

A compendium of
**REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES
IN COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT**



A compendium of
Regional Perspectives
in Communication for Development

Research and Extension Division
Natural Resources and Environment Department
FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
Rome, 2007

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Contents

ABOUT THIS COMPENDIUM	v
FOREWORD	vii
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	ix
1. CHALLENGES	1
Lack of Knowledge and Understanding of the different Communication for Development functions (and their planning process) on part of decision-makers	1
The need for capacity development and Training Institutions focused on communication	3
Policy and organizational reform	6
The need for partnerships	8
ICTs and knowledge management	10
2. STORIES ON COMMUNICATION INITIATIVES	13
3. LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE REGIONS	19
Central America and Mexico	19
Latin America	19
Indigenous Peoples	20
Southeast Asia	21
East and Southern Africa	22
The Sahel	23
Near East	23
4. ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS	25
Communication and politics	25
The need for policy	25
The importance of fostering partnerships	27
Capacity development for decision-makers	27
Capacity development for practitioners	28
Sharing of stories and experiences	29

5. ADVANCING COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT	31
Regional Action Plans	31
ComDev Regional Initiatives	33
Strategic directions for advancing ComDev in the different regions	34
 ANNEX I	
Regional consultations and workshop on Communication for Development	37

About this compendium

This compendium integrates the findings of seven regional consultations and workshops coordinated by FAO in preparation for the World Congress on Communication for Development (WCCD), with a view to promoting learning experiences and partnerships in Communication for Development.

The document was prepared by Ricardo Ramirez and Wendy Quarry, Communication for Development specialists, and its publication was supervised by Mario Acunzo, Communication for Development Officer at FAO, who was also responsible for coordinating the regional consultations. While the source materials for the compendium are the reports of workshop, e-fora and regional studies prepared by FAO partners and consultants, all of the analysis and recommendations are the responsibility of the authors.

The document is organized into five main chapters:

- **Main challenges:** summarizes some of the challenges faced by communication practitioners in each region.
- **Stories on communication initiatives:** responds to the challenges and provides the evidence of accomplishments.
- **Lessons learned:** details some of the findings from the regional workshops and papers in terms of best practices, methodologies, approaches and impacts.
- **Recommendations:** addresses emerging issues and opportunities for mainstreaming communication into development policies and programmes.
- **Advancing communication for sustainable development:** presents action-oriented proposals based on activities already being carried out within the context of the regional plans of action and of follow-up initiatives presently supported by FAO.

Annex I provides a synthesis of the consultation process across the regions while the Executive Summary presents a brief review of the findings.

For further information about this publication please contact ComDev@fao.org

Foreword

This compendium presents the findings of a series of regional studies, consultations and workshops organized by FAO in preparation for the World Congress on Communication for Development (WCCD) held at FAO headquarters, Rome in October 2007. These initiatives sought to bring together people, ideas and practices of actual experience on how Communication for Development (ComDev) is being applied in different regions.

The compendium serves as a reference document and compares present trends, experiences and challenges in ComDev across regions, organizations and projects. The experiences reported focus on the application of communication methods and media, particularly in the field of food security, natural resources management and rural development. Reference is made to three main functions inherent to ComDev:

- Policy communication and public relations - commonly used by governments to convey new programme directions to the public and promote their programmes.
- Educational communication for training - commonly used in transfer of technology programmes that seek to disseminate proven know-how.
- Facilitative or participatory communication - commonly used to understand how different groups perceive complex problems and negotiate ways forward.

The present document is just a synthesis of an intense consultation process about ComDev issues and experiences carried out in Africa, Asia and Latin America for the WCCD. It provides an example on how to support local appropriations of ComDev approaches, methods and tools for different cultural, agroecological and development contexts.

Only through improved knowledge sharing and collaboration among practitioners and institutions will it be possible to promote effective ComDev initiatives in the field and strengthen the capacities of national institutions and organizations.

It is hoped that the perspectives documented will offer new directions for mainstreaming ComDev in different regions and for fostering new partnerships.

Isabel Alvarez
Director
Research and Extension Division

Executive summary

This compilation of regional consultation yielded five main challenges:

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE AND CAPACITY IN COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE ON THE PART OF DECISION-MAKERS

Experience has shown that decision makers are comfortable with the idea of communication particularly where it applies to public relations, information and awareness raising. However there is little knowledge of the breadth of communication functions ranging from public relations to participatory communication. Nor is there understanding of the need for research-based communication planning to make a communication initiative viable. This lack of knowledge can result in confusion between communication for development and media, and presents a major barrier to the mainstreaming of Communication for Development initiatives.

LACK OF TRAINED PRACTITIONERS

There is a tremendous dearth of well trained communication practitioners in all regions. There is also a certain amount of confusion as to the depth and meaning of Communication for Development (ComDev) within regions and across regions making it difficult to find a common language/terminology to indicate the meaning of the process.

LACK OF POLITICAL WILL AS EVIDENCED THROUGH ABSENCE OF POLICY

It is clear that the presence of a supportive policy (for ComDev) within government at the national, middle and local levels would provide the impetus (enabling environment) to help accelerate the use of communication initiatives in project and program implementation. In many regions such a policy is often implicit in those countries that support participatory development (or community-based management) but in others, where participatory development is not the norm, it is almost impossible to find examples of any communication initiative beyond public relations and/or information exchange.

NEED FOR PARTNERSHIPS

There are several examples where partnerships between government bodies, NGOs and academe have brought together the different communication functions within a given program to good effect. This type of synergy is possible in countries where governments welcome the presence of NGOs and see them as complimentary to the government role of service provider and regulator.

CONFUSION AROUND ICTS AND INTERNET OPPORTUNITIES

The growth of internet technology has given an enormous impetus to wider interest in the power of communication. It has also opened the door to more horizontal communication that cannot be controlled by government. A good example of this is the recent blogging between Israeli and Lebanese citizens during the July 2006 war. At the same time, the excitement about the internet has led many decision-makers to confuse the internet (which is a tool) with Communication for Development which is a process that makes use of a wide array of methods and media tools.

While the above may appear to be a daunting task, **Section 2** of this Compendium is rich with **stories of accomplishment and innovation**. It is always important to tell the stories of communication initiatives that have been able to breathe life into a wide spectrum of different projects over the years. These stories bear testament to the impact of communication in the development process and help to remind us that without communication there can be no development.

The **third section** of this Compendium explores lessons learned. The regional workshops, e-forums and study papers set out to bring people together to share experiences in ComDev, discuss possibilities for future support and search for new ways to come together around the issues of increasing knowledge and practice in the field. Readers who are interested in the **specific lessons for each region** and ways forward will find **Section 3** of particular interest. For each region we provide a summary of lessons and our analysis of the implications.

Section 4 addresses the main five issues and offers recommendations:

COMMUNICATION AND POLITICS

In essence, the presence or absence of free and easy communication both vertical and horizontal is a political act. Countries that foster dialogue, debate and inclusion whilst encouraging a free and open media are more likely to engage in participatory communication practices than those with more centrally controlled nation states. The whole notion of transparency is in itself a communication

function that depends on the willingness of those in power to share knowledge and information with those who are not. It is difficult to know which is the cart and which is the horse – can bottom up participatory communication help foster a freer society or must a society already be free for open expression in order to foster participatory communication?

THE NEED FOR POLICY

The regional meetings have shown that those countries with policies to support Communication for Development are most likely to open the door to an increase in practice. The presence of an enabling environment offers a hook for practitioners to demand the inclusion of communication at all levels of planning. While this may be self-evident, the need to fight for policy has not often been clearly articulated.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS

While the development of national policies to support communication for development is key, we recognize the differing degrees of effort and length of time each country might take to get to the table on this issue. Meanwhile, the need to foster partnerships between government agencies and other actors with each other is paramount.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR DECISION-MAKERS

All regions report a lack of knowledge on the part of decision-makers about the breadth and depth of communication for development. This has often resulted in a partial nod to communication particularly if it involves media or a form of public relations to enhance the government agenda. It is clear that methods must be found to broaden the knowledge of decision-makers towards the full communication agenda. There may be scope to use well-recognized approaches like the Farmer Field Schools as a strictly “non-communication” -yet familiar- vehicle to illustrate how the different communication functions are contributors to the success.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR PRACTITIONERS

The corollary to the need for capacity building amongst decision-makers is the more pressing need to develop a cadre of trained practitioners. Across all regions there is a lack of accredited training opportunities in Communication for Development. This calls for a global and regional concerted program to develop –at the very least regional training programs. The efforts by organizations like the Communication for Social Change Consortium to develop core reading materials and standard course templates or virtual learning committees such as Isang Bagsak merit to be supported and adapted widely.

SHARING OF STORIES AND EXPERIENCES

The exchange of stories and experiences across regions and within regions has shown to provide impetus and encouragement to decision-makers, practitioners and donors to get motivated in support of ComDev initiatives. The call for regional platforms deserves to be balanced with the need to make use of what is already available at the global level within the field, and in each region with complementary activities in related fields. For example, regional evaluation networks or farmer field school experiences could be integrated with Communication for Development platforms. The WCCD sessions on Sustainable Development constitute one special moment where regional partnerships may be developed.

Of particular interest for the future will be the sharing of successful mechanisms to create spaces for dialogue and change with policy makers. Reaching these circles of decision making with convincing examples of the power of Communication for Development is the challenge for the future. While the message “**Without Communication there is no Development**” rings true, without expertise at reaching policy circles there is no message.

1. Challenges

The WCCD symbolized the many and varied challenges (both opportunities and barriers) to full-scale adoption of Communication for Development (ComDev) in the world of global development. Each region participating in the FAO meetings, e-forums and research papers identified challenges inherent in their individual regions. Most of the challenges cross regional boundaries while a few are pertinent to the individual issues confronting a particular area.

In this section, we have attempted to both rank the challenges according to priority and at the same time give an anecdotal flavour as to how the challenges were encountered in the different parts of the world included in the review.

Main challenges:

- Lack of knowledge and capacity in Communication for Development practice on the part of decision-makers
- Lack of trained practitioners
- Lack of political will as evidenced through absence of policy
- Need for partnerships
- Confusion around ICTs and internet opportunities

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE DIFFERENT COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT FUNCTIONS (AND THEIR PLANNING PROCESS) ON PART OF DECISION-MAKERS

Experience has shown that Decision Makers are comfortable with the idea of communication particularly where it applies to public relations, information and awareness raising. However there is little knowledge of the breadth of communication functions ranging from public relations to participatory communication. Nor is there understanding of the need for research-based communication planning to make a communication initiative viable. This lack of knowledge can result in confusion between communication for development and media, and presents a major barrier to the mainstreaming of Communication for Development initiatives.

- In the **Near East**, participants of the consultation process that included both an e-forum and a regional workshop (Cairo, May 2006) felt that the lack of knowledge on the part of decision-makers on the distinction between the communication functions (policy, knowledge transfer and participation) greatly retarded the type of time and support required for implementing a participatory approach. In addition, they felt that this lack of knowledge extended to ignoring the need for proper communication planning (audience research, field testing and monitoring and evaluation). The lack of government support for participatory communication was seen as a key constraint in the region

...from the e-discussion in Near East:

The simplest way to put this is to imagine two buildings: one designed by an architect, and a second one that was built without using the services of an architect. To be sure, both houses may use the same materials, resources, skilled and unskilled labor, but will produce completely different results. You may in fact spend the rest of your life fixing that house that was built without a professional design. Why do people see this as being valid in the construction business but fail to see it in communication? Because communication is in fact an every day activity, many people (especially the ones in authority) will become self-declared experts. It is absolutely necessary to have a “code” that prohibits the planning or implementation of communication programs without using the services of communication “architects” – hence the need for developing and using such people in our region.

Dr. El Kamel, Cairo, May 2006

- **East and Southern Africa** reports that in 1990¹ the SADCC countries gave written recognition to the fact that a condition for development is the “free-flow of ideas, technical know-how and capital.” However, no mechanisms were subsequently put in place for establishing such participation in a sustainable manner. As a result, the failure to integrate all members of society in the decision-making process coupled with the lack of regional standards to guide member states on issues of democratic standards, electoral regimes, participatory development and corporate governance, paved the way for widespread failure in food security and natural resource management practices. All were carried out without

1 SADCC, the Second Decade - Enterprise, Skills and Productivity, Lusaka 1990.

proper analysis and participation of the people. The Southern Africa paper relates this lacking to an essentially centralist structure of government inherited from Colonial times.

- In **the Sahel**, three out of the five countries² participating in the Regional Workshop "Communication for Natural Resource Management and Local Development" held in Ouagadougou 6-8 June 2006 had policy documents on the importance of participatory development and communication. However even those with policy in place had not integrated communication into sectoral policies nor supported much in the way of participatory communication. Those communication projects that were centrally promoted tended to rely on the media rather than other more participatory methodologies. There was little evidence of research-based communication initiatives.

THE NEED FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING INSTITUTIONS FOCUSED ON COMMUNICATION

There is a tremendous dearth of well trained communication practitioners in all regions. There is also a certain amount of confusion as to the depth and meaning of Communication for Development within regions and across regions making it difficult to find a common language/terminology to indicate the meaning of the process.

- The **Central America & Mexico** workshop "Communication for Development and Sustainable Livelihoods", held in Costa Rica in June 2006, attempted to introduce the Sustainable Livelihoods (SL) framework as a common foundation to compare and contrast the regional experiences. There was no unanimous agreement on the proposed framework and two definitions of Communication for Development were considered³. The seven cases presented were not compared or contrasted using the SL framework. In its stead, a SWOT analysis was carried out, but this

² Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Senegal

³ FAO proposed: "Communication for Development is a social process that is based on the participatory and systematic use of strategies, activities, and media to enable individuals, communities and organizations to share knowledge and information and achieve a consensus that leads to concerted development action" (p. 11). Subsequently, the workshop participants proposed a shorter definition: "Communication for Development enables people to have more control over their livelihoods" (p. 20).

approach lacks a common conceptual ComDev framework to enable a systematic comparison of experiences⁴.

- In **Central America & Mexico** impact assessment (monitoring and evaluation) remain central challenges both in terms of methodological innovation and capacity development. None of the presentations included an explicit M&E methodology, and many participants queried the presenters on this very subject.
- The Latin American seminar "Sin Comunicación no hay Desarrollo", held in Lima in August 2007, asserted the need to create national and international communication observatories in order to advocate for Communication for Development policies and to guarantee rural people's right to communication. Moreover, participants agreed with the need to enhance the capacity of alternative media (like edu-entertainment and communitarian radios) to work in development promote people's participation
- The **Near East**: participants to the technical consultation on Communication for Development in the Near East: experiences, needs and opportunities made it clear that lack of political support and policy direction hampered the advancement of Communication for Development in the region. Further they felt that in all cases, the socio-political, economic and cultural contexts. At present they pointed to only four institutions engaged in the practice and noted the subsequent lack of broad-based support for Communication for Development in the region. As a corollary they felt that most initiatives in Communication for Development came through donor funded individual projects. This meant that once the project ended so did the ability to plan and implement communication initiatives. Consequently the Near East had very limited examples of activities as well as research into the field of Communication for Development giving rise to the need for more stories and demonstration of results.

⁴ The WCCD paper "Waves in the Forest" provides an innovative integration of communication into the SL framework.

...from the e-forum East and Southern Africa, October 2006:

I am sure by now most of the contributors to this forum are aware that communication is no longer a one-way flow of information. It is no longer the hypodermic model advanced a couple of years ago.

Modern communication process requires that both the communicator and the communicated take away something from the communication process. This is one of the models advanced by the communication for social change. It emphasizes the importance for interaction in whatever form.

Without really pointing a finger at anybody, most so called communicators jump at developing messages without really establishing the information gaps, the baseline and the relevant information that is required by the target audience. Unless and until we interact with the target audience to establish first the nature of the relevant information and secondly what we want that information to achieve, the bottom line remains that we will be talking to ourselves. Like «winking to a woman in the dark « as advertisers like to say because she can't see you anyway.

Anderson

- In the **Near East**, even where communication practice is fairly common amongst extension staff, particularly when it entails interpersonal communication and information exchange, there is still a wide need for capacity building. One of the weaknesses mentioned in many country reports is the notion that “one size fits all.” Implementers, especially those who come from technical fields tend to see communication as a matter of coming out and distributing materials to stakeholders. Segmentation of the stakeholders is often not done because of the belief that all material is good for all people.
- The SADC Centre, set up with FAO assistance in 1993, offers a unique opportunity for ComDev capacity building in the **Southern and Eastern Africa** region. The Centre (which recently moved from Zimbabwe to Malawi) developed in-house training opportunities for regional teams from rural development programs to work and apply communication techniques in the field. In addition, FAO and the Centre worked with regional universities to open courses at the graduate and undergraduate level in Communication for Development. There was a post-graduate course offered at the University of Zambia and an undergraduate one in Malawi.

POLICY AND ORGANIZATIONAL REFORM

It is clear that the presence of a supportive policy (for ComDev) within government at the national, middle and local levels would provide the impetus (enabling environment) to help accelerate the use of communication initiatives in project and program implementation. In many regions such a policy is often implicit in those countries that support participatory development (or community-based management) but in others, where participatory development is not the norm, it is almost impossible to find examples of any communication initiative beyond public relations and/or information exchange.

- In the **Central America & Mexico**, the initial findings of a policy review contracted to RUTA (www.ruta.org) has revealed that *communication* is rarely mentioned in national policy documents, and that references to *participation* tend to be associated with rural policy development. When asked about *communication*, policy makers associate the term with public relations and journalism, while *ICTs* tend to be associated with the technological dimensions of the term.
- In **Latin America**, participants to the seminar Sin Comunicación no Hay Desarrollo agreed with the need to promote communication for development strategies to support participation in the definition of sustainable development and social change policies through a dialogue among civil society, development agency and governments.
- In **West Africa** three countries (Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali) already boast National Communication for Development Policies, which were in turn developed through a participatory approach. This work has been supported by FAO and relevant publications are available on the policy development process (FAO. 2002. Guide méthodologique de'élaboration d'une stratégie de communication multimédia. Rome). Despite this, as noted above, countries report that efforts have still not been made to disseminate the policy with few communication initiatives in place.
- In contrast, Communication for Development is not well understood nor appreciated in **Southern and Eastern Africa**. Although most countries in the region are signatory to the Lome IV Convention that recognizes that communication is pivotal to people's participation, there are few countries with policies to enable the process. When countries do recognize the

importance of communication in the development process (Kenya), they lack the trained personnel to carry a program forward.

- Most ComDev initiatives in **Southern Africa** have come from donors or international organizations (FAO, IDRC, UNFPA etc.). The need for HIV/AIDS communication has raised the profile of ComDev that has given rise to a plethora of communication initiatives carried out by NGOs. Similarly, radio plays and has played a special role in this part of Africa. A recent workshop set up to sensitize policy and decision-makers from East and Southern Africa to endorse the multi-sectoral approach in rural radio (CTA/FAO/SADC 2005) ended with participants unanimously concluding that national governments should formulate communication for development policies that recognize rural radio as an important development tool. Radio is also cited as an important medium in the Sahel.
- In **South-East Asia**, the trend is for donor-driven projects to introduce Communication for Development as components in Natural Resource Management (NRM) and food security projects. While this creates opportunities for national government to witness the role of communication, there have yet to be written policies even within specific sectors. There is a need to systematize the findings from these initiatives to create policy agendas within the countries familiar with the practice through the individual initiatives. One exception is the Philippines where the call for communication inputs is clearly stated in the Agenda 21 policy statement.
- The **Southeast Asia** experience with Farmer Field Schools (FFS) is already world-renowned. A major contribution of the FFS approach is that in Cambodia, the government has officially recognized the participatory approach as the core of its agricultural extension program. The FFS approach lends itself well as an example where the different communication functions are used in a coherent and complementary strategy. It also exemplifies a case where the government *implicitly* acknowledges the place for communication within the policy agenda (the policy call for participatory development). The same would apply to Thailand where the community management approach is clearly written into government policy. In contrast, some countries in the Near East who also reported good results from the Farmer Field School approach, abandoned the program since it was found to be impossible to ‘scale up’ to

the national level. Participatory development does not figure largely in Near Eastern countries' policy agendas.

- In **Mexico**, the legacy of the communication component of the PRODERITH program appears to be an organizational tendency to focus on quantifiable media products as opposed to valuing the learning processes or contents of the materials. This “instrumentalist” approach constitutes a challenge when it comes to impact assessment and sustainability measures in that there is a need to demonstrate enhanced knowledge and skill as part of the process. Interestingly enough, the reports from Mexico confirm that the project left its mark: people still remember the videos; they recalled the video sessions as good opportunities to meet face to face.
- In **Central America**, non-governmental organizations have created communication programs in support of advocacy and social mobilization. A combination of media and grassroots training activities that address agricultural issues, such as the farmer-to-farmer approach (campesino-a-campesino) are common. From a policy perspective, there is a contrast between these bottom-up efforts of social mobilization and a tendency at the governmental level to focus on the public relations side of communication.
- In the **Near East**, participants to the technical consultation on Communication for Development in the Near East: experiences, needs and opportunities made it clear that lack of political support and policy direction hampered the advancement of Communication for Development in the region. Further they felt that in all cases, the socio-political, economic and cultural contexts of any region clearly determined Communication for Development strategies and had to be taken into account. Participants felt that the present centralized top-down systems of government in this region created a barrier to any form of participatory communication – *the present political environment in the Near East is not conducive to the promotion of participatory communication.*

THE NEED FOR PARTNERSHIPS

There are several examples where partnerships between government bodies, NGOs and academe have brought together the different communication functions within a given program to good effect. This type of synergy is possible in countries where governments welcome

the presence of NGOs and see them as complimentary to the government role of service provider and regulator.

- In the **Philippines**, involvement in NRM conservation and development efforts has usually been a partnership between a funding agency, government unit, and an NGO or academe. Partnerships between and among several public and private institutions picture prominently in many of the projects reviewed. Similarly in Thailand, NGOs and the media are also actively involved in the implementation of national sustainability development projects. The study further revealed that the government approach to communication around food security tended to focus more on extension, community mobilization and indeed, participatory approaches while NGOs focused on advocacy, networking and alliance building (with the use of mass media).
- In **Thailand**, government worked to forge partnerships with farmer groups who were seen as an efficient means to transfer knowledge within a network of farming communities. This has created the room to support and sustain indigenous knowledge of farmers.
- While partnerships between government and NGOs are found in the **Near East** (Pakistan comes to mind), the relationship is not widely sought in many of the countries in the region. The absence of this relationship renders it more difficult to facilitate participatory communication approaches across the region.
- In **Uganda**, a Participatory Poverty Assessment report (2000) indicated that 44% of communities cited ignorance and lack of information as the fourth most important cause of poverty. As a result of this report and other assessments, the government established a National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) to assist government in providing agricultural extension service delivery in the country. NAADS seeks increasing farmer access to information as the key component of their work. NAADS works through elected farmer groups who provide the link between individual farmers and the government. Service delivery is demand based and delivered through contracts to the private sector as well as through civil society. NAADS is responsible both for developing farmer capacity to demand for services and for enabling the private sector to respond. NAADS activities are showing how communication methods and media are playing a key role in attaining its goal. NAADS works with radio, print,

email, internet, telephone, telefax, traditional media and face to face communication.

ICTS AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

The growth of internet technology has given an enormous impetus to wider interest in the power of communication. It has also opened the door to more horizontal communication that cannot be controlled by government. A good example of this is the recent blogging between Israeli and Lebanese citizens during the July 2006 war. At the same time, the excitement about the internet has led many decision-makers to confuse the internet (which is a tool) with Communication for Development which is a process that makes use of a wide array of methods and media tools. Internet is just one tool among many brought into use within the communication process.

- The **Near East** has witnessed a spurt of growth and interest in satellite technology. This has given rise to strong interest in modern ICTs. Ironically this has presented both an opportunity and a challenge. The opportunity lies in the potential of modern ICTs to connect vast networks of individuals and organizations across great distances (at low cost), the downside, however is that the fascination with ICTs has taken away from a broader understanding of Communication for Development, combined with the challenge of rural areas that lag behind in terms of connectivity. ICTS are seen as both the product and the program whereas they are only one group of tools in an arsenal of possibilities for communication in the region. In addition, and this goes back to the challenge surrounding policy and political environments, the lack of human resources, the culture of information that impedes policy frameworks and language issues retard the ability to use ICTs to its fullest development potential.
- The **Central America and Mexico workshop** "Communication for Development and Sustainable Livelihoods" held in Costa Rica in June 2006 concluded with agreements for regional collaboration or platform. A website has already created a networking tool (<http://www.comunicacionparaeldesarrollo.org/>). The goal of this platform is to demonstrate how Communication for Development approaches contribute to improved livelihood outcomes in harmony with the environment. The specific objectives include: 1) to develop and consolidate a Platform as a meeting

place of regional initiatives, organizations and individuals involved with Communication for Development; 2) To create the conditions to achieve the financial, social, political and technical sustainability of the Platform; 3) To develop capacities in terms of methodology, concepts, and techniques in order to enhance the effective delivery of Communication for Development projects; 4) To influence public policy and national legal frameworks and organizations so as to integrate Communication for Development in different development sectors; and 5) To support initiatives that democratize and increase public access to the wavelength spectrum, the Internet and other communication and information media. A focal point for each country was elected, and Voces Nuestras of Costa Rica will host the platform.

- In **Latin America**, Onda Rural: Radio, NTIC y Desarrollo Rural, an initiative promoted by FAO in cooperation with Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica (ALER) and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), launched through a regional workshop held in Quito in 2004 has been created to introduce communication in rural development policies and programs linking broadcast radio with the new information and communication technologies (ICTs). Onda Rural will contribute to strengthen existing networks of radio stations, injecting them with both an interest in the use of new ICTs and a renewed emphasis on using the technologies to overcome poverty and isolation in rural and disadvantaged communities

An Interactive Web Portal will offer specialized information in ComDev, support information exchange and promote cooperation among rural radios and development programs, promoting the dialogue between all the social players.

- In **Southern and Eastern Africa**, governments are increasingly recognizing the importance of information. As a result there are some policies encouraging the use of ICTs. However more needs to be done since many governments are not aware of the breadth of neither potential ICT applications nor what the internet itself can offer. In addition, gender imbalances in terms of access to information need to be addressed. There is certainly scope for integrating the Internet with rural radio, and several regional workshops have already explored this dimension.
- Telecentres are springing up in the **East and Southern Africa** region. Those that are run by private companies (Africa-on-Line, Vodacom etc.) are cheaper to run but tend to exclude anyone who is not considerably well

off. In contrast, centres set up by donors (UNESCO, ITU and IDRC, for example) are more expensive but cater to the needs of the people (stressing community participation and sustainability). Unfortunately, the report goes on to point out that most of these in the rural areas have so far not been able to stand on their own. This is not always the case in urban areas with more population to support the centre.

- In the **Philippines and Thailand**, cases have been found where participatory methods are combined with the use of traditional media and more modern ICTs. Here, ICTs are being used to bring stakeholders into the process of planning and learning. This is a potential that can be harnessed more in sharing how the process of ComDev is done especially among field workers who have access to the net.

2. Stories on communication initiatives

It is always important to tell the stories of communication initiatives that have been able to breathe life into a wide spectrum of different projects over the years. These stories bear testament to the impact of communication in the development process and help to remind us that without communication there can be no development.

- The **Mexican PRODERITH project** included a grassroots component known as *Planes Locales de Desarrollo* (Local Development Plans) where video was used to help communities convey their ideas on drainage and water projects to government planners and engineers. This use of media as a foundation for bottom-up planning was unique, and yet its continuation was interrupted. Instead, a more ‘instrumental’ use of communication (for policy communication and for transfer of technology) dominated the later phases of the program. Moreover, the thrust towards cost recovery and the establishment of commercially oriented rural communication units meant that the participatory communication components were eliminated from the range of communication methods. This suggests that the prevailing thrust towards the privatization of development (from water infrastructure all the way to communication units) was a contributor to the elimination of the facilitative component of the communication program.
- The development model that has prevailed in **Latin America** has stimulated top-down, unilateral, message-oriented communication approaches. What is needed instead is an alternative development model that is centred on pluralism and dialogue, where communication is seen as a basic right and as a tool for citizen engagement. In this perspective, there is no development without communication.
- **Indigenous Peoples’ organizations in Latin America** perceive communication as a strategic means of ascertaining their cultural identity, which in turn calls for supportive public policies that allow for indigenous organizations to establish, own and operate their own communication

networks in such a manner that traditional and modern methods and media may be combined towards self-determination.

- Several **Central American** experiences (Nicaragua's Food Security Program; Honduras' Agrifood Communication; Costa Rica's Open Furrow radio program) provide examples of multi-media strategies that support rural communities with agricultural and food related information. In several cases, programming specifically includes a gender component. In most of these cases, however, there is no evaluation dimension in place to document achievements and/or identify *weaknesses*.⁵
- In **Cambodia**, where the government has embraced participatory extension on the basis of the success of the Farmer Field Schools, additional participatory communication experiences like IDRC's Isang Bagsak will demonstrate the multiple dimensions of such approaches beyond agriculture, such as participatory evaluation.⁶
- In **the Sahel**, Communication for Development approaches are often integrated with participatory approaches and this in turn leads to the inclusion of traditional methods and means of communication into project strategies. The bridge between modern and traditional communication gives recognition to the fact that projects can build on existing communication expertise at the grassroots level and complement it.
- In several countries (**Lao, Cambodia, Nicaragua**), the FAO Special Program on Food Security incorporated Communication for Development and participatory approaches in its implementation. The benefits of these interventions comprise the inclusion of gender-sensitive approaches and participatory planning. These projects have the potential to be used as "policy experiments" if and when the government is involved in a reflection process to appreciate the potential contribution of the approaches and the policy requirements for their continued use and evolution.

5 The WCCD paper "The Changing Nature of Change: A Nicaraguan feminist experience" tells the story of the NGO Puntos de Encuentro that would be of interest to the Central American and Mexican partners.

6 For an example see: Kimhy, L. 2006. Talking with decision-makers in North-Eastern Cambodia: Participatory development communication as an evaluation tool. pp 89-93. In Bessette, G. (ed). People, land & water: Participatory development communication for natural resource management. London and Ottawa: Earthscan and IDRC.

- In the **Philippines** context, the study authors suggest that there is a shift from top-down or blueprint approaches towards learning-oriented, systems based ones. As programmes shift towards the second paradigm, they require communication activities in support of learning; this calls for increased attention to facilitative, participatory communication.
- In the case of the **Philippines**, six communication approaches were used to compare and contrast a large number of existing project interventions. In the table below we match the six approaches with the Communication Functions we presented in the introduction. In the Philippines most projects integrated a “trilogy” of approaches: information delivery, training and human resource development, and awareness and motivational communication campaigns.

Six communication approaches grouped along three major communication functions

Communication approaches	Communication Functions
Information, Communication, Education (IEC) Social marketing	Policy communication and Educational communication
Community mobilization/ community organizing Networking/alliance building Participatory development communication	Facilitative communication
Strategic communication	Integration of all

- The notion of using theatre for development is relatively strong in **Eastern and Southern Africa**. In Malawi, “Drama in Education” is a process whereby theatre is used to research, analyze and solve critical issues in a community, empowering local people to enhance or make change towards positive behavior, knowledge and attitudes regarding social issues affecting their lives. Outsiders go into the community and stay for a few days, during which time they must know the people and their culture and then produce plays around familiar themes that are coupled with development messages. The Chancellor College Traveling Theatre in Malawi, for example, sensitized communities to agricultural issues and the Morotholi Traveling Theatre in Lesotho worked with communities around issues of alcohol, sanitation and health.

- In **Thailand**, the Agricultural Services and Technology Transfer Centres (ATTC) encouraged farmers to work as village volunteers. To be a volunteer, the farmer must have the capacity to access new knowledge and information quickly. Village volunteers acted as *trusted teachers* and provided a link between the government and the villagers. The ATTC staff provided technical advice and material support to the farmers from their Centres in the community areas. A similar program started in the Hill Tribe area trained selected villagers on various agricultural techniques in order to support the work of extension workers.
- The Virtual Extension and Research Communication Network (VERCON) stated in **Egypt** in 1998 (www.vercon.sci.eg). This is a joint initiative supported by FAO with Egyptian research and extension institutions. It is based on the knowledge that research, extension and farming communities needed to cooperate, communicate and plan together to ensure effective programming. It also capitalizes on the interest surrounding the new technologies to try to harness these technologies to bring disparate groups together into a knowledge network. VERCON began with a thorough planning phase that brought multi stakeholders together to map out communication linkages and jointly identify shared goals (Communication Flow Analysis). In addition it used rural and agricultural appraisals at the field level to insure that the virtual network would be accurately focused on the information and knowledge needs of the larger agricultural community. Most important, a monitoring and evaluation mechanism was built into the project right from the start. This was to be very short, allowing for on-going and iterative updates of the VERCON. In reality, VERCON has proven to be an effective tool to link extension and research personnel into an information sharing network. So far, it has not been able to map out a methodology to include the small farmer within the circle.
- In **Lebanon**, a communication initiative was instigated by the American University of Lebanon together with the Association for Rural Development in Arsaal (ARDA). The need was to find a way to provide a platform to bring together disparate groups in the Arsaal area of the country. For years this region had been undergoing massive change due to the dismantling of the local municipality, the breakdown of traditional natural resource management practices and the on-going civil conflict. In 1998, the first municipal council was elected in 35 years. The problem was that the people elected had no experience in local administration. There was a need to develop a method to bring multi-stakeholders together to

discuss local needs. Since face to face communication is common in the Arab world (community issues were resolved through face-to-face meetings facilitated by village elders often in the home of the elder), the need was to form a platform that would enable disparate groups (involving the community, the government and new actors in the development process) to meet and discuss a range of issues in a face to face setting. A User Network was set up and platform created for group discussion. As the User Network progressed, facilitators learned more and more about communication principles and soon set up a typology of user groups that required specific communication initiatives according to their individual needs (segmented audience). This meant special sub-groups were identified (cherry pickers, flock owners and women) plus an experimental environmental group to bring larger environmental issues to the entire community. Emphasis was placed on monitoring and evaluation through farmer feedback to ensure that the learning was actually taking place. Tools used were a mix of interpersonal communication skills, “live –in– the village” initiatives, use of video documentaries for information, a website for sharing knowledge and a series of workshops on environmental issues. The network functioned as a self-reinforcing interactive participatory communication platform that proved to be an effective and innovative experience.

3. Lessons learned from the regions

The Regional workshops, e-forums and study papers set out to bring people together to share experiences in ComDev, discuss possibilities for future support and search for new ways to come together around the issues of increasing knowledge and practice in the field. Each region came up with Lessons Learned and suggestions for Ways Forward to bring ideas and action from the field to the Congress in Rome. For each region we provide a summary of lessons and our analysis of the implications.

CENTRAL AMERICA AND MEXICO

The common elements to work on in the Central America & Mexico region include: enhancing alliances, strengthening training, making the work visible, systematic documentation of experiences, creating a platform as sharing space, identifying indicators, influencing policies, integrating Communication for Development in planning, creating spaces in the media, horizontal exchange of experiences, information networks and methodological innovation (p. 29).

Analysis

While these are important accomplishments, the regional workshop did not lead to a common conceptual framework to enable a systematic comparison of experiences. Instead, a great deal of effort was placed on developing the mechanisms for a regional exchange platform. In addition to this initiative, there is scope for capacity development and exchange beyond the regional level, not only with other regions, but also with existing information resources with conceptual and methodological innovation that has yet to be shared, namely in the areas of evaluation and policy.

LATIN AMERICA

“Sin comunicación no hay desarrollo” (Without communication there is no development) is the motto at the top of the Latin American report, and this captures the main lessons learned. The bulk of the development model that has

prevailed in the region has created the conditions for a vertical, top-down way of thinking and implementing communication. The privatization thrust behind much of the development funding has left little room for the public domain of communication. The Latin American report calls for three strategic directions: 1) citizen engagement to monitor the Communication for Development approaches; 2) international observatories on methods and media for ComDev; and 3) the development of a mechanism for monitoring and exchange of participatory communication within the region beyond the WCCD.

Analysis

The motto «*Without communication there is no development*» captures the strategic role of communication for Sustainable Development. Indeed, to date the prevailing communication methods and media have more often been a mirror of the dominant development paradigm rather than an engine for change. A major challenge then is for communication practitioners to become more strategic in identifying when and where there is scope for realistic interventions. Can we advocate for governments to embrace communication functions that are not threatening (policy communication and educational communication) and leave space for others to implement participatory communication until there are spaces to influence regulatory and policy level that shift the overall development paradigm, rather than expect our pleas for participatory communication to be heard from those who support the prevalent development model? In other words, do we have realistic, practical strategies in place to deliver our message? We suspect it is time to move from the broad call for change, to more practical, sobering means to create spaces for change at the policy level.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Communication for Development is already embraced by indigenous organizations in Latin America as a means to ascertain cultural identities and pursue sustainable development in their own cultural terms. The challenge remains one of unequal access to media resources, and inadequate regulatory regimes that fail to recognize the rights and particular needs of indigenous populations. The declaration from the Bolivia, implemented in September 2006 calls for recognition of traditional communication methods and media, and for capacity development opportunities, with particular attention to women's training needs. The declaration clamors for a space and for the opportunity to embrace and create communication mechanisms that support an indigenous development agenda. Similar proposals were voiced at WSIS and are once again brought to WCCD.

Analysis

As with the Latin American report, we observe a clear direction but limited specific steps to outline how we can get there. In other words, we have the goals, but we lack the specific objectives to help us get there. These steps will at the very least need to address policy, capacity development and new partnerships.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

In the Southeast Asia context, the analytical framework used for comparing country experiences focused on four areas: policy institutions, concept and practice in Communication for Development. In this region the introduction of Communication for Development has taken place mainly through donor-driven projects. A common first step is a focus on the production of materials, which seems like a practical element to link with conventional extension programs (the case of Laos, Thailand and Cambodia). The risk of this project-based approach is that the broader contribution of Communication for Development is often disregarded, and the impact at the policy level is weak or non-existent.

South East Asia reports that while the countries reviewed in the region show a strong willingness and interest in Communication for Development, there is no indication that communication is being planned into programs and projects from the start. This has resulted in a more ‘shot-gun’ approach with messages and ideas pasted on to current initiatives. However, if ComDev is supposed to be transformative – i.e. generate learning and empowerment that leads to social change – this aspect of communication is yet to be deliberately designed and made operational during communication planning. None of the documents reviewed hinted on this function of ComDev.

Lastly, in Southeast Asia, experience has shown that policies are important as they provide the enabling mechanisms by which an innovation can easily be shared and worked out in a given social system. Its legal implications somehow “compel” people to oblige. At the regional level (in SE Asia), policy on the inclusion of ComDev as an integral part of any development effort in food security and NRM has been achieved fully in the Philippines, partly in Thailand and is still being worked out in Cambodia and Laos. In the Philippines the need now shifts towards full enforcement of these policies in the various sectors. The problem lies in identifying who should see to it that such policies on ComDev are enforced.

Analysis

The regional report did not yield consistent analytical frameworks that would allow for a cross-regional comparison of experiences. Even within regions, the attempt to apply the Sustainable Livelihoods framework- as was the case of Central America- did not succeed. The need for a common framework –or set of frameworks- that are accessible to practitioners and their partners remains a challenge.

EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

In the East and Southern Africa region, the review focused on a research paper produced by the head of the SADC Communication for Development Centre and augmented by a very lively e-mail forum on the subject. The paper gave a basic overview of ComDev activities in the region (both past and present) with a particular focus on examples from Malawi, Zimbabwe and Uganda. In the section on Lessons Learned, the author made the strong point that policy makers and decision-makers must learn to understand the breadth and importance of communication for development. In addition, the paper pinpoints the need for middle level management to build communication skills that would include an understanding of the research-based planning process and suggests further communication training for field level staff.

Analysis

Even though governments, NGOS and others are now recognizing the need for Communication for Development, very little is being done to build capacity to make it possible. Capacity building is required at the macro, meso and micro levels: Policy and Planning need ComDev practitioners need to be sensitized on how ComDev can make a difference; managers and others at the meso level need to build their skills to manage communication planning steps (audience research etc.) and at the field level, implementers need to improve their communication skills and at the professional level there is a need for university training.

To counteract this, the authors recommend that a pool of communication for development experts be made available to assist in work surrounding food security, NRM and agriculture. This, he writes, should be done in a systematic and sustainable manner.

Analysis

East and Southern Africa clearly argues that the most important need in the area is capacity building in communication for development (at the macro, meso and

micro levels). It is interesting, but perhaps not surprising, that this region sees capacity building as the route to future policy development around ComDev in NRM and Food Security.

THE SAHEL

The Sahel group of countries -with three out of five actually having policies in place in support of ComDev in each country- was seen to have the political backing for increased attention to the role of communication within their development programs. This was the result of strong earlier support from FAO. Even so, they reported a lack of dissemination of the policies resulting in communication being underutilized in NRM. The participants to the workshop in Sahel pointed to the need for the elaboration of policies within all participating countries but urged each country to learn to disseminate the policy and integrate communication into all development programs and projects. They also called for strategic partnerships within all stakeholders in national institutions and urged the reinforcement of capacity building and acknowledgement of local knowledge.

Analysis

The experience of countries in this region highlights both the importance of putting policy in place in support of ComDev (enabling environment) but also points to the undeniable fact that the presence of policy is not enough. In addition, there is the need for knowledgeable decision-makers who understand the policy enough to ensure its implementation coupled with sufficient practitioners to make implementation viable.

NEAR EAST

In the Near East common themes that emerged included centralized governments limiting the advancement of ComDev along with an absence of ComDev policies to enable the establishment of ComDev programs. The nature of centralized government tended also to downplay the importance of the role of civil society, hence eliminating possibilities for strong partnerships between government and civil society players. Participants to the workshop strongly supported the need to develop a common strategic vision for promoting ComDev and the sharing of knowledge and experience. To do this they promoted the establishment of a knowledge sharing platform (through the internet) to service actors in the region. In addition, the workshop identified national focal points who would be responsible for facilitating and promoting ComDev in each country. Plans were put in place for the development of a Regional Communication for Development

Framework, a capacity audit and the need to seek funding for a regional pilot project designed to demonstrate the importance of ComDev at a visceral level to decision-makers in the region.

Analysis

The Near East workshop enabled participants to confront several of the key challenges to mainstreaming ComDev in their region. It also gave clarity to the need to take the political and economic environment into account in addressing the mainstreaming agenda. Here the question is raised: is it best to acknowledge a centralized government framework and curtail communication initiatives accordingly or does one see communication as a vehicle for widening the government agenda?

4. Issues and recommendations

In this section, the authors of this Compendium have taken license to express their own comments and views that have arisen from the study of the regional initiatives. It is hoped that the recommendations flowing from the individual studies can become tools to assist in the mainstreaming of communication in all development initiatives.

COMMUNICATION AND POLITICS

In essence, the presence or absence of free and easy communication both vertical and horizontal is a political act. Countries that foster dialogue, debate and inclusion whilst encouraging a free and open media are more likely to engage in participatory communication practices than those with more centrally controlled nation states. The whole notion of transparency is in itself a communication function that depends on the willingness of those in power to share knowledge and information with those who are not. It is difficult to know which is the cart and which is the horse – can bottom up participatory communication help foster a freer society or must a society already be free for open expression in order to foster participatory communication?

Regional initiatives have raised the point that the level of acceptance of communication (ie whether it is public relations; information sharing or participatory communication) is often indicative of the type of development practiced both in the region and by individual institutions in the region. Regions that discourage the presence of NGOs usually indicate that there are countries where not a great deal of participatory development is being practiced. Similarly, the presence or absence of a free and open media is an indicator of the degree of willingness on the part of government to tolerate/facilitate and encourage participatory approaches to development.

THE NEED FOR POLICY

The regional meetings have shown that those countries with policies to support Communication for Development are most likely to open the door to an increase in practice. The presence of an enabling environment offers a hook for practitioners to demand the inclusion of communication at all levels of planning.

While this may be self-evident, the need to fight for policy has not often been clearly articulated.

Specific “prototype” policy clauses that enable Communication for Development are needed at different levels.

- At the (macro) national level, general policy directions are needed to facilitate broadcast and spectrum licensing, protect democratic freedom of the press, and create a level playing field for new entrants into rural communication market place and for non-commercial media organizations. In particular indigenous groups in some regions (Latin America) require specific policy support to ensure they have access and are able to have control over their media.
- At the (meso) sectoral level, ministries will benefit from established Communication for Development strategies that allocate resources and enable communication programming; at best National Communication for Development Strategies like the ones pioneered by FAO in West Africa merit to be shared with other regions beyond the Sahel.
- At the (micro) programming level, method and media for Communication for Development merit to be integrated into the program cycle, and capacity development for practitioners is urgently needed.

The Sahelian National Communication for Development Strategies (NDCS) merit being shared with other regions. The FAO publications outlining the participatory process required to develop such strategies need to be translated and adapted. Within the countries that already have NCDSs, there is scope to follow-up the strategies and implement them in coordination with the different development agencies.

In many countries, Communication for Development is introduced through donor-driven projects. There is a wide variation in the approaches utilized; what is often lacking is a systematic review of achievements and a definition of the conditions needed for their continuation. In particular there is a gap when it comes to best practices in participatory communication. In some cases (Thailand) the prevalence is for donor-driven projects to introduce conventional, top-down communication approaches that contrast with the more participatory tradition of NGOs. While this may constitute a start-up strategy, it needs to be followed by complementary activities profiling the other functions of ComDev.

In essence, if we are to harness projects as “policy experiments” then there is scope for more systematic reflection mechanisms to challenge technicians, communicators, administrators and policy makers to identify the relevant methodologies and the required policies to ensure the future evolution of the approaches adapted to the local context.

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOSTERING PARTNERSHIPS

While the development of national policies to support communication for development is key, we recognize the differing degrees of effort and length of time each country might take to get to the table on this issue. Meanwhile, the need to foster partnerships between government agencies and other actors with each other is paramount.

In Afghanistan, for example while it may not be feasible for government at this point in time to foster true participatory approaches to the development agenda, there is scope for government to allow for the space and encourage others (NGOs, academics, private sector etc.) to facilitate participatory communication. This will require a set of skills around negotiation, coordination and consensus building.

In Thailand, where partnerships with NGOs are fostered, experience shows that participatory development communication can best be achieved if there is a combination of community mobilization, education and training, networking and linking with the mass media. Observers noted that the synergy among different communication approaches helped overcome various forms of communication barriers and brought positive results within a shorter period of time.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR DECISION-MAKERS

All regions report a lack of knowledge on the part of decision-makers about the breadth and depth of communication for development. This has often resulted in a partial nod to communication particularly if it involves media or a form of public relations to enhance the government agenda. It is clear that methods must be found to broaden the knowledge of decision-makers towards the full communication agenda. There may be scope to use well-recognized approaches like the Farmer Field Schools as a strictly “non-communication” -yet familiar- vehicle to illustrate how the different communication functions are contributors to the success.

All regions note the need for sensitization of policy-makers, planners and decision-makers in government to the need for, and dimension of,

communication for development. As noted, even those countries in the Sahel with established national policies on communication for development still need assistance not only in diffusing the message of the policy but also in understanding the scope of participatory communication for development. There tends to be too much dependence on the mass media as main perpetrator for communication.

The Sahel experiences with National Communication for Development strategies may be a relevant case to bring to the attention of Southeast Asian governments. Similarly, the IDRC Isang Bagsak networking approach is yielding important results in the Southeast Asia region, both in terms of methodological innovation and human resource development. The approach could be of interest to the Central America and Mexico ‘platform’ initiative.

The Near East *noted* the overall lack of understanding and visibility of ComDev as a development approach. A lack of practitioner know-how, weak knowledge sharing and lack of documentation all contribute to limiting the extent to which policy makers reference ComDev as part of their approach to sustainable development. In addition, the inability of decision-makers to understand that communication is, in itself a professional skill has led to failed communication initiatives that downplay its value and importance.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR PRACTITIONERS

The corollary to the need for capacity building amongst decision-makers is the more pressing need to develop a cadre of trained practitioners across all regions. Across all regions there is a lack of accredited training opportunities in Communication for Development. This calls for a global and regional concerted program to develop –at the very least- regional training programs. The efforts by organizations like the Communication for Social Change Consortium to develop core reading materials and standard course templates merit to be supported, adapted and distributed widely. At the same time the model of virtual committees of practices such as Isang Bagsak should be promoted as an innovative model for capacity building in ComDev.

Several of the regional consultations and workshop reports call for networking among peers to support the exchange of experiences, further systematic documentation and comparison of approaches and experiences, and extraction of best practices. However, none of the reports provide examples of either analytical frameworks or evaluation approaches that have been applied to make such efforts

practical. There is a need to develop basic common frameworks to enable the above tasks to develop in a coherent manner that will allow for cross national and cross regional exchange of approaches and experiences. A concerted action-research effort is need for this to happen, one that integrates practitioners and researchers.

SHARING OF STORIES AND EXPERIENCES

The exchange of stories and experiences across regions and within regions has shown to provide impetus and encouragement to decision-makers, practitioners and donors who can get motivated to support ComDev initiatives. The call for regional platforms deserves to build on the opportunity to make use of what is already available at the global level within the field, and in each region with complementary activities in related fields. For example, regional evaluation networks or farmer field school experiences could be integrated with Communication for Development platforms. The WCCD sessions on Sustainable Development constituted one special moment where regional partnerships have

From the e-forum in East and Southern Africa

In 1996 I implemented participatory communication reflection and action plans with the Basarwa in the Kalahari on the sustainable management of veld products - see link below:(<http://www.envngo.co.bw/pages/vpr&d.html>)

I accept that there are many failures out there but we also can learn substantially from the successes from our work. Over the years I have learned that ComDev is both a science and an art and the right balance between the two needs to be achieved.

I have also learned that there is a direct relationship between methodology, process and content which leads to either failure or success of the 'communication initiative.

The work of the Veld Products Research and Development Trust in Botswana and their partners in the initiative albeit being very complex and difficult, needs to be commended in so far as they are making a difference in the food security of disadvantaged communities in the Kalahari.

Tomorrow I will give an example of the communication work of the Chikukwa Communities in Chimanimani District of Zimbabwe in the context of permaculture holistic land use management.

been initiated. Of particular interest for the future will be the sharing of successful mechanisms to create spaces for dialogue and change among ComDev practitioner and institutions and policy makers. Reaching these circles of decision making with convincing examples of the power of Communication for Development is the challenge for the future. While the message “Without Communication there is no Development” rings true, without expertise at reaching policy circles there is no message.

5. Advancing Communication for Development

REGIONAL ACTION PLANS

As a result of the regional consultations and workshops carried out in connection with the WCCD a series of regional action plan were identified. These offer the basis for concrete action to mainstream ComDev in the different regions according to local needs and opportunities. Furthermore, after the WCCD FAO has been providing follow-up to the action plans as a way to strengthen national capacities and to promote cooperation and cross-support within and across the regions. A synthesis of the regional action plans is presented below.

Central America

Practitioners in the Central America and Mexico sub-regional have established a Communication for Development Platform as a means for increased networking, enhanced training, methodological development and policy advocacy. Each country has produced a strategy document summarizing its priority themes, major achievements and the required support to address each organization's goals. Presently the Plataforma de Comunicación para el Desarrollo en Centroamérica y México coordinates its activities through five national focal points and a web based portal

www.comunicaciónparaeldesarrollo.org

South America

The South America sub-region has summarized its achievements and challenges in terms of overall development goals, health, governance, sustainability, and media. Among the priority action plans, there is reference to national communication policy development, a platform for the systematic exchange of experiences, a need to integrate communication with development that is democratizing and lead to social change, and for a constant effort to develop spaces for dialogue and citizen engagement. Furthermore, in Latin America there is specific reference to the importance of radio as a key communication channel, yet one that needs to be complemented with other methods and media that

encourage dialogue and citizen engagement. Within this framework, a regional ComDev initiative named Onda Rural was launched since 2004. Onda Rural will link rural radio to development initiatives through a regional platform www.onda-rural.net to promote ComDev in the region at the policy as well as at the field level.

Indigenous Peoples

In Latin America, Indigenous Peoples' organizations call for specific attention to the need for policies and support mechanisms that will enable them to control media, messages and approaches to strengthen cultural identities and direct self-determined development. As with the other Latin American gatherings, the Indigenous organizations see communication as a venue for further democratization in response to a prevailing development model that has limited their participation for decades. As a follow-up to the results of the WCCD special session on IPs' Communication and Development, an electronic platform has been implemented to support information exchange and collaboration of the IPs' organizations in Latin America www.plataformaindigena.org. Furthermore, the platform will serve as a mechanism to verify the application of the IPs' to communication and development and will be considered as a model to develop similar initiatives in other regions.

The Near East

Practitioners in the Near East developed both a Vision Statement and a plan of action set to establish a proactive community of practitioners in the region. To do this they have also developed an electronic platform for a sharing of knowledge and experience www.comdev-neareast.org. Furthermore, special attention will be given to the evaluation methods and to measure progress and establish a ComDev Advisory Consortium to spearhead the activities. In addition they will name a focal person for each country to act as catalyst for action at the national and regional levels. Efforts will be made to document and share best practices, facilitate a capacity audit and most importantly to support capacity building efforts within the region through training of practitioners. Concrete follow-up activities include: Letter of Agreement FAO/American University of Beirut to design and establish the platform and create a community of practice. It includes:

- document and share best practices;
- support focal points in each country;
- identify and build capacity of practitioners in the region;
- seek additional funding.

The Sahel

The countries of the Sahel have agreed to lobby for the establishment of a national policy on communication for development within each country. They also plan to work towards having each project and program include communication in all activities and at all levels. The Sahel region proposed concerted action at the national and regional levels with attention to ongoing collaboration in ComDev, with special attention to natural resource management, multi-media approaches, participatory methodologies and more attention to monitoring and evaluation methodologies.

COMDEV REGIONAL INITIATIVES

A synoptic table comparing the different elements of the ComDev regional initiatives is presented below.

Near East

Capacity Building
Program Support
Platform
Partnership
Policy Advocacy
Portal www.comdev-neareast.org

The Sahel

Capacity Building
Program Support
Platform
Partnership
Policy Advocacy

South America

Capacity Building
Program Support
Platform
Partnership
Policy Advocacy
Portal www.onda-rural.net

Central America

Capacity Building
Program Support
Platform
Partnership
Policy Advocacy
Portal
www.comunicaciónparaeldesarrollo.org

Indigenous Peoples

Capacity Building
Program Support
Platform
Partnership
Policy Advocacy
Portal www.plataformaindigena.org

Common Trends

The ComDev regional initiatives show several communalities both in terms of principles, goals and activities that are resumed below:

- support national and regional communication strategies; and where they exist, to operationalize in order to create a culture of communication;
- support to the establishment of ‘regional ComDev platforms’, conceived as communities of practice to exchange of experiences and promote ComDev policies and capacity building;
- support to regional ComDev networks and portals;
- assist in the development of contextualized ComDev approaches and methods to meet the needs of the different regions and groups of practitioners, according to culture and;
- promote pluralistic approaches to ComDev methods.

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR ADVANCING COMDEV IN THE DIFFERENT REGIONS

This section provides a synthesis of strategic priorities and follow-up actions to mainstream ComDev into the different regions. Furthermore, some of the proposed activities here presented have been already implemented with the support of FAO after the WCCD and presents a great potential for sustainability.

Context:

- FAO experience in building regional capacities in ComDev;
- regional consultations and Workshops taking advantage of the WCCD and follow-up initiatives;
- new opportunities in terms of awareness (from WCCD) and ComDev seen as a felt need.

Strategic Vision:

- Focus on capacity building, strategic planning and program support, sharing experiences and networking; policy development and partnerships.

Towards Implementation:

- Overall global activities that fit together to bring a strategic approach to ComDev in each region;
- emphasis on partnerships with other organizations to work together to ensure synergy, resources and continuity;

Comdev Action Plan Across Regions

Identification and Capacity Building of Practitioners

Objective: to develop a critical mass of experienced practitioners within each region

The Regional Workshops brought together ComDev practitioners from several countries within each region. ComDev is not new and participants were confident that there are more people with ComDev experience in each region that need to be brought back on board to help create the critical mass so essential for forward movement in each area. Next steps:

- reach “hidden” practitioners within each region;
- engage their experience to develop communication capacities within the natural resource and environment sectors;
- bring these practitioners together for updating and further training;
- enhance the networking instruments for this community of practice.

Regional Programs/Projects Support

Objective: implement ComDev projects to enhance field implementation of NRM projects

There is nothing as practical as witnessing the contribution of ComDev strategies in one’s own country and institutional context. Projects can work as policy experiments if policy makers are invited to reflect on the enabling environment that is needed to streamline ComDev. Documentation of outcomes and impact requires a renewed effort to integrate Monitoring and Evaluation with ComDev planning. Projects will supported by trained practitioners from each region. This will deepen and broaden practitioner work experience.

Platforms/Networksfor Information Sharing

Objective: to enhance exchange and learning in a growing Community of Practiceand allocate for counter policies

Each region specifically noted the need for a regional platform to serve as a vehicle/tool to bring together practitioners; share stories and experiences and offer a “home” page for ComDev activities in the region and across them. While there are issues around sustainability of such platforms, the presence of regional internet supported networks offers an immediate and visible port for practitioners; donors; NGOs and others to meet around ComDev to offer support, information and serve as clearing houses for ComDev activities in the different regions.

Partnerships

Objective: to ensure collaboration and ownership across regions and national levels with different institutions and organizations from public and civil society

The FAO workshops made every effort to bring together different institutions engaged in ComDev at different levels to discuss together the ways to move forward. Maintaining this idea of partnership forms the basis of our approach within each region and at the global level. Through the partnership approach counter practitioners hope to maintain the demand basis for their initiatives and move forward with sharing of resources, ideas, strategic plans, funding and vision.

Policy Development

Objective: to demystify ComDev and create enabling policies

The Compendium summarizing the findings from all regional initiatives clearly shows the need and importance of bringing policy/decision makers into the ComDev discussion. It was clear that their lack of understanding of the breadth of ComDev initiatives and possibilities was a serious obstacle to furthering well thought out ComDev. There is scope to build on existing National Communication for Development Strategies and learn from their achievements and seek ways to improve their on-the-ground performance. Below a synthesis of the regional initiatives and their main issues and components.

Annex I -

Regional consultations and workshop on Communication for Development

Title	Region	Partners	Activities	Dates
Technical Consultation on Com for Dev in the Near East	Near East	University of Cairo, WB, GTZ, FAO, Italian Cooperation	5 thematic studies 1 e-forum 1 regional workshop (Cairo) 1 regional strategy and plan of action	12-14 June 06
Com for Dev for Natural Resource Management and Local Development in the Sahel Region	Sahel	RECOM, WB, GTZ, FAO	5 national studies 1 overview paper 1 regional workshop (Ouagadougou) 1 regional strategy and plan of action	6-8 June 06
Communication for Development and Sustainable Livelihood in Central America and Mexico	Central America	Voces Nuestras, RUTA, WB, FAO, IDB	1 background paper 1 portal & e-forum 1 regional workshop (S. Jose) 1 regional strategy and plan of action	29 May-01 June 06
Communication for Development in Latin America - "Onda Rural"	Latin America	AMARC, ALER, Comunica, FAO, CNR Perú	1 workshop (Quito 2004) 1 regional assessment 1 e-forum 1 regional overview	January - 04July 06

"	Title	Region	Partners	Activities	Dates
	Without Communication There is no Development" Latin America	Calandria, Iniciativa de Comunicación, FAO	1 regional workshop (Lima)	24-26 August	
	Communication for Development in Southeast Asia	Southeast Asia	College of Development Communication, University of Los Baños, FAO	1 regional study 1 e-forum proceedings	1 -08 August 2006
	Communication for Development in Southern and East Africa	Southern and East Africa	SADC-Communication Centre, FAO	1 regional Study 1 e-forum proceedings	18 september - 7 October 2006
	Indigenous People' Communication for Development	Global	CIDOB, CARENAS, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, FAO, IFAD, WB , IDB,	1 overview paper 1 portal & e-forum 1 international workshop (Santa Cruz, Bolivia) & proceedings	17-19 August 2006

This Compendium presents the findings of a series of regional studies, consultations and workshops organized by FAO in preparation for the World Congress on Communication for Development (Rome, October 2007). The compendium serves as a reference document and compares present trends, experiences and challenges in Communication for Development across regions, and projects.

It focuses on the applications of communication methods and media, particularly in the field of food security, natural resources management and rural development, with a view for offering new directions for mainstreaming Communication for Development in different regions and for fostering new partnerships.

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