

Report on communication within the programme “Towards a non-toxic Environment in South East Asia”

The following is a report on communication within the programme “Towards a non-toxic Environment in South East Asia”.

The document includes the following:

- An analysis of the current communication activities based on interviews with partners.
- Results from the workshop held in Bangkok.
- Suggestions for communication activities etc. in the project.

In addition, I have written a suggested separate document, called Guiding principles for communication (Appendix 1) that could be used jointly by all partners.

The aim of this report is to produce a comprehensible and useful document, giving concrete examples and suggestions on how to develop communication activities that could give support to the project.

The fact that the consultant has not visited any programme in the field, and has thus not taken part in any activity, nor made any interviews with partners in the field, or persons benefitting from the programme, is clearly a limitation that should be taken into consideration when reading the conclusions and suggestions below.

Background

The project “Towards a non-toxic Environment in South East Asia” was initiated by the Swedish Environmental Secretariat for Asia (SENSA/Sida) and later developed together with the Swedish Chemicals Agency (KemI) in cooperation with the following three partners:

- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
- Pesticide Action Network – Asia and the Pacific (PAN-AP).
- The Field Alliance (TFA).



Purpose

The purpose of this document is to strengthen the work of the project and its partners during the project's current five-year phase (2013-2018).

Steering document

The project is guided by the overall objectives (long term impacts) which state that the programme contributes to:

- Better management and more sustainable use of agricultural, industrial and consumer chemicals.
- Reduced risks from chemicals to human health and the environment
- Strengthened capacity and regional collaboration for efficient pesticide risk reduction and chemicals management within and among partner countries.
- More sustainable intensification of agricultural production and improved resilience to climate change.

Programme objectives (medium-term outcome):

Strengthened capacity and regional collaboration for efficient pesticide risk reduction and chemicals management within and among partner countries.

What do we actually mean with communication?

"Communication (from Latin *commūnicāre*, meaning "to share") is the activity of conveying information through the exchange of thoughts, messages, or information, as by speech, visuals, signals, writing, or behaviour" (Wikipedia).

In the case of this project communication could be all aspects of conveying information within the project or to external partners, including:

- Reporting.
- Meetings and seminars.
- Training and capacity building.
- Information, education and campaign material.
- Lobbying and advocacy work.



In this project we could therefore define communication as something that takes place at several levels at the same time, involving a number of actors:

- Internal communication. The communication between partners in the project.
- Coordination with external partners and stakeholders.
- Reporting to donors.
- Lobbying, advocacy etc. towards media, industry, governments and others.

Strategic communication

Strategic communication is communication that is planned: there is a message that we want to communicate to specific target groups in order to achieve specific goals, using one or more types of channels, arenas or methods of communication.

Using strategic communication means being pro-active. We know that the image of an organisation is decided by media and other means of communication. We also know that an organisation that is pro-active also has the possibility to influence its own image. Thus, strategic communication is the tool for achieving this.

Background: How could communication be used in a development context?

In a development context, communication could be used as a tool to achieve goals, strengthen democracy and increase the respect for human rights. The key to success in development projects and programmes is to use communication to include and involve the stakeholders in order to achieve results, including:

- Listening to the weak groups of the society and help increasing their capacity to be heard, directly or through their own organisations/representatives.
- Visualising each activity that takes place in the development process for a wider audience.
- Increasing general awareness about global issues.
- Facilitating communication between stakeholders and improving mutual understanding of both possibilities and limitations.



- Improving development cooperation by letting more people participate and enhancing the exchange of information between stakeholders.

Ultimately the objective is to strengthen the project and help it to reach the goals that have been set up: communication for goal fulfilment. Increased communication could also help making the project more visible, thus contributing in delivering the results.

Previous references to communication in the project

Even though training, public awareness building and capacity building clearly plays an important role in the project (and are mentioned on several occasions in the Sida application from 2013), the concept of strategic communication as a tool to support on-going activities has not been used systematically. There are a number of communication activities taking place within the framework of the project, but they have not been systematically developed in a strategic way and their impact not fully measured.

The role of communication has not been discussed in previous reporting either, even though the mid-term evaluation (2009) of the previous five - year projects mentioned the role media could play:

“The Programme has been successful in enhancing awareness, knowledge and capacity among stakeholders at community level in the countries. The policy component has also been successful although understandably it has not been able to reach very far during the limited time of programme implementation. However, one link between these two levels of the programme that has not been adequately addressed in the first phase is the role that could be played by an active and well-informed press and other media.”

The evaluation also mentions a number of communication activities under “Outputs and achievements” including the publication of books and reports. The evaluation highlights the risk of “commercial interests in the chemicals industry being able to obstruct the development of regulatory systems”, however without making a connection to communication activities. This, somehow, indicates that the evaluation team did not see communication as a vital aspect of the programme.



Current communication activities by partners

KemI

Background

The Swedish Chemicals Agency (hereafter KemI) is a supervisory authority under the Ministry of the Environment and responsible for ensuring that companies and the society at large conduct chemicals control in an acceptable manner. The activities of KemI are primarily financed by fees and subsidies. The agency employs approximately 250 persons.

KemI endeavours to limit the health and environmental risks associated with chemicals by promoting rules and legislation in Sweden, in the EU and globally, that contribute to the achievement of the environmental quality objective of 'A Non-Toxic Environment'. Since legislation on chemicals is harmonised within the EU, a large part of the Agency's work takes place within the EU framework.

KemI's communication activities are directed towards several target groups: the Swedish Government, companies and industry associations, other authorities, parliament, members of the European Parliament, media, universities, the general public and NGO's.

KemI's website is the main channel for communication. It has a strong focus on text based information and much of the information is directed towards the chemical industry. Most folders and brochures can be downloaded from the site. .

KemI's communication concerns to a large extent rules and regulations and a big part is directed towards companies and industry associations. In addition to this KemI has recently initiated a work to extend the service to the general public. Here, there could be an opportunity for KemI to learn from other countries.

The agency has a communication department, consisting of eight persons, organised as a separate secretariat under the Director General. However, most communication on advice, technical aspects etc. are handled by specialist at different departments within the agency. For example, contacts via help desk telephone numbers.

Besides Swedish, KemI communicates in Arabic, English, Chinese and several other languages.

The development cooperation programme is financed by the Swedish Development Cooperation Agency and is part of KemI's core business. It



is integrated in the department for Development of Legislation and Other Instruments.

KemI is engaged in co-operation and development in many fields, covering health and environmental aspects of industrial and consumer chemicals, as well as pesticides.

Examples of areas covered are development of legislation, institutional capacity building, and specific areas like risk assessment, risk management, systems for distribution of risk information (classification and labelling, safety data sheets) and enforcement. The programme Towards a non-toxic Environment in South East Asia is the single largest development cooperation programme managed by KemI.

Among the project partners KemI has the greatest need of a joint communication from the project as KemI is the coordinator and has the overall responsibility. However, the department for development cooperation does not have any communication capacity of its own.

PAN AP

Background

Pesticide Action Network (PAN) is a global network working to eliminate the human and environmental harm caused by pesticides and to promote biodiversity based ecological agriculture. PAN-AP (the regional centre in Asia and the Pacific) is an independent organisation, committed to support the struggles of rural women, agricultural workers, peasants, indigenous peoples and other small food producers to advance food sovereignty, gender justice and environmental sustainability.

“Empowering people for change” is the pay-off that PAN-AP uses on its website, and in order to empower, communication skills is crucial.

Advocacy and awareness building are key areas for PAN-AP when working to link grass root activism with international policy advocacy work.

By some people, PAN-AP is probably seen as a “troublemaker”, by others as a hero that is giving communities a voice. However, it is clear that PAN-AP do have a watchdog function.

Communication capacity

PAN-AP does have a well-developed web site with linkage to social media tools such as Facebook (about 700 followers), Twitter (about 200 followers) and a YouTube channel. PAN-AP also maintains three other



websites, which are relevant to particular areas of work of each programme and campaign. There has been some live streaming from events, but with a relatively small audience.

A total of 2 persons are working with communication at PAN-AP.

Currently, PAN-AP is in the process of updating the website, making the material more youth-friendly, more visual and interactive. At present, the website has a strong focus on text and there are few human-interest stories, with the exception of the campaign “Our stories, our journey” about the life of rural women in Asia. Taking into account PAN-AP’s network there should be a lot of material that could be used.

Communication activities

Communication plays an important role in PAN-AP’s work within the cooperation. Over the years, PAN-AP and its partners have organised and taken part in numerous communication and dissemination activities, many of them presented in detail in the Narrative report (2012).

Several of PAN-AP’s partners have their own media programmes and activities. For example in Cambodia, where one partner has a weekly radio show on farming technique at Radio Sarika. There are also well-developed relations with TV channels.

One media workshop for local partners was held two years ago, but there has not been any strategic work on using communication in the field. However, PAN-AP is thinking of doing more of this during the current phase of the programme, including media workshops in several countries. A plan for this has not yet been developed.

In China, PAN-AP has developed e-learning modules together with local universities, and in Vietnam PAN-AP has been developing communication material and activities with youth as a specific target group.

It seems that PAN-AP has managed to balance its role as an “activist NGO” with the rather low-key, long term thinking that is needed when working in one-party states.

The narrative report is rich in detail. More testimonials, voices from the field and interviews with participants from seminars and other activities would however bring added value.

A systematic, strategic approach towards communication activities is needed: *Why are we doing certain things, what objectives do we set up for activities, what are our ways of influencing etc.* A strategic perspective on how PAN-AP aims to empower women within the programme would also



be useful, as well as an increase in contacts and interaction with youth, something that was mentioned in the interviews.

FAO

In this project, FAO is involved both from the head office in Rome and from the regional office in Bangkok. The division of roles between the two offices could (in this project) be summarized as follows:

- Relations with governments regarding legislation and its enforcement are managed by Rome.
- Relations with government and NGOs regarding training, local capacity building and hands on work related to the field is handled by the Bangkok office.

FAO Regional Office Asia Pacific (RAP)

FAO regional office works with a network of national IPM (Integrated Pest Management) programmes, managed and implemented by FAO's counterparts, mainly government ministries of agriculture at national and local levels, and with a core group of trainers. FAO is involved in direct training, mostly at regional and national level, whereas government implements activities at local level. The aim is to strengthen the capacity of government and national IPM programmes to train farmers and communities. Communication is a vital part of the on-going training programme as in many other activities.

The FAO IPM Programme office also maintains a website for the IPM programme (<http://www.vegetableipmasia.org>) which includes a number of manuals, reports, folders etc. that can be downloaded and links to technical resource materials. The site is technically quite old and does not allow interactivity (including information exchange and dialogue with visitors). The websites are primarily for information sharing of reference material. There is one area of the website accessible only for partners. The rest is open for the general public.

FAO RAP has developed a lot of information material in different languages and adapted to different circumstances, including hand-outs and poster, CDs manuals, radio messages and campaigns.

In general, information material is developed on an ad-hoc basis and based on current needs, for example if a crop is threatened by (invasive) pest



and/or disease outbreaks. FAO have a global communication strategy, (as well as at various levels), but communication strategy for the IPM Programme has not been formulated.

FAO Communication capacity

The team consists of two professional staff + support staff. The staff acts as advisors when material is produced locally. Material produced by FAO in Rome is at the disposal for adaptation and translation. The small number of staff clearly puts a limit on what the team can do by itself. They have, however, at their disposal the services of corporate communication units (see below).

FAO headquarter

The focus of FAO headquarters in Rome (in the context of this project) is Policy and legislation, mostly on a technical level. The office acts as an advisor to governments on issues such as new legislation and its enforcement. Often, FAO will work with national lawyers and legal experts, making analysis of how to develop the legal framework in a country. The work includes workshops, meetings, formal and informal discussions.

It is important for FAO to be seen as an impartial organisation that serves the interests of its member countries. Often, topics are quite sensitive, and there must be a high level of trust between FAO and governments in the process. The whole regulatory part is sensitive, something that puts clear limitations on what FAO can do jointly with the other partners in the project.

The cooperation with Sweden/KemI has been going on for a long time and there is a good understanding between the partners. The project fits well into FAO's overall objectives of giving service and advice to governments on demand basis. However, as there is no general budget for this under the FAO Regular programme, FAO depends on additional project funding (such as this programme) to finance such activities.

Communication activities

FAO has a well-developed communication structure with a communication department at the team's disposal. When external communication with media is done by FAO RAP in Bangkok, it often needs to be cleared with



Rome. FAO is good at human-interest stories and has been one of the pioneers in the field of Communication for development (C4D). The project is encouraged to use FAO's communication channels to spread information. These comprise both conventional channels (such as press releases) and new social media channels. A recent press release to call upon governments to expedite the phasing out of highly hazardous pesticides was taken up by over 400 national newspapers.

Within the context of this project, FAO is exploring the possibility to develop a web-based platform for exchange of information with governments on matters related to pesticide registration that will function as a closed professional community.

The Field Alliance (TFA)

The Field Alliance (TFA) started as a part of the FAO's agriculture programme in Asia during the 1990's. The FAO Rice IPM programme took place in several countries and cooperating with local NGO's in China, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand and other countries.

Today, the work of TFA is oriented towards training and capacity building of children in schools and farmers with a strong focus on ecological agriculture in the region. At this moment there are no other donors supporting TFA, but there is an existing contributions from local government and communities.

Communication activities

The following are the key communication areas for TFA:

Training: TFA's focus is to work at the local level and build capacity by training NGOs, partners, local authorities, schools and communities. The organisation is quite unknown to the general public but to those who are in contact with TFA the organisation is seen as a reliable partner with high credibility, providing technical assistance for capacity building of trainers from various agencies. TFA is partnering with local organisations in several countries.

TFA provides hands-on support, and put a lot of effort not only into training, but also into disseminating good results for other countries/areas, monitoring and continuous follow-up.

Local exhibition and forum: TFA's partners often organize exhibition and/or forum to exchange, disseminate the program results to the public



Seminars and workshops: TFA and partners organize and participate in national and regional seminar and workshop to exchange and disseminate the programs.

TFA communication tools

The key communication tools used by TFA are training manuals and oral presentation during seminars and workshops. In contacts TFA is using cell phones and e-mail. The website is quite basic and not very important as a communication tool, as it is not interactive. The fact that TFA's focus is schools and children is not communicated via the website.

So far, TFA has had limited resources for updating the web site and work with other communication tools. In the future, however, TFA hopes to dedicate more resources to its communication work.

TFA would like to use more inspirational video clips and DVD's. Since the literacy rate is low video could be very helpful for sharing knowledge and information.

So far, TFA has not developed any online training course or modules. One obstacle is the lack of computers and the fact that the majority of the target groups are in rural areas lacking access to the Internet.

TFA is a small organisation with limited capacity. Still, TFA has a lot of material from the field: experiences, stories etc. that could be shared among partners. If TFA's communication capacity could be strengthened this would benefit the project as a whole. It would also be beneficial if TFA could attract additional donors, for example by establishing cooperation with child-oriented NGO's such as Plan International or Action Aid.

One challenge is how to link information from local partners and programmes and have it published on the TFA website as people speak different languages and have limited knowledge of English. Simple tools that could be added to the website and used by local partners to upload material by themselves, and that could then be translated, would be a welcome addition. In addition, TFA should make the web more "child friendly", showing how the organisation actually works with children.

A joint identity – or not?

As mentioned previously, the project has been developed by four partners with different approaches, networks and target groups.



One key-issue in the discussion has been whether the programme should have a more formalised joint identity or not.

All participants agree that most people view the project as having four separate parts/sub components. In fact, it is probably only Sida that sees it as one programme. This raises the question whether this is a problem or not.

An exercise called Multiple Identity model was held as part of the workshop (see appendix 2). The aim was to discuss the project from different perspectives and to create input for the general discussion.

One conclusion was that in spite of the fact that there is very little joint communication (basically only the folder and the annual report), key external actors such as Sida and APPPC (Asia Pacific Plant Protection Commission) do have a positive view of the project, its objectives and results.

How would the programme then like to be seen? All participants agree that they together should present an attractive programme that everyone would like to invest in. This, in turn, means that the programme must create a win-win situation that could benefit a large number of stakeholders, which might have different agendas in a number of cases.

At the same time, it is important to clarify that the partners have different roles. This could be done by highlighting the benefits arising from collaboration between actors with different mandates and target groups

Joint communication activities so far

Besides a folder, joint communication activities have mostly consisted of meetings and reporting to Sida (the donor). The information production was very time-consuming. It took a long time to produce the folder, and as the stakeholders have different perspectives and other relations to take into account, the result is quite vague. The risk when doing something so general is that it is not useful for anyone.

All partners agree that it is important to make clear that they each have a different role: the strength that comes from the collaboration should be highlighted. It is also important to make Sida understand that this is the best way to work and that there is no real need to further formalize the cooperation.

An increased coordination under a joint umbrella would also risk undermining our credibility, argues FAO. FAO needs to adopt a much



more neutral position versus the industry than NGO's and cannot share information received from governments with others.

Thus, the cooperation should be seen as a programme of project, or a platform for informal coordination. Still, all partners have to be accountable to Swedish tax payers.

FAO is the entity within the cooperation that is the most reluctant to increase and formalize the cooperation. This objection is relevant. Still, it would probably be easier to do joint activities on the local level.

When would a better coordination of communication activities add value to the project? The exchange of information in order to avoid overlaps and make better use of local resources would definitely be useful. A joint workspace has also been discussed.

The fact that the actors are different and have different agendas could also create opportunities, as it makes it possible to approach an issue from different perspectives. For examples, while PAN-AP do a lobbying campaign, FAO could be helping the government and TFA do hands-on training of farmers.

KemI should, in turn, be able to do more on behalf of the project as a whole by communicating processes and results to the Swedish general public. This would serve a double purpose as it would both communicate results from the project, while at the same time increase the general knowledge among Swedes about pesticides in imported food and what they are eating during vacations in South East Asia. In general, consumers in Europe are increasingly interested in how goods are produced. There is also a selfish reason for Sweden to support the programme as an increased capacity in the region ultimately will benefit the Swedish environment as Swedish consumers buy food from the region.

Advantages of increased coordination:

- Better use of resources.
- Increased possibilities to influence.
- Reduced risk for duplication.

Risks of increased coordination:

- Conflict of interest could reduce impact.
- Coordination would take too much time.
- The project would have less impact, as it would be to "bland".



Risk of duplication and overlapping

There is a certain overlap on community education with a risk of duplication. This is also the area where an increased coordination could be beneficial as issues are not as sensitive on the local level as higher up.

SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis was conducted by the partners (se appendix 3 for full report). The following are some key conclusions:

Strengths

- High level of technical know-how.
- Broad base in the geographic area.
- Established network(s) in all countries.
- Access to all levels of the society.
- Working on all levels (from field to global).
- A common goal, different strategies.
- Diversity of partners.
- Secured long time financing.
- Good cooperation internally. Trust among partners, long experience of working together.

Weaknesses

- Limited staff resources.
- Language and cultural barriers makes it difficult to share experiences etc.
- Lack of common workplace for sharing info (soon to be fixed).
- Little awareness of what partners are doing or plan to do (will change during the coming phase).
- The need to keep separate identities.
- The gender perspective has not been sufficiently included.
- Communication has not been part of the strategic planning.
- Little linkage between community and policy levels.



Opportunities

- Many arenas for sharing information.
- Many ways of reaching the general public.
- Sharing more of the progress of the programme would help us make more use of what we do.
- Developing joint activities would help us grow.
- A stronger platform in Sweden would help to broaden the base of the programme (attract additional funding?)
- Small improvements in internal communication could bring a lot of positive changes.

Threats

- Pressure from the industry would make the programme less successful (if it becomes better known, the pressure could increase).
- Public perception of the programme (negative press etc.)
- Expanding into new geographic areas (Burma/Myanmar) and new technology could backfire.
- An information overload (outside/internally) could lead to less focus on what is important.
- Lack of resources to update platform for internal communication could result in it not being used.

Constrains/obstacles

Besides what is mentioned above, a number of constrains have been identified that must be taken into account.

Working in one-party states

Vietnam, Laos and China are one party states where no work can be done without the approval from the state (formal or informal). Despite this, the programme has been successful in establishing itself in the above-mentioned countries.

Explanations for this might be the long-term perspective and the fact that a lot of time has been spent on discussing the possibilities with partners. In some cases, organisations involved in training farmers' unions, women's organisations etc. are also controlled by the governments. This increases



the need to be careful, balancing the possible impact with the risk for conflicts.

In many cases, government officials have been invited to take part in (for example) local training workshops. The partners have also succeeded in engaging government officials in a positive way, for example when PAN-AP has suggested that authorities in Vietnam should do surveys on the use of illegal pesticides.

Still there are problems of using certain communications tools. Facebook, for example, is blocked in China and other means of communications are restricted.

In Cambodia and Thailand, the situation is somewhat different. Here the division between government and independent organisations is clear, with governments in many cases obstructing the work of independent organisations, for example through legislation.

Recommendations:

- Try to find a win-win situation together with authorities instead of confronting them.
- Engage officials.
- Use officials in communication as positive examples (interview them!)

The pesticide industry

The industry is strong and there are in many cases strong incentives for people to sell and distribute pesticides. The project cannot compete with the pesticide industry when it comes to publicity or other resources. Thus it is important not to get into a direct confrontation, but rather to create a common ground with governments and other actors.

Another objective would be to get the pesticide industry engaged in the environmental work, for example when it comes to enforce legislation against illegal use of pesticides. One of the key success factors from the Swedish environmental work has been the fact that KemI has succeeded in getting the industry on board, creating a sector dialogue on voluntary basis. This experience could be further shared.

Recommendations:

- Low-keyed approach needed.



- Fact-based reporting.
- The “good cop – bad cop” model within the project.
- Hands on activities (farmers’ programme).
- Work with simple things that no one could object to (children’s health etc.)
- Engage the industry in a positive way, for example in work against pirated products.

Language barriers

The fact that the region consists of many different ethnic groups and countries speaking different languages makes it difficult to share and make use of experiences and information material. The limited knowledge of English among partner organisations further complicates the situation.

Recommendations:

- Create a network of information staff that could help translating material.
- Create a bank of text, video and images that could be shared among partners.

Framework for strategic planning

A part of the workshop was a hands-on exercise where we worked with a strategic planning tool with the aim of identifying target groups, messages etc. (see appendix 4 for the full document).

Below are some conclusions based on the discussion during the workshop.

Target groups

The key target groups for our communication are:

- Farmers
- Women (children)
- Policy makers
- Donors
- Other actors in the same field
- Government agencies
- Local authorities
- Central authorities.



Channels

The principal channels are:

- Social media
- Traditional media (websites, television, radio)
- Campaign material
- Face-to-face meetings
- Seminars and workshops
- Farmer field schools

When should/could communication be done jointly?

- When reporting to Swedish taxpayers and financiers.
- When partners need to highlight the support from strong donors (Sida).
- When doing local activities that several partners could organise jointly.
- When – if – a joint pilot project is developed.

Developing guiding principles for communication

Despite differences, there are possibilities of cooperation that have not yet been fully explored by the partners. By agreeing on, and applying some basic guiding principles it should be possible to increase the impact of the project as a whole. In addition, one or several partners could from time to time develop joint communication activities.

The focus of the guiding principles should be what's written in this document on target groups, channels, messages, values etc.

Applying a set of guiding principles could be done without compromising the identity of each partner. Enclosed please find a draft version of suggested guiding principles.

Suggestions:

- Do joint activities when beneficial (two or more partners, all four don't have to take part).
- Take small but concrete steps.
- Consider developing a pilot project.



- Work with simple things that no one could object against (children).

Core messages

All partners in the project are united by the ambition to give help and technical support to local actors. It could be formulated as follows:

- We can help you to develop your skills.
- We can help you to strengthen the legislation.
- We can help you to build capacity.
- We can help you to reduce risks.
- We can help you to create awareness.

Values

One conclusion that could be drawn from the workshop is that, despite the fact that each partner is working individually, there are values and core messages that unites all participants:

Towards a non-toxic environment in South East Asia

This is the key value that unites all partners, and also the name of the programme. The sentence is in itself a clear message that could be used in many circumstances, for example as a pay-off in joint activities organised by several or all partners.

Key words

The following are the key words that unites the partners:

- Partnership
- Dialogue
- Capacity building

Principles for communication

In the project, the partners should strive to work along the following principles. Communication should be:

- Factual. One aim is to provide local partners with factual information that is reliable and balanced.



- Open. The communication should be as open and transparent as possible.
- Inspiring. By giving inspiration through good examples, training sessions and suggested legal frameworks the partners would contribute in inspiring the local partners to develop their work.

The way ahead: Key communication issues

Develop the internal communication

By developing the internal communication, resources and experiences could be shared, without the need for coordination. However, in order to make it work, someone needs to be responsible for the work.

Suggestions:

- Assign one person as responsible for the internal communication between the partners, information sharing etc.
- Start small; build on gradually (DropBox, Google cal etc.)
- Develop a database for sharing photo, film, stories etc.
- Share links etc between you.
- Get updated in current technology.
- Learn from each other.
- Make better use of existing resources.
- Exchange information at local level between partners.
- Exchange information prior to making field visits, for example on local media, organisations and officials to meet.

Working with media

Media relations are vital for any project and they could be further developed, both locally and at the international level.

Some partners are already working with local media, producing radio programs etc. Experiences from this could be shared.

Suggestions:

- Identify and make a list of important national and regional media to which information should be sent. Don't forget bloggers and other influential actors in the social media field.



- Conduct a workshop for media persons among partners.
- Share your media contacts.
- Set up a coordination system between media persons at partner organisations, for example through a meeting every six months.
- Create a virtual meeting place for media persons from partner organisations where they could share stories and material.
- Make more use of FAO's communication expertise. FAO has developed a lot of methods and do have far-reaching channels.

Information production/storytelling

Even if the programme is not presented in a joint way, there are ways of producing material that could be used jointly/syndicated to other medias.

All too often, development actors use facts as a way of influencing people. It is of course important to be factual, but what captures most people's interest is a narrative story, something that is well known in the news media. Corporate storytelling is a concept where the company "sells" its brand and its products by telling a story. So far, the aid sector is lagging behind private business in this field.

A story could be in any format: oral, written, video, in photos etc. In the case of this project there are numerous opportunities for storytelling, for example:

- Stories of persons/families who have improved their lives through more sustainable agriculture.
- Stories of government agencies that have stopped illegal pesticides.
- Stories of persons/communities that have contributed to common goods/a better environment.
- Stories on how someone was affected by paraquat and what you could do to avoid it.

There are many good stories from the field, find them and spread them!

Suggestions:

- Produce material that could be syndicated.
- Develop a joint template for how to produce stories (could be 3-4 basic questions + picture of person).



- Develop a format for stories from the field (or similar).
- Get partners to produce stories that could be shared.
- Create a simple picture bank with images and film clips from activities.
- Use partner's media contact to place stories.
- Develop a format for short video clips.
- Share and translate training manuals, folder etc.
- Translate and adapt relevant material from KemI's website.
- Produce a FAQ folder that could be translated and adapted.
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The website

A website needs to be under constant development as technology around us is changing so rapidly. Today, one of the most common way to access a website is via a smart phone, something that requires the producers to adapt bode design and content.

The most important thing is to set a realistic ambition level (interactivity or not, possibility to comment or not etc.) and to define the target group.

Suggestions:

- Use a joint information text (from the folder?) that you publish at all partner sites.
- Publish stories that also make reference to partners and their web sites.

Social media

Today, organisations need to be aware of the use of social media, how it is used and what implications it could have. However, social media is a vast field and there is no limit on how much time you could spend in the field. It is therefore important to set a limit for your own ambition. In the case of this project I would not suggest that you start joint social media activities. Better to let each partner develop its own activities, while at the same time share information and learn from each other.

Suggestions:

- Assign one "scout" who could guide the partners in the digital jungle.
- Build relations with bloggers, geek and ICT4D actors in the regions.



- Consider developing a pilot project in the social media field. It could be small, with the ability to grow.
- Let those who want to tweet and blog do that. Don't force anyone.
- Learn, copy and share!
- Do joint monitoring, for example by following everything that's written about pesticides in social media in some selected channels.
- Do not develop a joint presence in important social media channels, as you will not have the resources to keep it updated.
- Develop a contest among bloggers and/or journalist on the best story of a non-toxic environment.

Set up communication goals and measure impact

The project would benefit from setting up joint communication goals that could be measured and reported in the next report to Sida. The goals could be quantitative and related to each one of the partners along the lines of the RBM model.

Examples of goals:

Number of stories produced by the project.

Number of collaboration projects with other media.

Number of times partners are invited by media.

Number of mentions in media.

Produce a narrative report

The project as such would benefit from a narrative report along the lines of the PAN-AP report. Each partner could produce a number of examples/short texts that could be inserted into such a report.

Develop a pilot project

Some areas could be considered for closer cooperation. One idea is to develop a local pilot project in which all, or several, partners can take part. Such a project could be focused on farmers' education and possible subjects like "Women's and children's health" which few could possibly question.

Advantages of developing a pilot project:

- You could (in a hands-on way) try to cooperate on a specific issue(s).



- The pilot project will most likely generate a lot of material that could be used by all partners.
- You could put a stronger focus on gender issues (mentioned by Sida).
- You could use a pilot project to measure the impact of communication activities.

The next step

The most important thing is that you have a functioning information-sharing tool (this is already in process).

I would then suggest that you organise a joint workshop for persons working with media in local partner organisations. At this workshop, formats for narrative reporting could be developed and tried. The workshop should be in the form of a “training of trainers”.

The third step would be to integrate communication aspects in all reporting to Sida and to develop a simple, joint communication framework for narrative reporting.

I hope this will inspire you to continue with your very important work!

Stockholm, September 24, 2013

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