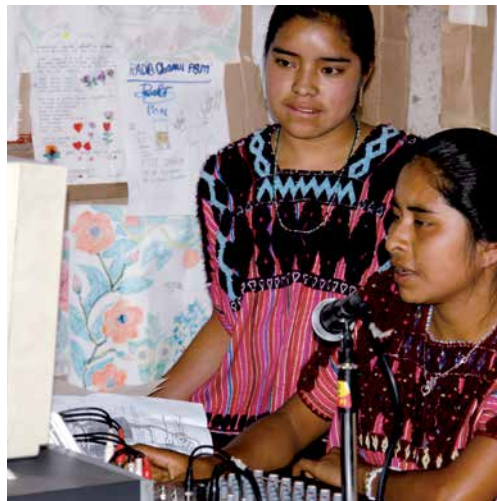




**Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations**



RURAL COMMUNICATION SERVICES FOR FAMILY FARMING

**CONTRIBUTIONS, EVIDENCE AND
PERSPECTIVES**

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PERSPECTIVES

Results of the Forum on Communication for Development
and Community Media for Family Farming (FCCM)

Rome, Italy, 23-24 October 2014

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Rural communication services

ICTs Participatory video

Community radio

Communication policies

ComDev

PREFACE

Smallholder and family farmers face significant social, economic and environmental challenges in their everyday lives which demand timely access to information. Yet information and communication services are not always easy to access in rural areas. Numerous barriers exist, including illiteracy, speaking a minority language, inadequate or non-existent infrastructures, as well as low income and purchasing power, making it difficult to obtain communication devices such as radio receivers, mobile phones or computers. At the same time, women, youth or minority groups can suffer from socially-constructed roles that inhibit their participation in decision-making. Participatory communication processes, community media, and local adoption of ICTs have proven essential to overcoming such limitations and increasing the self-reliance of millions of farmers worldwide.

Supporting dialogic communication and knowledge sharing processes is a powerful means of helping farmer organizations, indigenous peoples, rural communities and civil society organizations to make their voices heard and be part of the development agenda. The challenge is to promote institutional and policy frameworks that will allow equitable access to information and communication services in rural areas and ensure the active participation of smallholder farmers. Communication for development policies can translate farmers' right to communication into fair and transparent regulatory frameworks that entitle the rural population to access information and to manage communication processes.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), convened the international Forum on Communication for Development & Community Media for Family Farming (FCCM) from 23-24 October 2014. The FCCM addressed opportunities for promoting rural communication services as sustained, inclusive and efficient communication processes involving family farmers and the rural population, and considered how to better integrate these services into agricultural policies. The Forum took place during the 2014 International Year of Family Farming (IYFF) whose implementation was led by FAO in collaboration with governments, international development agencies and farmer organizations. It also resonated with the theme of the XIII UN Interagency Round Table on Communication for Development, hosted by FAO in September 2014, which focused on "Mainstreaming communication for development in policies and programmes – Enabling social dialogue to support food and nutrition security, resilient rural livelihoods and family farming". As a result of these events, the FCCM attained a special momentum.

The Forum brought together a wide range of rural actors, giving voice to farmers, rural institutions and civil society organizations, including development and human rights NGOs, community media organizations and communication networks. One major achievement of the Forum was that it created a space for such actors to engage in dialogue with subject

matter specialists, government regulators, investors, research organizations and academia. Representatives of different stakeholder groups had the opportunity to sit at the same table to exchange views about the value of rural communication, community media and ICTs as they affect the livelihoods of farmers.

Going beyond the exchange of experiences, the Forum created a venue for policy dialogue among a plurality of stakeholders, who were able to compare and reconcile their diverse agendas. Efforts to map out and identify synergies and common areas of work will be extremely helpful to strengthen partnerships in this sector. The decision to establish an FCCM Working Group to put into practice the Forum resolutions was also a clear indicator of the commitment to consolidate mechanisms for collaboration and to continue steering dialogue on inclusive rural communication services and policy frameworks.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Forum on Communication for Development and Community Media for Family Farming (FCCM) was organized by a dedicated team at the FAO Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development Division (OPC), coordinated by Mario Acunzo and supported by Marzia Pafumi, Vanessa Vertiz, Carlos Valdivia and Stacey Zammit. The Forum was also the result of a close collaboration between FAO and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC).

This final report was prepared by Marzia Pafumi and Katie Jarvis and supervised by Mario Acunzo. Thanks are due to Bruce Girard, Loes Witteveen, Alice Van der Elstraeten, Sarah Cardey, Rico Lie, Maria Stella Tirol and Cleofe Torres for their valuable service as rapporteurs, as well as to the session facilitators Elske van de Fliert and Sophie Treinen.

Final report, background documents, presentations and multimedia materials from the Forum are available in the dedicated FCCM page: <http://fccm.cccomdev.org>

Additional readings and resources can be found in the FAO ComDev thematic page: www.fao.org/communication-for-development/en

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AMARC	World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters
APC	Association for Progressive Communications
ASHC	African Soil Health Consortium
CABI	Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International
CFAP	Cambodian Farmers Association Federation of Agricultural Producers
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
ComDev	Communication for Development
CTA	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation
EMBRAPA	Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation
GFAR	Global Forum on Agricultural Research
GFRAS	Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FRI	Farm Radio International
IAMCR	International Association for Media and Communication Research
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IICD	International Institute for Communication and Development
IYFF	International Year of Family Farming
LVC	La Via Campesina
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OPC	FAO Office of Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development
RCS	Rural Communication Services
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UPLB	University of the Philippines Los Baños
WACC	World Association for Christian Communication
WCCD	World Congress on Communication for Development
WeRATE	Western Regional Alliance for Technology Evaluation
WFO	World Farmers' Organization
WRF	World Rural Forum

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF FAMILY FARMING

Today, with more than 500 million family farms out of 570 million farms worldwide, family farming is the predominant mode of agricultural production in both developing and developed countries and a major player in food production throughout the world ([FAO, 2014](#)).

Family farmers tend to run crop-diversified agricultural systems and preserve traditional food products, contributing to both a balanced diet and the safeguarding of the world's agro-biodiversity.

Despite their relatively small size – 72% of family farms are smaller than one hectare – they are responsible for the majority of global agricultural production. In China family farms account for 95 percent of all agriculture production, 80 percent in Africa, and 70 percent in Latin America. At the same time, even while they are feeding the world, family farmers are among the poorest and most food-insecure people on the planet. Improving the livelihoods of family farmers must be at the centre of any strategy aimed at eliminating poverty and establishing global food security.

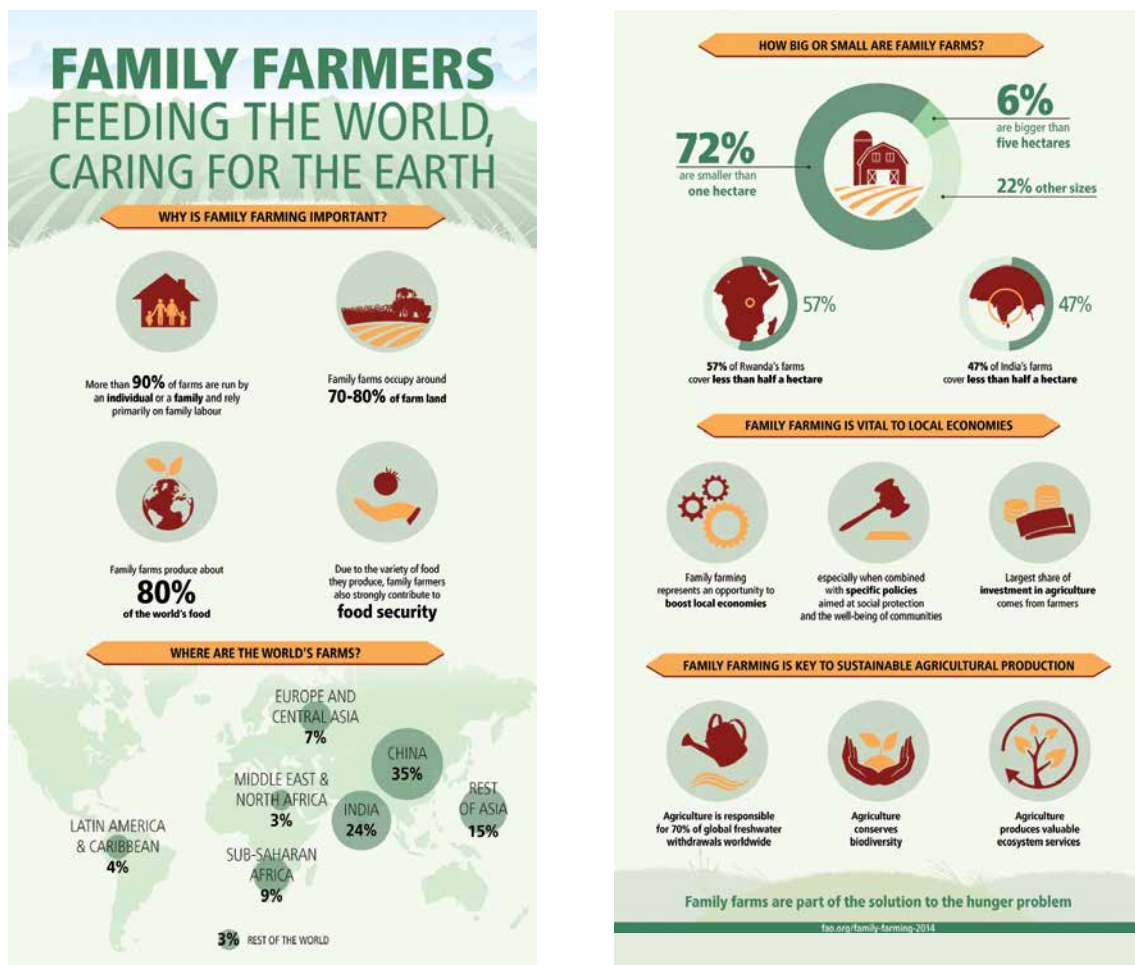
To recognize and celebrate the importance of family farming for eradicating poverty and improving global food security, the United Nations proclaimed 2014 as the [International Year of Family Farming \(IYFF\)](#) and tasked FAO with facilitating its implementation in collaboration with governments, international development agencies, and farmers' organizations, as well as relevant non-governmental organizations. Partners included the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, as well as other stakeholders such as the World Farmers' Organization (WFO), the World Rural Forum (WRF), La Via Campesina (LVC), Biodiversity International and the European Union.

The year-long process of consultations and regional dialogues focused on the role that family farmers play as drivers of food production and stewards of natural resources. The year concluded with the [Global Dialogue on Family Farming](#), which took place in Rome on 27-28 October 2014. The two-day event put the spotlight on the importance of family farming and revealed the shared resolve on how to transfer the momentum created by the IYFF into concrete actions.

Recommendations from the Global Dialogue included differentiated policies in various countries to support family farming's role in achieving food security. Family farming needs to be part of the agenda for agricultural development at all levels and within regional initiatives

of organizations like FAO. It is important to support youth and women through dedicated training programmes and ensuring safety and security for women and girls. Participatory approaches are essential for including marginalized groups of people in the development process. All farmers need to have access to modern technologies and credit, but they must also be supported by government policy and continued research. Continuous dialogue on family farming is needed in the post-2015 development agenda to carry the work of the IYFF forward (FAO, 2015).

Figure 1 International Year of Family Farming infographic



Source:
www.fao.org/resources/infographics/infographics-details/en/c/270462

1.2 SPOTLIGHT ON COMMUNICATION FOR FAMILY FARMING

FAO is a pioneer in using participatory communication to engage smallholder farmers and make their voices heard in development processes. In the framework of the IYFF, the FAO

Office of Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development (OPC), in collaboration with the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), convened an international **Forum on Communication for Development & Community Media for Family Farming (FCCM)** in Rome, Italy on 23 - 24 October 2014. The FCCM addressed opportunities for promoting rural communication services as sustained, inclusive and efficient communication processes involving family farmers and the rural population.

The Forum attracted more than 100 participants representing various countries from all regions. By bringing together a variety of rural actors, the Forum gave voice to farmers, rural institutions and civil society organizations, including development and human rights NGOs, community media organizations and communication networks. At the same time, it created a space for grassroots organizations to dialogue with subject matter specialists, government regulators, investors, research organizations and academia.

As emphasized by the Forum's participants, the event was unique in that it was the first time that representatives from different sectors had the opportunity to discuss the value of communication, community media and ICTs and their impact on rural livelihoods around the same table. The aim was to compare and reconcile such different perspectives in order to facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue on inclusive policy frameworks.

1.3 FCCM OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

The main objectives of the FCCM were to:

- Showcase the contribution of communication for development (ComDev) and community media to family farming, providing evidence of innovative programmes and farmer-led experiences.
- Raise awareness of the potential of communication in agriculture and rural development, giving voice to farmers and civil society organizations, rural institutions, the private sector and community media.
- Identify opportunities, policy options and strategic initiatives to promote ComDev policies and services in support of family farming and rural development.

Over the two days, the Forum facilitated dialogue on the contribution of communication for development and community media to family farming and formulated priorities for rural communication policies. A **Final Statement** was presented at the Global Dialogue on Family Farming the following week. The statement contained a set of recommendations for enabling policy and institutional frameworks for rural communication services, support investments and partnership opportunities, and enhance communication capacities of rural stakeholders (see the full statement in chapter 7).

The Forum also led to the identification of joint initiatives and a road map to promote rural communication policies and services for smallholder and family farmers, and established a permanent **Working Group** of over twenty organizations committed to strengthening networks and collaboration among relevant partners.

1.4 THE FCCM PROCESS

In preparation for the FCCM event, relevant organizations and partners were invited to join an Advisory Group to actively support the preparatory process and the accomplishment of FCCM objectives. The Advisory Group acted as a sounding board for the contents and proposals emerging from the Forum, and contributed to the identification of participants, cases and examples of ComDev work in family farming to be showcased. Ultimately, the group steered the FCCM's conclusions and identified strategies and joint initiatives for follow up.

Members of the Advisory Group also promoted the participation of their organizations and networks in a series of **regional online consultations** on the role of ComDev, community media and ICTs to advance family farming, which took place from 25 August to 12 September 2014. These consultations were held in order to collect different regional and sectoral perspectives and examples that would feed into the FCCM event. Three online discussions were facilitated through the FAO-AMARC regional platforms: [Onda Rural](#) in Latin America, [Yenkasa Africa](#), and [ComDev Asia](#). The virtual consultations identified trends, challenges and opportunities for ComDev that were shared with FCCM participants as inputs for the discussion (See Box 2).

Figure 2 **Organizations that joined FAO as members of the FCCM Advisory Group**



A dedicated [webpage](#) was developed as part of the [Collaborative Change Communication](#) platform, to facilitate outreach and online interaction among members of the Advisory Group and FCCM participants. The FCCM page provided a space to share stories, articles, videos and photos of their ComDev experiences, as well as useful documents and information related to the Forum. It also facilitated access to the live Twitter and video streaming of the event, allowing remote participants to join the discussion and pose questions to the panellists.

The webpage is now used to share regular updates on the activities and joint initiatives developed under the FCCM umbrella. The [blog](#) also welcomes contributions by any organization or individual interested in rural communication services and family farming. From the [multimedia gallery](#) users can easily access all FCCM presentations, pictures and a number of [interviews](#) recorded with participants during the two-day event.

Figure 3 **FCCM webpage**



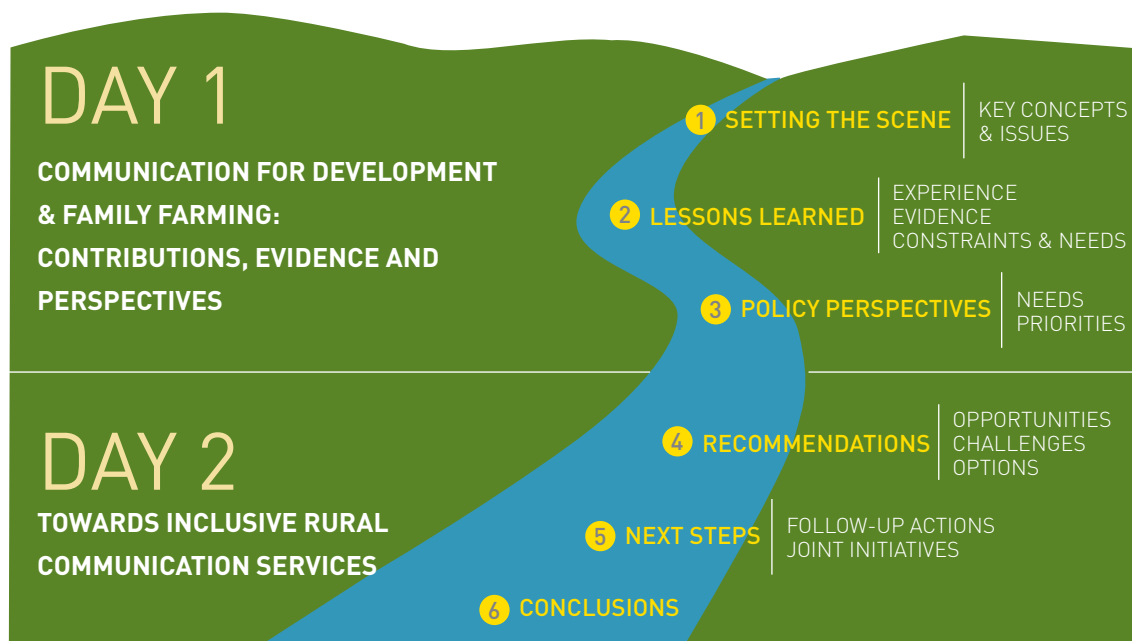
1.5 FCCM STRUCTURE AND THEMES

The FCCM was an interactive two-day event with five sessions designed to spark discussion on the contribution of communication and community media to family farming. Participants were invited to share case studies, multimedia materials and outstanding experiences, and to contribute their views in working groups and through social media.

The Forum structure followed a logical sequence of six steps, where each session was guided by thought-provoking questions, which allowed focusing the discussion and drawing useful conclusions that would lead to the following sessions (see Figure below).

The Forum agenda is found in Annex 1. The objectives and outcomes of each session will be outlined in the following chapters, with highlights from the discussions, key points and recommendations.

Figure 4 **The structure of the Forum**



THE CONTRIBUTION OF COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT TO FAMILY FARMING

Marcela Villareal, Director of FAO's Office of Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development, welcomed participants to the event on behalf of FAO. She introduced the scope and value of family farming and the importance of communication for development to ensure farmers' meaningful participation in development and policy processes. Welcoming remarks were also given by Mario Lubetkin, Director of FAO's Office of Corporate Communication, who outlined FAO's work in promoting the IYFF and in communicating its main messages.

AMARC President, Maria Pia Matta, focused on the supportive role that community media has played in rural development, despite the policy obstacles that it confronts. She highlighted the importance of communication and media as the venue where social relations and development as a concept are defined. Communication for Development means to expand the notion of common good, respecting cultural and language diversity, promoting social dialogue and empowering communities as decision-makers.

“Una de las formas más evidentes de la exclusión ciudadana en la actualidad se sitúa en la pérdida del derecho a ser oído, a ser escuchado, que equivale al de existir, contar socialmente, tanto en el terreno individual como en el colectivo”¹

Jesús Martín Barbero quoted by Maria Pía Matta, AMARC

She stressed the value of community media, and in particular community radio, to give ownership and sovereignty, to mobilize local communities and increase their participation and representation in the public sphere. Finally, she called for communication for development policies that translate the right to communication into fair and transparent regulatory frameworks, as a precondition to foster a pluralistic and democratic media system where not only freedom of expression is granted, but citizens are entitled to manage communication processes, to inform and be informed.

“Una política amplia de comunicación para el desarrollo requiere de conceptualizarse desde la noción de comunicación como derecho, que no solo supone la libre circulación de ideas, sino también la gestión de medios de comunicación”²

Maria Pía Matta, AMARC

¹ English translation: “One of the most evident forms of citizen exclusion nowadays is the loss of the right to be heard, to be listened to, which means the right to exist, have a say in society, both from the individual and the collective point of view.”

² English translation: “A broad development communication policy should be conceptualized from the notion of communication as a right, which not only involves the free movement of ideas, but also the management of communication media”.

2.1 SETTING THE SCENE

Following the opening remarks, the first session of the Forum was meant to provide an overview of the current state of communication for rural development and introduce the key concepts and issues to be discussed during the Forum, asking what the role of ComDev, community media and ICTs is for family farming.

Mario Acunzo, FAO Communication for Development Officer, introduced Rural Communication Services as the reference concept that would orient the FCCM discussions:

Rural Communication Services

Rural Communication Services is a working concept that seeks to frame a wide range of processes, activities, media applications and institutional arrangements that respond in a sustained and inclusive manner to the communication needs of rural populations.

(FCCM, Rome, 2014)

The session chair, Rico Lie from Wageningen University, highlighted the RCS conceptual framework as being complementary to the definition of Communication for Development established during the World Congress on Communication for Development (WCCD). This definition is now widely used within the United Nations system:

ComDev Definition

Communication for Development is a social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. It is also about seeking change at different levels including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change. It is not public relations or corporate communication.

(WCCD, Rome, 2006)

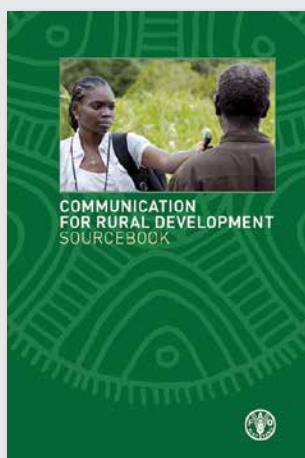
ComDev is on the development agenda and has been discussed in recent years through numerous publications, workshops and conferences. From the debate emerge a number of challenges that must be addressed in order to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of ComDev interventions:

- Recognize that the problems being dealt with are complex or “wicked” problems, with no pre-defined solutions, or one solution that fits all situations. This underlines the importance of creating context-specific solutions through partnerships.
- Work in a trans-disciplinary way and underline the functioning of multi-stakeholder platforms, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and multi-stakeholder learning. This brings all knowledge and all voices into the discourse on ComDev.

- Emphasize sustainability and build resilient communities to ensure the continuity of ComDev interventions. Sustainability includes economic, environmental and social sectors.
- Adopt a rights-based approach and strive for inclusive rural communication services that also target women and the youth. A gender component is often missing from ComDev interventions, despite the prevalence of women in family farming. ComDev technologies such as ICTs can be used as a way to keep young people in farming, as they will otherwise move to urban areas to pursue more ‘modern’ careers.
- Mainstream the policy consequences of Communication for Development. The right to be involved and informed needs to be institutionalized to ensure their continuation.

BOX 1 RECENT PUBLICATIONS ADDRESSING COMDEV

- **[Communication for Rural Development Sourcebook](#)** published by FAO and developed jointly with the College of Development Communication, University of the Philippines Los Baños
- **[Mainstreaming Communication for Development in Policies and Programmes](#)** background paper to the September 2014 Round Table, prepared by a team from the University of Queensland, led by Elske van de Fliert
- **[The ORBICOM network of UNESCO chairs in communication report](#)**, with upcoming academic spin-offs in a special issue on Communication for Development of the Journal of Communication Theory and the Journal of Multi-Cultural Discourse, by Karin Wilkins, Jan Servaes and Rico Lie
- **[Farming for the Future](#)**, background paper of the FCCM, authored by Linda Austin, result of a collaboration between FAO and AMARC
- **[The Handbook of Development Communication and Social Change](#)**, by Karin Wilkins, Thomas Tufte and Rafael Obregon and published by IAMCR and Wiley-Blackwell



Bruce Girard, from Fundación Comunica, recalled the core idea of the ComDev approach: development begins when people are empowered to make decisions over their own lives, and that knowledge and dialogue are key to that empowerment. According to another UN definition, this process “allows communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns, and participate in the decisions that relate to their development.”³ ComDev is not about farmers being able to receive messages from the ministry of agriculture telling them what, how and when to plant. It is about, for example, having a local radio station where members of rural communities can dialogue with the ministry, add their own knowledge, and formulate, articulate, and express their own needs.

2.2 FAMILY FARMING: KNOWLEDGE INTENSIVE, SOCIAL AND ENGAGED

One of the premises of the FCCM is recognizing that family farming is facing a series of challenges: climate change, globalisation of markets, consolidation of national markets in the hands of large buyers, and the need to make more sustainable use of resources such as water, while reducing the use of agro-chemicals. Accompanying those challenges are a number of opportunities that stem from the increasing availability of mobile phones, the internet and other information and communication technologies, the continued growth of community radio worldwide, and a growing tendency for governments to consult their citizens on matters of public policy.

In order to meet these challenges and opportunities, successful family farming will have to be *knowledge intensive, social and engaged*:

- **Knowledge intensive** because small-scale farmers need to develop or learn how to use new agricultural techniques and how to grow unfamiliar crops as they adapt to changing climate and market conditions. They also need to better understand the markets, in order to get the best prices for their crops and know what crops are more convenient to plant. Knowledge has always been important, but in times of change and innovation, farmers need new ways to learn and to create, share, and disseminate knowledge. Extension services also have to change in order to help farmers create, access and share the information they need.
- **Social** because family farmers need to engage in social dialogue, share experiences and coordinate strategies with neighbours, allies and peers. They need to be organised to effectively and collaboratively have impact on markets. When one farmer is armed with current and accurate market information, he or she may be able to negotiate better prices. When 1 000 or 10 000 farmers have access to prices and are connected to each other, they are able to avert economic exploitation, influence markets, open new markets, and work together to develop and implement solutions to their problems.

³ United Nations General Assembly (1997). Communication for development programmes in the United Nations system (No. 51/172). New York: The United Nations.

- **Engaged** because family farmers need to have a voice in policy development processes – to be able to dialogue with policymakers, to articulate their demands, and to be heard. A basic principle of communication for development is that people’s participation in the development of policies that affect their lives, results in better policies. For many years and for many reasons family farmers have had little presence in policy debates that affect them. Communication for development approaches, combined with access to media and new ICTs and a new willingness among many governments to consult and listen to citizens, present an opportunity that cannot be passed over.

Girard gave an illustrative example of the role played by communication in all the above. A group of farmers use mobile phones to send the prices offered by various buyers to a central location, where they are compiled and then sent out to thousands of farmers via text messages or community radio. Armed with this information, farmers can select the best place to sell their product. This is how better *knowledge*, in this case of market prices, can quickly increase revenue.

Taking this a step further, the local community radio station then hosts a roundtable discussion with local leaders to discuss the problem of low prices. The programme reaches thousands of listeners who are also able to send their questions and contributions via text messages or voice calls. There is a consensus that low prices are directly connected to the terrible state of roads that make access to market difficult and expensive. In this example, the *social* aspect of communication helped to identify a problem and to build a consensus around the need to address it.

Finally, the community station invites a government representative to participate in an on-air dialogue during which a demand for better road maintenance is presented. The government representative promises to look into it. Meanwhile, the radio station invites listeners to call and send text messages to the Ministry of Public Works and their elected representatives to ensure they are aware of the demand and the support it has. This *engagement* with political processes and actors helps farmers access the kind of transparency and accountability that is often denied to rural communities.

Various examples of how ComDev can and has been supporting family farmers and their adaptation during times of change are discussed in full in the paper *Farming for the Future: Communication Efforts to Advance Family Farming* prepared by Linda Austin of the University of Queensland, with inputs from FAO and AMARC.



FARMING FOR THE FUTURE: COMMUNICATION EFFORTS TO ADVANCE FAMILY FARMING⁴

COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT: A KEY TO FAMILY FARMING

Smallholder and family farmers face unprecedented challenges linked to climate change and widening economic, social and political inequalities. To be able to respond and adapt, farmers need access to relevant and reliable sources of information, in languages and formats they can easily use. Yet even where information is available, it cannot be assumed that farmers will know how to interpret and act upon it, or even that they will be able to afford it. Farmers need to be socially engaged, to be able to share experiences and coordinate strategies with neighbours, allies and peers. They need to be organised also to articulate their demands and effectively dialogue with policy makers. In all of this, communication acquires a central role to facilitate information sharing, knowledge generation and multi-stakeholder dialogue for participatory decision making.

One of the reasons why rural people tend to have poor political representation, and be less organized than urban communities, is that they suffer from numerous “access” barriers. These barriers include: illiteracy, speaking a minority language, inadequate or non-existent infrastructures and telecommunication services, low income to purchase and use media outlets, and, especially for women, socially constructed roles that inhibit public speech and participation in decision-making. Rural communities and family farmers need a means to exercise their rights to expression and opinion, cultural and linguistic rights, and rights to seek and impart information through any media. Communication for development and community media in particular provide family farmers with a way to collectively express their identity and create social capital, whilst claiming and enjoying their communication rights.

⁴ FAO (2014) Farming for the Future: Communication Efforts to Advance Family Farming. Available online at www.fao.org/3/a-i4223e.pdf

LESSONS LEARNED

When used in a sustained and sustainable way, communication, community media and ICTs have proved to positively affect the lives of family farmers, expanding their participation and self-determination, and facilitating their engagement in profitable livelihood opportunities.

1. Mobile phones are an affordable and accessible tool with great potential to enhance farm productivity.

Mobile phones are increasingly widespread and represent the only truly viable ICT option for many rural poor to access services for agriculture, health and finance. In Malawi, female farmers quintupled their groundnut-harvest earnings by using an SMS (short message service) commodity-price information service. By working together, they were able to find a buyer in a neighbouring town who offered better prices than the local buyer and who provided transportation for large orders.

2. Farmer-driven information services are often the most accurate, timely, locally relevant and trusted by fellow farmers.

In Uganda and Colombia, men and women farmers serve as information liaisons known as “Community Knowledge Workers”. Chosen by their communities and trained by the Grameen Foundation, they visit farmers and use smartphones to provide real-time information on crops, livestock, weather forecasts, market prices, transport directories, buyer contact information and mobile-money agency locations. The service is popular with women farmers, who are more comfortable working with female knowledge workers.

3. Community media supports community rights and good governance.

Ilaramatak Radio⁵ in Northern Tanzania serves the semi-nomadic and politically marginalized Maasai people. The radio broadcasts in the vernacular within a radius of up to 100 kilometres, preserving the minority language and cultural identity of the Maasai. Since its inception in 2002, Ilaramatak Radio has helped the Maasai to protect their native lands, demand the accountability of elected and traditional leaders and bring the issue of women’s personal and economic security to the forefront of community conversation.

4. ComDev can engage family farmers in scientific discussions, ensuring that their local and traditional knowledge is valued.

In Ghana, the community radio initiative Climate Airwaves provided a platform for farmers to communicate with policy-makers and climate researchers to provide and share accurate information and to integrate local experiences and traditional knowledge into policy and research decisions. Scientific terminology was translated into local languages so family farmers could understand and engage in the conversation.

5. Access to ICTs alone is not enough to trigger change in rural areas.

In Peru, despite 30 000 *cabinas públicas* (internet-enabled public access points) in rural areas, 68 percent of farmers surveyed remained “extremely digitally poor” as they did not have the skills or income to use the ICTs that were available. It is important to enhance the capacity of farmers and rural stakeholders and to facilitate participatory processes in order to define context-specific solutions devised by local communities.

⁵ The Ilaramatak Radio is also referred to as Orkonerei FM Radio Service.

6. The convergence of traditional media and ICTs can provide even the poorest rural communities with access to relevant information.

In Sri Lanka, Kothmale Community Radio pioneered “radio browsing”. Together with listeners and guest experts, volunteers browse the internet to discuss and contextualize agricultural information in local languages, thereby placing the community at the centre of the activity.

7. Partnerships between local communities, government extension and the private sector are important.

Family fishermen’s unions in Senegal partnered with the local subsidiary of an international telecommunication company and later the government to introduce a free text-based real-time weather and market-information service. This prevented losses due to spoilage while waiting for a buyer, as the sales were organized before the fishermen had returned to the wharf. One telecommunication partner also built a mobile-phone base station to provide wireless phone signal along the coast and out to sea.

8. Community-based farmer organizations are key to facilitating the use of advanced ICTs, providing information and communication services and helping members to empower themselves.

In Mali, the Coprokazan women farmer’s cooperative turned to internet systems to help producers of shea butter earn better prices for their crops and expand into international markets. Women quickly mastered technologies for digital photography and visual materials, as they did not require high levels of literacy. The earnings of the cooperative were reinvested in a solar power system, which attracted community members, including schoolchildren, from villages in a 30 km radius to use the facilities (such as a photocopier) and to study by electric light. The cooperative trained its members to use GPS devices to map their fields. Within two years, the Coprokazan members had doubled their incomes.

9. ComDev can bring local farmers’ perspectives to wider audiences and demand accountability from power holders.

Listener groups are important in imparting understanding of good governance and political accountability. Such groups associated with the FAO’s Dimitra Project in Niger and the Democratic Republic of the Congo contain 16 000 active members gathered around nine community radio stations; it is estimated that the number of villagers who are not active in listening groups but who have benefitted from listening to the radio shows is three times that number. Listener groups mobilize communities around concrete plans of actions, and promote women’s and youth empowerment.

10. ICTs can attract young people to careers in farming and improve their farm management skills.

In three communities in western Kenya, young male family farmers joined their local farmers’ organizations to learn ICT skills. They learned to access, share and critically assess online information. They used business-management software to keep farm records and developed business networks through social media. The young men came to be seen as emerging entrepreneurs by their communities.

INSTITUTIONALIZING RURAL COMMUNICATION SERVICES

All too often ComDev initiatives are seen in isolation rather than as elements of a holistic development approach. To be effective, ComDev must be systematically planned, implemented and coordinated as an integral part of rural development policies and programmes. ComDev approaches and tools must therefore be laid out within policy frameworks, so that they become mainstreamed across the “value chain” and not just an add-on. Such frameworks would allow rural populations to manage communication processes and establish their own community media outlets, to fully partake in decision-making, and to benefit from government support and services.

Opportunities are presented by changing policy environments in the telecommunications, media and agriculture sectors, which could ease the introduction of ComDev principles at different levels. There are also opportunities in funding, such as Universal Access Funds, which can be used to address infrastructure challenges and to facilitate the “demand” side of ICT usage.

ComDev values, approaches and methods should be introduced into relevant policies and programmes by coordinating across sectors. There is a call for improved coordination among ministries of agriculture and media regulators to pool resources and expertise around the delivery of communication services to family farmers and rural communities, possibly involving the private sector to reduce the rural-urban divide. At the same time, farmer organizations should be supported to develop their own vision and operationalize the provision of farmer-led services. A strengthened system of monitoring and evaluation should be established to ensure a more effective assessment of ComDev impact and produce evidence-based policy recommendations.



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The last 40 or 50 years are full of examples showing how community media and communication for development have made important contributions to millions of family farmers worldwide. Girard stated that while the evidence is there, projects have often been isolated. One of the causes is that farmers' organisations, governments, international agencies, NGOs, the private sector, and others have worked with a variety of concepts and tools – development communication, communication for social change, ICT for development, and many more – with only sporadic collaboration. Another limitation is that communication for development has not become standard practice and is rarely embedded in policy.

“Are we interested in pooling our knowledge and experience, and embedding communication for rural development in national policy?”

Bruce Girard, Fundación Comunica

Girard concluded his intervention by asking whether it is possible and useful to bring these diverse tools, concepts and actors together to strengthen communication efforts to advance family farming. He suggested that it might be time to frame communication for development under the umbrella of Rural Communication Services, to be able to embed and operationalise it within the context of agricultural policies and establish linkages with media and telecommunication policies.

2.3 REGIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Francesco Diasio, AMARC's Secretary General and Alice van der Elstraeten of FAO provided evidence of the issues faced at the regional level, during a presentation on the outcomes of the virtual consultations held from 25 August to 12 September 2014.

The complete record of the virtual consultations from [Africa](#), [Asia and the Pacific](#), and [Latin America](#) (in Spanish) are available for download. From 22 September to 6 October 2014, the e-Agriculture Community of Practice organized a global e-forum on this theme to complement the outcomes of the three regional consultations; the resulting [Policy Brief](#) is available in English, French and Spanish.

BOX 2 VIRTUAL CONSULTATIONS ON COMDEV, COMMUNITY MEDIA AND ICTS FOR FAMILY FARMING

Online discussions were facilitated through the FAO-AMARC regional platforms, with the intention of identifying trends, challenges and opportunities for ComDev in relation to family farming. The conclusions and recommendations from each of the three regional consultations are summarized below.

COMDEV ASIA

ASIA-PACIFIC

Overcoming access barriers

One of the primary challenges faced by ComDev in the Asia-Pacific region is the difficulty of establishing reliable ICT services. Unreliable electricity supplies, slow internet speeds and the high and recurring cost of ICTs all pose barriers to their usage. The development of inexpensive ICTs and the provision of training for farmers and farm workers would help to overcome some of these problems.

Finding appropriate communication tools

For many areas, such as the Pacific Islands, most ICTs are not yet appropriate technology. Radio broadcasting regulations and licences do not even exist in some countries. There is a need to recognize community media and to differentiate community radio with regards to licensing, fees and spectrum allocation.

Closing the gender gap

Women usually do the bulk of farm labour within a household, yet do not have equal ownership or equal say in decision-making. In areas such as rural Nepal many men become migrant workers, leaving women to take over their work. Women farmers therefore need to be targeted by ComDev and ICT interventions to ensure that their knowledge, communication and information needs are met to support them in their farming activities. Initiatives that give a voice to women will help to bring them into the ComDev debate.



LATIN AMERICA

Responding to farmers' needs

Farmers can experience an overload of information, or not know how to use the tools that have been provided for the community. This can be prevented by evaluating the needs of farmers and designing software packages that will provide relevant information without intimidating the farmers. Well-trained and sensitized facilitators can ease the adoption of new technologies.

Role of governments

Food security is the responsibility of a government. It is therefore the duty of governments to invest in agricultural development and to promote the use and training on the use of technology. Communication and agriculture should be linked by governments to ensure long-term continuity and to stop the cycle of repeating actions with each new administration.

Providing relevant agricultural information

The main issues in Latin America and the Caribbean are related to climate change, water and prices. Therefore ComDev needs to focus on these issues through traditional media such as radios as well as through new communication technologies. Technology can ensure that information about irrigation technology, meteorology, plant protection and the market reaches farmers as early as possible.



AFRICA

Strengthening rural radio

Community radio is the most effective ComDev resource in Africa, yet there are still many communities that do not have access to radio. Governments and development partners need to increase funding and make the necessary legal changes, such as licensing laws, to encourage the growth of community radio. For existing stations, operators should be trained to ensure better services for farmers and rural communities.

Developing communication capacities

Illiteracy and a lack of education prevent many family farmers from accessing the information they need to improve their livelihoods. Adult education, agricultural extension and ComDev training in rural communities will allow stakeholders to benefit from available ComDev resources. This could be further improved with proper training for public officials, local community leaders and ComDev practitioners such as community radio journalists.

Effective farmer organizations

The ineffectiveness and dysfunctional condition of farmer's organizations and associations causes frustration. Informal or undemocratic internal structures mean that they are not capable of representing farmers. Farmers' organizations could be strengthened through the creation of transparent and participatory structures, and by the introduction of lobbying for the interests of family farmers. Improved networking will provide their communities with regular updates on new marketing and farming techniques that will benefit their members.

THE APPROPRIATION OF COMMUNICATION BY RURAL ACTORS: EXPERIENCES AND EVIDENCE

The second session of the Forum was chaired by Ajit Maru from GFAR, and opened with a presentation by Elske van de Fliert from IAMCR. Three panels looked at communication as a strategic asset for family farming, from the perspective of different actors including farmers, communicators, and rural institutions. The discussion sought to answer the following set of questions:

1. **EXPERIENCES:** *Based on your first-hand knowledge and experience, how have communication processes and tools (including community media and ICTs) improved the livelihoods of family farmers and/or their participation in rural/socio-economic development?*
2. **EVIDENCE:** *What have been the major results and changes brought about by communication? Was the process evaluated with the users?*
3. **CONSTRAINTS and NEEDS:** *What are the most significant constraints you have faced using communication, community media or ICTs to support farmers? What is needed to overcome these barriers and achieve sustainability of communication activities?*



© BBC Media Action-Bangladesh

The panellists presented first-hand experiences of how communication processes and tools can improve the livelihoods of family farmers and their participation in rural and socio-economic development. Their presentations highlighted major results achieved and constraints faced, and prompted thought on how those barriers could be overcome. Facilitators captured the lessons learned as inputs for discussion during the following sessions.

3.1 COMMUNICATION AS AN ASSET FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Elske van de Fliert introduced the role of communication for rural development as a platform to enable dialogue and inclusiveness, provide tools to influence policies and close the communication gap between beneficiaries, policy makers, researchers and development stakeholders. She stressed the need to use communication for creating open and inclusive policy negotiations, fostering a culture of citizen-government dialogue, addressing stakeholders' expectations and promoting transparency and accountability. In addition, the need for individuals and communities to give their consent and participate in development activities makes communication for building trust an important goal of governments and societies at large.

Successful and sustainable ComDev projects are built on public-private partnerships with established local leadership. They apply a fully integrated approach, allowing them to be placed within larger development programmes whilst maintaining a specific budget line for ComDev. Major impediments that stand in the way of this integrated rural development approach and projects include weak institutional capacities, lack of adequate human and physical resources, and limited opportunity for collaboration among agencies.

3.2 FARMER-LED COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY MEDIA

The first panel on farmer- and community-driven communication was chaired by Joseba Imaz of the [World Rural Forum](#), and brought together the voices and perspectives of farmers, farmer organizations and community media practitioners. The experiences recounted by the panellists provide solid evidence of the value of communication for resolving legal and social problems, improving resource use, helping rural communities understand and influence policies, and even getting local people elected to represent farming communities in national parliaments.

In Mali, for example, land tenure is often precarious. As reported by Lamine Coulibaly of [La Vía Campesina](#), farmers without title to their land or without knowledge of their legal rights and obligations can have their land stolen. A multimedia communication campaign was undertaken, including partnerships with the local press and radio, to support information sharing, awareness raising, advocacy and dialogue against land grabbing. As a result, farmers are more aware of their rights and the government is developing an improved law for agricultural land tenure. The opportunities for dialogue as a result of this campaign have brought farmers' organizations closer to government and for the first time they have

developed an agenda of farmers' issues. Farmers' organizations have been accepted as legitimate interlocutors and issues that had previously been ignored by the government are now being discussed.

Other projects have used media, including leaflets, radio and television, to inform and train farmers, such as one run by the Cambodian Farmers Association Federation of Agricultural Producers (CFAP) about water use. Yap Thoeurn from CFAP reported that even though there continue to be water shortages, the communication project helped farmers make more efficient use of the available resource. As a result, food supplies are better, income has increased, out-migration has decreased, and water is more plentiful and of better quality.

Adeline Nsimire, from [SAMWAKI/Radio Bubusa FM](#), reported the positive impact of community listeners' clubs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Working in cooperation with a local community radio station, the clubs have increased awareness of various rural problems, encouraged people to plan solutions and take responsibility for their implementation, inspired dialogue and conflict resolution, while also encouraging and supporting women in leadership roles. Prior to the organization of the clubs, the radio station was not really community-oriented. Now that the community is organised, the station is more responsive.

Ouangraoua Boukari, from Inades-Formation, presented a Burkina Faso experience with *barefoot communicators*⁶ which has had impressive impact, despite its limited technological and economic resources. Networks of volunteers produce rural newspapers in local languages, providing 900 000 people in rural communities with news and information from regional, national, and international levels for the first time. As a result of this spread of information, there has been a creation of a local elite who influence and participate in local development, and partner with public and private organizations for the production and diffusion of information. Inades is facing the need to recruit new writers and distributors. At the same time, more needs to be done to target young people as the newspapers tend to be read by older generations. Delayed publication is also viewed badly by the readers. Despite these issues, however, Inades-Formation is seen as an important organization in the production and diffusion of information in Burkina Faso.

Ashish Sen of [AMARC](#) shared the highly successful experience of Sangham Radio, India's first grassroots radio for Dalits⁷. Located in the drought-prone state of Telangana, the station has helped women, who do most of the farming. Among its accomplishments, the stations claims to have reduced the suicide rate and to provide people with the knowledge needed to develop strategies to deal with drought. Reflecting the women's interest in ecological farming and indigenous crops, the station has helped the women cultivate some nineteen different organic, indigenous crops, promoted the exchange and preservation of traditional seeds, helped identify new markets and provided growers with the information they need to access them.

⁶ www.slideshare.net/cccomdev/ouangraoua-boukari-wrf-session2panel-1farmer-led-comm (in French)

⁷ www.slideshare.net/cccomdev/ashish-sen-amarc-session-2panel-1farmer-led-comm



Sangham Radio © AMARC

Despite these successes, several problems were raised by the panellists, including lack of resources, human capacity shortfalls, reliance on volunteer labour. In addition, regulatory hurdles, lack of coordination at the national level, and the absence of supportive policy frameworks were often mentioned.

3.3 COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE

The second panel, chaired by Piers Bockock of the CGIAR Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers, brought together people with experience of supporting communication for development programmes and projects internationally.

“If science isn’t shared, if the people who need it cannot access it and understand it, then what is its value?”

Kevin Perkins, Farm Radio International

Kevin Perkins from Farm Radio International (FRI) placed emphasis on the interactivity made possible by the combination of broadcast radio and ICTs, especially mobile phones – a combination that FRI uses in its approach to agricultural extension and advisory services. Evidence shows that the approach can drive the adoption of new farming practices, help introduce new practices and value chains, create new services and amplify the voices of farmers⁸. He also discussed how

⁸ <http://farmradio.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/farmradioictreport2011.pdf>

FRI is using mobile phones as survey tools to measure the impact of radio programmes and to solicit community input to future programming.

According to Perkins, one of the main challenges is that donors do not recognize the real cost of doing communication for development. They balk at the costs of research, planning, project design and training, but a successful project needs all of these inputs.

The African Soil Health Consortium ([ASHC](#)) is a project managed by the Centre for Agriculture and Biosciences International (CABI) and was presented at the Forum by Jill Rischbieth. This project provides an example of the importance of communicating with smallholder farmers and of bridging the gap between scientific knowledge and the farmers who need it. It also demonstrated that work needs to be done at both ends – so the farmers can understand and make use of the information, while the scientists can hear the farmers and produce knowledge that is truly meaningful and helpful to overcome their real problems. Difficulties faced by ASHC relate to measuring impact in terms of how and why farmers used the media they were provided. This is primarily because CABI is not the distributor of the communication products, and evaluation is left to other partners.

Paul Neate from CTA described a community mapping activity that empowered local communities in Suriname to play an active role in managing their land and natural resources and gave them a voice in related decision-making processes⁹. Representatives from 14 villages worked together to assemble a 1: 15 000 scale three-dimensional model map of an area approximately 2 160 square kilometres. The map represents the community members' understanding and use of their own environment, but it has also deepened that understanding. It is used for local planning purposes and during discussions and negotiations with developers,



© CTA

⁹ www.slideshare.net/cccomdev/paul-neate-cta-session2panel-2comm-and-dev-practice

BOX 3 “TRANSFORMATION” TV PROGRAMMES FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT¹⁰
by Arjuna Weerasinghe - BBC Media Action

BBC Media Action has been using national TV and radio in Bangladesh to support farmers and encourage collective action on climate change adaptation. In one experience with the “transformational” TV programme Amrai Pari¹¹ - ‘Only we can do it’ - communities were given climate adaptation challenges to solve. The experience also involved training NGOs on how to use communication

better, encouraging simple explanations of low-cost techniques that can be replicated and focusing on people coming together to solve their problems and celebrate their success.

The issue of demonstrating impact was addressed through a quantitative survey that indicated that the TV programme had 15.8 million viewers, divided equally among men and women, of whom 60 percent watched

regularly. There was a very high engagement of young people (aged 15-24). Focus groups were also used, which allowed the collection of a significant body of anecdotal evidence of impact. The audience described the show as relevant and useful and indicated that they understood the information. It was also shown that urban viewers were likely to spread the messages of the programme to family in rural areas.

Challenges and constraints included demonstrating appropriate actions, presenting simple actions in a way that people could replicate, understanding the influence of local power relations, involving women and minority groups, and sustainability issues. It was recommended that there is greater engagement with NGOs, humanitarian and government sectors, and greater audience research, which should be at the heart of the work.



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¹⁰ www.slideshare.net/cccomdev/arjuna-weerasinghe-bbc-media-action-session-2-panel-2-comm-and-dev-practice

¹¹ www.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/where-we-work/asia/bangladesh/humanitarian

investors and policy makers interested in the exploitation of local resources such as gold and forests. Neate noted that although participatory mapping can be labour intensive, logistically challenging and expensive, projects like this are important and communication and local knowledge must be embedded in development interventions from the beginning.

3.4 INSTITUTIONAL EFFORTS IN COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

Chaired by Norma Madeo, from the Argentinian Ministry of Agriculture, a third panel brought together people with experience in large national level programmes within government institutions and international agencies.

Antonio Heberle from the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMPBRAPA) shared how his organization has started to interact with rural communities from the outset of the research cycle. Developing a good interaction between researchers and farmers, throughout the entire production and supply chain, has had positive results and helped scientists to focus their research on the real needs of rural actors. From his experience, Heberle suggested that research institutions need to pay more attention to communication with farmers, and strengthen their expertise in participatory approaches such as communication for development. Similarly, new indicators for evaluating agricultural research need to take into account its dissemination and uptake by farmers.

Stella Tirol of the University of the Philippines at Los Baños (UPLB) spoke of the institutionalization of rural communication services (RCS) for agricultural development in Bangladesh – an FAO project carried out in collaboration with the Government of Bangladesh. The preliminary stage of the project entailed feasibility studies, mapping of national actors and institutions, and introductory workshops on ComDev. This served to raise awareness and appreciation of RCS among stakeholders, developed confidence in the concept, and strengthened local capacity. During the pilot/testing stage a rural radio station was established in the south of Bangladesh¹² to provide agricultural information and communication services at the community level, including planning and field testing. The following phases of the project focused on sustainability: how to scale-up and institutionalize the RCS, as the national communication strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture, with a shift from a top-down to a bottom-up approach in communication for agricultural development. Despite an increasing awareness of the added value of RCS and of the need for policies to sustain them, this experience shows that the full institutionalization of RCS is not an easy task. Major problems are related to the lack of continuity of staff and the shifting nature of institutions as they face changing political contexts.

Andrea Gros of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) and Moses Kivanda, from Migori County in Kenya, presented the experience of the Western Regional Alliance for Technology Evaluation (WeRATE), a platform for interaction among small farmer organizations to test new agricultural technologies and input products. The project used communication for development methods to work with women producers in Kenya. It formed a stakeholder platform and eventually developed into an organization of 26 Kenyan farmer associations and NGOs. Using face to face communication and mobile phones it works at the grassroots level, testing and applying new farm technologies in partnership with county extension, the private sector, and research organizations.

Kivanda stressed a number of constraints faced by farmers: they have limited access to information; development and research agencies propose inappropriate communication tools

¹² www.bnnrc.net/network/communityradioinbangladesh/krishiradio

(hi-tech, low impact); and local media ignore farmers' needs. There is a need to engage with the farmers to collect more data and to design inclusive research programmes that use bottom-up communication practices to meet their needs and preferences (i.e. crop characteristics). Farmers must also be involved in communication tool development.

Supporting Kivanda's recommendations, Riccardo Del Castello of FAO presented some aspects of FAO's long experience with communication for development. He placed emphasis on rural radio, which is still appropriate for reaching farmers. New technologies and applications are there, but we need to make sure that people have access to them for information and knowledge sharing. The FAO communication for development group works to support the organization's strategic objectives and to strengthen communication for development capacities for FAO projects. They are usually embedded within larger FAO projects. Difficulties faced often derive from irregular institutional commitment to communication, due to a low understanding of the importance of communication and networking throughout the lifespan of a development project or programme. There is a common belief that communication is just a piece of technology, not something that makes the difference between whether or not a rural family is able to eat on a particular day. The often scarce knowledge of participatory methods and other communication for development concepts can also have an impact.

From the experiences shared during Session 2, it was evident that common constraints limit farmers and other rural stakeholders in terms of participation, skills and access to communication. It was noted that the difficulty in establishing the importance of communication within development projects comes from its intangible nature and a lack of measurable impacts. Evidence of success, as seen during the panels, is small compared to the problems it must combat.

RECONCILING THE PRIORITIES: THE NEED FOR COMMUNICATION POLICIES TO ADVANCE FAMILY FARMING

The first day of the Forum concluded with a panel on the importance of creating policy frameworks for rural communication services. Bruce Girard, from Fundación Comunica, moderated the discussion between Mark Holderness (Global Forum on Agricultural Research), Norma Madeo (Ministry of Agriculture Argentina), Damián Segura (La Vía Campesina), François Laureys (International Institute on Communication and Development), Lavinia Mohr (World Association for Christian Communication), Mike Jensen (Association for Progressive Communications) and Mario Acunzo (FAO).

Building upon the lessons shared in the previous session, as well as their own experience, the panellists addressed the need to support equitable access to communication by farmers and rural communities through policy provision.

A number of common themes were raised. First among them was the need to ensure that farmers are at the centre stage. To this end, it is important to help farmers become real actors in a communication world, to ensure they have access to knowledge and information that can enable them to take better decisions and increase their productivity and livelihoods. Farmers should be empowered to innovate and turn information into new products and into wealth. It is not a case of a power dynamic between those who have knowledge and those who don't. Instead, it is an exchange of different knowledge in which everyone gives and receives.

“The focus should not be on communication tools and channels – when the time is right, farmers will choose those that are appropriate to their needs. Instead the focus should be on communication processes and on capacity building”

François Laureys, IICD

Smallholder farmers are vulnerable, lacking market access and productivity, and therefore require support systems both on the ground and virtually. ICTs have eliminated demand for the ‘middle man’, presenting challenges as the gap between society and science grows. Yet there is also huge potential for knowledge to be shared, as online storage systems and social media offer the chance to store and disseminate huge volumes of information, including visual media such as videos. It is therefore essential to get the best possible value out of these technologies and turn them into products that are useful for farmers.

The use of different forms of media and communication, including the use of multiple technologies with the same end goal, has been noted in projects around the world, as farmers and communities choose their preferred method of accessing information. Nevertheless, mobile phone usage is booming, and must be capitalised upon in order to include the greatest number of people possible.

It was also noted that work needs to be done regarding inclusiveness, particularly from a gender perspective. Women's participation and contribution to content is often overlooked. Given that so many family farmers are women, this is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Information circulated and provided to farmers must be valuable – trustworthy and accurate information will be ensured by data and information policy provisions. Treaties need to include both regulatory and enforcement provisions to make sure relevant information is circulated among the rural poor, instead of being retained by the wealthier levels of society. The context and culture in which information is consumed determines its use and utility, highlighting the importance of creating a participatory environment.

Panellists also mentioned the need for appropriate broadcast and telecom policies to guarantee access to communication in rural areas. This includes extending telecom networks to rural areas to provide coverage, ensuring affordability– as even where coverage exists the cost is often too high for the average farmer. The drafting of supportive legislation and enabling policies, including subsidies, for rural community broadcasting should also be included. Furthermore, communication infrastructure is not sufficient in many places, meaning that there is no access to any type of signal.



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Creating more community and rural radio stations was proposed as a way to increase connectivity. An interim measure would be to increase satellite audio broadcasting, which can provide a low cost solution to disseminating information in remote areas where there is no other type of signal. Mobile phone networks are also severely limited with a lack of signal preventing dependable use of the phone and connection to the internet. This is despite good progress in this area in many countries.

It was noted that increased mobile phone usage has pushed public access facilities off the development agenda. However, mobile phones are failing to meet all demands. For example, community telecentres can provide multimedia tools such as digital cameras and projectors, as well as computers and printers. There is still a need for safe public access services for rural people. In areas where this kind of infrastructure development would prove too expensive in the short to medium-term, subsidies are necessary.

The more complex matter of ensuring that farmers' issues are included in the agenda of mainstream media was also broached. More attention needs to be paid by governments to rural livelihoods. Media coverage can bring rural needs and issues into the public agenda and into a political setting. Argentina's legislation was put forward as an example of an effort to democratise access to the media, but it was challenged by others for its centralising of decision-making and control of regulatory structures to central government. Some preferred to appeal to the media's sense of social responsibility, or to encourage innovative campaigns to defend and advocate for farmers' issues.

One of the issues also under debate was how to include farmers in the policy development process. There is a need to raise awareness among governments, institutions and donors and to challenge them to communicate better with farmers. This involves actions as diverse as reforming extension services, decentralising policy-making, enabling policy dialogues that include farmers as actors, and strengthening farmers' associations. The FAO has an important role in this area and it needs to carry out work in advocacy and awareness raising with governments and donors.

"Necesitamos dar nuestra voz. Los medios tradicionales están muy preocupados en invisibilizar nuestra lucha, en criminalizar, cooptar, dividir, en imponernos agenda [...] Nosotros tenemos que tener nuestros propios medios."¹³

Damian Segura, CLOC-La Vía Campesina

Many panellists argued for the need to take a rights-based approach. This includes rights to access information and communication, rights to freedom of expression including the collective right of a community to have its own media, the right to a reply when petitioning

¹³ English translation: "We need a voice. Traditional media are busy trying to jeopardize our fight, criminalize, co-opt, divide and impose their own agenda. [...] We need to have our own media."

the government, among others. These rights should be recognized and also be included in policies. Countries must implement laws that include communication for development, thereby publicising its importance much more widely than at present. Farmer and rural organizations need to work with communication for development organizations to push the agenda for equitable access to communication platforms for all rural people.

In summary, the session highlighted the importance of taking a rights-based approach to rural communication services. Linkages and dialogue need to be created between governments, institutions and farmers, the latter of which need to be at the centre of communication. Gender too must be integrated more effectively, by including more women in participatory activities. Above all, as these issues are all interlinked, there is a need for an 'eco-systems approach', that would allow for the development of more holistic solutions.

CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND OPTIONS FOR RURAL COMMUNICATION SERVICES

The second day of the Forum focused on discussing existing challenges, opportunities and viable options for the provision and institutionalization of rural communication services, as a basis to formulate specific recommendations.

In the opening remarks, Francesco Pierri of FAO highlighted the contribution of ComDev to the IYFF 2014 by promoting social inclusion and dialogue on enabling policy environments for family farming. Key features to be addressed by policy environments include access to agricultural credit, which is not evenly distributed and yet is essential for many family farmers, access to markets, and a minimum price policy. He concluded by emphasizing that dialogue and knowledge sharing are crucial and can contribute to family farmer organizations participating in policy formulation and implementation.

Venus Jennings of UNESCO then chaired the fourth session of the Forum which comprised of three panel discussions. Each panel was introduced by a thematic presentation from a subject matter expert (see Boxes 4, 5 and 6) and guided by the following set of questions:

1. **POLICY and INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS:** *What are the main gaps in policy and regulatory frameworks to enable farmers' access to information and communication? What are the emerging opportunities and options for policy and institutional change? Who are the key actors to be involved and how to promote policy dialogue and coordination among them?*
2. **INVESTMENTS and PARTNERSHIPS:** *What are the main investments required for communication services in rural areas? What are relevant financial mechanisms and funding opportunities? How can farmer organizations have a say? How can we improve partnerships and coordination among different actors including farmer organizations, public institutions, private sector, development agencies, etc.? What are other enabling factors?*
3. **CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT:** *What is the role of farmer organizations, community media and rural institutions in facilitating communication for agriculture and rural development? What are existing capacities and initiatives to leverage on? What should be done to enhance local capacities to enable rural communication services and how?*

Panellists reflected on the policy frameworks, investments and partnerships needed to develop communication services in rural areas. Their discussion pointed out how farmer organizations, community media and rural institutions have a role to play in facilitating communication for

agriculture and rural development, and explored ways in which the capacity of different actors and the collaboration among them may be enhanced. Following the panels, participants broke out in working groups to brainstorm on the topics discussed and to make recommendations for future action. These were later presented and commented on in plenary.

5.1 ENABLING POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR RURAL COMMUNICATION SERVICES

The first panel aimed to identify emerging opportunities for policy and institutional change and the key actors to be involved. The panel comprised of Leul Gebru (Ethiopian Broadcasting Authority), Norma Madeo (Ministry of Agriculture, Argentina), Sarah Cardey (University of Reading), Magdalena Blum (Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services), and Francesco Diasio (AMARC).

BOX 4 COMMUNITY BROADCASTING

by Toby Mendel – Centre for Law and Democracy

Freedom of expression is the right to seek, receive and impart ideas or information. Regulatory frameworks are needed to enable communication and technology use, but there are cases where a restrictive legal environment can hinder freedom of expression, for example, by blocking community broadcasting¹⁴.

Regulatory frameworks need to balance flexibility and clarity in order to maintain form and adaptability. Although it should be ensured that all community broadcasting is non-profit, this does not mean that they cannot have any income, however, any income should be used to improve the service provided. There also need to be links to the community, whether in terms of management, content, or liaising with the community. These links have to be flexible and be able to take into account slow start-up phases

of community broadcasting. In some cases, links develop later on in the process. The regulatory framework needs to avoid aspirational or vague language, as this can be used to limit or abuse community broadcasting. For example, some talk about empowering the community, or providing certain cultural and social benefits, which can be very difficult to guarantee legally.

Community broadcasting often suffers from limited access and licensing, which needs to be addressed in the framework. There should

be a right for community broadcasting systems to use diverse dissemination systems, which often requires equitable distribution of frequency on the AM or FM band. Licensing processes with a different set of values, such as ease of licensing, need to be established for community broadcasting to encourage services to become established.

Community broadcasting also requires tailored rules for funding, including public subsidy systems and lower license fees.



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¹⁴ UNESCO (2014). Turning into Development: International comparative survey of community broadcasting regulation. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002246/224662e.pdf>

Community radio is a key media in providing rural communication services. In order to establish a regulatory framework, it is first necessary to define community broadcasting in the face of the great diversity of the community radio sector (e.g. university radio, religious radio, radio movements, information and news radio). Community broadcasting is not just about communication, but also about the right to communication and access to public goods. Services are related to public goods, but cultural and linguistic diversity can make it difficult to find a uniform approach for regulation.

International law guarantees freedom of expression and prohibits advocacy of hatred, violence and hostility on the basis of race, nationality or religion. Rules exist to protect against extreme discriminatory language. However, individual broadcasters may be much stricter in enforcing these rules. There is a need for independent regulators to apply the laws.

In some situations it is relatively cheap and easy for start-up groups to get a license. However, there is a policy gap. Community funding policies are essential, but not always present, e.g. in Ethiopia. If broadcasters are unable to pay their annual fee, sustainability becomes a problem. This lack of funding is also reflected in too few journalists and trained technicians, and poor equipment, as standards are too low to guarantee more modern technology.

Policy has to play a role in community broadcasting, therefore private sector organizations, NGOs, civil society organizations and citizens should advocate for communication policies. There are very few countries maintaining policies for extension, whilst those that do have initiated policies with little involvement of stakeholders. Multi-stakeholder processes are needed to define policies and farmer organizations require a specific role.

Farmers are partners in extension services, and as such it is not just a question of consulting farmers, but of working with them at every stage of the process. This requires funding and support to help them pay for the services they want, as well as to access knowledge and information technologies. Governments must be more accepting of such multi-stakeholders processes and find a way to integrate them into policy design.

Communication for development takes place among heterogeneous actors who take part in diverse activities, including capacity-building, information dissemination, technology development, network brokering and fostering linkages between actors. This is taking place within changing landscapes of innovation support. This changing context is driving the development of new partnerships and organizational arrangements. Results from studies in Kenya, Uganda and Sudan indicate that innovation takes place primarily in groups. Whilst communication and innovation can and often did contradict each other, they also complement each other in ways that weren't expected. Weak innovation stemmed from weak linkages and coordination between actors. Effective communication required credible leadership— whether national or in the community—, trust, and the capability to perceive and act on changes in a timely manner. What is needed to improve innovation are clear guidelines on public-private partnerships, strengthened networks for support and tailoring of support mechanisms, and better understanding of gender relations.

Following the panel discussion, participants developed a specific set of recommendations focusing on the **enabling policy and institutional frameworks** for RCS:

- **Build cross-sectoral alliances to promote and implement law and policy reforms in respect to communication and family farming.**
- **Bring national law and policy on rural communication services in line with agreed international standards.**
- **Provide formal legal recognition to create a regulatory environment for independent and pluralistic community radios including simple licensing processes, equitable reservation of frequencies and robust funding possibilities.**
- **Integrate critical analysis of women's and men's specific needs and priorities into efforts to develop rural communication services including aspects such as tools, content, implementation and impact.**

5.2 INVESTMENTS, FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

A second panel explored details relating to investments and partnerships in the field of rural communication, such as what financial mechanisms exist and how to strengthen coordination between farmer organizations, public institutions, private sector, development agencies, etc.

BOX 5 FINANCIAL MECHANISMS AND RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE POLICIES¹⁵ by Mike Jensen – APC

For both mobile and internet services, stronger national infrastructures are needed in rural areas. The "last mile" links are needed to connect national and local services, requiring mobile and signal towers, fixed wireless services and satellite links. Because of the huge scale, last mile links usually require an investment around 10 times the size of national links.

Isolated rural areas will require public or government funding to make these changes, and public-private partnerships are often helpful. Public access services and last mile links can be built upon funding from various sources.

Relatively small contributions from Universal Service Funds can attract the private sector into investment. Last mile links can also be financed by the communities if the local regulatory system allows it.

End-user equipment is usually financed by the user, but private operators have also set up mechanisms to finance the services through contracts.

Private finance is used for commercially viable content development and government funding is appropriate for e-government applications. Communities fund their own ICT literacy training, although government loans also occur.

Development and government finance is most often used for energy supply, although communities can also be involved in this. More open markets attract more funding, and better communication services such as internet and mobile phone access reduce operating costs for providers, thus allowing local investors to meet the costs. Passive infrastructure sharing reduces the costs of network deployment. Independent power producer policies help improve the viability of small-scale energy deployment, where small-scale energy producers can sell excess energy back to the grid.

¹⁵ www.slideshare.net/cccomdev/association-for-progressive-communicationimages/0022/002246/224662e.pdf

Communication for development researchers and practitioners need to form partnerships with scientists and engage with education at all levels to make communication a fundamental part of scientific research and people's lives.

There is a need to adjust services to meet the needs of the field in terms of content development. It can take a long time before an agricultural service becomes affordable or profitable, therefore investors need to commit to a longer period of time to allow the services to develop. There is also the possibility of creating intermediaries between research institutes and extension services, the government, farmers and other stakeholders in order to translate and develop content that can be diffused by mobile phone. Working together with operators provides marketing and monitoring, therefore bringing together major stakeholders and operators could be a solution.

“The arguments we're making are not sufficiently evidence-based, needs-based, focused on what is the problem we're trying to solve and what the offer is of communication in solving it”

James Deane, BBC Media Action

There is a gap in research concerning the need to increase investment. Information on return of investment for agricultural communication and the time needed to communicate a single message, for example, is not known. The contribution of agriculture to the global economy suggests that the true cost of agricultural communication is vast, in the trillions of dollars. Therefore, even a slight reduction in costs could attract investors.

Farmers today require more than just information on what and how to grow. They also need both localized and globalized information on markets – where to sell, what to sell, for how much. In order to produce programmes that satisfy needs, audience research is needed. This is necessary to improve the quality of the programme, to help market the programme, and to attract investors. A skilled production team is also essential in creating good quality programmes. Interactive programmes allow the farmers' voices to be heard, but this includes additional costs which must be taken into account. Successful programmes will attract more investors, allowing the programme to act as a source of revenue for the station.

Building on the inputs provided by panelists, participants formulated recommendations for increasing **investments and partnership opportunities** in the field of rural communication:

- **Work in partnership to build the evidence base for rural communication services.**
- **Urge governments to invest in reinforcing community-based communication services and up scaling good practices.**
- **Engage in multi-stakeholder partnerships, to embed communication in development initiatives/programmes.**
- **Ensure that access to infrastructure and services is affordable to rural communities, particularly to women and youth.**

BOX 6 LEARNING AND SHARING IN COMMUNICATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT by Cleofe Torres – UPLB

The Collaborative Change Communication initiative of FAO and the College of Development Communication, University of the Philippines Los Baños, is a global effort for capacity development and collaboration. It facilitates exchange of contents, methodologies, learning resources, field experiences, and policy issues in communication for rural development.

Collaborative Change Communication delivers **demand-driven** and **socially inclusive** priorities such as developing communication capacities, building online and offline networks, and strengthening partnerships among a variety of rural actors including farmer organizations, community media, rural

institutions, universities, research organizations, and development and communication practitioners.

The Communication for Rural Development Sourcebook¹⁶ was designed to support this effort. The Sourcebook is a key learning resource that compiles a full set of

guidelines, methodologies, and tips for applying communication to agricultural and rural development initiatives such as natural resource management, food security and nutrition, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk management.



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¹⁶ FAO (2014) Communication for Rural Development Sourcebook www.fao.org/3/a-i3492e.pdf

5.3 ENHANCING COMMUNICATION CAPACITIES OF RURAL ACTORS

The third panel focused on the role of farmer organizations, community media and rural institutions in facilitating communication for agriculture and rural development, and looked at some existing capacities and initiatives that can be developed.

Communication is a tool in the farmers' struggle against land grabbing, agro-industry, state colonization and misappropriation of farmers' knowledge. It is a tool in the struggle for food sovereignty, livelihoods and autonomy. Farmers and farmer organizations need to be able to handle their own media, allowing them to use their own voices in their own languages. The context is essential to understand any information.

Without examining the relationships and tensions between stakeholders, it is not possible for people to become empowered. By allowing farmers to transform themselves, communication becomes more than a process of community building and rural development. It can become a tool for social transformation that will bring more people into the process.

Communication for Development as a science or a field of study is poorly understood compared to, for example, chemistry or soil science. It is difficult to talk about extensions, communication, ComDev or social media because they are poorly-understood fields which are constantly evolving. The role of communication specialist is often not recognized, and is not well paid compared to other professions in agricultural research and practice. It is therefore difficult to attract students into the field and to ensure relevant jobs. It is important to understand diversity, the poor, and seasonality, in order to deal with people. Consequently, we need well-trained professionals.

“We will never be soil; we will never be a cow. In communication we are dealing with people.”

Loes Witteveen, Van Hall Larenstein University

Farmer learning should be approached in a holistic manner. Social capital is developed by organising and mobilising farmers’ unions, cooperative and community groups. Knowledge and skills gained through self-directed learning using mobile phones and radios build human capital. Financial capital is essential to allow farmers to carry out sustainable farming practices due to challenges such as the high cost of inputs and inaccessible markets. Grants, loans and subsidies provide family farmers with access to sustainable farming resources, and when combined with improved human and social capital create self-sustained economic growth and a sustainable environment for the farmers.

There is a gap between what research institutions are doing and what extension workers are disseminating to the farmers. A channel between the source and the recipient would close this gap. Information is being disseminated by public and private extension services, advisory services and farmers’ organizations. Farmers’ organizations can bring stakeholders together to create partnerships that ensure equal input.

In order to enhance the capacity of farmers to make their voice heard and to influence policy, participants agreed on the following recommendations:

- **Develop the capacity of rural actors at all levels, applying a diversity approach, to engage effectively in rural communication processes.**
- **At the level of farmers: facilitate knowledge, confidence and agency of women and men farmers to voice their needs and concerns, claim their rights, interact and organize themselves**
- **At the level of development professionals²⁰ : develop collaborative learning strategies that link directly to and are inspired by rural realities with special attention to gender, class, age and socio-cultural issues**
- **Develop mechanisms and tools for coordination and partnerships ensuring that communication for development principles are evident and operational, and that there is support for independent and pluralistic media.**

JOINT INITIATIVES FOR PROMOTING RURAL COMMUNICATION SERVICES

The fifth session of the Forum was meant for participants to identify and agree upon concrete initiatives and follow-up actions to jointly promote rural communication services. On behalf of the FCCM Advisory Group, Mario Acunzo of FAO presented a number of priority lines of action outlined by the group members according to the activities carried out by each organization and the collaborations already in place.

The five major clusters of activities identified are as follows:

6.1 COLLABORATIVE MECHANISMS AND ADVOCACY

The FCCM Advisory Group agreed on the need to continue the information exchange through an informal coordination mechanism that would open up more opportunities for interaction and allow partnerships to mature. During the half-day follow-up meeting of the Advisory Group on 25 October 2014 it was agreed that an informal coordination mechanism would be consolidated – the FCCM Working Group – with a common vision and a shared strategy to advocate for and promote inclusive rural communication services. FAO committed to support this community with a dedicated FCCM webpage, which is facilitated in collaboration with UPLB.

6.2 KNOWLEDGE SHARING AND NETWORKING

Several initiatives already exist to promote knowledge sharing and networking at the global, regional and local level, for example, through online communities and consultations. Regional ComDev platforms are supported by AMARC and FAO in Africa, Latin America and Asia. Also in collaboration with FAO, UPLB facilitates [Collaborative Change Communication](#), a global platform for capacity strengthening in communication for agriculture and rural development. CTA hosts a range of activities, including knowledge platforms for farmers' and fisherfolks' organizations and e-discussions on agricultural topics. Furthermore, knowledge materials and resources such as the [Communication for Rural Development Sourcebook](#) or the ICT Observatory¹⁷ to name a few, are released and distributed to help the implementation of ComDev practices in the rural sector. This range of knowledge sharing activities promoted by various actors (e.g. FAO, CTA, and Farm Radio International, among others) can be more interlinked and benefit from the support of additional partners.

¹⁷ <http://ict-observatory.cta.int/index.php/en/>

6.3 RESEARCH

The FCCM Advisory Group stressed the urgency of collecting evidence of the impact of communication, community media and ICTs in the agricultural sector. Rural communication services is a recent concept that can be built upon to form a background for discussion. On the other hand, more research needs to be done on how to sustainably maintain rural communication services, on suitable evaluation methodologies, and on enabling policy frameworks.

FAO and a team of leading Universities in the sector are working on a compendium of evidence-based approaches applied to Rural Communication Services in order to assess how to best include evaluation in the design of communication services for the rural sector. This type of research has been done, but not in the agricultural sector. Together with a policy monitor on RCS, this research will be helpful to orientate future projects.

6.4 CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

There is a lot of potential for joint initiatives to increase training opportunities and improve local capacity in rural communication. The CComDev platform, facilitated by University of the Philippines Los Baños and supported by FAO, has created partnerships with other agricultural universities: University of Reading, University of Queensland, University of Guelph, and University of Wageningen. Universities have training programmes, scholarships, and PhD research in the area of communication and ICTs for rural development. Likewise, many distance and e-learning initiatives emerged, such as the distance training and mentoring courses in ComDev offered by the Commonwealth of Learning, also for community radio. The issue of collaboration between universities in the global South was raised, in terms of improving the curriculum of ComDev courses, while scholarships for students coming from developing countries were also proposed.

6.5 SUPPORT TO PROGRAMMES AND COUNTRIES

This final area of work proposed by the FCCM Advisory Group is linked to the provision of technical assistance and collaboration with selected institutions, organizations and countries, particularly those who request assistance in developing communication policies. Attention was drawn to the financial aspects of rural communication services and the issue of rural access to communication infrastructures, for which funding opportunities must be made available. In this sense it was proposed to engage with existing national and regional structures such as Universal Service Funds and regional economic communities. FAO will take advantage of its own strategic framework in the agricultural sector – prioritising family farming, food security, resilience and advocacy – and will liaise with countries that express the need to incorporate communication in agricultural policies and programmes.

Following the presentation of these five areas of work, participants were invited to make comments and brainstorm on how their own organizations would be able to contribute. There

was a common agreement on the need for better information sharing and networking between different organizations and sectors.

The resulting FCCM Action Plan (Appendix 2) captures both the inputs of the Advisory Group and the participants' suggestions, offering an overview of strategic opportunities to join efforts under the RCS umbrella.

BOX 7 FLAGSHIP INITIATIVES IN COMMUNICATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Collaborative Change Communication

CCComDev aims to:

- Improve learning opportunities and capacities in rural ComDev
- Build and consolidate on-line and off-line knowledge networks
- Establish partnerships and collaborations among universities, research and development organizations
- Facilitate the creation of a global community of practice and a forum on ComDev policies

CCComDev features:

- World map of training opportunities in ComDev
- Library of learning resources and publications
- Spotlight on relevant news and updates
- Gallery of multimedia materials
- Links to regional platforms such as **ComDev Asia**, **Onda Rural**, **Yenkasa Africa**
- Social media and online community

Communication for Rural Development Sourcebook

The sourcebook is a compilation of guidelines and methodologies for applying communication to agricultural and rural development initiatives. By tackling issues such as natural resource management, climate change adaptation and disaster risk management, it enables learners to design and implement locally relevant and sustainable strategies. The sourcebook aims to develop capacity in multi-stakeholder dialogue, ComDev planning and assessment.

Content

- | | |
|---|--|
|  Module 1. Introduction to ComDev planning |  Module 5. Participatory message and materials development |
|  Module 2. Participatory communication appraisal |  Module 6. Assessing results and fostering sustainability |
|  Module 3. Designing the ComDev strategy and plan |  Module 7. Applying ComDev to rural development challenges |
|  Module 4. Implementing the ComDev plan |  Guide to ComDev Training [tips for planning and delivering effective ComDev training] |

CONTINUES ON THE FOLLOWING PAGE →

Regional ComDev Platforms

[ComDev Asia](#), [Yenkasa Africa](#) and [Onda Rural](#) are online platforms based in Latin America, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region designed to gather development workers and community media practitioners to share information and foster cooperation in ComDev for rural development. They present news, articles, experiences, multimedia materials and networking tools. The platforms aim to build regional communities of practice, enhance capacities and improve ComDev activities in local areas.

COMDEV ASIA

ASIA-PACIFIC

ComDev Asia supports community media professionals based in Asia-Pacific in sharing knowledge, establishing partnerships, and promoting ComDev interventions in the rural sector both at the regional and national level.



AFRICA

YenKasa Africa is a regional platform that facilitates information on communication for rural development in Africa encouraging community media practitioners to share experiences, establish partnerships and work together.



LATIN AMERICA

Onda Rural is a regional initiative that brings together communication practitioners, farmers and development institutions to promote the role of ComDev and the use of radio for rural development in Latin America.

PROMOTING INCLUSIVE RURAL COMMUNICATION SERVICES

James Deane of BBC Media Action opened the closing session of the Forum by praising it for focusing on outcomes and including many farmer organizations. This was supported by Florence Buchholzer, EU and Vice Chair IYFF International Steering Committee, who highlighted how the presence of farmer organizations rooted the work of the Forum at the grassroots level. She discussed the powerful role communication for development plays in helping rural communities, indigenous peoples, civil society and farmer organizations to put forward their own development agenda. Whilst the use of participatory communication has been crucial in engaging farmers and ensuring their voices are heard, governments, donors and the private sector must also share the responsibility in order to mainstream communication in national agricultural policies. Mario Acunzo (OPC) underlined the importance of the FCCM as a milestone for the creation of a platform for multistakeholder dialogue and collaboration to promote inclusive rural communication services. He also invited the members of the FCCM Steering Committee to a meeting the following day, to operationalize the FCCM Action Plan and define a detailed roadmap.

Marcela Villareal, Director of FAO Office for Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development (OPC), also commented on the outcomes and how they had become concrete through the presence of farmer organizations. She commented on the importance of ownership in communication channels, as community broadcasting plays an essential role in development and improving the living conditions of rural people. The importance of farmers organizing themselves was also highlighted, as diversity between regions make it imperative that rural people can vocalize their own needs.

Concluding the Forum, a Final Statement summarizing major conclusions and recommendations was read by James Deane, and endorsed by all the participants. The FCCM Final Statement is presented in the next pages.

FINAL STATEMENT OF THE FORUM ON COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY MEDIA FOR FAMILY FARMING

FAO, Rome, Italy, 23-24 October 2014

COMMUNICATION: KEY TO FAMILY FARMING

By proclaiming 2014 the International Year of Family Farming, the UN has put family farmers at the centre of the international development agenda and has underlined the need to collectively move toward more inclusive and sustainable approaches and policies in the agricultural sector.

Today most family farmers live in disadvantaged rural areas and face several social, economic and environmental challenges, from access to market to climate change. These challenges are making agriculture extremely knowledge-intensive and family farmers' livelihoods are increasingly dependent on timely access to relevant information.

However, frequently family farmers and rural communities are not only resource poor but also information poor. Their self-reliance is significantly affected by limited access to information and to communication services. There is a need to support knowledge, dialogue and communication processes that "allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that relate to their development"¹⁸.

All of the above implies the key role of communication as an asset for farmers and the need to integrate it into family farming policies.

THE FORUM ON COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY MEDIA FOR FAMILY FARMING (FCCM)

Over the past years, participatory communication processes and community media have proven to be essential for the livelihoods of millions of family farmers worldwide. For example, the use of mobile phones and rural radio to provide innovative market information and communication services, is improving agricultural extension work and helping family farmers worldwide to save time and negotiate better rates, often resulting in significant income increases.

¹⁸ United Nations General Assembly (1997). *Communication for development programmes in the United Nations system* (No. 51/172). New York: The United Nations.

The challenge now is to promote institutional and policy frameworks that will allow equitable access to information and communication services, and that will ensure the active participation of family farmers in development processes.

To raise awareness on the role of communication and community media as drivers for innovation and social change in rural areas, an international Forum on Communication for Development and Community Media for Family Farming (FCCM) was held in Rome on 23 and 24 October 2014 as part of the International Year of Family Farming.

The Forum provided the opportunity to share experiences and showcase evidence of the contribution of communication, ICTs and community media to family farming. It addressed opportunities for promoting rural communication services¹⁹ as sustained, inclusive and demand-led communication processes involving family farmers and the rural population.

More than one hundred participants representing farmer organizations, rural institutions, international agencies, governments, research organizations, development and human rights NGOs, academia, community media and communication networks discussed issues related to:

- *The contribution of communication to family farming*
- *The appropriation of communication by farmers and rural actors*
- *Need and priorities for communication policies*
- *Enabling policy and institutional frameworks*
- *Investments and partnership opportunities*
- *Enhancing communication capacities of rural stakeholders*

The participants of the FCCM agreed that sustainable social and economic development begins when farmers, communities and people are empowered to make decisions for their own lives. They agreed that communication is key to advance family farming and rural development, and recalled the definition²⁰ and recommendations of the World Congress on Communication for Development (WCCD 2006), especially the need to move towards a rights-based approach.

In order to move the policy agenda in communication for family farming and rural development forward, the participants of the FCCM endorsed and committed to act on the following recommendations.

¹⁹ “Rural communication services is a working concept that seeks to frame a wide range of processes, activities, media applications and institutional arrangements that respond in a sustained and inclusive manner to the communication needs of rural populations”. FCCM, Rome 2014.

²⁰ “Communication for Development (ComDev) is a social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. ComDev is about seeking change at different levels including listening, establishing trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change”. WCCD, Rome 2006.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In relation to **enabling policy and institutional frameworks** it was recommended to:

- Build cross-sectoral alliances to promote and implement law and policy reforms in respect to communication and family farming.
- Bring national law and policy on rural communication services in line with agreed international standards.
- Provide formal legal recognition to create a regulatory environment for independent and pluralistic community radios including simple licensing processes, equitable reservation of frequencies and robust funding possibilities.
- Integrate critical analysis of women's and men's specific needs and priorities into efforts to develop rural communication services including aspects such as tools, content, implementation and impact.

In relation to **investments and partnership opportunities** it was recommended to:

- Work in partnership to build the evidence base for rural communication services.
- Urge governments to invest in reinforcing community-based communication services and up scaling good practices.
- Engage in multi-stakeholder partnerships, to embed communication in development initiatives/programmes.
- Ensure that access to infrastructure and services is affordable to rural communities, particularly to women and youth.

In relation to **capacity development** it was recommended to:

- Develop the capacity of rural actors at all levels, applying a diversity approach, to engage effectively in rural communication processes.
- At the level of farmers: facilitate knowledge, confidence and agency of women and men farmers to voice their needs and concerns, claim their rights, interact and organize themselves
- At the level of development professionals²¹ : develop collaborative learning strategies that link directly to and are inspired by rural realities with special attention to gender, class, age and socio-cultural issues
- Develop mechanisms and tools for coordination and partnerships ensuring that communication for development principles are evident and operational, and that there is support for independent and pluralistic media.

The participants also agreed to establish the FCCM as an informal mechanism to advocate for rural communication policies and services and to steer collaboration among relevant actors. The FCCM will be supported by a working group consisting of research and development institutions, farmer organizations, community media, NGOs and universities who commit to putting this agenda forward.

²¹ Organizations, NGOs, consultants, extension workers, private companies and other mediators including farmers and farmer organizations as well.

APPENDIX 1.

FCCM AGENDA AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

Day 1 – Thursday 23 October COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT & FAMILY FARMING: CONTRIBUTIONS, EVIDENCE & PERSPECTIVES	
8.00-9.00	Registration of participants
9.00-9.20	Opening Session
9.00-9.20	<p>Welcoming remarks by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marcela Villarreal, Director FAO Office of Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development • Mario Lubetkin, Director FAO Office of Corporate Communication • Maria Pia Matta, President World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) <p>Introduction to the FCCM by Mario Acunzo, FAO Communication for Development Officer</p>
9.20-9.50	Session 1 - The contribution of Communication for Development to family farming and rural development
9.20-9.50	<p>Chair: Rico Lie, Wageningen University Rapporteur: Loes Witteveen, Van Hall Larenstein University</p> <p>Opening remarks by Rico Lie, Wageningen University Presentation by Bruce Girard, Comunica – Farming for the future: communication services for family farming Presentation by Francesco Diasio, AMARC and Alice Van der Elstraeten, e-Agriculture – Perspectives on ComDev, community media and ICTs for family farming Q&A discussion</p>
09.50-10.00	Coffee break
10.00-15.30	Session 2 - The appropriation of communication by rural actors: experiences and evidence
10.00-12.00	<p>Chair: Ajit Maru, GFAR Rapporteur: Sarah Cardey, University of Reading</p> <p>Presentation by Elske van de Fliert, IAMCR – Communication as an asset for agriculture and rural development: key issues and players PANEL 1. Farmer-led communication and community media with Q&A PANEL 2. Communication and development practice with Q&A</p>
12.00-12.30	Video display with Q&A - contributions by AMARC & Digital Green
12.30-14.00	Lunch
14.00-15.30	PANEL 3. Institutional ComDev efforts with Q&A Highlights of the session, facilitated Q&A discussion and wrap up
15.30-15.45	Coffee break
15.45-17.00	Session 3 - Reconciling the priorities: the need for communication policies to advance family farming
15.45-17.00	<p>Moderator: Bruce Girard, Comunica Rapporteur: Alice Van der Elstraeten, FAO</p> <p>Panel discussion. How to address the communication needs of family farmers? Policy perspectives of different rural stakeholders Facilitated Q&A discussion, highlights of the session and wrap-up</p>
18.00-19.00	Cocktail Reception (Aventino Room, Main Cafeteria 8th Floor, Building B)

Day 2 – Friday 24 October TOWARDS INCLUSIVE RURAL COMMUNICATION SERVICES	
9.00-9.30	Opening remarks by Francesco Pierri, FAO Keynote address by Mirna Cunningham , Special Ambassador International Year of Family Farming Summary of Day 1, agenda and methodology for Day 2
9.30-12.30	Session 4 - Challenges, opportunities and options for rural communication services
9.30-10.30	Chair: Venus Jennings, UNESCO Rapporteur: Rico Lie, Wageningen University Presentation by Toby Mendel, UNESCO – <i>Comparative study of community broadcasting regulations</i> Panel discussion with Q&A Enabling policy & institutional frameworks for rural communication services
10.30-10.40	Coffee break
10.40-12.00	Presentation by Mike Jensen, APC – <i>Universal Access: financial mechanisms and rural infrastructure policies</i> Panel discussion with Q&A Investments, funding opportunities and partnerships Presentation by Cleofe Torres, UPLB – <i>Learning and sharing in communication for rural development</i> Panel discussion with Q&A Enhancing communication capacities of rural actors
12.00-12.45	3 Working Groups to process the inputs given by the panels and come up with recommendations
12.45-14.00	Lunch
14.00-14.30	Interactive reporting in plenary of the recommendations produced by the 3 break-out groups
14.30-15.45	Session 5 - Joint initiatives for promoting rural communication services
14.30-15.45	Chair: Francesco Diasio, AMARC Rapporteur: Cleofe Torres, UPLB Priority lines of action for follow-up and proposal for strategic initiatives presented by FCCM Advisory Group Facilitated Q&A discussion
15.45-16.00	Coffee break
16.00-17.00	Closing Session
16.00-16.40	Chair: James Deane, BBC Media Action Rapporteur: Marzia Pafumi, FAO Recap of conclusions (from Sessions 1-3), recommendations (from Session 4) and follow-up proposal (from Session 5) Facilitated discussion and wrap up
16.40-17.00	Final statement of the FCCM Closing remarks by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florence Buchholzer, Vice-chair IYFF International Steering Committee • Marcela Villarreal, Director FAO Office of Partnerships, Advocacy and Capacity Development

Day 1 – COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND FAMILY FARMING: CONTRIBUTIONS, EVIDENCE AND PERSPECTIVES

SESSION 1 – The contribution of Communication for Development to family farming and rural development

Setting the scene

- ✓ **KEY ISSUES & PERSPECTIVES:** What is the role of ComDev, community media and ICTs for family farming? What are the key concepts and issues considered by the FCCM?

SESSION 2 – The appropriation of communication by rural actors: experiences and evidence

Lessons learned

- ✓ **EXPERIENCES:** Based on your first-hand knowledge and experience, how have communication processes and tools (including community media and ICTs) improved the livelihoods of family farmers and/or their participation in rural/ socio-economic development?
- ✓ **EVIDENCE:** What have been the major results and changes brought about by communication? Was the process evaluated with the users?
- ✓ **CONSTRAINTS & NEEDS:** What are the most significant constraints you have faced using communication, community media or ICTs to support farmers? What is needed to overcome these barriers and achieve sustainability of communication activities?

SESSION 3 – Reconciling the priorities: the need for communication policies to advance family farming

Policy perspectives

- ✓ **POLICY NEEDS AND PRIORITIES:** Based on your first-hand knowledge and experience, what has to be done to enable equitable access to rural communication services? At policy level, how do we address the need for communication expressed by farmers and rural communities? How do we ensure the inputs of farmers into the policy development process?

Day 2 – TOWARDS INCLUSIVE RURAL COMMUNICATION SERVICES

SESSION 4 – Challenges, opportunities and options for rural communication services

Recommendation

- ✓ **POLICY and INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS:** What are the main gaps in policy and regulatory frameworks to enable farmers' access to information and communication? What are the emerging opportunities and options for policy and institutional change? Who are the key actors to be involved and how to promote policy dialogue and coordination among them?
- ✓ **INVESTMENTS and PARTNERSHIPS:** What are the main investments required for communication services in rural areas? What are relevant financial mechanisms and funding opportunities? How can farmer organizations have a say? How can we improve partnerships and coordination among different actors including farmer organizations, public institutions, private sector, development agencies, etc.? What are other enabling factors?
- ✓ **CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT:** What is the role of farmer organizations, community media and rural institutions in facilitating communication for agriculture and rural development? What are existing capacities and initiatives to leverage on? What should be done to enhance local capacities to enable rural communication services and how?

SESSION 5 – Joint initiatives for promoting rural communication services

Follow up

- ✓ **FOLLOW UP ACTIONS:** What concrete actions can be jointly undertaken to promote rural communication services and policies? How would your organization be able to contribute and what would be expected from other partners? How can we steer this collaborative process?

APPENDIX 2. FCCM ACTION PLAN

As a follow up to the *Forum on Communication for Development & Community Media for Family Farming (FCCM)*, FAO is facilitating a process of information sharing and coordination among relevant organizations that teamed up as **FCCM working group** to jointly promote rural communication services (RCS)²².

Based on what each organization is already implementing/planning in this area, and leveraging on several collaborations that are already in place, this is an effort to highlight concrete opportunities for implementing joint initiatives under the RCS umbrella, in line with the priority action points and recommendations of the FCCM (please refer to the *FCCM Action Points* document for a full list of activities, inputs and proposals collected during and after the event).

This Action Plan is meant for members of the FCCM Working Group to concretely start planning together and maximize results under **5 major areas of work**:

1. FCCM FACILITATION and ADVOCACY
2. KNOWLEDGE SHARING and NETWORKING
3. RESEARCH
4. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT
5. SUPPORT TO PROGRAMMES and COUNTRIES

Under these areas of work the proposals for collaboration have been clustered into **7 joint initiatives** and, for each of them, a number of activities (more can be added) have been prioritized according to the following criteria:

- ✓ the activity is functional to advancing RCS as a common area of work
- ✓ the activity is already planned and budgeted for implementation or launch in 2015
- ✓ the proposing organization is open to share resources and work in partnership on this activity

The organizations that plan to work together are listed for each activity, in particular those that will be coordinating the activity – **convenors** – and those contributing as **partners**.

²² “Rural communication services is a working concept that seeks to frame a wide range of processes, activities, media applications and institutional arrangements that respond in a sustained and inclusive manner to the communication needs of rural populations.” FCCM, Rome 2014

JOINT INITIATIVES	ACTIVITIES	CONVENOR/S	PARTNERS
Area of work 1 : FCCM FACILITATION and ADVOCACY			
GOAL: Steer coordinated action and advocacy for rural communication services (RCS)			
1a. COORDINATION MECHANISM of the FCCM WORKING GROUP Convenor: C. Torres	1.1 Support joint planning, monitoring and reporting on RCS initiatives	FAO	UPLB
	1.2 Maintain the FCCM virtual space hosted by CCComDev (blog, share fair) and facilitate online discussion	UPLB	FAO
1b. JOINT ADVOCACY EFFORTS	1.3 Distribute FCCM paper and final report	FAO/AMARC	IAMCR
	1.4 Regional forum on RCS in Latin America (Brazil, Oct 2015)	EMBRAPA	FAO
	1.5 Regional forum on RCS in Africa (Ghana, Aug 2015)	AMARC	FAO/ FRI/ COL/ WACC
	1.6 Seminar on Community Media Sustainability: Policies & Funding (Paris, Sep 2015)	UNESCO	AMARC/ FAO
JOINT INITIATIVES	ACTIVITIES	CONVENOR/S	PARTNERS
Area of work 2 : KNOWLEDGE SHARING and NETWORKING			
GOAL: Facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration on RCS at global/ regional/ country level			
2. SUPPORT to KNOWLEDGE PLATFORMS and COMMUNITIES of PRACTICE RELATED to RCS Convenor: F. Diasio	2.1 Africa regional platform on communication for rural development (Yenkasa + Barza)	AMARC	FAO/ FRI
	2.1.1 Strategic planning and training session (Ghana, Aug 2015)		
	2.2 Latin America regional platform on communication for rural development (Onda Rural)	AMARC	FAO/ IICA
	2.2.1 Strategic planning and training session (TBC)		
	2.3 Asia-Pacific regional platform on communication for rural development (ComDev Asia)	AMARC	FAO/ Digital Green
2.3.1 Strategic planning and training session (TBC)			
2.4 Global platform to share resources and good practices on RCS (CCComDev)	UPLB		FAO/ eAgriculture

JOINT INITIATIVES	ACTIVITIES	CONVENOR/S	PARTNERS
Area of work 3 : RESEARCH			
GOAL: Generate a solid evidence-base and policy analysis for RCS			
3a. REVIEW of EVALUATION METHODS and EVIDENCE of IMPACT of the RCS Convenor: E. van deFliert	3.1 Scoping study on evaluation approaches and research methods to assess the impact of rural communication services	FAO/IAMCR (UniQ/ UniW/ UniR/ UniG/ UPLB)	CTA/ GFAR/ FRI/ CGIAR/ BBCmedia
	3.2 Joint research projects on RCS and staff exchanges (e.g. researchers, PhD students) 3.2.1 Participation at European Seminar Extension & Education (Wageningen, Apr 2015) 3.2.2 Session at IAMCR conference (Montreal, Jul 2015) 3.2.3 Internship agreements	IAMCR	FAO/UniQ
3b. RCS POLICY MONITOR	3.3 Case studies on RCS and policy frameworks (e.g. Latin America, Bangladesh, Uganda)	FAO	UPLB/ UniR
	3.4 Policy guidelines for enabling rural community media	UNESCO	AMARC/ WACC/ CfLD
JOINT INITIATIVES	ACTIVITIES	CONVENOR/S	PARTNERS
Area of work 4 : CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT			
GOAL: Strengthen capacities of rural actors in communication for development			
4. IMPROVED ACCESS to TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES in COMMUNICATION for RURAL DEVELOPMENT for RURAL INSTITUTIONS, COMMUNITY MEDIA and FARMER ORGANIZATIONS	4.1 E-learning on communication for rural development	FAO	CTA/COL
	4.2 Regional training for farmer organizations, community media, development practitioners and project managers in Latin America (Paraguay, Apr 2015)	FAO	AMARC/ IICA
	4.3 Regional training for farmer organizations, community media and development practitioners in Asia Pacific (Philippines, Oct 2015)	FAO	UPLB

JOINT INITIATIVES	ACTIVITIES	CONVENOR/S	PARTNERS
Area of work 4 : CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT			
GOAL: Strengthen capacities of rural actors in communication for development			
	4.4 Training for community media practitioners and program managers in Africa	FRI	COL/ AMARC
	4.5 Repository and digest of training opportunities and learning resources [CCComDev]	UPLB	UniW/ UniQ/ UniR/ UniG
	4.6 Curricula development in rural communication at the University level		
JOINT INITIATIVES	ACTIVITIES	CONVENOR/S	PARTNERS
Area of work 5 : SUPPORT TO PROGRAMMES and COUNTRIES			
GOAL: Collaborate with selected institutions, organizations and countries for the promotion of RCS			
5. PARTNER to PROVIDE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE to COUNTRIES and FIELD PROJECTS Convenor: M. Acunzo	5.1 Mapping of ongoing initiatives and projects at country level	FAO	Uni
	5.2 Development of a proposal to support selected countries in developing RCS policies (e.g. Facility)	FAO	GFAR

APPENDIX 3. MEMBERS OF THE FCCM WORKING GROUP

#	NAME	ORGANIZATION
1	Mario Acunzo	Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
2	Francesco Diasio	World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC)
3	Venus Jennings	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
4	Ian Pringle	Commonwealth of Learning (COL)
5	James Deane	BBC Media Action
6	Mike Jensen	Association of Progressive Communication (APC)
7	Caroline Figueres	International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD)
8	Roxanna Samii	International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)
9	Kristin Davies	Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS)
10	Ajit Maru	Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR)
11	Elske van de Fliert	International Association on Media and Communication Research (IAMCR)/University of Queensland
12	Paul Neate	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA)
13	Bruce Girard	Fundación Comunica
14	Isabelle Delforge	La Via Campesina (LVC)
15	Joseba Imaz	World Rural Forum (WRF)
16	Luisa Volpe	World Farmer Organization (WFO)
17	Mauro Conti	International Planning Committee on Food Sovereignty (IPC)
18	Lavinia Mohr	World Association of Christian Communication (WACC)
19	Charlotte Masiello	Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers (CGIAR)
20	Andrea Gros	International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA)
21	Kevin Perkins	Farm Radio International (FRI)
22	Federico Sancho	Inter-American Institute for Cooperation in Agriculture (IICA)
23	Rico Lie	Wageningen University
24	Loes Witteveen	Van Hall Larenstein University
25	Cleofe Torres	University of the Philippines Los Baños
26	Sarah Cardey	University of Reading
27	Helen Hambly	University of Guelph
28	Antonio Heberle	Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation (EMBRAPA)
29	Rikin Ghandi	Digital Green
30	Jackie Davies	C4D Network



Supporting dialogic communication and knowledge sharing processes is a powerful means of helping farmer organizations, indigenous peoples, rural communities and civil society organizations to make their voices heard and be part of the development agenda. Rural communication services and policies can translate farmers' right to communication into fair and transparent regulatory frameworks that will allow equitable access to information and communication services in rural areas and ensure the active participation of smallholder and family farmers.

During the International Year of Family Farming, FAO convened an international Forum on Communication for Development & Community Media for Family Farming (FCCM), in collaboration with the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC). The Forum participants addressed opportunities for promoting rural communication services as sustained, inclusive and efficient communication processes involving family farmers and the rural population, and considered how to better integrate these services into agricultural policies.

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