



FAO EXPERT CONSULTATION **COMMUNICATION** FOR **DEVELOPMENT**

MEETING TODAY'S
AGRICULTURE AND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT
CHALLENGES

Office of Knowledge Exchange, Research and Extension (OEK)
Research and Extension Branch (OEKR)



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IN COLLABORATION WITH:



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The final report, background documents, presentations and recommendations from the Expert Consultation are found on FAO's ComDev webpage:

<http://www.fao.org/oek/communication-for-development/en>

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
AMARC	World Association of Community Radio
AUB	American University of Beirut
BBC	British Broadcasting Company
CARIMAC	Caribbean Centre for Media and Communication
CC	Climate Change
COMDEV	Communication for Development
CSDI	Communication for Sustainable Development Initiative
CTA	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GFRAS	Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services
GIZ	Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IICD	International Institute for Communication and Development
IPDC	International Programme for the Development of Communication
KIT	Royal Tropical Institute
KM	Knowledge Management
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WB-ARD	Agriculture and Rural Development Department of the World Bank
WCCD	World Congress on Communication for Development

FOREWORD

Nowadays, compelling issues affecting the agricultural and rural sector not only require stronger commitment from the international community, but also inclusive and demand-driven approaches to development. Fostering a dialogue between institutions and small-scale farmers is critical for the identification of adequate solutions to deal with food insecurity, malnutrition and the impact of climate change. This process of change implies improved access to agricultural knowledge and information, as well as the active participation of the rural population in the development efforts.

Communication is key to supporting inclusive and people-centred initiatives for agricultural innovation and sustainable livelihoods. Communication for Development (ComDev) plays a crucial role in ensuring more equitable access to information, facilitating a dialogue among people and institutions and fostering new and more inclusive development opportunities for rural communities.

The importance of ComDev is recognized within the UN system. FAO has been a pioneer of ComDev since the 1970s, promoting communication strategies as a component of agricultural and rural development policies and programmes. Over the years, hundreds of field projects have been implemented and ComDev systems have been institutionalized in different countries.

Today, more than ever, ComDev is strategically relevant to the work of FAO and other development agencies. FAO is presently engaged in designing and implementing ComDev activities tailored to the needs of the rural population in the context of national agricultural policies, focusing on enhancing the capacities of local institutions to deliver sound ComDev services.

FAO's Office of Knowledge Exchange, Research and Extension (OEK) considers ComDev as a driver of change that needs to be adequately positioned in the work of the Organization and in the agricultural sector. To this end, there is a need to foster collaboration among those institutions and practitioners committed to the recommendation of The Rome Consensus "to move towards a rights-based approach to Communication for Development" (World Congress on Communication for Development -WCCD, Rome, 2006).

Within this framework, the Expert Consultation “Communication for Development: Meeting Today’s Agriculture and Rural Development Challenges” was the first specialized meeting in many years that focused on the role of ComDev in agriculture and rural development. The consultation offered an invaluable opportunity to identify strategic actions to maximize ComDev contributions to the agricultural sector. In particular, the consultation urged FAO to play a leading role in supporting rural institutions and stakeholders in ComDev and to take the necessary steps towards developing a corporate strategy in this field.

The results of the consultation presented in this report call for renewed efforts to position ComDev in the agriculture agenda, establishing partnerships and technical networks and improving impacts in the field. The experts agreed on concrete recommendations on how to mobilize people and institutions to mainstream ComDev. We believe that this way forward will provide better opportunities for rural people to be listened to, so that they will be able to influence decisions in relation to their own development.

Xiangjun Yao

Director

Office of Knowledge Exchange, Research and Extension, FAO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UN General Assembly has called on UN agencies to mainstream ComDev in the development agenda, recognizing

“the pivotal role of communication in the successful implementation of development programmes within the United Nations system and in the improvement of the interaction among actors in development, namely, the agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, Governments and non-governmental organizations.” A/RES/50/130 (1995)

In response to this need, FAO’s Office of Knowledge Exchange, Research and Extension (OEK) organized an Expert Consultation on Communication for Development: Meeting Today’s Agriculture and Rural Development Challenges, that was held at FAO headquarters from 14 to 16 September, 2011. The main purpose was to identify challenges and strategic actions to maximize ComDev contribution to the agriculture and rural development sector, while positioning it in the work of the Organization.

The Expert Consultation was organized by the FAO ComDev team in collaboration with the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD). The event brought together 32 international ComDev experts and representatives from development agencies, donors, NGOs, communication networks, rural institutions and the academic community.

Participants identified key challenges and strategic areas for ComDev support to agriculture and rural development (e.g. food security, innovation systems, climate change adaptation) such as capacity development for rural institutions and projects, interface with other approaches such as knowledge management, convergence between mass and community media, need for regulatory frameworks, and access to funding. Special attention was given to the need for documenting ComDev impact in the field and for mainstreaming ComDev into agricultural policies and programs.

The experts concurred that **FAO should take a leading role in mainstreaming ComDev in the rural development agenda**. Four main recommendations were prioritized as a way for follow-up by FAO and partner institutions:

- 1. International rural development organizations and national institutions should include communication for development in their vision, policy, and strategic framework**
- 2. Make ComDev relevant and compelling to key audiences (FAO, academia, other institutions)**
- 3. Establish a multi-institutional alliance to promote ComDev principles and practices within agricultural innovation systems and translate these into actions at the country level**
- 4. Facilitate national ComDev networks that involve practitioners, academicians and stakeholders, connecting theory, research and practice, and systematically improve standards of programs**

In consideration of its commitment to improving the livelihoods of small farmers, the Expert Consultation urged FAO to take an active role in promoting ComDev as a key element in agricultural and rural development policies and programs. In particular, the participants encouraged FAO to adopt a **corporate ComDev strategy** to ensure stakeholders' engagement and increased effectiveness of FAO work in member countries.



INTRODUCTION

Nowadays communication is increasingly recognized as a driver of change and a key factor of development. Communication for Development (ComDev) is a people-centred communication approach integrating participatory processes and social media, ranging from rural radio to ICTs, and is different from information dissemination or institutional visibility.

Present challenges in the agricultural and rural development sector, such as climate change and food crises, call for a more systematic use of ComDev methods and tools to ensure equitable access to knowledge and information and the active participation of rural people in development. This entails a reconsideration of the role that ComDev can play, both in the context of agriculture and rural development policies and programmes, as well as at the community level.

ComDev is directly related to sustainable development, because it contributes to the participation and social appropriation of the development process. Rural programmes and projects that are implemented with ComDev components guarantee participation and thus prompt ownership of development objectives. If communities take leadership and ownership of programmes and projects intended to improve their lives, those programmes are likely to be more sustainable once external technical assistance has withdrawn.

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

This resolution makes clear recommendations to UN agencies and organizations on the institutionalization of ComDev:

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



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

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

The potential of ComDev has yet to be fully exploited in the rural sector. In many cases ComDev components are not adequately integrated in the design and implementation of agricultural development initiatives, and there is an increasing need for enhancing human and institutional capacities in this field.

Opportunities exist for upgrading and up-scaling activities and services from very specific and localized experiences to more sustained communication processes. Within this context there is an urgent need to identify appropriate measures for the integration of ComDev in national agricultural and rural development policies, the institutionalization of ComDev services and the enhancement of the capacity of rural institutions and stakeholders.

Key international events such as the first World Congress on Communication for Development ([WCCD] held in Rome in October 2006) and the UN Interagency Roundtables on ComDev have stressed the importance of mainstreaming ComDev in the development agenda. FAO has been leading ComDev efforts to fight hunger and achieve food security and is now striving to identify new opportunities for promoting ComDev as part of the agricultural and rural development agenda.

To this end, FAO organized an international Expert Consultation on ComDev. The purpose of the consultation was to provide a forum for development agencies and institutions, donors, NGOs and the academic community to take stock of ComDev initiatives that are currently in place to address ongoing challenges in the agriculture and rural development sector, to identify emerging trends and to foster cooperation between relevant stakeholders. The consultation aimed to promote partnerships and explore mechanisms for collaboration and joint action among institutions committed to rural development and social change.

Objective and Expected Results

The overall purpose of the Expert Consultation was to assess the role of ComDev in relation to emerging challenges and to identify priorities and strategic initiatives, to position ComDev in the development agenda and to maximize its contribution to agriculture and sustainable rural development.

The expected outcomes of this Expert Consultation included:

- » Key issues, challenges and trends identified in relation to the application of ComDev in the agricultural and rural development sector.
- » Learning practices and innovative applications of ComDev to agriculture and rural development shared.
- » Experiences and perspectives on the institutionalization of ComDev services into agricultural and rural development policies gathered.
- » Priorities and strategic interventions to enhance effectiveness of ComDev in agriculture and rural development identified at the institutional and field level.
- » Prospects and key initiatives to position ComDev in the agricultural sector and strengthen collaboration identified.
- » Potential partner international organizations, able to implement and support priority ComDev programmes and follow up actions, identified.



FAO EXPERT CONSULTATION: AN OVERVIEW

The Expert Consultation on **Communication for Development: Meeting Today's Agriculture and Rural Development Challenges** was held from 14 to 16 September 2011 at FAO headquarters in Rome. It was organized by the ComDev team within FAO Office of Knowledge Exchange, Research and Extension (OEK), namely by the Communication for Development Officers Mario Acunzo, Riccardo Del Castello and May Hani.

The meeting brought together overall 32 international experts, representing different fields of activity related to rural communication, including major players among development organizations, donor countries, universities with specialized ComDev departments, national rural institutions, global communication networks. In addition, a number of FAO specialists participated as observers and contributed to specific sessions (see Annex A for the full list of participants).

Process Leading Up to the Event

The FAO ComDev team worked in close collaboration with a senior advisor in Communication for Development, Alfonso Gumucio, on all the preparatory activities to the consultation, including the development of background documents, the design of the consultation format and methodology, the identification of participants and the coordination of their inputs to the event.

Steering Committee

A Steering Committee composed of FAO, the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) was established to provide overall guidance and technical orientation to the event.

Members of the Steering Committee coordinated efforts to engage relevant actors and act as a sounding board for the technical contents and proposals emerging from the consultation. The Steering Committee is also responsible for providing appropriate follow-up to the experts' recommendations and promoting effective coordination mechanisms among relevant institutions to support joint action in ComDev for agriculture and rural development.

Background Documents

In preparation for the consultation, the organizing committee shared with the participants a concept note introducing the rationale and objectives of the meeting. A background paper was developed by Alfonso Gumucio to conceptualize key issues and identify trends, challenges and opportunities for ComDev in today's agricultural and rural sector. Along with this, a set of guiding and thought provoking questions were prepared to set the tone and focus of the consultation.

Furthermore, an assessment of ComDev functions, activities, institutional perspectives and perceptions of different stakeholders within FAO was carried out by Silvia Balit, Marzia Pafumi and Vanessa Vertiz and resulted in an overview paper that provided interesting inputs to the debate on mainstreaming ComDev in the agenda of rural development organizations.

Format of the Consultation

Structure and Themes

The consultation was meant to draw on participants' knowledge and skills in the field of communication and rural development. To this end, the sessions were designed as interactive discussions and group works based on the active contribution of all experts involved. The complete agenda of the Expert Consultation is enclosed as Annex B. The first two days were structured into four half-day thematic sessions, addressing the key topics listed below:

Session 1. Communication for rural development today

- » ComDev approaches for agriculture and rural development
- » Current trends in ComDev for agriculture and rural development
- » Evidence of ComDev contribution in this sector
- » Interface with other disciplines

Session 2. Key areas of intervention for ComDev in the agricultural sector

- » Overview of agricultural sector issues
- » Strategic areas of intervention for ComDev (e.g. climate change, food security, agricultural innovation systems, other)

Session 3. Challenges and opportunities for ComDev in the agricultural sector

- » Capacity Development
- » Overlaps with other approaches (e.g. ICTs, KM) applied in the sector
- » Relation with local, community and mass media
- » Policies and regulatory frameworks
- » M&E and funding

Session 4. Enhancing ComDev impact on agricultural development

- » Institutional frameworks for ComDev
- » ComDev in national agricultural policies and programs
- » Establishing rural communication services
- » Up-scaling ComDev activities

The opening session was meant to set the stage of the consultation, to level off participants' views and expectations and reach a common understanding of key ComDev issues and current trends. The following sessions examined the current situation of ComDev for agriculture and rural development in terms of challenges and opportunities, moving from an overview of the sector to the identification of strategic areas of intervention, and highlighted institutional factors and requirements for positioning ComDev in agricultural

organizations, policies and programs. Besides the strict interlink between all the themes, there was a logical progression throughout the consultation. At the end of every session, one of the participants presented a plenary wrap-up of the key points and questions raised, as food for thought for the next discussion.

The third and final day of the consultation was designed to move from reflection to action. The ComDev experts were invited to look more concretely into opportunities and strategic priorities for the immediate future, and to formulate common recommendations for FAO and partner institutions to follow-up. The last session was in fact titled “**ComDev in action: the way forward**” and saw the experts focusing on the following issues:

- » Mainstreaming and funding ComDev
- » Priorities and follow-up actions
- » Mechanisms for collaboration and joint initiatives

The variety of inputs emerging from group works were consolidated into a number of common recommendations which, in turn, were collectively prioritized and further refined into four final recommendations (see page 38). These strategic priorities were also presented to FAO management during the closing session of the meeting.

Facilitation Methodologies

The event was very different in nature to a panel discussion. Several facilitation techniques were used as an alternative to keynote speeches or formal presentations in order to create an open environment for participants’ interaction. Among those techniques were the following:

- » **Talk Show:** a combination of television interview and panel discussion format. The Talk Show’s open circle layout encouraged greater participation and provided a chance to weave ideas between participants and dig down for key issues.
- » **Peer assist:** bringing together individuals to share their experiences, insights and knowledge on an identified challenge or problem. The methodology helps a predetermined “peer assistee” to identify possible approaches or new lines of enquiry, while promoting shared learning among those invited to advise the assistee on how to deal with their challenge or work towards solving their problem.
- » **World Café:** a whole group interaction focused on conversations about one or more relevant questions. Participants are encouraged to capture free flowing ideas as they emerge and to establish a collaborative dialogue. Conversations are cross-fertilized with ideas from other tables as participants move around the room.



Outreach Activities

In order to highlight FAO experience, results and ongoing field efforts in ComDev, an ‘open space’ for display of publications, multimedia materials and communication platforms was set up at headquarters premises during the event. This ‘ComDev Fair’ provided the opportunity for both FAO staff and visitors to get familiar with the themes of the Expert Consultation and share ideas with the invited experts.

An extensive use of social media was made to give visibility to the event and connect interested people who were not able to actually participate. A dedicated webpage on the FAO website (<http://www.fao.org/oek/communication-for-development/expert-consultation/en>) presented information and updates about the event, while live coverage of the discussion was ensured through Twitter (following @FAOcomdev and #comdev11) and blog posts.

In addition, short video interviews to the consultation organizers and experts were recorded and posted on the FAO ComDev channel on YouTube (www.youtube.com/FAOcomdev).



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DISCUSSION

Communication for Rural Development Today

Session 1 set the stage for the expert consultation by giving an overview of the following key areas: (a) ComDev approaches in agriculture and rural development (b) current trends in ComDev (c) evidence of ComDev contribution to the agricultural and rural sector.

The floor was opened by Alfonso Gumucio, author of the background paper “**Communication for Development: Meeting Today’s Agriculture and Rural Development Challenges**”, who highlighted a number of key issues as inputs for the discussion. Here follows a summary of the overall document.

After an initial round of reactions to the background paper, four participants were invited to interact among themselves and with the rest of the group as guests of a talk show. Afterwards, participants broke up into 4 groups to further the discussion.

BACKGROUND PAPER ON COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT: MEETING TODAY'S AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

History

Communication for Development has grown after World War II both as a discipline and a field practice, being widely used in various geographic, cultural, social and economic contexts.

Two main trends have dominated five decades of ComDev: (a) communication models inspired by modernization theories and techniques; (b) communication approaches that emerged at the heat of social and political struggle against colonial and dictatorial powers, conceptually rooted in the dependency theories. During the 90's, some elements of convergence appeared in models that combine the use of mass media with educational and participatory approaches. These communication models promote social change rather than individual behavioural change, and suggest actions that emerge from the communities and not just for the communities.

The United Nations System has a long history of supporting the conceptualisation and implementation of communication for development programmes and projects. Agencies such as UNESCO, FAO and UNICEF have been among the main international referents for this area. Biennial UN inter-agency roundtables and the World Congress of Communication for Development (2006) have been instrumental to position ComDev within cooperation institutions as a key component of sustainable development.

Today's challenges

New issues in the rural sector and potential areas of intervention have emerged. The impacts of climate change are very clear on four main areas: a) food security, b) water security, c) energy security and d) human security. However, another important consequence is foreseeable as the combined result of the four: governance breakdowns.

Communication for sustainable natural resource management involves establishing linkages among all stakeholders, developing common understanding, language and channels for participation. The emphasis is on promoting awareness and participation about global environmental and conservation issues such as: biodiversity preservation, climate change and desertification.

Poverty reduction and equity issues involve peoples' participation in directing the course of their own development are central tenets of both the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and National Poverty Reductions Strategy Plans (PRSPs). The issue of equal access to knowledge and information is becoming one of the key aspects of sustainable development.

Strategic priorities

Monitoring and evaluations are crucial to make policies known and relevant. Increasingly there is a trend towards interactive policy-making. This move away from a persuasive approach demands careful communication planning for public meetings, consultations, and round tables for stakeholder engagement.

Capacity development at all levels is important for sharing knowledge and explaining scientific information with the aim of creating new perspectives rather than transferring pre-packaged solutions. Academic support is needed through post-graduate programmes contributing to the profile of high-level communication for development professionals, decision and policy makers. Funding for ComDev initiatives is limited compared to what development organizations usually spend on media for institutional visibility. The wealth of experience and learning trajectories is often not shared with similar initiatives. Networking is an important tool to share both knowledge and practical experience.

Interfaces

The role of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) is complex. It is often presented as the panacea for poverty, exclusion and underdevelopment. However, studies show that ICTs are just tools and their effectiveness depends on content and local knowledge.

Knowledge should not be confused with information; the idea that it can be “sent” or “received” is questionable. Knowledge management is a field or discipline aimed at addressing “a range of strategies and practices used in an organization to identify, create, represent, distribute, and enable adoption of *insights* and *experiences*”.

Institutionalization

National policies should integrate communication for development in order to acknowledge that it is essential to sustainable development and social change. It should also be part of the policies and strategies of development organizations and within their institutional frameworks. Mainstreaming communication for sustainable development at all levels is key to reach development goals.

Each organization needs clear strategies to use information and communication in support of development initiatives. These should be cross-sectoral and multi-dimensional to take into account the multifaceted challenges of agricultural development. Mechanisms are needed for ensuring widespread public education and informed public participation in decision making on the future directions of development.

Way forward

Organizations need to break their resistance to participatory approaches and understand that participation leads to appropriation of the development process, thus ensuring sustainability.

UN organizations have a clear mandate from the General Assembly to implement ComDev programmes. They need to acknowledge and implement existing resolutions and recommendations and effectively commit national governments and local partners to ComDev policies and strategies through establishing concrete and operational agreements.

The real commitment of development organizations to communication for development should be monitored through criteria that include: a) policy design and strategy implementation, b) specific budget allocation to ComDev, and c) specialised staff recruitment at the highest levels of decision-making.

Overall the debate raised a set of issues which are presented below:

1. COMDEV APPROACHES

ComDev approaches focus on engaging multiple stakeholders and facilitating dialogue in favour of progress and increased well-being. They are applied to get to the heart of a problem and to identify a solution from within the context of the problem. Ideally, the process of engagement would converge with the opportunities offered by new information and communication technologies, but in practice there is a lack of coherence and much fragmentation among multiple actors and interventions. There are few examples reflecting convergence, partly due to the lack of research and documentation. The latter is in fact essential to record the evolution of newly emerging and home-grown approaches which are neither mapped, monitored nor evaluated.

ComDev initiatives that encourage and support local assembly, consultation and learning processes would make an invaluable contribution to technology programmers. Interactive information sharing and dialogue are in fact a resource for locally generated content and a cost-effective measure, contributing directly to the construction and sustainability of knowledge societies. In the context of ICTs, little if any is known about the actors involved in carrying out ComDev driven needs assessments. It is also unclear to what extent ICT managers and programmers utilize participation, interaction and dialogue with farmers and their communities (including extension agents) at any stage of planning. The deployment of ICT solutions are not necessarily accompanied with open source principles nor do they aid the flow of crucial and specialized information and content to general populations. For example, the required vocabulary to explain the phenomena of climate change does not exist among key populations in the majority of African countries.

The reasons for many of the above gaps can be better understood and met through closer examination using a combination of management, social, linguistic and anthropological approaches that define ComDev and underline the importance of mainstreaming its theory and practice.

“There is a need for mainstreaming ComDev. Excellent information and communication initiatives may be compromised if not integrated in the policies of the Ministries of Agriculture, in university programs and so on.”
(H. Hambly)

2. CURRENT TRENDS IN COMDEV

The world economy and power structure has changed significantly since the 80's when ComDev practice was engaged in promoting participatory and inclusive rural development. The shift from a global to a local dimension and the changing roles of the South in the global economy have presented new opportunities and challenges.

The agriculture and rural development sector has not sustained public expenditure in favour of agricultural extension networks resulting in a drift between rural development and ComDev theory and practice. Increasing interest in agricultural investment makes it important to understand the impact of multinational land ownership on small scale farmers.

The international development community acknowledges the importance of a people-centred approach, but levels of support are higher for ICT driven programmes and solutions than ComDev. ICTs offer a wide range of organizational, management, communication and knowledge sharing solutions, but they come with a hidden cost and have not changed the critical “old” challenges including social inequity and marginalization which are looming challenges in a financially fragile world economy. The case of the famine situation in the Horn of Africa and the lack of value chains for subsistence farmers can be taken as examples that underline the critical need for communication process in any development intervention. Bringing multiple threads together to form a sense of cohesion presents an important challenge that the international ComDev community must face.

“*Things are changing at phenomenal speed and we can see now enormous advances in communication tools and technologies.*

Let's capture the imagination.

(J. Deane)

It's about time that we question our own knowledge. Let's give attention to the knowledge of the present communicators and media practitioners.

(N. Dajani)



More countries are giving importance to ComDev and exploring possibilities to allocate required resources. However, institutional capacities require strengthening and need to be equipped with indicators and benchmarks that can guide and demonstrate both short-term and long-term impacts.

An increasing number of actors in the international development community are learning to understand and appreciate ComDev. Non-governmental organizations and UN funds and programmes are paying increased attention to resource allocation for ComDev projects (e.g. the BBC World Service Trust and UNICEF). Others are actively advocating ComDev as an essential skills-base resource and supporting initiatives that integrate relevant indicators and benchmarks in national development planning (e.g. UNESCO, AMARC). A significant number of universities are also engaged in the research and teaching of ComDev (e.g. University of Guelph, University of Ohio, University of Los Baños, University of Queensland, University of West Indies).

3. EVIDENCE OF COMDEV CONTRIBUTION TO AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

The establishment of more than 10 000 community radio stations has boosted the potential of Latin American rural populations to communicate and express social needs and values. In West Africa, radio helped to improve livestock trade and taxes and in Southern Africa radio successfully promoted community leadership to control the spread of cholera. However, systematized data collection and relevant indicators need to be developed in order to demonstrate impact, beyond radio products, and to ensure transparent follow-up to process, which the donor community finds less interesting.

“We have to change our language, avoid jargon and be very concrete in presenting our discipline to make it understood by the people who count.”
(S. Balit)



ComDev actions are being advocated to influence policy and become mainstreamed in national development plans with expectations that relevant mapping and transparent resource commitments may be supported and allocated at the national level. There is consensus among ComDev experts that technology cannot be favoured as the sole-enabling factor of development or for the transfer of knowledge in the agriculture sector.

The scope of ComDev is very wide, but the lack of coherent interventions presents an obstacle. Mechanisms that would otherwise facilitate the use of local knowledge to enrich technical and political decision-making are few or unknown. This raises a number of concerns largely related to deficiencies in professional and institutional capacity.

“*The challenge for ComDev is to get governments and organization listen to what people want, in terms of communication and information opportunities. We have to work out how do we get institutions to understand the society.*”
(J. Deane)



4. COMDEV INTERFACE WITH OTHER DISCIPLINES

The development sphere is crowded with practitioners and emerging disciplines that may be rooted in ComDev but are named differently. From that perspective, ComDev is less visible in a large and competitive arena where development problems and challenges remain unchanged.

Climate change is a global priority theme but new approaches and skills are required to meet that challenge. Rural development is crosscutting and a possible interface with other disciplines such as health education and environment. That scenario has raised concerns about the terminology “ComDev”, which is synonymously used and interchanged in various contexts including social marketing, behavioural change, communication for social change, thus creating some confusion.

Based on the specific issues raised during Session 1, a group of participants elaborated the following preliminary recommendations:

- RECOMMENDATIONS**
- 1. Facilitate national ComDev networks that involve practitioners, academicians and stakeholders.**
 - 2. Resurrect and re-examine (and revise as needed) inventories on ComDev tools and approaches.**
 - 3. Examine the disconnect between the application of ComDev tools and their impact.**
 - 4. Write a ‘What can ComDev do’ statement in simple words.**

Key Areas of Intervention for ComDev in the Agricultural Sector

The aim of Session 2 was to identify strategic areas for ComDev intervention in agriculture and rural development. Marcela Villareal, Director of FAO Gender Equity and Rural Employment Division, was invited to present an overview of the major challenges faced by the rural sector today, after which participants shared ideas and experiences in several rounds of World Café conversations.

The first conversation thread focused on
THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN CLIMATE CHANGE

COMDEV ROLE

ComDev has to help farmers realize CC impact in agriculture and figure out how to change their livelihood. Public awareness is only the first step, ComDev role is to encourage collective learning by farmers and link up with scientists, so that farmers' experience can feed back into the research agenda.

CHALLENGES

Doing communication for CC means dealing with unpredictability and requires presenting a menu of choices and possible scenarios. Uncertainty and complexity bring the challenge of M&E as it becomes difficult to document results and demonstrate impact.

EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS

ComDev has promoted horizontal farmer-to-farmer sharing of technology to help rural communities find new options to cope with CC (e.g. the CSDI* project in the Caribbean). Community-developed technologies are now being studied by national researchers to be improved and shared with other farmers.

OPEN QUESTIONS

Is it really necessary for farmers to make the linkage between a hurricane and climate change? Raising the issue from a more concrete angle (hurricanes, droughts) would not be more effective and relevant to them?

CLIMATE CHANGE

* Communication for Sustainable Development Initiative. For more information <http://www.csdinitiative.org>

A second theme for discussion was
THE CONTRIBUTION OF COMDEV TO FOOD SECURITY

COMDEV ROLE

ComDev contributes to food security as local communities are empowered to: get access to relevant information, voice out their needs, influence local policies, value their own culture and knowledge, enhance local practice.

CHALLENGES

Low investments in agriculture at the national level are accompanied by poor investments in ComDev. It is important to show ComDev indirect contribution to food security through improved practices and increased production.

EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS

Thanks to ComDev particular kinds of food or traditional crops previously neglected by local communities (e.g. black eyed peas in Africa) have been given value and are substantially contributing to food security.

OPEN QUESTIONS

Should ComDev for food security constitute a project alone or should it be embedded within other projects?

FOOD SECURITY

The experts also explored
THE ROLE OF COMDEV IN AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION SYSTEMS

COMDEV ROLE

ComDev fits very well in innovation systems due to its horizontal nature. It contributes to sustain the dynamic process of knowledge creation, co-creation and sharing among the plurality of actors in the innovation system, bringing the diverse players to systematically interact and dialogue.

CHALLENGES

Capacity development in ComDev is needed to provide community facilitators with the proper skills to create links and play an intermediary role among all the system stakeholders. Playing a negotiation role requires institutional change and transparency at all levels, power relations have to be taken into account.

AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION

EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS

In Bolivia ComDev approaches are used by the National Institute for Agricultural Innovation (INIAF) to reinforce local innovation capacities by engaging farmers, listening to their real needs and connecting these to the solutions that research can provide, encouraging collective learning and experimentation.

OPEN QUESTIONS

Who are the knowledge brokers and how will they function?
How to engage and deal with innovation networks and capacities?



A fourth discussion table allowed participants to brainstorm on additional areas that can particularly benefit from the application of ComDev principles and methods: the main areas identified, cutting through the above ones, were gender and sovereignty. While the thematic discussions exposed specific challenges and opportunities for the application of ComDev in each area, in general it was agreed that ComDev is an approach that provides process to development initiatives and should therefore be embedded in such initiatives rather than stand on its own.

ComDev processes facilitate, in a participatory manner, the planning, implementation, evaluation and large-scale outreach of development initiatives and make them accessible, transparent and, therefore, relevant to all stakeholders. As a result, effectiveness and impacts of these initiatives are expected to improve.

To make this happen, ComDev should particularly give attention to the following modes of operation:

1. STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

By giving a voice and providing space for dialogue, especially to those who normally do not have the power to speak out (women, ethnic minority groups, marginalised communities), stakeholder groups can position themselves, express their needs and concerns and, hence, have a role in setting agendas and directions for change processes.

ComDev processes can provide voice directly or indirectly. Additionally, ComDev methods help create linkages among stakeholders. Communication processes and tools need to be differently targeted to different stakeholder groups depending on language and literacy issues, access to technology, and power relations.

2. AWARENESS RAISING FUNCTIONS

Awareness raising about the need for, and consequences of, change is necessary before effective learning and behavioural change can be expected. Awareness raising should happen at all levels, not only among those who are supposedly not aware of the latest science (e.g. on climate change issues), but also among policy makers who may not know why communities do what they do and who have reason to make local decisions the way they do.

ComDev provides a platform for exchange of information and for advocacy to support awareness raising and, hence, create favourable conditions for constructive dialogue. Language is extremely important and various levels of translations (across ethnic languages, as well as scientific vs. layman vs. politician language) will influence the effectiveness of communication.

3. EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATION FUNCTIONS

ComDev methods can improve the effectiveness and relevancy of information flows, to serve educational functions in development. Being based in participatory processes and having properly identified and profiled stakeholders, information can be better targeted in appropriate forms to different stakeholder groups. This involves information derived from both research-based innovations and indigenous or locally generated knowledge and practices.

4. INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF COMDEV

For sustainability of processes and impacts of a development initiative, it is important that ComDev processes and operations can be sustained beyond the lifespan of a development intervention. Ownership over ComDev processes and operations needs to be in the hands of local stakeholders, whether this be governments, local organizations or communities, as early on in the process as possible.

Institutionalization of ComDev should be pursued from the first interactions with stakeholder groups at the planning phase. Projects can initiate, but should not create, an unsustainable set-up. Capacity building is an extremely important element in this context and should happen at different levels (managers/designers, facilitators, users).

5. FUNDING MECHANISMS

To acquire adequate levels of funding for ComDev, different strategies may be required when embedding ComDev as a component in a development project or when creating a separate ComDev initiative. A stand-alone initiative needs to effectively sell the ComDev concept to the funding agency. Embedding ComDev as a component means convincing the primary stakeholders that ComDev is an underlying process of facilitation that does not necessarily need to be visible, and yet still requires an allocation of resources.

The conclusions of Session 2 were used by one group of participants as a starting point to develop specific recommendations, focusing in particular on key areas of intervention for ComDev in the agricultural sector:

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Look at the different levels of innovation systems to identify the nodes and entry points that ComDev can facilitate.**
2. **ComDev should facilitate the translation of the innovation systems framework to ensure that reflects practical and participatory actions and effective learning structures in member countries.**
3. **Work actively within alliances among ComDev institutions (FAO, CTA, IICD, Universities, private sector) to do an audit of actual funding on ComDev**
4. **Document a set of demonstrated effective and efficient ComDev interventions through case studies.**
5. **Conduct an audit of spending by key rural/agricultural development investments.**
6. **Don't be afraid to make statements such as: we know that this will make your food security program more effective.**



Challenges and Opportunities for Rural ComDev

During the third session, participants were involved in a Peer Assist exercise to tackle five major challenges for rural ComDev: (a) capacity development; (b) synergies with other approaches such as ICTs and knowledge management; (c) relation with local and community media; (d) M&E and funding; (e) policies and regulatory frameworks. Because these topics are interrelated, much of the exchange shifted between the issues of what, how and why.

1. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

What would be effective mechanisms to enhance professional skills, develop a critical mass of practitioners, and ensure greater institutionalization of ComDev?

Renewed importance has been given to strengthening capacities since the Paris Declaration put the issue of sustainability back into the agenda of international agencies. Capacity development requires a conducive environment (resource allocation, adequate integration into the larger development agenda) and a holistic approach to work at different levels with individuals, organizations and institutions.

There is a stress between the focus on standardization or professionalization. Related to the first option is the suggestion to look at existing competency frameworks in ComDev as a whole, or centred on specific sectors such as health, and harness past experiences to create and accredit a set of ComDev experts. At the other end, there are calls for distributed capacity among a larger number of organizations with the aim of, at least, having high-level staff with responsibility to maintain ComDev issues on the agenda. This in turn requires broader strategic skills.

Capacity development activities need to address different scales or levels of staff, from policy makers to media and field agents, each requiring a different set of skills. The difficulty of staff turn-over (which could be a waste, but also has system-wide benefits) must be considered, along with structural constraints (e.g. countries with no extension workers to train).

A number of innovative ComDev training opportunities are currently offered, including on-line postgraduate courses, modular courses leading to a certificate, sandwich programs for professional upgrading. It is important to develop intensive training courses rather than one-off workshops, and to establish accreditations criteria in collaboration with university networks. In all cases, it is key to start “where people are at” to design ComDev programs that respond to each context.

2. SYNERGY WITH ICTs AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

How to take advantage of ComDev synergies with other approaches, such as ICTs or KM? And how to stay abreast of new tools?

There are overlapping themes among ComDev and other approaches such as ICTs and Knowledge Management (KM) for Development. The three are in fact complementary and should not be considered as stand-alone disciplines. However, the challenge is that specialists are often territorial and competitive.

It was recognized that each specialist cannot be a jack-of-all-trades, but should rather work in teams with complementary skill sets. In some projects, it would be useful to have an experienced person linking the different disciplines. In this sense, ComDev people should act as facilitators, working with other divisions and training technical staff, to help them understand the knowledge gaps that need to be addressed. The introduction of technologies in a vacuum is a big limitation that can be overcome thanks to ComDev processes, which start always with a review of the context, aspirations and needs of local communities.



The case of underutilized community telecenters prompted an intense debate about factors that contribute to a repeat of conventional media white elephants, for example: government and donor pressures towards deliverables, lack of a grounded needs assessment, limited or lacking ownership over the process of developing the initiative, etc. Documenting both successes and failures was underlined as key in order to learn from experience. In particular, from the KM dimension emerged the need for a more concrete, example-based approach to field activities, which could also help overcome the tendency to jargonize the field.

What is important for a good ComDev practitioner is to stay abreast of new and different tools, media and platforms and learn about their principles, characteristics and specific functions in order to understand better which one should be used. Especially in relation to social media, there is a call for “getting younger”, getting training, and engaging a new generation in ComDev, while on-line fora like KM4Dev are recognized as effective ways to stay abreast. Since much of the innovation with social media is happening in civil society, reference was made to connecting with actors that were less prominent before. Large scale change is happening thanks to mobiles, which put ComDev in a position to embrace new opportunities. However, in the reality rural areas are largely bypassed.

3. RELATION WITH LOCAL AND COMMUNITY MEDIA

How to reinforce the role of community radio as part of ComDev processes?

A critical point is the difference between local radio (commercial, governmental, etc.) as a tool, and community radio as a ComDev process owned and managed by the community. The first concept limits the potential due to its instrumental bias, while the second is an excellent example of what ComDev is all about: having communities decide on programming, enabling an exchange of voices in a manner that works for local needs.

Being embedded in a ComDev process, community radio is much more than a dissemination tool: it is about institutions and media as components of a process of change. Community radio is recognized as a platform for community development that allows multiple communication functions to be brought to bear of multiple local needs.

While the level of democracy in each setting will directly affect how many people are able to shape programming, it is clear that community radio is also part of transforming the public sphere into a democratic area where everybody can speak and build an empowered reality. Since this language may not be accessible to non-ComDev practitioners, examples and stories should be used to explain the difference: the story of how the mining radios emerged and evolved in Bolivia is an example of a community controlled space for interaction and political action.

Ownership and sustainability are fundamental for community media to be effective. It is important to develop capacity in ComDev to ensure that local and community radio is used for two-way communication as part of a ComDev process, also training staff in established private radios could be a good strategy.

Partnerships between radio associations and community radios with development actors and governments should be enhanced, and more attention should be given to the opportunities brought by the convergence between radio, mobile phones, and other new technologies (e.g. listeners clubs).

4. POLICY AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

Do ComDev regulations make any difference to the farm community? Should governments be encouraged to enact national policies that promote agricultural programming?

The cases of Mali and Ethiopia well exemplify contrasting scenarios: in Mali the regulation is loose and many different radio stations are competing, although their rural content may be limited; while in Ethiopia a state policy mandates all radios to broadcast agricultural programs. In addition, the Mali case has a precedent of a national ComDev policy framework that created sector-wide activities with a rural orientation (the process behind this achievement was facilitated and documented by FAO).

It is recommended to work at the policy level and encourage governments to define national regulations. However, a central node of the debate is: who determines content and broadcast times for community radios? The real ComDev challenge is to get people at the community level to set the agenda and produce their own content, but local radios do not automatically include farming content because they are embedded in the community. What if the community representation on the radio boards is skewed? Capacity development is key to ensure that local radios involve community stakeholders and apply ComDev principles to meet the needs of their audiences. A ComDev policy

should also involve private and commercial radios to ensure they include in their broadcasting programs content with a social responsibility. In addition, filling voids in public radio with quality programming, is conducive to stimulating demand.

In the Latin American region, regulation addresses all types of radios (commercial, public, community) differently yet with the goal of having programming that is social responsible, relevant, and timely. A translation of a recent book¹ documenting experiences and lessons learned into English and/or French would allow other regions to learn from the Latin American experience.

5. MONITORING, EVALUATION AND FUNDING

How to evaluate ComDev impact?

And to what extent ComDev evidence is used to resonate with donors?

Often the call for more evidence of ComDev work distracts from the fact that evidence exists, but has not been made sufficiently relevant, timely and accessible to funders. One challenge is that often ComDev is a component of other initiatives, supporting and contributing to the achievement of those projects' objectives. Therefore outcomes are either invisible or not directly related to ComDev.

On the matter of attribution Vs contribution, a differentiation has to be made: in the first a linear causality is assumed (as many Logical Frameworks and Results Based Management suggest), while the other seeks evidence of change that may be related to the ComDev activity, but where multiple other factors beyond our control are acknowledged.

ComDev practitioners have often failed to determine project objectives and indicators with due caution of the many factors that may limit their completion. A revisit to the examples of ComDev evidence presented at the World Congress of Communication for Development (WCCD) shows a mixed bag of outcomes and impacts: some were clearly seen as 'change of state' types of results, while others were either unclear, or the extent of direct causality was limited.

While there are examples of donors who do listen and accommodate ComDev approach, it is generally seen as fundamentally subversive and challenging of institutional cultures, in that it

1 Gumucio, A. and Herrera, K. (Eds.) (2010). *Políticas y Legislación para la Radio Local en América Latina*. La Paz: Plural Editores.

empowers local communities and can generate real changes in power balances. Development actors place different emphasis on accountability: some endorse the need for it as a way of increasing transparency, others question the political agendas that underlie many interventions.

The need for more flexible tools of project formulation is commonly recognized. For example, monitoring and evaluation instead of those that donors are familiar with, such as logframes, which tend to be too deterministic. ComDev practitioners and projects at FAO should embrace alternative evaluation methodologies, which are well documented in the literature and in the evaluation field, including among others: Outcome Mapping, Utilization Focused Evaluation, and Most Significant Change. The challenge of delayed and/or invisible change has also to be considered, and yet is often off the radar screen in conventional evaluations.

One group of experts focused on the challenges and opportunities identified during Session 3 to develop the following proposition and preliminary recommendations:

Proposition

Communication for Development at FAO exists to meet the information and communication needs of farmers, particularly small farmers, as well as those affected by food insecurity. It places as much emphasis on listening and learning from farmers as it does on informing and educating them. In the 21st Century, how farmers access, trust and use information, and how they communicate with each other and to those who make decisions that affect them, is becoming more critical and more complex. As food security, equity of access to agricultural resources and multiple other challenges become more acute, as the MDG goal of reducing hunger by 50 percent by 2015 becomes more remote, and in the context of rapidly changing media, information and communication landscapes, the role of and priority attached to information and communication needs to be reassessed. Major new opportunities exist to meet the information and communication needs of farmers.

Problems to be solved

FAO has a wealth of historical experience and expertise in meeting the information and communication needs of farmers, but several problems need to be solved if the organization is to be effective:

- » Lack of systems, coordination and expertise at country level that can ensure strategies that connect agricultural extension, communication and media practitioners capable of meeting the information and communication needs of farmers.
- » Academic alliances and partnerships capable of connecting research and practice, and systematically improving standards of programming designed to meet the information and communication needs of farmers.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Clarify the evidence base: there remains a strong, but disaggregated evidence base supporting the role of information and communication in improving farmers lives. Much of this evidence base can be drawn from FAO's own experience. This needs to be better consolidated and coordinated.**
2. **Twitter stream: a screen in FAO forum communicating twitter messages from farmers around the world.**
3. **Champions: Harnessing the expertise and enthusiasm within and across the organization.**

Enhancing ComDev Impact on Agricultural Development

Session 4 revolved around four main aspects: (a) institutional frameworks, (b) ComDev in national agricultural policies, (c) rural communication services, and (d) up-scaling of ComDev activities. These topics were addressed by short presentations or institutional analysis, and a talk show involving experts from government institutions and rural development organizations.

In particular, Silvia Balit shared the results of an assessment conducted within FAO prior to the consultation, aimed at identifying the role of ComDev in the Organization, new perspectives and future directions. The presentation highlighted a number of requirements for mainstreaming ComDev as a key component in FAO mandate and institutional setup.

OVERVIEW PAPER ON COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN FAO

With more than 40 years of experience establishing linkages among multiple stakeholders and working to ensure the participation of poor and vulnerable communities, FAO has demonstrated that ComDev can make a difference for the effectiveness and sustainability of agricultural policies and programs. Although the strategic value of ComDev has not always been fully recognized, the current position in FAO institutional framework is more favourable than in the past: located within the Office of Knowledge Exchange, Research and Extension (OEK), ComDev specialists have better chances of working with different technical divisions across the organization, not only as a support to extension.

FAO ComDev mandate is primarily to provide assistance to member countries and strengthen their ComDev capacity. Present activities focus on three priority areas: (1) natural resource management, climate change and emergencies; (2) food security and nutrition; (3) agricultural innovation.

The core functions include:

- » Policy advice to member countries
- » Technical assistance in communication design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation to governments, regional offices, national institutions and field projects
- » Capacity development of national staff, institutions and change agents working with rural communities
- » Advocacy to mainstream the discipline in agricultural and rural development policies and programmes

ComDev today has a greater potential in the rural sector and as a strategic element for the work of FAO, as the new priorities are all people-oriented and communication is needed to achieve effectiveness, especially working with small producers and vulnerable groups. On the other hand, ComDev still faces a number of constraints, including: weak human resource base especially at the regional level, difficulty in promoting effective participatory and inclusive development processes, misunderstanding about communication processes Vs technology, insufficient recognition of the technical nature of the discipline.

Elements for mainstreaming Communication for Development in FAO

- » A new vision and a corporate strategy in ComDev
- » Advocacy at regional and country levels with senior management and policy makers
- » An in-depth stocktaking of ongoing activities and current needs in ComDev at FAO, to identify relevant stakeholders and potential partners, especially at the regional and field level
- » Partnerships with stakeholders using ComDev or similar approaches at HQs and in the field
- » Lobbying for extra-budgetary resources to strengthen the weak human resource base
- » Flagship ComDev initiatives, including more research, capacity development and M&E
- » Official recognition of OEKR as focal point to ensure common ComDev approaches and principles across FAO
- » Dialogue and internal coordination with other communication officers in the organization, to harmonize and adopt a common approach to ComDev
- » Inclusion of ComDev in the guidelines for FAO's new Country Program Framework

Overall the debate highlighted the following main issues:

1. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The institutionalization of communication for development depends on policy decisions inside development organizations. The starting point is the recognition of communication for development within and across the organizations, with adequate budget, staff and policy support. Legitimacy may have been earned from field experience and ComDev may have the endorsement of participating stakeholders, but this has to filter upward to decision-makers in implementing and donor institutions, who may not be exposed to actual fieldwork.

Communication for development is a concept that cuts across other areas and sectors. Organizations need to evolve towards openness and transparency to deal with complex issues and become less vertical. ComDev needs to be part of programme areas in each organization, and not just an appendix for institutional visibility. One important question is: where is communication for development placed in the institutional structure? Is it with programmes or with public information? The importance assigned by development institutions to ComDev is, in fact, proportional to the budgets allocated to it. It is easy for managers to say that ComDev is “very important”, but still needs to be supported in concrete ways inside each organization.

Interagency Roundtables on ComDev, with participation of non-UN organizations, have helped to maintain communication for development in the agenda of the United Nations and bilateral development agencies. However, most of the time the resolutions taken and the recommendations issued at round tables do not have a follow-up. Consequently, a suggestion was made to evaluate the roundtables using similar evaluation indicators used in the field.

Strategic alliances between UN organizations and civil society groups are needed. Programmes like IPDC² (promoted by UNESCO) provide grants for community media, capacity building, independent media and other projects managed by independent organizations, government departments, or field offices. At the core of every institution there should be a common understanding on communication for development and it should reflect at the policy level.

2 For more information <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/communication-and-information/intergovernmental-programmes/ipdc/>

“There is a favorable environment to revitalize ComDev at FAO, with agriculture high on the development agenda and a renewed commitment to small farmers. What is needed is a new vision and a strategy for mainstreaming ComDev in the Organization and in the rural sector in general.”
(S. Balit)

2. NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL POLICIES

Setting standards, such as the media development indicators developed by UNESCO, is a concrete contribution to national policies on ComDev which relate to public access, inclusive participation, transparent and accountable governance, and independent media with social responsibility.

Mainstreaming communication for sustainable development at all levels is key to reach development goals. Communication for development should be integrated in national policies thereby acknowledging that it is essential to sustainable development and social change. It should also be part of the policies and strategies of development organizations and their institutional frameworks.

A national policy has to be based in social inclusion, the recognition of identities and differences, and re-valuing of participation. In dealing with distinct cultures, identities and problems, there is a need for capturing and giving value to differences: this calls for the integration of communication for development and participatory processes to research and technical assistance. ComDev needs to fit with policy-makers ideas and help government plans. There is no other option than working for the benefit of partners in the regions in order to contribute to strengthening national capacities and ensuring sustainability in the long-term perspective.

“Communication for development is invisible, like the salt or sugar you add to food. You can taste it but you don’t see it.”
(M. Rucibigango)

3. RURAL COMMUNICATION SERVICES

The concept of **Rural Communication Services** is presently being steered in the context of FAO-supported projects (e.g. in Bangladesh) to promote network-like institutional arrangements that allow the integration of demand-driven communication services to satisfy knowledge and information needs of the rural population, while ensuring their active participation in development initiatives. This involves mainstreaming ComDev strategies in agricultural planning at the national and local levels, the use of participatory communication methodologies and the integration of several media ranging from the local/traditional media to the new ICTs.

Rural communication services also imply special attention to institutional strengthening and capacity development, building on the existing communication and advisory services provided by government institutions, research organizations, NGOs, organized farmer groups, and the private sector to ensure improved coordination and effectiveness.

Extension has a long history in developing countries as the effort from centralised institutions to reach peripheral communities. Extension is not the same as ComDev processes, which start from the recognition of the knowledge, skills, experience and values of the rural population. However, the best communication for development is not so evident when it is effectively enabling development and social change. It is there, but you do not see it.

ComDev practitioners have also to acknowledge that they are working in a dynamic environment where new technologies are easily adopted: these must be used as tools, without forgetting the principles of working side by side with the poorest rural population. There has always been a “new” technology to accelerate information exchanges but technologies do not generate their own content, people do.

4. UP-SCALING COMDEV ACTIVITIES

It is very different to manage a pilot project than to implement a full programme at the field level. It is like preparing for parenthood compared to actually becoming a father for the first time. Pilot projects may be very successful, but each pilot is only as good as the particular community and context where it has been developed. Experience shows that there are no shortcuts for upscaling projects through vertical decisions.

The reality in the field is very different from projects on paper. Too often technical assistance consists in writing programmes with one government and implementing them when another government is in charge. Changes at the highest levels in a ministry

of agriculture, for example, may signify radical changes in policies, even if the overall government has not changed. The instability of interlocutors is a common feature in developing countries. Also there are issues that deal with ethics, timelines and conceptual frameworks. Who scales up and what is that is scaled up? Is it service coverage? Is it the tools? What kind of institution are we dealing with? Is there a national framework for expanding activities or not? How sustainable can be up-scaling if there is no budgetary commitment from the central or provincial governments?

The answers for up-scaling can only be found in rural reality, not in donor offices. Too often the push for “more results” is combined with less resources being invested: “Do more, and make it sustainable, in two years” is something technical staff has frequently heard. There is a wide disconnect between the design of ambitious plans in offices at headquarters, and the reality that is being lived day by day in rural settings. In addition, there is not enough learning from experiences in the field which could serve as feedback for institutionalization, for national policies and up-scaling.

5. THE WAY FORWARD

“ComDev in the rural sector cannot work alone but has to be linked with other issues like food security, climate change, food crises and with other actors. The real challenge is to involve also mainstream media, private sector and young people: there is a need for fresh ideas.”
(M. Lubetkin)

Organizations need to break their resistance to participatory approaches, first within their own institutional frameworks, to understand and internalise participatory communication as policy and as means to promote the appropriation of development processes, thus ensuring sustainability overtime.

FAO and other development organizations have a clear mandate from the UN General Assembly, to implement communication for development programmes. They should acknowledge and implement existing resolutions and recommendations, and effectively engage and commit national governments and local partners to communication for development policies and strategies, through concrete operational agreements.



There are important traits of ComDev that should be acknowledged, such as its multi-sectoral nature and the need to work not only essentially in field-based programmes but also on policy documents, reviewed with partners with a clear commitment to participatory approaches. The understanding of ComDev nature will end the pervasive confusion between information and communication.

Focal points for communication for development need to be officially recognised both in international development organizations and government institutions, to facilitate networking with other communication staff within and outside the organizations. The identity of the discipline will allow for a corporate communication for development strategy and this may lead to changing organizational institutional culture.

The real commitment of development organizations to communication for development is relatively easy to verify and can be monitored through basic criteria that include: a) has the organization or institution developed a policy paper and a strategy for implementation?; b) is there specific budget allocation to communication for development, distinct from information dissemination?; and c) have high-level posts for communication strategists been created and is specialised staff been recruited?

During the last day of consultation, participants developed a specific set of recommendations seeking to enhance ComDev impact on agricultural development:

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Develop a policy or strategic framework for organization**
 - Common understanding of ComDev (manual of key messages)
 - Get together allies inside the organization
 - Political lobby with member countries
 - Member countries' stocktaking
 - Get alliance in countries
- 2. Find entry point in existing national agricultural policies in member countries**
 - Lobby in congress and legislative body
 - Argue that communication is a universal right
 - Start in countries where they have been successful in establishing policies
 - Show successful experiences in the field
- 3. Make visible the results of ComDev and integrate it in agricultural programs**
 - Feasibility studies
 - Embed ComDev in technical areas
 - Invite investments from private sector
 - Alliances with other actors
 - Link with other issues (health, climate change, etc)
 - Use existing instruments and new technologies
 - Encourage process that lead to budgeting for ComDev
- 4. Up scaling Statement**

Up scaling is directly related to ownership and appropriation by communities. Growing into sustainable scale is not something vertical but horizontal. This is done through knowledge exchange, sharing of experiences, documentation and evaluation. If there is benefit or profit to individuals, they will take it to scale.

“*Go beyond reports, meet with decision makers. There are plenty of publications demonstrating the usefulness of ComDev, there are hundreds of examples of it that have been studied, published, in long and short versions. Now find the space to talk with decision makers and get their attention.*”
(R. Ramirez)



RECOMMENDATIONS

During Session 5 the participants worked in groups in an effort to identify and plan a way forward. Different inputs, provided on the basis of previous discussions, were collected and consolidated into a number of common recommendations.

The experts concurred that **FAO should take a leading role in mainstreaming ComDev in the rural development agenda** and formulated a set of recommendations for concrete follow-up by FAO and its partner institutions.



The table below lists the main recommendations in the priority order defined collectively through a ‘dotmocracy’ (ranking) exercise:

RANK	RECOMMENDATIONS	DOTS
1	Make ComDev visible	26
2	Work actively within alliances among ComDev institutions (FAO, CTA, IFAD, IICD, Universities, private sector)	22
3	Develop a ComDev policy or strategic framework within organizations	21
4	Facilitate national ComDev networks that involve practitioners, academicians and stakeholders, connecting research and practice and systematically improving standards of programming, to meet the information and communication needs of farmers	17
5	Find ComDev entry-points in existing national agricultural policies in member countries	14
6	Ensure coordination and ComDev expertise at country level to foster strategies that connect agricultural extension, communication and media practitioners capable of meeting the needs of farmers	12
7	Facilitate the translation of the innovation systems frameworks to ensure that it reflects participatory practical actions and effective learning structures in member countries	9
8	Look at the different levels of innovation systems to identify the nodes and entry-points that ComDev can facilitate	2

Upon further revision and group work, the following four recommendations were identified as the major strategic priorities for follow-up:

RECOMMENDATION 1

International rural development organizations and national institutions should include Communication for Development in their vision, policy, and strategic framework

RECOMMENDATION 2

Make ComDev relevant and compelling to key audiences (FAO, academia, other institutions)

RECOMMENDATION 3

Establish a multi-institutional alliance to promote ComDev principles and practices within agricultural innovation systems and translate these into actions at the country level

RECOMMENDATION 4

Facilitate national ComDev networks that involve practitioners, academicians and stakeholders, connecting theory, research and practice, and systematically improve standards of programs

RECOMMENDATION 1

International rural development organizations and national institutions should include ComDev in their vision, policy, and strategic framework

WHY

Policy is one of the main instruments to institutionalize and mainstream ComDev. A strategic policy framework is a driver for accountability and contributes to ownership and sustainability.

HOW

The recommended action should be carried out by:

- » Presenting the results of the Expert Consultation to FAO senior management
- » FAO drafting a corporate ComDev strategy, building on the results of the consultation
- » Call for an information exchange meeting with all FAO staff interested in ComDev
- » Designing a stocktaking exercise on ComDev at the field level in particular for FAO
- » Articulating a mechanism to foster synergy and advocate for ComDev
- » Making the recommendation known at the country level
- » Identifying allies and partners willing to participate and follow-up to the Expert Consultation

WHO

Institutions willing to collaborate include:

- » FAO ComDev team
- » Similar teams in other participating institutions
- » Local governments
- » Member countries already engaged in ComDev
- » Relevant departments in academia
- » Communication networks
- » Farmers' organizations

NEXT STEPS

For the short and medium term, participants recommended to FAO and partners to:

- » Develop and promote a corporate FAO ComDev strategy
- » Develop a flagship program for funding
- » Engage international donors, foundations and the private sector to support the development of this recommendation

RESOURCES

Adequate FAO resources are needed, as well as support by member countries and donors.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Make ComDev relevant and compelling to key audiences (FAO, academics, other institutions)

WHY

As the challenges of food security and equity of access to agricultural resources become more acute, as the MDG goal of reducing hunger by 50 percent by 2015 becomes more remote, and in the context of rapidly changing media, information and communication landscapes, the role of and priority attached to information and communication needs to be reassessed. ComDev at FAO exists to meet the information and communication needs of small farmers and those affected by food insecurity, taking into consideration social and economic justice and human rights.

HOW

The recommended action should be carried out by:

- » producing a strong evidence base
 - » comb the literature
 - » inventory of tools, approaches
 - » case studies of successes and lost opportunities
 - » find new ways to do this – for example a competition designed to capture best practice around the world
 - » audit ComDev investments and procedures alongside commitments and statements
- » creating a community of practice
 - » bring together people to talk about the best work they are doing – identify emerging practices, champions
- » creative demonstration of what works and (even lost) opportunities
 - » ComDev fair
 - » guerrilla tactics – twitter in FAO lobby – farmers to the FAO
 - » use social media to facilitate communication between farmers and policymakers
 - » Most Significant Change
 - » doing by example

WHO

Institutions willing to collaborate include:

- » CTA
- » ComDev departments in universities can refer students

NEXT STEPS

Participants called upon FAO to take the lead on one activity in each of the above-mentioned areas of action.

RESOURCES

Following-up requires doing less (of current work) as opposed to seeking more funds.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Establish a multi-institutional alliance to promote ComDev principles and practices within agricultural innovation systems and translate these into actions at the country level

WHY

Innovation systems emphasize the flow of ideas and information about technologies, institutions and enterprises that is key to processes of agricultural innovation and rural development. Communication for development principles and practices are based on interaction and learning that empowers people and makes innovation systems more inclusive and participatory. The end to hunger depends on people having a voice, sharing ideas and working together. Not using ComDev undermines investments in food security.

HOW

The recommended action should be carried out by:

- » Task force set up from this ComDev Expert Consultation 2011
- » Online and face to face discussion groups (within and outside FAO)
- » Case review – identify key cases; the relevant work of other agencies (grad)
- » Materials for teaching/capacity building
- » Highlighting the issues in conferences, journal articles, e-zines or magazines with wide, multilingual distribution (e.g. Spore)

WHO

Institutions willing to collaborate include:

- » FAO, CTA, IICD, IFAD
- » Donor agencies (e.g. ACIAR, IDRC, WB-ARD)
- » Universities (e.g. Queensland, Guelph, Kinshasa)
- » NGOs / think-tanks
- » Project alliances (e.g. KIT, GFRAS, Nairobi conference in Nov 2011)

NEXT STEPS

In a short-medium term perspective, participants recommended to:

- » Identify volunteers for the Task Force
- » Set up a D-group
- » Invite suggestions for cases
- » Request reviews by students
- » Have May raise this issue in the Innovation and Extension meeting in Nbi-Nov11
- » Write “think pieces”
- » Continue thinking and networking

RESOURCES

Financial and human resources available within the institutions willing to collaborate could be pooled, and a concept note should be developed to this purpose.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Facilitate national ComDev networks that involve practitioners, academicians and stakeholders, connecting theory, research and practice and systematically improve standards of programs

WHY

Facilitating national networks of ComDev practitioners and stakeholders is of great importance to:

- » Streamline ComDev work
- » Pool resources (avoid duplications)
- » Improve the efficiency of ComDev interventions
- » Improve/develop standards of ComDev practice
- » Attract funding
- » Raise the profile of ComDev
- » Build human and institutional capacity
- » Increase/optimize program outcomes

HOW

The recommended action should be carried out through:

- » Establishment of a working group
- » Agreement on areas of responsibilities
- » Agreement on joint interventions
- » Identification of implementing setup

WHO

Institutions willing to collaborate include:

- » FAO, UNESCO, UNICEF
- » Donors (e.g. GIZ)
- » Universities (e.g. CARIMAC, AUB)
- » AMARC

NEXT STEPS

For the short-medium term, participants recommended to:

- » Circulate Expert Consultation Report
- » Develop strategy (workplan, roles of responsibilities..)
- » Identify and develop networks/regions
- » Consult and identify possible partners
- » Map existing ComDev actors and programs

RESOURCES

Commitment and time are needed, as well as appropriate communication and funding.



CONCLUSIONS AND FOLLOW-UP

Final remarks

Communication needs and available channels in rural areas are going through tremendous changes. Rural people are increasingly calling for new communication capacities to access relevant knowledge and information and to get better opportunities for participation in development. The Expert Consultation was a unique opportunity for ComDev experts to meet and reflect on the challenges that ComDev in agricultural development is facing today. Technical institutions with a long history in communication for rural development such as FAO, IFAD, CTA and IICD, promoted the consultation to share experiences and open questions with scholars, donors, and practitioners from various regions, but also to find a common way forward based on a blend of perspectives and better coordinated efforts. Throughout the three-day gathering, participants' ideas and expertise stimulated insightful discussions and contributed to envisioning a way forward for the work of ComDev in the rural sector.

The enthusiastic response to FAO's call demonstrated once again that **ComDev is a key ingredient in agriculture and rural development processes**. It confirmed the need for ComDev professionals, and the organizations that they represent, to work together and learn from each other, strengthen links and establish alliances to jointly address new challenges in the sector.

In particular, the experts tackled pressing issues such as the gap between the application of ComDev methods and tools, and the evaluation of their impact. The need for collecting and systematizing data was also emphasized in order to create **a stronger evidence base** to demonstrate ComDev contribution to agriculture and rural development. For instance, the expert community attributes enormous potential to FAO publications and documentation materials on ComDev, but these materials should be more extensively distributed to effectively showcase successful initiatives using participatory communication approaches in the rural sector. Likewise, the importance of **generating news about ComDev** was also stressed, to make it more visible, relevant and fully understood by donors, technical staff, media and the general public. Advocating for ComDev goes hand-in-hand with **developing capacities**, both at the country level and within development organizations. Regional platforms should be supported to share best practices in ComDev and create links with different areas of the world.

In consideration of its commitment to improving the livelihoods of small farmers, participants concurred that FAO should actively promote ComDev as a fundamental element to ensure stakeholders' engagement and increased effectiveness of agricultural and rural development policies and programs. In fact, the recommendations from the consultation urge **FAO to take the lead in shaping a vision and mainstreaming Communication for Development in the agriculture and rural development agenda.**

In particular, the experts encouraged FAO to **adopt a corporate ComDev strategy** as a first step towards this direction. An FAO corporate strategy in ComDev will serve as a reference document to mainstream ComDev in the work of the organization and at the country level.

Moreover, emphasizing the need for **stronger institutional alliances**, the consultation participants called for mechanisms to foster synergies and partnership opportunities, which would also considerably help advocate for ComDev in the rural sector. From an FAO perspective, this entails improved coordination and information exchange with interested technical units, field programs, decentralized offices and staff involved in communication activities across the Organization.

Towards an action plan to mainstream rural ComDev

Based on the results of the Expert Consultation and in response to the unanimous call for FAO to take the lead in shaping a vision and mainstreaming ComDev in the agriculture and rural development agenda, the FAO ComDev team has planned the following steps as immediate follow-up actions towards the development of a corporate ComDev strategy:

- » Present the results of the consultation to senior management and promote active follow-up
- » Take the lead in promoting Communication for Development as a key component of agriculture and rural development policies and programs
- » Develop a strategy for integrating Communication for Development in FAO strategic framework and field program
- » Launch a stocktaking exercise of ComDev activities and experiences across FAO and conduct internal consultations involving regional and sub-regional FAO offices
- » Promote a functional technical network on Communication for Development (ComDev training should be provided to FAO staff and field officers)

FAO will also establish a simple coordination mechanism for follow-up so as to continue the dialogue and collaboration initiated with the Expert Consultation. This will push forward concrete activities that were identified as the next steps.



ANNEX A

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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ANNEX B

AGENDA

TIME	DAY 1 - SEPTEMBER 14 (WEDNESDAY) / FACILITATION ROOM		
8:00-8:50	Registration of Participants		
9:00-9:40	Opening session Welcome remarks - by FAO and co-organizers Introduction and purpose of the consultation - by FAO ComDev team Presentation of participants		
9:40-13:00	SESSION 1 COMMUNICATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT TODAY	OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED RESULTS	RESOURCE PERSONS
9:40-10:20	Topics/ Subtopics a) ComDev approaches for agriculture and rural development	Set the stage of the expert consultation » Presentation of background paper » Inputs/comments on background paper from participants	A. Gumucio
10:20-10:40	Coffee break		
10:40-12:40	b) Current trends in ComDev for agriculture and rural development c) Evidence of ComDev contribution in this sector d) Interface with other disciplines	» Common understanding of ComDev concepts » Participants views on ComDev » Highlights of major global issues in ComDev for agriculture and rural development (Institutional, academic, field)	H. Hamblly J. Deane N. Dajani R. Del Castello
12:40-13:00	Wrap-up summary of conclusions from Session 1		V. Jennings
13:00-14:00	Lunch		
14:00-17:00	SESSION 2 KEY AREAS OF INTERVENTION FOR COMDEV IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR	OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED RESULTS	RESOURCE PERSONS
14:00-15:25	Topics/ Subtopics Overview of agricultural sector issues	Highlight the main challenges the agricultural sector is facing today	M. Villarreal
15:25-15:45	Coffee break		
15:45-16:40	» Communication & CC challenges » Communication and innovation systems » Communication for food security » Other emerging areas	Identify strategic areas for ComDev in agriculture and rural development	R. Ramirez/ M. Protz M. Hani O. Ndiaye/ T. Al-Ghanem S. van der Krogt
16:40-17:00	Wrap-up summary of conclusions from Session 2		E. van de Fliert

TIME	DAY 2 - SEPTEMBER 15 (THURSDAY) / FACILITATION ROOM		
9:00-13:00	SESSION 3 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMDEV IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR	OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED RESULTS	RESOURCE PERSONS
9:00-10:20	Topics/ Subtopics a) Capacity development challenges b) Overlaps with other approaches i.e. KM, ICTs applied in the agricultural sector	Situation analysis of ComDev challenges and opportunities	R. Obregon B. Girard
10:20-10:40	Coffee break		
10:40-12:40	c) ComDev relation with local, community and mass media d) Policies and regulatory frameworks e) M&E and funding	(continued)	M. Solervicens D. Mowbray J. Deane
12:40-13:00	Wrap-up summary of conclusions from Session 3		R. Ramirez
13:00-14:00	Lunch		
14:00-17:00	SESSION 4 ENHANCING COMDEV IMPACT ON AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT	OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED RESULTS	RESOURCE PERSONS
14:00-15:20	Topics/ Subtopics a) Institutional frameworks for ComDev b) ComDev in national agricultural policies and programs	Requirements and recommendations for institutionalizing and positioning ComDev in agricultural policies and programs	S. Balit V. Jennings T. Al-Ghanem M. Acunzo O. Ndjaye
15:20-15:40	Coffee break		
15:40-16:40	c) Establishing rural communication services d) Up-scaling Communication for Development activities	(continued)	C. Torres A. Troilo E. Murillo M. Rucibigango
16:40-17:00	Wrap-up summary of conclusions from Session 4		A. Gumucio
18:00	Cocktail – FAO terrace Bldg. B 8th floor		

DAY 3 - SEPTEMBER 16 (FRIDAY) / FACILITATION ROOM			
TIME	SESSION 5A COMDEV IN ACTION: THE WAY FORWARD	OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED RESULTS	RESOURCE PERSONS
9:00-13:00	SESSION 5A COMDEV IN ACTION: THE WAY FORWARD	OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED RESULTS	RESOURCE PERSONS
09:00-10:20	Topics/ Subtopics a) Market place - key initiatives and opportunities for collaboration	Identify priorities and mechanisms to mainstream ComDev in the rural development agenda	
10:20-10:40	Coffee break		
10:40-12:00	b) Mainstreaming & funding ComDev	(continued)	B. Jallof M. Lubetkin R. Payes G. Brignone C. Bothe-Tews
12:00-13:00	Recap from previous sessions, facilitated discussion and recommendations	Summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations	M. Acunzo R. Del Castello M. Hani
13:00-14:00	Lunch		
14:00-16:00	SESSION 5B COMDEV IN ACTION: THE WAY FORWARD	OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED RESULTS	RESOURCE PERSONS
14:00-16:00	Topics/ Subtopics a) Priorities and follow-up actions b) Mechanisms for collaboration and joint initiatives c) Perspectives of international cooperation partners	Follow-up planning	B. Jallof M. Lubetkin R. Payes G. Brignone C. Bothe-Tews
16:00-16:20	Coffee break		
16:20-17:00	Closing session Wrap-up, consultation statement and closing remarks		M. Acunzo R. Del Castello M. Hani X. Yao

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