



Communication for Development: meeting today's agriculture and rural development challenges

Background Paper

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INTRODUCTION

Communication for development has grown after World War II both as a discipline and a field practice. The comprehensive use of communication in development programmes developed in different directions in various geographic, cultural, social and economic contexts. Several development communication models have been around since the 1950's, some based on academic exercises and some proceeding from field experience. Models have developed often with marked and irreconcilable differences, though in recent years there is a trend leading towards convergence.

Two main trends have dominated five decades of development communication: firstly, communication models inspired by modernisation theories and techniques derived from the information strategies used by the US Government during World War II and by the industrial sector struggling to position its post-war products; secondly, communication approaches that emerged in the heat of the social and political struggle against colonial and dictatorial powers imposed on Third World countries, which have their conceptual reference point in the dependency theories.

Models related to modernisation theories support the expansion of markets and the assimilation of large masses of marginalized population, through mechanisms of persuasion and strategies of information transfer and dissemination of innovations and technologies. The main premise of these models is that information and knowledge, *per se*, generate development, whereas local culture and traditions stand as barriers for Third World countries to reach levels of development similar to those of industrialised countries. Because of their straightforward link with US official foreign policy, these models have been dominant in international cooperation for several decades.

The models that emerged from the independence experiences of Africa, Asia and Latin America, are conversely intimately linked to political and social events, and in a larger sense to values and expressions of cultural identity. Their main premise is that the underlying causes of underdevelopment are structural and have to do with land tenure, lack of collective civil liberties, oppression of indigenous cultures, and social inequity, among other political and social issues. These communication models promote social change rather than individual behavioural change, and suggest actions that emerge *from* the communities and not just *for* the communities. They consider that communication and participation are two sides of the same coin. The involvement of local stakeholders is essential in the entire spectrum of alternative, horizontal and participatory communication models.

Both major currents - modernisation and participation - evolved for several decades, often in open confrontation on the theoretical level as well as in social applications. During the 90's, however, some elements of convergence appeared in models that combine the use of mass media with educational and participatory approaches.

The United Nations System has a long history of supporting the conceptualisation and implementation of communication for development programmes and projects. Agencies such as UNESCO, FAO and UNICEF have been among the main international referents for this area, because they have traditionally supported communication for development as a programmatic central tool for sustainable development through civil society participation.

I. COMMUNICATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT TODAY

At the beginning of this century, communication for development and social change appears as the paradigm that recovers and deepens the path that participatory, alternative and development communication had cleared, while also integrating progressive features from current modernisation models. It questions at all levels the concept of development that does not include the population that is directly affected, and promotes a communication process that supports effective community participation, particularly of the most impoverished and marginalized sectors of society.

1. Key communication concepts in development

Communication for Development (ComDev)

Communication for Development (ComDev) is a social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. ComDev is about seeking change at different levels including listening, establishing trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change. It is not public relations or corporate communication. (WCCD, The Rome Consensus). The ComDev process goes beyond information dissemination to facilitate active participation and stakeholder dialogue. It highlights the importance of raising awareness, the cultural dimensions of development, local knowledge, experiential learning, information sharing and the active participation of rural people and other stakeholders in decision making. (FAO)

Communication for Empowerment (C4E)

Communication for Empowerment is an approach that puts the information and communication needs and interests of disempowered and marginalized groups at the centre of media support. The aim of Communication for Empowerment is to ensure that the media has the capacity and capability to generate and provide the information that marginalized groups want and need and to provide a channel for marginalized groups to discuss and voice their perspectives on the issues that most concern them. (UNDP Oslo)

A combination of factors, particularly the accumulation of practitioner knowledge and experience, as well as changes in the media environment, provides greater impetus to prioritizing Communication for Empowerment interventions. There is also a growing realization by key development actors that Communication for Empowerment is a fundamental underpinning for participation and ownership in achieving the MDGs.

Communication for Social Change (CFSC)

Communication for Social Change is a process of public and private dialogue through which people themselves define who they are, what they need and how to get what they need in order to improve their own lives. It utilizes dialogue that leads to collective problem identification, decision-making and community-based implementation of solutions to development issues. It is communication in the interest of the people who define what their interests are. (CFSC Consortium)

2. A recent history of Communication for Development

During the past five decades, at least two main visions on development compete: on the one hand, the hegemonic perspective blaming world poverty on cultural barriers, lack of information and education, and local political structures; on the other hand, those who asserted that underdevelopment and poverty were not merely the product of ancestral cultural defects, but of a system of exploitation of poor countries by rich countries, and of enormous social inequalities between the rich and poor in each country. In other words, there were structural reasons –political, economic, social, cultural, legal- that explained the real causes of underdevelopment and dependency. These ideas were expressed in the dependency theories.

Both social and political action as the framework for theoretical analysis had an influence on the emergence of countless experiences of alternative and participatory communication in community contexts, urban as well as rural, and their main objective was to conquer spaces for expression which had been inexistent until then. These experiences developed without being a previously designed and tested communicational model.

Furthermore, communicational theory in relation to these experiences began to be prepared much later. So for many years, and even today, different names were used to refer to these communication experiences: popular, horizontal, dialogical, alternative, participatory, endogenous, etc. Somehow all involved the same elements and formed part of the broader concept of communication for social change.

UNESCO McBride report revealed alarming data about the situation of information and communication in the world. Two or three news agencies in the United States controlled two thirds of the information flow, and there were no national or regional agencies in Africa, Asia or Latin America, which could offer a different perspective. Large information conglomerates –today they are even larger- controlled networks of newspaper publications, radio and television. The vast majorities in each country were excluded and had no possibility of expressing themselves through the existing means. As a consequence of this report and the actions taken on behalf of the New Order of Information and Communication, the United States withdrew from UNESCO (MacBride, 1980).

From the beginning of the early 1970s communication for development has been mainly promoted by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), emphasizing appropriate technology, which could be adopted by the poor communities, and suggesting the need to establish knowledge sharing between rural people and institutional experts, instead of assuming that the solution is a unidirectional “transfer” of knowledge or, really, information dissemination. Communication for development, as well as valuing local knowledge, understood the need to respect traditional forms of social organization and strengthen them in order to have a valid and representative interlocutor.

Alternative media –another strong trend- is the least institutional model; in fact, it is not a model. It emerged first as a large variety of experiences, throughout the length and breadth of the planet, and it was not until later that an effort was made to prepare a theory around it. Experiences of alternative media emerged in the heat of the social struggles. This dealt with non-conformist efforts, with conquering communication spaces in neo-colonial, repressive societies. Peasants, workers, students, miners, women, youth, indigenous people and other sectors excluded from political

participation created their own communication media because they had no possibility of access to the State or private sector's information media.

Different social groups, grouped together by ideology, by their common needs, by their decision to conquer a space of public expression –now called the public sphere– created community radios, magazines and popular daily papers, and sometimes small television channels. The fundamental aspect of alternative media is the *appropriation* of the media. This does not mean that the private media were taken by force, although there were cases of this. The sense of “appropriation” should be understood as a way of developing separate, community and collective capacity, of adopting communication and the media as a process which contributes to social struggles.

Communication for social change is the most recent formulation of practices that have always been around, mostly within the participatory and alternative communication experiences, and partly among communication for development projects. Its theoretical formulation only started in 1997, with a series of meetings that The Rockefeller Foundation organised to discuss the role of communication in social change. Similar to alternative communication, the process is more important than the products. The participation of social actors, who are in turn communicators, takes place within a process of collective growth that precedes the creation of messages and products such as a radio programme, a video documentary or a pamphlet. Messages and their dissemination are just additional elements of the communication process. Another similarity with alternative media is the importance attached to the *appropriation* of the communication process, not just the ownership of media.

Communication for social change and communication for development are both concerned with culture and tradition, respect for local knowledge, and dialogue between development specialists and communities. Communication for social change does not attempt to anticipate which media, messages or techniques are better, because it relies on the process itself, rooted in the community from which the proposed action must emerge.

In recent years a new wave of new communication and information technologies (ICTs), including the so-called “social networks” has entered the field of development with mixed results. On the one hand, the new technologies available seem to democratize the access to information and horizontal communication between individuals and communities with like interests, but on the other hand the fascination for the tools overshadows local content creation and the adequate management of these new tools for the benefit of development. In some sense, this new wave repeats the errors of the “diffusion of innovations” of the 1970s, which claimed that poverty and underdevelopment was only a matter of lack of information and not of social justice.

The ICTs set-ups around the world, including in very poor countries have multiplied and donors have heavily invested in hardware and software, but not with a strategic vision. Communication for development practice is often absent in these projects, communities do not participate in the decision-making process, and contents adapted to real local needs are not developed. Several recent independent studies point to more failures than successes in the use of ICTs for development and the real impact in development of “social networks” in the poorest and most in-need communities in developing countries in the world.

3. The United Nations System and Communication for Development

The United Nations System has a long history of supporting the conceptualisation and implementation of communication for development programmes and projects. Agencies such as UNESCO, FAO and UNICEF have been among the main international referents for this area, because they have traditionally supported communication for development as a programmatic central strategy for sustainable development through civil society participation.

FAO has been very active in the field, through its Regional Advisors for Communication and key long-term programmes (such as PRODERITH or CESPAN) that demonstrated the direct link between development and communication. In 2006 FAO was one of the organisers and the host of the very first World Congress of Communication for Development (WCCD), which took place in Rome and gathered hundreds of delegates from all organisations related to ComDev in the world. Unfortunately, high management levels at FAO Headquarters in Rome have not been as supportive to ComDev as in the past, and thus FAO has lost much of the prominent leadership that it had during the 1970s and 1980s.

Similarly, UNESCO, through its Communication for Development division, its regional advisors and country offices' specialists, has been very active during the past three decades promoting participatory projects of independent media, including television, community radio, the use of satellites for education, and more recently the Community Multimedia Centres (CMC). Besides, it has supported numerous studies and meetings of experts in the field of ComDev, which often resulted in key concept developments and publications that have enriched the field. The MacBride Commission and report, was a key contribution in 1980, and more recently the *World Report Towards Knowledge Societies* (UNESCO, 2005).

With James Grant as Executive Director (1980-1995) UNICEF was committed, at the highest level, to "programme communication", a similar concept to communication for development, involving participatory approaches. UNICEF has been the only UN agency to have international communication staff at the country level, as well as regional advisors. However, the Programme Communication area was gradually downgraded during the 1990s and instead, the Information Division, dealing more with visibility and fundraising, was enhanced. In the field, many communication officials have been very active supporting ComDev and projects that are community based and participatory, in line with the ComDev, C4E and CCS principles.

UNDP approved the 2008-2011 Strategic Plan that recognises that communication channels are key determinants of *inclusive participation*, which is a key focus for the work of UNDP in the area of democratic governance. The UNDP Oslo Governance Centre produced in 2006 with technical support from the Communication from Social Change Consortium a key report on Communication for Empowerment, which in terms of policy and strategy places UNDP in a good position to support communication in the field.

In July 2008, during the 63rd period of sessions of the General Assembly, the Secretary General of the United Nations transmitted the report "Communication for Development Programmes within the United Nations System", presented by the Director General of UNESCO in conformity with Resolution 50/130 of the General Assembly.

The Resolution A/RES/50/130 of 23 February 1996, at the 96th Plenary Meeting of the 50th General Assembly, has a number of important points to guide the action of UN development agencies and programmes. For example:

6. Encourages the relevant agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, as appropriate, to use informal mechanisms such as round-table conferences to improve communication for development programmes in the United Nations system;

7. Emphasizes the need for the relevant agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system to develop a systematic approach to capacity-building in the development of communication capacities, particularly with respect to the training of field workers and development workers and technicians as well as communication planners and specialists, especially in the developing countries;

8. Invites the relevant agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as Governments and the regional commissions, to consider identifying focal points for the purpose of facilitating dialogue in the exchange of information on communication on issues related to development so as to strengthen coordination and international cooperation in this area.

This is a key resolution because the UN General Assembly acknowledges “the need for the improvement of the development of communication capacities within the United Nations system to ensure effective inter-agency coordination and cooperation” and recognises “the pivotal role of communication in the successful implementation of development programmes within the United Nations system and in the improvement of the interaction among actors in development, namely, the agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, Governments and non-governmental organizations”.

It signals the need to improve “the effectiveness of programme delivery as regards development programmes of the United Nations system as a development partner in the development of the developing countries” and “recognizes the important role of communication for development programmes in the United Nations system in enhancing the transparency of system-wide coordination within the United Nations system, inter alia, for the development of the developing countries”.

It also clearly highlights the collaboration with civil society organisations:

Civil society groups and non-governmental organizations should participate in defining national strategies for communication for development from the inception stages of planning.

The very last paragraph of the Conclusions and Recommendations argues in the same direction:

Communication is more than a tool for generating and disseminating content and should be used to facilitate relevant social change processes. The growing number of designated communication for development focal points from practising and non-practising agencies, funds and programmes demonstrates the growing momentum of both need and interest.

Communication for development is seen as crucial for coordination and efficiency among agencies in the grounds of “Delivering as One”, however little is done at the country level to follow-up on the above recommendations.

4. Interagency Communication for Development Round Tables

For more than three decades UN agencies and organisations have been meeting at the highest level among themselves and with key partners to discuss communication for development, providing important analysis and guidance to the development world on the use of communication as a tool for sustainability and participation.

The UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development, first introduced in 1986, plays a significant role in bringing together United Nations agencies, bilateral and multilateral donors, foundations, non-governmental organizations, scholars and a number of practitioners in development communication from throughout the world. The round tables, eleven to date, are organised by a different agency each time, which is an example of inter-agency collaboration in the perspective of “delivering as one”. In exchanging with multiple partners from civil society, such as foundations and networks, the UN system has greatly enriched its own philosophy on communication for development.

The round table meets every two years to discuss and assess the current trends in communication for development and provide strategic direction and input to development communication programmes for the members of the round table and the larger development community. It stresses the need to support two-way communication systems that enable dialogue and that allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that relate to their development, and was conceived as an informal international forum for donors and those working in communication where approaches could be harmonized, news of progress given and good practices shared. It also represents an opportunity to share information and experience, coordinate efforts and add to the growing knowledge base within communication for development¹.

During the course of these meetings there has been a perceptible shift from information dissemination to a focus on Communication for Development (ComDev) as a crucial enabler of effective community participation. The round tables have succeeded in bringing recognition to grassroots needs, justifying the need for resource mobilization, emphasizing the importance of human rights and achieving recognition of the purpose of the round tables, i.e. mobilizing the participation of the international community at large; supporting increased human capacity in communication; and securing resources that contribute towards the growth of communication for development.

The UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development makes an effort to contribute innovative ideas and creative solutions to development by putting into perspective a better future and a better world.

Apart from the expert consultations that both FAO and UNESCO organised during the 1970s, the early UN round tables were relatively informal and only those agencies with an active communication for development component and a few partner organisations were involved. UNICEF organized the first round table in March, 1988, in New York.

¹ http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=21370&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

The second was coordinated by CIDA/IDRC25 in Ottawa in July 1989. The third was hosted by FAO in Rome in September 1991. Round tables 4 and 5 were organized by NGOs - the fourth was organized by the Instituto para America Latina (IPAL) in Lima in 1993 and World View International Foundation took responsibility for hosting the fifth round table that took place in 1995 in Chiang Mai, Thailand in January². These first Round tables shared similar objectives, which were to exchange information and experiences, agree on the concept of communication for development, and consider ways to achieve a greater profile for this theme with high-level decision-makers within the agencies.

In 1994 the UN General Assembly recognized the round table as “an important mechanism of inter-agency cooperation and coordination for promoting and advancing communication for development” and requested the UN Secretary-General, in consultation with the UNESCO Director-General, to submit biennial reports on the round table's implementation³. Six round tables have taken place since then, organized on the basis of a common theme influenced by current trends and practice:

6th UN Round Table – 1996: Held in Zimbabwe in 1996 and convened by UNESCO, focused on ‘Communication Access for Rural Development’. The objectives were to share information and experiences to provide a solid base for inter-agency cooperation, and to explore common strategies and identify mechanisms to improve (i) interaction between development actors, (ii) knowledge of the various UN organizations, governments and NGOs. The Round table focused on Communication for Development at the grassroots and community level, and in particular the appropriate communication techniques, methods and technologies to increase people's participation and catalyze the creation and sharing of knowledge and skills – concepts separate and distinct from public information. It recommended that Communication for Development should be viewed as an integral component of development projects and programmes, and that communities should be provided with the skills and equipment to voice their opinions and aspirations⁴.

7th UN Round Table – 1998: Held in 1998 in Salvador, Brazil, and coordinated by UNICEF, it focused on ‘Communication for Social Change and Development’. Its objectives were to share information, experiences, lessons learned; develop strategies and common approaches; and to identify mechanisms for collaboration among participants. The round table addressed four major themes on which working groups made recommendations: a) Developing the concept of Communication for Development, b) Evaluation of specialized programmes; c) Knowledge strengthening, d) Communication and behavioural change through community media. The Roundtable concluded that greater priority needed to be given to evaluating communication programmes and more resources should be dedicated to developing capacities for catalyzing changes in behaviour change.

8th UN Round Table – 2001: Held in 2001 in Managua, Nicaragua, and organized by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in collaboration with the Panos Institute, the Rockefeller Foundation and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Roundtable focused on the

² Overview of UN Inter-Agency Round Tables on Communication for Development, Background Paper.

³ 11th UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development – January 2009

⁴ Harnessing Communication To Achieve The Millennium Development Goals. Background Papers prepared for the 10th UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development - 2007

⁵ Overview of UN Inter-Agency Round Tables on Communication for Development, Background Paper.
11th UN Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development – January 2009

HIV/AIDS pandemic and the communication challenges it presents. The discussions examined the role of communication, its successes and failures, and gave the opportunity to incorporate the cumulative expertise of the development communication sector into the global response to HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS presents unique challenges for development communicators. In the absence of a cure, the capacity of people to communicate with each other and to change their behaviour as the result of such communication is the central element in prevention, care and mitigation of the impact of the epidemic. The long-term goals for communicators include improved inter-agency collaboration in areas such as education and communication in reproductive health for adolescents, the retention of prevention, care and mitigation of the impact of the epidemic high on participants' agendas, and strengthened alliances between governments and civil societies to maintain progress on such themes as rights, gender equity and social equality and reproductive and sexual health. In addition participants agreed that immediate steps for further action would include increased knowledge-sharing, the formation of an international brains trust on HIV/AIDS communication strategies and tools, together with flexible but sustained external funding for professionally sound programming.

9th UN Round Table – 2004: Hosted by FAO and organized in collaboration with UNESCO, the World Bank and IDRC, with financial contribution of the Government of Italy and CTA. It took place in Rome, Italy, from 6 to 9 September 2004. This round table focused on 'Communication and Sustainable Development' and addressed three key themes: Communication for Natural Resource Management, Communication for Isolated and Marginalized Groups and Communication in Research, Extension and Education. The round table recognized the need for increased human and financial resources in communication for development; the need to harmonize approaches allowing for greater collaboration and networking; and the need to identify priorities and activities within the Plan of Action which will consolidate alliances and partnerships. The round table affirmed that a communication for development approach is essential for bridging the rural 'digital-divide' and to provide universal information access to rural populations. This should support the creation of local content and ownership, taking full advantage of the convergence between 'conventional' media, such as rural radio and new information and communication technologies.

The 9th UN Round Table provided an overall framework for advancing communication in sustainable development policies. It reiterates the need to enhance local capacities and to design new communication strategies to meet the new development challenges. In its final declaration the round table identified the key challenges and opportunities.

The main recommendations insist on the policy dimension and the need to evaluate:

- *Policies and resources – Communication for development initiatives need to be properly enabled by concerted actions, and adequate policies and resources, both human and material. These should consider longer timescales.*
- *National governments should implement a legal and supportive framework favouring the right to free expression and emergence of free and pluralistic information systems, including the recognition of the specific and crucial*

role of community media in providing access to communication for the isolated and marginalized.

- *The Roundtable recommends research that addresses how to achieve and sustain the process and outcomes of ComDev. This requires a participatory approach, a shared framework between development agencies and local stakeholders and community involvement in design, implementation and dissemination.*
- *Evaluation and impact assessments should include participatory baseline and communication needs assessments. They should also include self-evaluation by the communities themselves and be socially useful. They should be used to feed back at policy level.*

During the 9th Roundtable five crosscutting issues emerged as priority areas for collaboration among UN agencies, NGOs and Academy:

- *Advocacy - to foster the scaling up of ComDev initiatives and ensure that adequate attention and resources are devoted at the policy as well as at the field level. ComDev has to be recognized as a central component in all development initiatives.*
- *Learning and Capacity Building - Training initiatives should focus on collaborative learning, encouraging experiential, value-based, and culturally sensitive training in ComDev across the regions.*
- *Building Alliances - Effective linkages and joint communication initiatives to give voices to the poorest and to influence decision-making on sustainable development issues. Special attention should be given to fostering national and regional ComDev strategies and initiatives.*
- *Research, Monitoring and Evaluation - Applied research and ComDev monitoring and evaluation (M&E) methodologies have to be fostered. An evidentiary base about the impacts and how to achieve and sustain ComDev policies and projects should be developed.*
- *Information Sharing - Information sharing is a strategic for advocacy, building alliances, and supporting capacity building. An information sharing mechanism should facilitate partnerships and contribute to the definition of a common agenda in ComDev and implementing joint initiatives at the global, regional and national level.*

The accumulation of experience and exchanges through the round tables since 1986, led to the World Congress of Communication for Development (WCCD) in Rome, October 2006. The Rome Consensus agreed that the international forum should be for the UN system a central reference guiding the communication strategies for “delivering as one”.

10th UN Round Table – 2007: Held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 12 to 14 February 2007, convened on the theme ‘Harnessing Communication to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals: Towards a Common System Approach’. The theme was selected because of the unprecedented political support for the MDGs, which provide a strong unifying basis for inter-agency collaboration, and the recognition of Communication for Development’s potential to help deliver the

MDGs. The round table focused on practical and achievable interventions around which UN organizations could develop a common approach, strategy and action plan for the implementation of communication for development practices at the country level; and provided future directions to the communication for development agenda in UN system.

The meeting's objectives were to increase joint inter-agency collaboration at Headquarters and UN Country Team levels; strengthen awareness among UN system organizations on ways in which the impact and effectiveness of communication for development can be measured; and introduce mechanisms to harmonize communication for development programming approaches within the UN system. The round table provided an important forum to take stock of the extensive range and scope of communication for development-related initiatives and activities being implemented by the UN system. It also sought to advance the agenda by focusing on practical and achievable interventions, around which UN system organizations could develop a common approach, strategy and basis for an action plan that would harness communication for development. The focus on the Millennium Development Goals reflected the Millennium Declaration's centrality in UN development efforts and its potential as a strong unifying basis for Inter-agency collaboration.

11th UN Round Table – 2009: Held in Washington, DC from March on 11 to 13, 2009 and was jointly organized by the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, with the contribution of UNICEF, FAO, UNESCO and ILO. The meeting was convened to discuss the theme 'Moving Communication for Development up the International Development Agenda: Demonstrating Impact and Positioning Institutionally'. The meeting also offered an opportunity to review current ComDev activities across UN agencies and the invited partners, discuss challenges and courses of action to strengthen the institutional position of ComDev, and further improve monitoring and evaluation of ComDev programmes.

The objectives of the meeting were "to review the evidence across sectors and agencies about how to assess the impact of communication for development (ComDev) and present results clearly and concretely; discuss how to position communication for development as a self-standing area of work in development, including the optimal institutional arrangements; review the use of communication-based research approaches to enhance project design and assess communication as a sector in client countries; and discuss ComDev training and learning programmes designed to strengthen skills and ensure rigorous quality standards."

Participants at the round table agreed on the following recommendations:

- *Develop a UN Round Table advocacy strategy for ComDev that includes materials documenting good practices in key ComDev programmes;*
- *Develop and implement a common learning framework on ComDev in order to enhance the capacity of UN agencies, governments and external actors;*
- *Conduct advocacy actions to promote ComDev at country and regional levels;*
- *Coordinate common efforts closely with other inter-agency mechanisms.*

Some organisations renewed their commitment to communication for development and some other agencies stated how far (or how short) they are from abiding to the

resolutions of the UN General Assembly. As stated in the final report, several agencies acknowledged they are not really implementing any communication for development initiatives.

Most interestingly, the background paper prepared for the round table by Warren Feek and Chris Morry (The Communication Initiative) included the results of a survey conducted with UN staff about the institutional position of communication for development. To the question "how does institutionalisation of ComDev take place in agencies?" 45.5% responded "at discretion of project managers" and only 29% "mandated by formal policy". To the question "what challenges complicate efforts to centralize ComDev?" 67% responded that it is due to the "absence of clear comprehension of ComDev", 61% to the "lack of understanding of added value" and 46% thought the reason was "few managers with ComDev backgrounds".

The final report of the round table underlines the discrepancy in the way communication for development is perceived: "the discussion addressed the different ways in which communication impact is conceptualized. Whereas some agencies talked about impact in terms of development issues, others stressed the "efficient" delivery of communication for development programmes. Different expectations in each agency require communication officers to clarify how and where to position communication for development in their respective organizations."

World Congress of Communication for Development (WCCD) - 2006

As mentioned earlier, the accumulation of experience and exchanges through the round tables from 1986 to 2004, led to the World Congress of Communication for Development (WCCD) in Rome, October 2006.

This was the largest possible meeting of institutions and individuals concerned with communication for development in the world. The congress, convened at FAO by three organisations (FAO, the World Bank and The Communication Initiative) was open to UN agencies, universities, experts, policy makers, practitioners, NGOs, and everyone with experience and trajectory in the field of communication for development. More than one thousand organisations and individuals participated in three main thematic areas: health, governance and sustainable development.

The WCCD "sought to provide the evidence and make the arguments for placing Communication for Development much closer to the centre of development policy and practice. The Congress did so by creating a space for practitioners, academicians, and decision makers to come together formally and informally to review impact data, share experiences on processes and approaches, listen to stories, learn from new research, and strengthen the networks that will carry the work of the Congress beyond Rome. The presentations and discussions underlined the importance of Communication for Development and distinguished it from communication per se for an influential audience not steeped in the lessons and experiences of the field"⁵.

A short declaration, labelled "The Rome Consensus" was issued at the end of the congress. Under the subtitle "Communication for development, a major pillar for development and change", the document pointed in its introduction to the experience acquired in different programmes and countries and the challenges ahead. It then captured a consensual definition of "communication for development", underlining that

⁵ World Congress on Communication for Development - Lessons, Challenges and the Way forward.
<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/010/ai143e/ai143e00.pdf>

“it is not public relations or corporate communication”, and mentioned the “strategic requirements”, which stand out as philosophical principles of communication for development since its initial conceptualisation:

- *The right and possibility for people to participate in the decision making processes that affect their lives*
- *Creating opportunities for the sharing of knowledge of skills.*
- *Ensuring that people have access to communication tools so that they can themselves communicate within their communities and with the people making the decisions that affect them – for example community radio and other community media*
- *The process of dialogue, debate and engagement that builds public policies that are relevant, helpful and which have committed constituencies willing to implement them – for example on responding to preserving the environment.*
- *Recognising and harnessing the communication trends that are taking place at local, national and international levels for improved development action – from new media regulations and ICT trends to popular and traditional music.*
- *Adopting an approach that is contextualised within cultures.*
- *Related to all of the above a priority on supporting the people most affected by the development issues in their communities and countries to have their say, to voice their perspectives and to contribute and act on their ideas for improving their situation – for example indigenous people and people living with HIV/AIDS.*

The recommendations spelled in “The Rome Consensus” are, in 2011, still part of the “pending” agenda:

1. *Overall national development policies should include specific communication for development components.*
2. *Development organisations should include communication for development as a central element at the inception of programmes.*
3. *Strengthen the communication for development capacity within countries and organisations at all levels. This includes: people in their communities; communication for development specialists and other staff including through the further development of training courses and academic programmes.*
4. *Expand the level of financial investment to ensure adequate, coordinated, financing of the core elements of communication for development as outlined under Strategic Requirements above. This includes budget line[s] for development communication.*
5. *Adoption and implement of policies and legislation that provide an enabling environment for communication for development – including free and pluralistic media, the right to information and to communicate.*

6. *Development communication programmes should be required to identify and include appropriate monitoring and evaluation indicators and methodologies throughout the process*
7. *Strengthen partnerships and networks at international, national and local levels to advance communication for development and improve development outcomes*
8. *Move towards a rights based approach to communication for development*

5. Current trends in sustainable development

In the last twenty years sustainable development has emerged as one of the most prominent development paradigms. In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) concluded with a report containing the well known definition “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Elliot, 2004). Three dimensions are generally recognized as the “pillars” of sustainable development (Harris, 2000):

Economic dimension: *a sustainable system must be able to produce goods and services on a continuing basis, to maintain manageable levels of government and external debt, and to avoid extreme sectoral imbalances, which damage agricultural or industrial production.*

Environmental dimension: *the system must maintain its resource base, avoiding over exploitation of natural renewable resources or sink resources, on depleting non-renewable resources; this includes the maintenance of biodiversity, atmospheric stability and other ecosystem functions not ordinarily classified as economic resources (e.g. the beauty of some landscapes).*

Social dimension: *the system must achieve distributional equity, adequate provision of social services, including health and education, gender equity, respect for minorities, political accountability and participation (see e.g. Anand and Sen, 1996).*

FAO elaborated the concept of Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development (SARD), that implies “the management and conservation of the natural resource base, and the orientation of technological and institutional challenges in such a manner as to ensure the attainment and continued satisfaction of human needs, for present and future generations. Such sustainable development (in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors) conserves land, water, plant and animal genetic resources, is environmentally non degrading, technically appropriate, economically viable and socially acceptable” (FAO, 1989).

After the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, the concept of sustainable development was widely accepted as a steering paradigm integrating economic growth, social development and environmental protection as interdependent and mutually supportive elements of long-term development. In September 2000, The United Nations declared Environmental Sustainability as one of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and established to integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and to reverse the loss of environmental resources as one of the three targets to be achieved.

Different perspectives have influenced over the years the holistic and integrated vision of sustainable development, nevertheless, one of the central ideas is that there is no universal development model which leads to sustainability at all levels of society and the world. Development is an integral, multidimensional, and dialectic process that can differ from society to society, community to community, context to context.

Sustainable Development implies a participatory, multi-stakeholder approach to policy making and implementation, mobilizing public and private resources for development and making use of the knowledge, skills and energy of all social groups concerned with the future of the planet and its people. Within this framework, communication plays a strategic and fundamental role contributing to the interplay of the different development factors, improving the sharing of knowledge and information as well as the active participation of all concerned.

6. Role of ComDev for agriculture and rural development

For communication processes in development to be continuous and effective, it is imperative to conceptualize *sustainable communication for a sustainable development*. (Gumucio, 2006)

Communication for development theory and practice have been changing over the time in line with the evolution of development approaches and trends and the need for effective applications of communication methods to new issues and priorities.

By the end of the 1980s the participatory approach became a key feature in the applications of communication for development to sustainable development. Communication for development is conceived as the planned and participatory use of communication methods and tools that facilitate the sharing of knowledge and information, participation and change of attitude and practices aiming at achieving development goals agreed among all stakeholders. Communication for development is about dialogue, participation and the sharing of knowledge and information.

It responds to three main functions:

- a) *Facilitating participation: giving a voice to different stakeholders to engage in the decision-making process.*
- b) *Making information understandable and meaningful. It includes explaining and conveying information for the purpose of training, exchange of experience, and sharing of know-how and technology.*
- c) *Fostering policy acceptance: enacting and promoting policies, especially when these bring new opportunities for rural people to access services and resources.*

Communication is a process that is not confined to the media or to messages, but to their interaction in a network of social relationships. Communication for development approaches and methods are appropriate to: improve development opportunities ensuring equitable access to knowledge and information especially to vulnerable and marginalized groups; foster effective management and coordination of development initiatives through bottom-up planning; promote equity issues through networking and social platforms influencing policy-making; encourage changes in behaviour and lifestyles promoting sustainable consumption patterns through sensitization and

education of large audiences; promote the sustainable use of natural resources considering multiple interests and perspectives, and supporting collaborative management through consultation and negotiation; increase awareness and community mobilization related to social and environmental issues; ensure economic and employment opportunities through timely and adequate information; solving multiple conflicts ensuring dialogue among different component in a society.

Various communication approaches –often branded by different organisations as their own invention- are presently being used within UN programmes, bi-lateral agencies, Governmental and non-governmental organizations to meet the challenges of sustainable development: behaviour change communication, communication for development, communication for social change, edutainment, health communication, health promotion, ICTs for development, information, education and communication, network development and documentation, social marketing, social mobilization, strategic communication, participatory communication.

At least in the discourse of most agencies, the emphasis now is on the process of communication and on the significance of this process at the local level. The tendency towards flexibility and the blending of different approaches to better respond to the challenges of sustainable development is increasingly growing among practitioners working in the field of communication for development. This development coincides with the enhancement of local capacities and the appropriation of communication processes by local stakeholders, and especially by the vulnerable and marginalized groups. These elements of capacity building in communication, including the so called “bridging” of the rural digital divide are now conceived as essential conditions for sustainable development and the fulfillment of the UN Millennium Development Goals.

7. Case studies and evidence of ComDev contribution

There are many communication for development initiatives that have contributed to the betterment of rural communities. Some are emblematic and have been studied in depth because they provided evidence about the importance of communication for development in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of social and economic development programmes.

a) *FAO & PRODERITH*.- When the Program of Integrated Rural Development in the Tropical Wetlands in Mexico (PRODERITH) began, the approach was radically modified to start off with a process of consultation. Video proved to be an excellent tool to bring the farmers into the planning process. During a pre-planning phase a video camera was used to help rural communities analyze their situation, articulate their collective perception and propose solutions. The video-based planning methodology became an integral part of planning in the water sector in Mexico.

b) *IDRC & CEDRES*.- An IDRC supported action research project experimented a Participatory Communication Approach to address water related conflicts with local communities. The research team worked with 19 villages in the Nakanbe River Basin in Burkina Faso. The team and the communities identified three main sources of water related conflicts: the lack or insufficiency of water; deficient management and use of existing water infrastructures; and the lack of communication between end-users (Ramirez & Quarry, 2004).

c) *Village Animal Health Workers (VAHW)*.- A user-paid system or service provision for payment in Cambodia. The identification of the VAHW happens during a village meeting. The function and criteria of a VAHW are explained to the villagers. Participants for a village meeting propose candidates to become a VAHW. The facilitators, who are the Government or NGO extension workers, encourage the proposal of female candidates. The facilitators of the village meet and check whether the candidates meet the criteria. They include the ability to read and write. The candidate is elected by secret balloting after that the candidate has the permission to enter the training process. This election process ensures that the future VAHW has the trust of most of the villagers. Major services offered by the VAHWs are treatments and vaccinations. There is no official fee structure for the services, and no charges for technical advice. (FAO, 2006).

d) *IICD Market Acces in Bolivia*.- Example of the use of for market access is the large-scale information system for small-scale farmers managed and funded by the Departmental government of Santa Cruz, Bolivia. Operating fully sustainable since 2007, the program provides crop price information on 8 national reference markets and production techniques and input information to a large and growing audience of 300,000 producers. Key media include a national daily radio broadcast with a potential audience of 1 million providing market prices on a daily basis and technical advice to producers on demand. So far 1,000 farmers subscribed to a mobile SMS services providing price information. Besides radio and mobile, the program has set up network of 15 provincial telecentres. The telecentres provide over 100 extension workers access to on-line information used to inform and train producer organisations in actual use and analysis of information at local level.

II. CHALLENGES FOR COMDEV IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

1. New issues in the rural sector

A number of issues have strongly emerged in rural areas that challenge communication for development approaches in sustainable development.

a) Food security, rural development & livelihood strategies

Food security is threatened worldwide by changes related to climate change, bio-energy and soaring food prices. These global concerns were discussed during the High Level Conference organised by FAO (Rome, June 2008) and at the Third International Conference on Community Based Adaptation to Climate Change (Dhaka, February 2009).

The conference in Rome underlined the need to embrace a people-centred policy framework in support of rural peoples' livelihoods in developing countries, while increasing the resilience of production systems. The challenges related to climate change and food security require a combination of immediate, medium and long-term measures to improve rural institutions, knowledge creation and information sharing through peoples' participation. This is a clear indication that only collective action and participation can allow for long-term community resilience.

The impacts of climate change are very clear on four main areas, and the prospects in the near future for these areas are grim: a) food security, b) water security, c) energy security and d) human security. However, another important consequence is foreseeable as the combined result of the four: governance breakdowns.

Climate change is likely to decrease food security and increase the risk of hunger up to 30 per cent by 2080. Those already identified, as high risk —including women and children — will be the worst hit.

Climate change will make it increasingly difficult to achieve and sustain development goals. This is largely because climate effects on poverty remain poorly understood, and poverty reduction strategies do not adequately support climate resilience. Ensuring effective development in the face of climate change requires action on six fronts: investing in a stronger climate and poverty evidence base; applying the learning about development effectiveness to how we address adaptation needs; supporting nationally derived, integrated policies and programmes; including the climate vulnerable poor in developing strategies; and identifying how mitigation strategies can also reduce poverty and enable adaptation. (DFID/CDKN, 2011)

The Community Based Adaptation (CBA) approach to climate change prioritizes the most vulnerable households, since they are the least likely to adapt. Resilient households are usually those with more livelihood assets, such as saving to buy crops, or forms of physical capital or social capital. They can find immediate short-term strategies to cope with climate change impacts. *Income coping strategies* are closer to resilient households, through the selling of livestock or access to loans, however the most vulnerable households can only cope through *cutback strategies*, such as eating less and cheaper or taking the children out of school to save money.

Food security and rural development policies have been revised in recent years placing more emphasis on integral approaches to rural livelihoods focusing on the sustainable use of natural resources, multi-sectoral collaboration and stakeholder

participation in accessing rural assets. Inherent in these approaches is the recognition of the importance of an individual's balanced portfolio of assets in which knowledge, access to information and a means to communicate play a strategic role. Communication for development has been acknowledged an essential and appropriate approach for addressing sustainable rural development. The spread of digital technologies has made information and communication services a cost-effective option for providing basic information, although the spread of penetration of ICTs in rural areas is still very limited in most countries.

Thus, the focus must remain on the needs of the rural audiences -rather than on the technologies and the media utilized- with the aim to enhance the capacity of local stakeholders to manage communication processes, to develop local contents and to appropriate the use of media tools. Communication for development strategies and initiatives today are context specific and reflect values, perceptions and characteristics of the people and institutions involved. Within this framework, rural communication for development systems have been implemented in different countries integrating communication processes with the use of multimedia, often integrating traditional and local media, rural radio and the ICTs.

Although there is an increasing recognition of the central role that communication plays in promoting agricultural and rural development, national and local rural development plans hardly include communication components and there are limited examples of communication for development services to improve living standards in rural areas, providing access to natural resources and information on technologies and economic development options (including livelihood diversification), improving access and efficiency of rural development services (e.g. research and extension, communication), and fostering peoples' participation and inter-institutional coordination in the rural areas.

Within this framework, special attention should be given in assisting governments and rural institutions in developing policies and programmes to foster communication for development services in support of food security, rural development and rural livelihood.

b) Sustainable natural resource management

With people at the centre of natural resource management, communication becomes important. Planned communication must be factored in to facilitate program and project implementation.

A key challenge faced by rural development programmes is to address poverty alleviation and economic growth while conserving environmental sustainability in an integrated manner. Fighting land degradation and desertification, halting deforestation, promoting proper management of water resources and protecting biodiversity require the active participation of rural communities through communication processes. For many years however, communication initiatives in support of environmental and natural resources management have mainly focused on the dissemination and adoption of technical packages. These efforts have only yielded limited impacts.

Communication for sustainable development offers an alternative. Its participatory approaches can facilitate the dialogue and sharing of knowledge and information, increase community knowledge (both indigenous and modern), promote agricultural practices which are compatible with the environment, and develop awareness in policy makers, authorities and service providers. Participatory communication approaches

can bring together different stakeholders and groups into conversation with each other, to enable the poorest and most marginalized to have a voice in the decision-making process and on activities concerning the sustainable use of natural resources. Communication for sustainable natural resource management involves establishing linkages among all stakeholders; developing common understanding, language and channels for participatory communication; and responding to information and training needs (Ramirez, 1997).

It is important to move from the recent focus on specific natural resources – to an acknowledgment that people are part of the ecosystem. This means that we have to learn to engage many parties in deciding how to manage our relationships with each other, with our policies and with our use of natural resources.

The realization that people must be involved in program decision-making is shared across donor agencies, at least at the level of discourse. The World Bank handbook for Poverty Reduction Strategic Plans (PRSP) included a chapter on strategic communication planning. This came about through donor consultation around the PRSP process. The working group for PRSP challenged the Bank by asking how it would be possible for countries to build internal ownership process without communicating among citizens.

One of the innovative aspects of the approach emphasizes that the participation and leadership of local people is essential to co-management. In other words, innovation must be built on existing local knowledge and practice, rather than imposed from outside.

Collaborative management begins with stakeholder analysis and participatory appraisal activities, followed by a series of negotiation and planning meetings to reach a basic consensus. Agreed language (concepts, frames of reference, points of departure) is essential to bridge differences and find perspectives. This process may require extensive negotiation using a variety of planning tools. Finally the agreement is applied through the necessary institutional arrangements, and tested to gather system feedback and adjust the strategies and procedures.

Being in a position to play a role depends on the actors' power to become involved, to be heard and seen, on their readiness to learn, and on legal, political, institutional, economic and socio-cultural questions of feasibility. Communication thus becomes central to the negotiation process, but it is not a silver bullet. The reference to collaborative management shows that other indispensable ingredients must be brought into play: reduced power differences, a procedure of engagement that all parties perceive as fair, a convener who is trusted by all parties, methods of negotiation, and institutional and policy commitment to consultation and learning. Without the latter, it is unlikely that a communication component will ever thrive.

c) Globally important issues

Environmental communication is used for addressing global environmental issues that concern public opinion at large. Within this framework, communication, education, participation and public awareness approaches are used in an integrated manner to reach out effectively to the key groups who are needed to manage changes in the environment and society.

The emphasis is on promoting awareness and participation about global environmental and conservation issues such as: biodiversity preservation, climate change and desertification.

d) Poverty reduction and equity issues

"Empowerment is about people - both women and men - taking control over their lives: setting their own agendas, gaining skills, increasing self confidence, solving problems and developing self-reliance. It is both a process and an outcome" (CIDA, 1995).

Communication can also play a decisive role in promoting the empowerment of women and girls. The communication processes can give rural women a voice to advocate changes in policies, attitudes and social behaviour or customs that negatively affect them. Communication for development can support women empowerment, enabling them to take control of their lives and participate as equals with men in promoting food security and rural development. Without communication the voices of rural women will not be heard. Vulnerable groups in the rural areas of developing countries are on the wrong side of the digital divide, and risk further marginalization.

Peoples' participation in directing the course of their own development are central tenets of both the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and National Poverty Reductions Strategy Plans (PRSPs). The issue of equal access to knowledge and information is becoming one of the key aspects of sustainable development. Several development agencies seek to narrow the gap between the information rich and information poor, and to provide a framework for international co-operation in developing common strategies, methods and tools for building a just and free information environment and to broaden the access to information and to communication technologies at the community level.

However, in the rush to "wire" developing countries, little attention has been paid to the design of ICT programs for the poor ignoring many lessons learned over the years by communication for development approaches which emphasize communication processes and outcomes over the application of media and technologies. The focus should be on the needs of communities rather than the quantity or performance of technologies available. Local content and languages are critical to enable the poor to have access to the benefits of the information revolution. The creation of local content requires building on existing and trusted traditional communication systems and methods for collecting and sharing information (Balit, 2003).

Horizontal people-to-people processes are emerging alongside dominant structures and vertical lines of communication. But global media markets are now dominated by a mere handful of multinationals, and the globalization of communication is threatening cultural diversity and the traditional values of minorities. Modern mass media and alternate or parallel networks of community media or interpersonal communication channels are not mutually exclusive by definition. Poverty is caused by uneven power structures, and communication cannot substitute for structural change (Balit, 2004).

Communication can contribute to the effective reduction of poverty as well as offering better opportunities for the active involvement of marginalized groups and isolated population into policy-development and decision-making. Within this framework, FAO and other agencies are working on the appropriation of communication for development processes and technologies by marginalized and vulnerable groups,

including indigenous people (FAO, 2004), to ensure that they claim their right to a voice in decision making which affects their lives.

2. Potential areas of intervention

Agricultural innovation systems, natural resource management, climate change adaptation, food security, disaster risk reduction, equity issues, among other, are potential areas of intervention where communication for sustainable development can play a key role in strategic planning, stakeholders participation and long-term sustainability.

3. Strategic priorities: M&E, capacity development, funding, networking

Planned communication approaches can support a range of programme implementation needs through several complementary functions. The word *planned* emphasizes the importance of being proactive in plotting out carefully constructed communication inputs to enhance program/project implementation.

There is a wide range of communication functions that cross the development spectrum – information, public relations, social marketing, community voice and more:

1. Making policies known and relevant. Increasingly there is a trend towards interactive policy-making. This move away from a persuasive advertising approach demands careful communication planning – for public meetings, consultations, and round tables for stakeholder engagement.
2. Communication for sharing knowledge, explaining scientific information with the aim of creating new perspectives rather than transferring pre-packaged solutions.
3. Participatory communication. Giving a voice to different stakeholders to engage in platforms where negotiation among different parties can take place with regard to natural resources.

In spite of a wealth of successful experiences, communication for development is often blamed –not by partner communities as much as by donor agencies- of not having enough “proof” of its benefits. Whilst this is mainly prompted by those inclined to quantitative measurements, it does point to the need of strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems within communication for development programmes and projects. Qualitative information is readily available but sometimes not systematised to serve the double purpose of collective learning and making the case among funding agencies and management level in development organisations.

The issue of capacity development is equally relevant to the institutional positioning of communication for development, particularly because it is a field of knowledge of relatively recent growth and development. The profile of “communicator for development” is rare since very few universities in the world –less than 30- have adequate training programmes, and postgraduate studies with emphasis on communication for development are scarce. This partly explains why development organisation cannot find well-trained professionals and often fill communication posts with journalists or public relations graduates. There is a great need of academic

support to the field of communication for development through graduate and post-graduate programmes that will contribute to the profile of high-level communication for development professionals.

Funding for communication for development initiatives has been always limited compared to what development organisations, including multilateral and bi-lateral agencies, NGOs, government programmes, etc., usually spend on media for institutional visibility. The World Congress of Communication for Development (WCCD) recommended that funding allocations for ComDev should be different from those applied to institutional promotion.

Strategically, other than funding, capacity development and monitoring and evaluation, networking is also important to position communication for sustainable development. Too often very important communication projects contributing to sustainable development remain isolated. The wealth of experience and learning trajectories is thus not shared with other similar initiatives; consequently important knowledge is lost or kept behind walls. Networking is an important tool to share both knowledge and practical experience.

4. Interface with other approaches

a) Extension and innovations

The discussion on agricultural extension is very old. Extension was an attempt to reach rural communities. The name itself indicates that there is a *central* place from which the *periphery* is reached. The central location is meant to have something that those in the periphery do not have, be it technology, goods or knowledge. The extension philosophy was a typical well-intentioned move from institutions and governments that otherwise practised centralised planning.

Among other authors, Paulo Freire in his book *Extension or communication?* (1973), wrote:

“The error to which the concept of extension can lead is clear. It is one of ‘extending’ technical knowledge to the peasants, instead of making (by efficient communication) the concrete fact to which the knowledge refers (expressed by linguistic signs) the object of the mutual comprehension of peasants and agronomists alike. It is only with the co-participation of the peasants that communication can work efficiently, and only by means of this communication can agronomists successfully carry out their work.”

FAO and other development organisations believe that the concept of extension can be revived with a new perspective: “The starting point for this analysis is in recognition that the days when agricultural extension was synonymous with the work of public sector agencies are over” (Christoplos, 2010). According to FAO the only thing that remains is the name, but now “extension” can relate to any other existing approach:

“The ‘extension services’ described here may just as likely consist of an input vendor advising a farmer about what seed to plant, a television station broadcasting a weather forecast, a supermarket advising traders about what standards are required for the vegetables they purchase or a farmer organization lobbying for research that reflects the demands of its members for new technologies. Mobilizing the potential of extension is about enhancing this broad

and complex flow of information and advice in the agrifood sector” (Christoplos, 2010).

The “new” extension concept is defined by FAO as “systems that should facilitate the access of farmers, their organizations and other market actors to knowledge, information and technologies; facilitate their interaction with partners in research, education, agri-business, and other relevant institutions; and assist them to develop their own technical, organizational and Management skills and practices”.

Further on, the document prepared for FAO by Ian Christoplos underlines:

“Extension is no longer just about men from public sector agricultural agencies riding around on motorcycles talking to farmers, even though this stereotype still describes a significant proportion of extension agents. The term ‘extension’ conjures up images from the past and leads to inaccurate assumptions about what extension reform is all about.

The paper uses the term *extension* as “an admittedly amorphous umbrella term for all the different activities that provide the information and advisory services that are needed and demanded by farmers and other actors in agrifood systems and rural development”.

“The term extension, as used here, is taken to be synonymous with rural advisory services. The word ‘extension’ is seen by some as an old fashioned term related to one-way technology transfer. Despite these connotations, extension is used intentionally here to highlight the importance of breaking out of these past assumptions and infusing the concept of extension with new meaning. Extension includes technical knowledge and involves facilitation, brokering and coaching of different actors to improve market access, dealing with changing patterns of risk and protecting the environment. This takes place within complex systems involving old and new service providers and even information and communication technologies (phones and mobile phones, internet, radio and television)”.

It acknowledges that “in fact, some of these providers would not even classify themselves as ‘extension’ but rather as community developers, innovation brokers, natural resource planners, etc. However, they are all linked by a primary focus on providing advice and information”.

A recent report prepared by Leeuwis and Hall (2010), attempts to establish new relations between extension services and innovation support, based on the experience already cumulated by FAO:

“In many ways this is the crucible of all tensions. It stems from rethinking about research and extension activities with the development and spread of innovation systems ideas. These ideas recognise that innovation, as a process of using ideas and technologies for productive purposes, is not the preserve of research projects and public services. In this perspective promoting innovation goes way beyond promoting technology from research and involves enabling a wide range of processes, players and capacities. This idea is no longer contentious. But it does leave open the question about who should broker the relationships in these systems of innovation.

“There are those who argue that since extension has always been about innovation support this is a function extension could very well play, albeit with a redefined mandate and scope. But there are others who argue that the primary

role of extension is to provide technology and information services to farmers. These positions are not mutually exclusive and can co-exist; in some contexts emphasis will need to be placed on different roles. Nevertheless, the tension between the two can be seen playing out within FAO. Part of this tension relates to the history of FAO as an international source of information and expertise on agricultural topics. Traditionally it was a subject matter specialist-type of organisation rather than a research organisation or a policy advice organisation. And it still, visibly, has a very strong tradition of producing publications with an advisory-type orientation. (...)"

The report acknowledges that OEKR/FAO has an expertise in 'research management', 'agricultural extension' and 'communication for development' relevant to offering support services for 'diagnosis and visioning', 'reflective learning', 'institutional learning', 'experimentation', 'change management', etc. However it argues that a "rebranding" is needed for two reasons:

"The first reason is conceptual: when we look at climate change adaptation as an innovation challenge then terms like 'extension' and 'communication for development' do not clearly capture the kinds of communicative intermediary services that are required from a theoretical point of view. Sticking to old terminology and labels reinforces the risk of reproducing outdated insights and theories of change. The second reason is that the outside world ... hardly recognises the significance of the OEKR unit to contribute to climate change adaptation. They know that there is a group dealing with 'extension' and 'communication for development', but when it comes to supporting dynamics in multi-stakeholder innovation networks they prefer to hire or employ expertise from elsewhere..."

"The history of the former Extension Science group at Wageningen University is perhaps indicative of this: the group changed its name to Communication and Innovation Studies more than 20 years ago. Since then it became part of (and was invited into) new networks, discovered new issues, and developed new areas of expertise. This also led to the employment of staff (e.g., with a background in social psychology or innovation studies) who would probably not even have applied for a job in 'extension science'. Despite these changes, and perhaps because of them, the group continues to generate relevant ideas on agricultural innovation support, including extension".

To conceptually and practically reposition FAO in the face of climate change and other adaptation challenges, it will be necessary to work with new strategic partners, and to pay less attention for classical extension establishments. The report mentions a number of meaningful changes that are possible:

- Provide extension organisations with up-to-date insights from innovation studies to make clear that all technical innovation requires re-organisation of local institutions and social relationships
- Change job descriptions of above field-level extension staff, and make senior extension officers responsible for facilitating the local institutional change process
- Enhance diagnostic and visioning skills at regional extension offices to facilitate future and opportunity-oriented extension programming (instead of problem-based programming)
- Conduct experiments with organising interaction among relevant players in local level 'innovation systems' (e.g., local farmers, traders, processors, money lenders, chiefs, etc.,) in order to identify social and technical problems and opportunities

The process of innovation for adaptation requires specific approaches, which cannot be generalised:

“Experience has taught us that it is a mistake to think in terms of an optimal ‘one-size-fits-all’ model for organising research and extension in support of agricultural innovation and/or climate change adaptation... However, at a more abstract innovation theoretical level, we can say that any innovation support infrastructure should be able to support three essential processes.

“The first process is that of *network building*. We have seen that innovation inherently implies a re-configuration of relationships within and between networks, and possibly the formation of new networks and/or the demise of existing ones.

“A second key process is of *supporting social learning*. In different strands of thinking about innovation, learning is considered a critical process for developing a conducive fit between innovations and their environment...

“The third key process that needs to be supported is *dealing with dynamics of power and conflict*. The existence of competing human values and interests in complex problem settings implies that efforts to change the status quo are likely to lead to tensions and conflicts of various kinds.

When resorting to more conventional terminologies used in the sphere of extension and communication literature, the kinds of activities mentioned include well-known strategies and services such as:

- Advisory Communication
- Organising horizontal exchange in support of diffusion
- Persuasive mass media campaigns
- Awareness raising
- Training
- Information provision

However, the authors mention that “in order to make innovation happen in a network-like configuration, such classical activities need to be accompanied by other communicative strategies and services (see Leeuwis, 2004; Klerkx & Leeuwis, 2009)”, such as:

- Network brokerage
- Demand articulation and knowledge brokerage
- Visioning
- Process facilitation
- Interactive design and experimentation
- Learning-oriented monitoring
- Exploration of opportunities and constraints
- Lobby advocacy communication
- Conflict management

“It is in the context of such ‘new’ communicative tasks and strategies in an innovation trajectory that ‘old’ strategies can become meaningful and appropriate, usually at later stages of an innovation trajectory.

“What we seen, in essence, is a broadening of the role of extension and communication professionals in innovation trajectories. While in the linear ‘transfer of technology’ model communication was primarily seen as an intermediary function between science and practice, we now see a much broader range of intermediary roles... that include, for example, mediation in conflict situations;

network and knowledge brokerage; facilitation of exchange, learning and vision building among diverse communities; matching of supply and demand of innovation support services. Moreover, the intermediary roles... happen at a range of interfaces that are situated within (and between) networks of stakeholders operating in different societal spheres”.

b) The role of new technologies (ICTs)

First wrong assumption: development is a matter of technology.

Second wrong assumption: development is a matter of information.

Third wrong assumption: information technologies are equal to development. (Gumucio-Dagron, 2003)

Over fifty years of mostly failed attempts to promote development in the poorest developing countries of Africa and Latin America have demonstrated that the paradigms of development are complex and can no longer be dictated by the development agendas of bilateral and multilateral organisations which have not taken into consideration social, political and cultural factors that determine social change and development. People are poor because of social inequality, which embraces much more than just access to information. Development paradigms have gone through various phases to realise this.

The first phase, in the fifties and sixties, bet on the introduction of new technologies and techniques to improve agriculture, at a time where the rural population in most developing countries was still a majority. The assumption was: “Poor peasants need better technology to produce more crops, so they can sell them and improve their lives.” Little consideration was given to how the international market operates, who fixes the prices, and who, in the end, benefits from the work of those poor peasants that are now living in worst conditions than 40 years ago. Today, there is less productive land for the poor and more for the wealthy. The land more was productive forty years but has been exhausted by intensive harvesting of commodity crops such as cotton or sugar cane.

The second paradigm, during the seventies and eighties, recognised that technology alone is not the silver bullet, and that information and knowledge are also important to help the rural population to improve their living conditions. The assumption, however, had a dangerous arrogant slant: “we have the knowledge, we know what the poor need, we will gracefully share our knowledge with people in developing countries”. Actually, a very limited perspective this was, because it did not take into consideration the local knowledge cumulated over hundreds of years, by cultures that were alive and well while pests ravaged Europe.

In recent decades, the role of communication in development and social change has been acknowledged. A number of development organisations began to understand that information and communication is not the same thing. Information alone does not generate changes, whereas communication –which implies participation, sharing of knowledge in a horizontal way, and respect for diversity and culture- is key to social change.

Unfortunately, too many development programmes today are still basing their approach on the diffusion of innovations theories of the sixties, often mocking participatory approaches, but seldom really involving communities in the decision making process, because it clashes with institutional agendas and the “annual report” syndrome.

The expansion of the new Internet based information technologies was initially presented as the 'magic box' containing the answers for poverty, exclusion and underdevelopment. There is a kind of competition whereby development agencies and corporate interests team together to achieve 'equality' through ICTs. Mass media often portrays news and reports about fascinating exploits of connecting Timbuktu to the web or building social networks in remote islands in the South Pacific, through satellite connections activated by solar panels. Computers along with the promise of a better life are parachuted over small villages where there had never been electricity or telephone, often not even safe water.

Thousands of international initiatives have been established to harness ICTs for development on a global scale, in particular since the publication of the World Development Report on Knowledge for Development (World Bank, 1998). The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) hosted the World Summit on the Information Society in 2003 (WSIS), the second phase of which took place in 2005. These initiatives aimed to build partnerships between civil society, the public and the private sectors to harness ICTs for development.

More conscious social and less technical approaches to new technologies are also promoted: "The ultimate goal of using ICTs for human development is to empower people to actively shape the world around them, enabling solutions that promote economic prosperity with equity, fostering democracy that is socially just and opening new opportunities for the realization of our full human potential" (Gomez et al., 2003).

Low-income countries have fewer telephone lines, mobiles, computers and lower Internet connectivity. Changes of the availability of technology, most evidently the mobile phone, have enabled access to information for a wide range of rural poor people. Customization of information and knowledge and their delivery via easy-to-use interfaces are found to be key success factors. Mobile penetration rates reached 68% in developing countries at the end of 2010 (ITU 2010). The number of mobile phones has overtaken landline phones in Africa. This shows that where there is an appropriate new technology it can 'leapfrog' earlier technologies (Grimshaw & Kala, 2011).

There is a consensus that ICTs can play an important role in development, for example by connecting people to more accurate and up-to-date information, equipping them with new skills or connecting them to an international market. However, there is concern that the 'digital divide' is increasing the gap between the 'information haves and have-nots' and this is the preoccupation of many of the initiatives established to address ICTs for development. Many studies have been published, particularly by practitioners in the development field, on the use of ICTs for development.

ICTs for development projects have been criticized for failing to build on existing systems or work in a participatory way. Critics argue that 'top down' projects, driven by the donor agenda, fail to achieve local ownership (Gumucio-Dagron, 2001; Lloyd Laney, 2003). The concept of the 'design-reality gap' (Duncombe and Heeks, 1999) highlights the distinction between the context in which an ICT project or application is designed and the context of its use in developing countries.

Over the years new ICTs have been used in development projects. Yet the effectiveness of these interventions is still contested. One of the key areas of debate is the extent to which numerous pilot studies, case studies or other small-scale interventions can add to the body of evidence. How reliable are the findings from a small pilot study carried out in only one location? How can such study be compared to

apparently similar studies carried out in other locations? Is a project that uses a mobile phone to deliver information comparable to one that uses the Internet? In essence all the questions are about how these findings can be generalised.

Other projects are specifically designed as research projects to test out an idea, hypothesis or perhaps sometimes some specific new technology. How can a development project be compared with a research project?

The main reasons for conducting impact evaluations have been well summarized by Leeuw and Vaessen (2010) as:

1. Providing evidence on 'what works and what doesn't.
2. Measuring impacts and relating the changes in dependent variables to developmental policies and programmes.
3. Producing information that is relevant from an accountability perspective.
4. Benefit from individual and organizational learning.

Carlos Barahona (2010) draws attention to two problems with the RCT methodology. First is the need to limit the impact indicators to those that can be accurately measured; and secondly, the level of control needs to be good enough to render any contamination effect negligible. Both of these limitations are cause for concern in the context of development interventions.

For ICTs to contribute to the development of the rural poor, certain conditions have to be met, which are seldom found today:

The first is *ownership and appropriation*, which can only be achieved through a process of participation from the inception of each project. This is a foremost condition particularly when seeking for sustainability, which has been the weakest aspect in most of the current experiences. However, it is important to get it right "ownership and appropriation". It does not refer to technology alone. It refers to the ownership of the *communication process*, as opposed to a badly defined "access" whereby the conditions are dictated by external agendas. Ownership and appropriation refers to strengthening the local capacity to understand the importance of communication, knowledge and networking in social development. It refers to communities acquiring the necessary skills to manage ICTs as a tool at the service of well-defined areas of development and education.

The second condition is the *development of local contents*, equivalent to "localizing" the World Wide Web. Rather than an ocean of information that is irrelevant to local needs, communities need small ponds of sweet water that are suited for their consumption. Access to the World Wide Web should not prevent each local experience to develop its own demand-driven content, as it is done at the Village Knowledge Centres in Chennai, India. Farmers need to know the price of their crops at the city market, if there is a veterinarian at a walking distance, or if the local government has credits available for them.

The third condition is *language and cultural pertinence*, which relates with the development of local contents. Rural poor need to have access to information in their own language, and presented in a layout that they can understand and that is culturally appropriate. Language is the vehicle that communities use to communicate; but it is also the essence of their identity. Strengthening cultural values through communication tools, including ICTs, can only benefit long-term sustainable social development. Communities are often menaced and at risk of internal divisions because of external

influences, religious or political. By bolstering local identity communities are better equipped to face the ongoing cultural negotiation process.

The fourth is *convergence and networking*, both essential for sustainability of the communication process. We want to make the world smaller and communities bigger, however, it is a paradox that many of the ICT for development projects are born as deserted islands, with very little rapport with other similar experiences in the same province, country or region. *Networking* is important not only in terms of information exchange, but also to contribute to capacity building of newer experiences. As for *convergence*, it is important to acknowledge the opportunities that exist to build on existing communication processes, such as community radio, which has grown enormously in the past decades, and seems to be culturally pertinent and adapted to the need of communities. ICT projects have a lot to learn from community radio in terms of local management, creation of local contents, networking, or the use of appropriate technology. However, convergence should not be understood as a technology challenge alone. ICT projects must converge with local schools, local libraries, local development projects and local social organisations to be effective in helping to improve the lives of the rural poor.

The fifth condition, *appropriate technology*, also relates to sustainability. During decades we have discussed the need of appropriate technologies for development, particularly in the fields of agriculture and health. However, when it comes to information technologies, projects are easy preys of hardware and software companies willing to penetrate new markets. We have seen so many projects equipped with expensive computer equipment and software, which are used often at less than 5% of their capacity. Anyone of us is responsible for that distortion, because in our daily lives, we also use our computer equipment at less than 5% of its potential. Partly, the reason is the lack of useful contents but it is also the type of technology being utilised, which is not appropriate to the local context. (Gumucio-Dagron, 2003 & 2005).

c) *Knowledge management*

In respect to knowledge, FAO has defined its importance within the framework of rural communication:

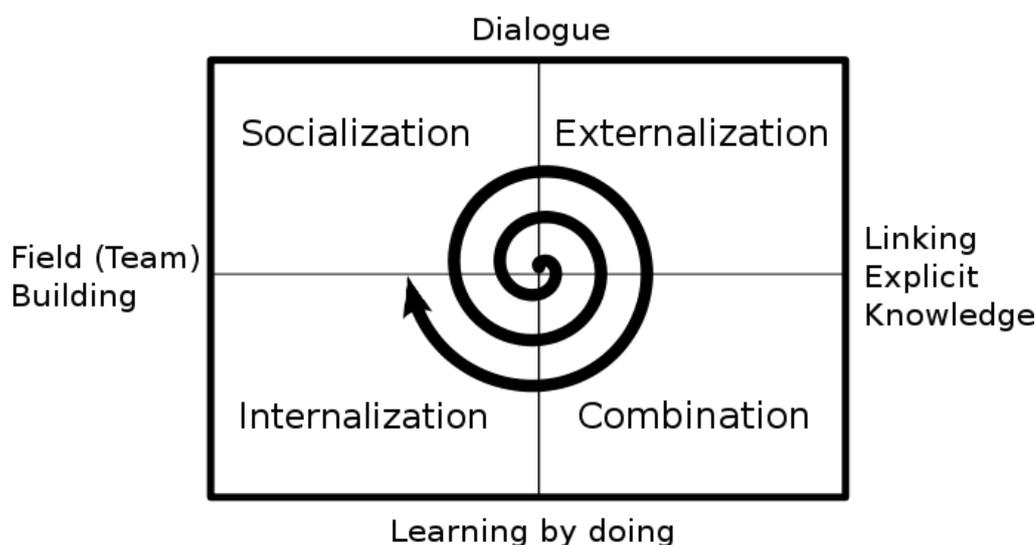
“Rural communication is an interactive process in which information, knowledge and skills, relevant for development are exchanged between farmers, extension/advisory services, information providers and research either personally or through media such as radio, print and more recently the new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). In this process all actors may be innovators, intermediaries and receivers of information and knowledge. The aim is to put rural people in a position to have the necessary information for informed decision-making and the relevant skills to improve their livelihoods. Communication in this context is therefore a non-linear process with the content of data or information. (FAO, 2006)”

However, the idea that knowledge can be “sent” or “received” is questionable. It may apply to information, but not to knowledge, which cannot be packaged in messages. The confusion between “information” and “knowledge” calls for a revision of the concept, since knowledge is strictly related to experience. Acquiring knowledge is a process whereby personal and collective experience is associated or contrasted with elements of information, and assimilated or apprehended as new knowledge. Knowledge is not information per se. The conceptual weakness is important to signal, since it has been at the core of the strategies of information dissemination that have

not really contributed to create knowledge or to value the existing knowledge. The assumption that knowledge resides in one place and can be transferred to another place is preposterous.

Knowledge management emerged in the early 1990s in the private business sector, as a field or discipline aimed at addressing “a range of strategies and practices used in an organisation to identify, create, represent, distribute, and enable adoption of *insights* and *experiences*”. Insights are the result of acute observation and deduction, penetration, discernment, perception called intellection or noesis; whereas mental, spiritual, social or emotional experiences are cognitive processes lived by individuals or collectives in order to acquire knowledge.

The “knowledge spiral” as represented by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), shows that acquiring knowledge is far from being the same thing as acquiring information. The spiral connects four dimensions of explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge: combination, internalisation, socialisation and externalisation; and these are intersected by four activities that are essential to knowledge as they are to communication for development, which is or should be above all participatory: dialogue, team building, learning by doing and linking explicit knowledge.



Pertinently, Neil Fleming provides a simple observation in relation to knowledge:

- A collection of data is not information.
 - A collection of information is not knowledge.
 - A collection of knowledge is not wisdom.
 - A collection of wisdom is not truth.
- (Fleming, 1996)

According to Gene Bellinger, information, knowledge and wisdom “represent more than the sum of its parts”. There is logical flow from information (at the bottom of the scale, towards knowledge in a second stage, and towards wisdom in the upper stage. *Data* may be the point of departure, but it develops following two axes: a context of independence and understanding. The flow between information, knowledge and wisdom, is mediated respectively by understanding relations, patterns and principles (Bellinger, 2004).

In short, Bellinger states that:

- *Information* relates to description, definition, or perspective (what, who, when, where).
- *Knowledge* comprises strategy, practice, method, or approach (how).
- *Wisdom* embodies principle, insight, moral, or archetype (why).

Knowledge management strategies are varied, depending on the context they are used and the purpose: cross-project learning, mapping, best practice analysis, collaborative technologies, knowledge brokers, storytelling, social software, learning trajectories, etc. Knowledge management facilitates innovation and organisational learning, by leveraging the expertise of people across a community or organisation.

III. INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS AND POSITIONING OF ComDev

1. Communication for development integration in national policies

Communication for sustainable development has been facing new issues and challenges in the last decade, as a consequence of globalization media liberalization, rapid economic and social changes, and the emergence of new information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Liberalization has led not only to greater media freedoms, but also to the emergence of an increasingly consumer led and urban centred communication infrastructure, which is less and less interested in the concerns of the poor. While there has been a general global trend towards much greater media freedom, sometimes this trend has been confined largely to urban metropolitan middle classes rather than the population as a whole.

Women and other vulnerable groups and in general the rural population continue to suffer marginalization in and from communication networks, and evidence of the scale of discrimination within the media itself is growing. The need of ensuring access to information and promoting the right to communication as a pre-condition to achieve sustainable development has been addressed by several meetings and international conferences.

In spite of all recommendations, only few countries in the developing world have enabled communication policies that favour the least advantaged. Most attempts to develop communication policies face strong reactions from private commercial media. Even sectoral communication policies, which may be important to design specific communication strategies for sustainable development, are not being implemented.

The divide between institutional actions in development and the expectations of rural population is considerable because of the lack of dialogue and communication. There is a great misunderstanding about the role of communication for development, and little of knowledge about its importance. This is also noticeable among international development institutions that confuse communication with public relations or information dissemination.

A wealth of documents and studies indicate the importance of developing national policies in relation to communication for development, which must be systematically planned, implemented and coordinated to make room for better coordination and to avoid the duplication of efforts. The existing situation in many countries where each sectoral ministry has its own development communication unit is no longer cost effective, and the lack of coordination often creates confusion.

The definition of National Communication for Development Policies is now on the agenda of a number of countries, and is the subject of policy and intellectual debate. The issues relate to how such policies can best reflect the development priorities, and what sort of national communication system encourages peoples' participation, as well as the sharing of knowledge and skills at all levels, and the coordination of efforts among all partners involved in the development process. One of the main questions is what sort of system can become income generating and sustainable.

Other issues concern the need to regulate public and private ownership of the media used for rural development and participation, the amount of advertising and the extent

of decentralisation allowed, as well as the regulation of new communication technologies and electronic networks to make them accessible to rural people for development purposes. Each country should develop its own policy and or strategies in accordance with its economic, social, political, institutional and cultural framework, and the general communication policies, legislation and institutional frameworks already existing in the country⁶.

A National Communication Policy is the answer to one of the major policy issues in the development agenda. It is the meaningful strategy thanks to which it is possible to use information and communication to support development initiatives at national and local levels. The strategy for achieving sustainable development should be cross-sectoral and multi-dimensional, to gather around different development. The development of a national information and communication policy can be seen as a mechanism for ensuring widespread public education and informed public participation in decision making on the future directions of development, particularly in countries of Africa where development problems are more pressing than in other regions.

In the process of designing a national policy of communication for development, the following factors are fundamental⁷:

- Being aware of the interdependence between communication and other development sectors and areas;
- Taking into account specific situations as well as the realities and needs of the countries concerned and in particular of their own means and their human, material and financial resources;
- Choosing multimedia approaches that include traditional and new communication technologies and instruments;
- Envisaging communication as human horizontal process by ensuring that it is not monopolised by one-way mass media but it is carried out by community facilitators, educators, agricultural workers, health officers as well as members of NGOs and farmers' organisations.
- Understanding that the implementation of a communication for development policy must be placed in an appropriate juridical and institutional framework.

A National Policy on Information and Communication for the sustainable should also include the following objectives:

- Supporting national development initiatives and programs to improve the quality of life of the people, by facilitating systematic and effective use and coordination of communication and information strategies and activities.
- Enhancing access to information and communication tools and processes, especially in rural communities;
- Preserving national cultural identity, promoting the national cultural heritage and enhancing cultural and artistic capabilities, while enabling productive regional and international exchanges;
- Rationalising cross-sectoral investments in information and communication and appropriate integration in national development plans and planning structures;
- Promoting national dialogue on development issues by all citizens.

⁶ S.Balit and JP.Ilboudo, Towards National Communication-for-Development policies in Africa, Rome, FAO 1996; <http://www.fao.org/sd/cddirect/cdan0001.htm>

⁷ The Design and Implementation of National Information and Communication Policies for Sustainable Development in Africa: Issues and Approaches, Rome, FAO 2002;

There is no development without communication. Many documents produced by UN agencies underline the importance of understanding the concept:

“Basically, communication is a social process that produces changes in the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of individuals, and groups, through providing factual and technical information, through motivational or persuasive messages, and through facilitating the learning process and social *environment*. These results might then lead to increase in the mastery of crucial skills by the individual, and to enhancing the achievement of various instrumental goals. Other possible consequences of communication include enhancement in self-esteem and well being through participation in community and social life, increasing the individual's perceived efficacy in dealing with other people, reinforcing mutual respect and enhancing confidence among social groups and building trust within communities. These outcomes are the ingredients that contribute to the creation of those positive individual, community and societal changes that together are often referred to as *development*. Communication can thus positively influence development (...)⁸.

However, the confusion between information dissemination and communication as a horizontal and participatory process has led to the misunderstanding of communication for development, even in UN documents. For example, the indicators generally employed in the Human Development Index are mostly infrastructural and technological: access to radio, television, Internet users, personal computers, mobile phones. Certainly the opportunities that these channels provide for *carrying* information and messages and for allowing multiple social interactions driving social progress, are a crucial contribution to the level of socio-economic development of societies, however they are only tools and their usefulness is related to the content and the use people make of them. This is why a policy approach is needed to support the integration of information and communication thinking and practice into national development and governance plans.

A national policy on information and communication for development provides a conceptual and institutional framework for the coordination and integration of technical and social interventions undertaken by institutions ranging from agricultural extension to education and health ministries, from NGOs such as women's resource groups and human rights activists, to private sector interests such as chambers of commerce or banks. The contribution of a national policy is to articulate principles, values and norms that are applicable to communication at all levels of government, to civil society and the private sector, within the context of the development goals of the nation. An approach that considers information and communication as a sector for development planning would also help to rationalise investments and provide a basis for integrating information and communication interventions within national development strategies.

A number of countries in Africa have requested FAO to assist them in the definition of national communication for development policies. Most of FAO experiences were undertaken in ECOWAS member countries: Mali, Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, Burkina Faso and Niger. In placing structuring instruments for creating national policies of communication for development, FAO has reiterated several important principles and basic methodological considerations inherent to communication policies.

⁸ The Design and Implementation of National Information and Communication Policies for Sustainable Development in Africa: Issues and Approaches, Rome, FAO 2002
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/005/y4338e/y4338e00.htm#Contents>

In April 2002, FAO's Office Knowledge Exchange, Research and Extension organized a regional workshop in Niamey (Niger) on the methodologies involved in designing and implementing National Communication for development Policies (NCDP). The workshop's principle objectives were twofold: to reinforce the impact of its fieldwork within the Economic Community of West States, and to ensure the availability of the field tested and developed methodologies in the area of communication policies and strategies.

The Governments of Mali, and Guinea Bissau have been among the first to embark on such a process and Central African Republic, the Congo, and Burkina Faso have undertaken similar exercises in 1996. In 1999 a workshop was held in Praia (Cape Verde) with FAO technical and financial support. Following the example of other African countries, the Government of Niger has since August 2001 undertaken the process of defining a National Communication for Development policy with the backing of FAO, UNICEF and the UNDP. Mali was the first country to initiate the exercise of elaborating a NCDP. During the workshop held from the 4th to the 11th October 1993 was defined the National Communication for Development Policy and nowadays Mali is also the first country where a NCDP has already been implemented.

2. Positioning in institutional frameworks (e.g. development agencies)

FAO has been pioneering the Communication for Sustainable Development Initiative (CSDI), a programme supported by the Italian Ministry for the Environment and Territory, that intends to strengthen institutions and peoples' capacities in the use of communication methods and tools to meet today's development challenges. The CSDI programme is engaged in documenting and testing experiences in the use of communication for development for climate change adaptation and food security, focusing on strategies and services presently being supported at the field level in pilot areas in Bangladesh, Bolivia, DR Congo, and The Caribbean.

Each activity in the regions is lead by local institutions and will serve as the basis for generating the lessons learned in terms of what works (i.e., best practices, impact and value added) and what does not work (limiting factors, corrective measures, etc.). These in turn will provide the guide in the formulation of corresponding recommendations pertaining to advocacy, policy and institutional reforms, capacity building, and feasibility for implementing communication for development programs. Based on these results, proposals for recommended strategies for introducing communication in national development policies and programs are drawn.

Communication for development processes in institutional frameworks facilitate the definition of priorities and content, based on the needs of the local partners through a participatory process. In the first place it helps to define the problems and assess the situation that is creating barriers for sustainable development. It facilitates processes of consultation with stakeholders through participatory communication methods, with the aim of designing communication strategies, media and messages that are pertinent to a specific context.

The Communication for Sustainable Development Initiative (CSDI) is the first global programme focused on the application of communication for development strategies and tools for climate change and sustainable natural resource management. The programme includes activities such as documenting and sharing good practices on the use of communication for development in climate change adaptation, piloting

communication for development strategies and services, and the implementation of regional communication platforms.

It is important to underline the kind of communication these processes involve:

“First, communication for development is not just a matter of getting the message right or of mounting public awareness campaigns, although public awareness is crucial. Second, communication for development is not only technology transfer or diffusion of innovations, although the development of appropriate technologies and practices is central. Communication for development is not a one-way, top-down transfer of information. Information alone does not solve problems. In fact, years of communication research and evidence show that message-based approaches almost always achieve limited results. Third, communication for development is not just engaged in “persuasion” or “social marketing” efforts that promote the adoption of new behaviour, even though certain social marketing principles can be useful in the community-based adaptation process. Rather, communication for development is a discipline in its own right.” (Protz, FAO 2010).

3. Role of Communication for Development in Community-Based Adaptation

Community-Based Adaptation (CBA) yields far more encouraging results than any other approaches. Community-Based Adaptation to climate change involves multi-stakeholder action, innovation and social learning. Usually, it involves small-scale, low-cost and simple technologies made possible by whatever resources local communities have.

The increasing role of rural knowledge institutions and their need to incorporate the application of ComDev strategies and ICTs to deal with community-based adaptation to climate change are becoming evident. New opportunities to strengthen rural communities through knowledge and information are provided by the use of participatory ComDev approaches that comprise the use of the new ICTs. Nevertheless, there is still a need to conceptualize the role of these strategies and proceed to develop a strategic framework for enhancing their application to community-based adaptation to climate change. One of the main activities that must be carried-out in this regard is to assess how knowledge institutions address climate change in their work with rural communities and how they can be strengthened, in terms of their human and methodological capacity, to cope with issues that include, among others:

- a. facilitating participatory research and horizontal knowledge sharing;
- b. improving the quality of advisory services for technology innovation;
- c. enhancing adaptation processes and disaster risk management;
- d. bridging the gap between global environment information and local communities' knowledge; and
- e. strengthening policy dialogue between institutions and small farmers.

Communication for development is central to the Community-Based Adaptation approach to climate change. It combines participatory communication methods and processes with a variety of media and tools ranging from rural radio to information and communication technologies (ICTs). In the context of community-based adaptation to climate change, communication for development involves the systematic design and use of participatory communication processes, strategies and media to share

knowledge and information among all stakeholders in a particular agro-ecological context. It aims to enhance peoples' resilience and capacity to cope through diverse livelihood options.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), through the Communication for Sustainable Development Initiative (CSDI), has consolidated a framework on Communication for development as a Community-Based Adaptation approach to climate change.

For example, successful local adaptation to climate variability and change requires multiple pathways with well planned, interrelated, short- and long-term measures, most of which are considered "knowledge intensive." They include:

- a. adopting physical adaptive measures (e.g. storage facilities for retaining rain water);
- b. improving existing agricultural practices (e.g. adjustment of cropping patterns, selection of drought-tolerant crop varieties);
- c. adjusting socio-economic activities such as livelihood diversification and market facilitation;
- d. strengthening local institutions through self-help programmes and capacity building;
- e. creating awareness of and advocacy for climate change and adaptation issues;
- f. strengthening linkages between research, extension and farmers; and
- g. providing access to adequate knowledge and communication services.

In the words of Mario Acunzo, from FAO: "A community-based adaptation approach to climate change requires a multidisciplinary, multi-stakeholder action and process of social learning for adaptive livelihoods. Within this framework, communication plays a key role in addressing the complex dimensions of vulnerability. As such, communication must be taken into account in the early part of the intervention. This calls for a holistic approach based on two-way communication processes integrating the use of various media according to the characteristics and needs of the audience with regard to climate change" (FAO, 2010).

And Maria Protz, from the CSDI, adds: "It is recognized that the need for climate change adaptation is urgent. But longer-term approaches are also needed as there is no "quick fix" for climate change. There is also a need to see climate change adaptation within the context of social change and sustainable development in the broad sense. (...) There is really no need to reinvent the wheel. The challenge lies in drawing from existing best practices and leveraging resources and experiences." (FAO, 2010).

One of the main activities that must be carried-out in this regard is to assess how knowledge institutions address climate change in their work with rural communities and how they can be strengthened, in terms of their human and methodological capacity.

Communication for development criteria apply also to community-based adaptation to climate change, as follows:

- a. Start by assessing peoples' knowledge, perspectives and expectations;
- b. Build on existing communication systems;
- c. Ensure equitable access;
- d. Promote local content;
- e. Use realistic technologies;

- f. Ensure financial sustainability; and
- g. Build local capacities.

The value added that communication for development can provide is also better appreciated when seen as an essential component throughout the entire community-based adaptation process. This means that it is critical to employ communication for development at specific junctures or moments in the community-based technology generation process:

- a. Situation analysis or problem identification
- b. Observation, documentation of indigenous techniques and livelihood survival options; validation of scientific and indigenous knowledge
- c. Prioritization of livelihood adaptation options
- d. Communication of information to vulnerable groups in order to make sound decisions; development of participatory communication strategies and message design to support community-based adaptation activities and interventions
- e. Implementation and monitoring of strategic, targeted communication interventions to support community-based adaptation choices
- f. Evaluation of outcomes/impacts in terms of changes in attitudes, knowledge level and practices.

4. Mainstreaming communication for sustainable development

The key for success in communication for development initiatives is to start with the participatory analyses of the needs of local institutions and stakeholders, taking into account local culture and values, and promoting a concerted action for development. Communication for development can achieve relevant impacts and sustainability only if adequately inserted in national development policies and building on already existing experiences and capacities.

Over the years several communication centres and systems have been established to deliver services and provide technical assistance both at national as well as regional level. However, the economic sustainability has often been the weak point of their activities.

Nowadays, an increasing number of development initiatives emphasize the use of communication as a strategic tool and new opportunities are emerging for mainstreaming communication for development into national policies for sustainable development, especially in agricultural, natural resource management. Nevertheless, the promotion of adequate communication for development policies, including capacity building efforts should start with a reflection about trends, opportunities and priorities at the field level considering best practices, needs and opportunities for collaboration both at the regional and national levels.

This analysis would also allow to build common understanding about the differences in applying communication in different political and cultural contexts, and to agree on strategies considering opportunities and resources already in place in each region.

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Acronyms

| | |
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| CARIMAC | Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication |
| CBA | Community-Based Adaptation |
| CC | Climate Change |
| CCA | Climate Change Adaptation |
| CCCD | Caribbean Centre for Communication for Development |
| CDKN | Climate & Development Knowledge Network |
| CDMP | Comprehensive Disaster Management Program |
| CGIAR | Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research |
| ComDev | Communication for Development |
| CSDI | Communication for Sustainable Development Initiative |
| DANIDA | Danish International Development Agency |
| DFID | Department for International Development |
| DRM | Disaster Risk Management |
| EC | European Commission |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization |
| GFRAS | Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services |
| HIV/AIDS | Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| ICT4Dev | Information and Communication Technologies for Development |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural development |
| IPCC | Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change |
| LACC | Livelihood Adaptation to Climate Change |
| NGOs | Non-Government Organizations |
| NRM | Natural Resource Management |
| OEKR | Research and Extension Branch, FAO |
| PRCA | Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal |
| SARD | Sustainable Agricultural and Rural Development |
| SMS | Short Message Sending |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNEP | United Nations Environment Programme |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| WAU | Wageningen Agricultural University |