	100	0
Bags	1	2.000	2.000	1	2.000	2.000	0
Other godgets		not defined			see annexed list		
Budget for godgets 000XX			25			30	20
Press releases			50			45	–10
Visits with journalists	5	4	20	6		18	–10
Visit with visitors	5	4	20	7		21	5
Budget for PR 000XX			10			8	–20
TOTAL BUDGET 000XX			130			130	0

responsible for the unit can complete his/her evaluation and submit it to higher management.

In table 8.2 it is possible to see another simplified example[38] of monitoring. This project is spending a bit more than forecasted, probably because there is a high use of labor, partially due to time dedicated to individual meetings. There was a higher than forecasted production of media, but the radio audience (mea-

Table 8.2: Example of monitoring data for evaluation

Area	Category	Unit	Target	Actual	Δ %
Input	Economic resources	000$	300	320	6,7
	Human resources	month	24	26	8,3
Output	Individual meetings	no.	200	247	23,5
	Group meetings in rural areas	no.	12	8	–33,3
	Group meetings in urban areas	no.	10	8	–20
	Weekly radio programs (15')	no.	1	1	0,0
	Radio ads (90")	no.	1	1	0,0
	Posters (5,000 copies each)	no.	4	5	25,0
	Leaflets (20,000 copies each)	no.	2	2	0,0
	Annual report of activities (300 copies)	no.	1	1	0,0
Outcome	Persons met individually	no.	200	247	23,5
	Participants in rural areas	no.	240	167	–30,4
	Participants in urban areas	no.	200	246	23,0
	Radio audienc	no.	40.000	35.000	–12,5
	Persons exposed posters	no.			
	Persons exposed leaflets	no.			
	Persons exposed to Annual Report	no.			
Impact	Rural people with favorable opinion	%	50	65	30,0
	Urban people with favorable opinion	%	50	80	60,0
	New national legislation	no.	1	1	0,0
	Parcels registered	no.	10.000	9.789	–2,1
	Area registered	ha	40.000	41.352	3,4
	Parcels purchased	no.	5.000	4.371	–12,6
	Area purchased	ha.	20.000	17.258	–13,2
	Conflicts in discussion	no.	1.000	1.539	53,9
	Area in discussion	ha.	5.000	12.536	150,7

[38] This example is entirely fictional and there is no reference to existing projects.

sured through survey) was lower than expected. There is no information about exposure to posters and leaflets.

Technical results are mixed: legislation has not been drafted yet, the number of holdings registered is smaller than expected, but the area is higher. A notable result is the opinion of farmers about land registration: 82 percent are convinced that land registration is positive for their businesses and their families.

What is not included in the tables is probably even more important: what is the reason for the discrepancies? Why were there so many individual contacts that consequently did not allow group events to be organized? Did participants like the demonstrations? What can they suggest to improve these events? Why was legislation not yet introduced? And what actions or corrections are needed for the future?

Another important area of continuing evaluation for the planners and implementers of the communication strategy is the opinion of stakeholders regarding the different communication methods and media, in terms of messages, codes, formats, frequency, etc. The suggestions they might provide could be of vital importance. Again, through their involvement, focus groups and specific formal surveys, these important aspects should be periodically monitored and the suggestions incorporated into the future activities.

Case 8.1: Improving through evaluation in El Salvador

The Land Administration Project began its operations in 1997 with the aim of regularizing land registration for several million rural and urban land parcels, and strengthening an already efficient and financially self-sustaining authority: the National Registry Council.

In 1998, the story, *El Chambita Medidor* (The small Salvadoran who measures), was created. It depicts a young man who travels the countryside measuring the land. A song was written about the character to help explain to stakeholders that measurement will take place. The song was initially two minutes but was reduced to 51 seconds to better fit into radio programs. The communication budget allocated 70 percent of resources for field operations (including salaries, operational costs for promoters and the recently established hot line) and 30 percent for mass communication, of which 60 percent was allocated for radio and 40 percent for printed materials.

Mass communication is largely based on radio spots, with short stories with the well-known jingle saying that *El Chambita Medidor* is coming to

measure the parcels. These radio announcements cover the whole country. Schedules are carefully planned to avoid times when there is other excessive communication (Christmas, Easter) or pre-electoral weeks.

Other mass communication is made with the same jingle broadcast through local radios or market radios, with the addition of a phrase indicating that the measurement will take place. On the first day of measurement, cars with loudspeakers move throughout the area, reminding everyone that the registration operations have started.

Posters, leaflets, and comic books for children are distributed in the area to be measured to strengthen the message. The comic books describe similar situations and are useful for delivering suggestions to illiterate adults via their children.

Field communication activities are extremely important to reinforce the message and to ensure that when the measurement staff arrives, owners or occupants of all parcels will be there, with the necessary (if available) documentation. Field operations are divided into two phases:

First phase (diagnosis and analysis): about 30 days before the technical staff comes, the promoter scouts the area, checks the correspondence with existing maps, verifies that roads and streets are accessible, takes note of crops, speaks with people about what is going on, introduces himself or herself. He or she begins to hang the posters in visible places and distributes leaflets. On another day, not necessarily the following one, the promoter goes again to the same area, sometimes accompanied by other personnel, sometimes with a supervisor or NRC staff, to visit the local leaders (mayors, clergy, health operators, presidents of neighborhood council, teachers, police, etc.) in order to ask for their support. Meetings are organized for the entire population.

Second phase (local promotion): four days during the week before the measurement staff arrives are devoted to intensive interpersonal communication in the area. The aim is to ensure that all owners, occupants or empowered relatives, will be present on the measurement days, ready with their documents (if they have any) and willing to cooperate. The promotion consists of several meetings, previously organized with local leaders, with groups or individuals, to explain the reasons and benefits, reduce the fear of new taxation, define the timing of operations and get names and telephone numbers. All this information is given to the supervisor. The fifth day coincides with the first day that the technical staff come to the area. On this day the promoter accompanies the supervisors and technical staff. The car with a loudspeaker goes throughout the area.

Monitoring and evaluation of the communication activities

Output (radio transmissions, posters, information in the dailies, field activities, etc.) is monitored constantly.

In 2001, a formal evaluation of the communication activities was carried out, interviewing about 3,000 people in the departments of Ahuchapan, Santa Ana and San Salvador. In the last one, field operations had not yet started, but the project management wanted to explore the level of awareness already existing. It turned out that it was quite high (70 percent in San Salvador) and that 76 percent knew that **CNR** was measuring the parcels. The Chambita medidor was known by 81 percent of the people (86 percent in San Salvador).

Radio spots were the most important information medium (88 percent), with all other methods influencing less than 10–15 percent of audiences. Also in the areas where field promotion had been carried out, the vast majority of respondents attributed their knowledge to radio spots. What people remembered about the message was also measured and 62 percent still remembered it. The radio message was considered easy to understand (86 percent) and very much appreciated (71 percent); 65 percent liked the song and 77 percent suggested making no changes.

Other methods or media referred to by the respondents were the home visits (11.5 percent and 12.3 percent, respectively for Santa Ana and Ahuachapan), the announcements in the daily newspapers (4.5 percent and 3.1 percent), the cars with loudspeakers (13.5 percent and 9.8 percent), the leaflets (5.7 percent and 4.2 percent), the posters (10.0 percent and 3.4 percent) and the comic books (1.4 percent and 0.5 percent). In the future, respondents suggested also using television (46 percent), to be more informative and explain better why measuring the property was important (25 percent) and generally to make more promotion (24 percent).

Following this study, and also taking into consideration observations made by field personnel and other staff, changes in the format and contents of both graphic and spoken communication were proposed. The focus group method was used in order to validate the suggested changes, before their implementation, with one group from the rural area and another one from the urban area.

The new messages are now more gender sensitive: in the radio spots some new characters are women, and a woman also appears on the posters. The name of areas under measurement is not printed and there is an empty space where it must be written with block letters by the field promoters. This allows the production cost to be reduced, eliminates the waste of leftover posters and allows the message to be located better. The poster

size has been reduced and it is now horizontal. The name of the measuring firm has been removed, because it was misleading and to avoid waste of money on unusable materials. Only the NCR logo appears on posters, t-shirt, caps and other gadgets. Furthermore this allows the same materials to be used by all firms, with evident scale economies. Positioning of posters in public places has improved and radio transmissions are better timed to meet the highest number of listeners. Leaflets are printed on cheaper paper, only in black and white, and in much larger quantities.

Conclusion (lessons learned)

The communication strategy of this agency is proving quite successful, because several aspects have been positively combined: the organizational setting, the appropriate mix of mass media and labor intensive methods, continuous monitoring and periodic evaluations. All stakeholders participate in the evaluation and contribute with their opinions and suggestions: Field agents who record what they feel and see while talking with the people, supervisors, the measurement personnel, the hotline operators who take note of the typology of questions, and the beneficiaries, via formal focus groups and surveys. These elements merge with the attention to budget and to cost effectiveness, allowing a better and more cost-effective strategy to be produced.

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USEFUL WEBSITES

Internet allows unlimited access to millions of pages of materials about all aspects of rural development and communication. There are hundreds of websites, in all languages. The following is a list of only a small number of suggestions, in English. Many of the sites also have French or Spanish versions, or links with other sites in these languages.

http://web.aces.uiuc.edu/agcomdb/docctr.html Communication for development at University of Illinois.

http://www.aged.tamu.edu/aiaee/ The International Association for Agricultural Extension and Education.

http://www.agricta.org Agriculture and rural development, with European experiences in developing countries.

www.amarc.org International Association of Community Radios.

www.apc.org Association for progressive communication, linked with several alternative information sources.

www.bytesforall.org Site coveri ng applications of information technology.

www.CHOIKE.org Portal of Southern Civil Society, deals with developing countries issues.

http://www.cmsindia.org/ Center for media studies.

http://www.comminit.com/ The communication initiative, a partnership of ONG and Foundations.

www.DEC.org Site of the Development Experience Clearinghouse, with reports about USAID activities all around the world.

www.devmedia.org, Site linking people interested in the use of media for communication and development.

http://www.digitaldividenetwork.org A site devoted to internet and communication.

http://www.enrap.org/ Internet for rural development, with a focus on Asia.

http://www.fao.org/sd/KN1_en.htm The FAO website about communication, extension and education.

www.globalknowledge.org Site of the Global Knowledge Partnership.

www.gdnet.org, Global Development Network.

www.gdln.org, Global Development Learning Network.
www.iicd.org International Institute for Communication and Development.
www.iied.org Leading research institute on themes regarding sustainable development and environment.
www.iucn.org/cec The site of the Commission for Education at the International Union for Conservation of Nature.
www.odi.org.uk Overseas development institute, with research and consultancies all over the world. Very interesting for extension, communication and research in agriculture, rural development, etc.
http://portal.unesco.org/ci/, Communication and information at UNESCO.
www.worldbank.org/rural, Agriculture and Rural Development at the World Bank.

ABBREVIATIONS

AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Information System
CDD	Community Driven Development
CSD	Committee of Sustainable Development
CSO	Civil Society Organization
HYV	High Yield Variety
ICR	Implementation Completion Report
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
KMS	Knowledge Management System
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MIS	Management Information System
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
OED	Operations Evaluation Department
PAD	Project Appraisal Document
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
PRRA	Participatory Rapid Rural Appraisal
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
RDP	Rural Development Project
R&D	Research and Development
SAR	South Africa Region
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
WB	The World Bank