

Advancing Rural Communication Services in Family Farming in the Asia Pacific Region

Trends, Experiences & Way Forward



Inclusive Rural Communication Services (RCS)

The United Nations Decade of Family Farming (UNDFF, 2019-2028) aims to unleash the potential of family farmers as ‘key agents of change’ to transform food systems in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. This is guided by a Global Action Plan (GAP) under which Pillar 4 calls for improved communication and ICT capacities, Rural Communication Services, and increased awareness of family farmers’ roles, contributions, and challenges, among others (GAP-Outcome 4.4).

Within the framework of the ComDev Asia initiative (comdevasia.org), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Digital Green (DG) and the College of Development Communication - University of the Philippines Los Baños (CDC-UPLB) have embarked to support the UNDFF by promoting inclusive Rural Communication Services (RCS) as a key dimension of family farming policies and programmes in the Asia-Pacific region. The ComDev Asia’ RCS initiative covers three main activities: (a) conducting research for building-up evidence on how RCS are being appropriated; (b) generate evidence and use research results and dialogues for policy advocacy towards the institutionalization of RCS into agricultural and rural development programmes; c) technical assistance and capacity building to farmer organizations, community media, s and rural institutions to enable inclusive RCS.



A Consultative Process

RCS efforts build on the Communication for Development (ComDev) approach and discipline. ComDev is defined as “a social process that employs a broad range of communication methods and tools designed to bring about social change. It is anchored on participatory processes such as dialogue, listening, debating, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, shaping policies, and collective learning for sustained and meaningful change” (World Congress on Communication for Development, 2006).

The ComDev Asia web portal (comdevasia.org) promotes consultations among different stakeholders of the family farming sector current experiences and trends in RCS in Asia and the Pacific. Furthermore, a ComDev Asia online community of practice (CoP) promotes the sharing of experiences about rural communication processes and tools involving farmer organizations, community media, academia and rural institutions. The following activities have already been undertaken to date:

Launch Webinar: A webinar was conducted in December 2021 to launch the initiative and to involve relevant stakeholders. Participants shared their experiences and lessons learned about RCS appropriation for family farming.

Online consultations: An online survey involved RCS providers and users representing farmer organizations, community media groups, agricultural advisory services and other rural institutions in India, Nepal and Bangladesh. The data collected will be further expanded and validated through a policy brief on advancing RCS in the Asia and Pacific and case studies.

Further information at: comdevasia.org

RCS: Way Forward

A series of knowledge products will be delivered to consolidate the ComDev Asia RCS initiative in 2022:

Study on RCS experience and evidence: Online literature review is being conducted to explore policy frameworks in different countries of the region, trends in appropriating RCS and insights about the experiences and lessons derived. The publication will include a series of case studies and evidence on experiences and approaches to design farmer centered rural communication services.

Policy brief:

Another relevant product of the process will be a policy brief for institutionalizing RCS in family farming policies and programmes.

Community of practice on RCS:

A specific section of the ComDev Asia CoP will be dedicated to the RCS for stakeholders to be able to discuss and explore viable solutions to promote RCS for family farming in Asia and the Pacific.

Capacity development on participatory video:

An online training module on participatory video production and sharing along with two field guides is being prepared.

Regional forum on RCS:

A regional forum (virtual) on RCS will be organized based on the results of the previous activities with the objective to advance the mainstreaming of RCS in family farming policies and programmes in Asia and the Pacific.