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COMMUNICATING WITH FARMERS

Communication for Technology Transfer in Agriculture

CTTA

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COMMUNICATING WITH FARMERS

Communication for Technology Transfer in Agriculture

Communicating with farmers is critically important to agriculture and society. Farmers need information to take advantage of new seeds and other improved technologies. Through communication, they receive information; and researchers and policymakers receive feedback about farmers' successes and problems in using the new technologies.

The Communication for Technology Transfer in Agriculture Project (CTTA) provides an opportunity to apply innovative approaches for effective use of communication, especially mass media, to support agricultural extension programs. The CTTA objective is to develop, test and demonstrate integrated multi-channel communication strategies and methods that increase the impact of extension-

type programs at costs affordable for sustained use by developing nations.

CTTA combines experience from agricultural communication and extension with that of development communication projects in agriculture, health and education. Behavioral analysis, social marketing and instructional design are also incorporated into the strategies which guide the multi-channel CTTA communication program.

The Project collaborates with existing public and private sector institutions to develop effective communication networks, with particular emphasis on strengthening linkages among extension, research, input and service providers, and farmers.

CTTA GOALS

Appropriate use of communication support to increase extension's effectiveness in transferring appropriate agricultural technologies from research to beneficial use by farmers is the princi-

pal CTTA goal. It is also anticipated that stronger research/extension/farmer linkages and networks will result in research that is more relevant to local problems.

CTTA SITES

CTTA is a worldwide project that will establish pilot communication projects in collaboration with up to nine countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia/Near

East. Implementation activities began in Honduras, the first and primary site, in September 1986; and in Peru, the first collaborating country, the following month.

SHARING CTTA EXPERIENCE

CTTA experiences will be shared as they are gained—through networking within and among collaborating country pilot projects, and with the national and

international professional communities. Results will be disseminated worldwide through reports, papers, articles, and conferences.

WHY CTTA

Extension institutions and technology transfer programs exist in almost every developing country. Yet, coverage of farm families is still limited, the quality of third world extension programs is seriously questioned, and the transfer of beneficial new and underutilized agricultural technologies continues to lag.

Incorporating appropriate multi-channel communication strategies into extension programs can improve the technology transfer situation.

Many information units already exist;

and mass media, audiovisual aids and printed materials are used extensively. However, the use of communication skills, media and methodologies is typically ad hoc and fragmented. Too often, they are poorly integrated into the total extension program; and strategies for their mutually reinforcing use to support the programs are rare.

Experience in other sectors such as health and education, as well as in agriculture, indicates that use of multi-channel communication strategies integrated into extension-type programs can increase their impact.

THE CTTA APPROACH

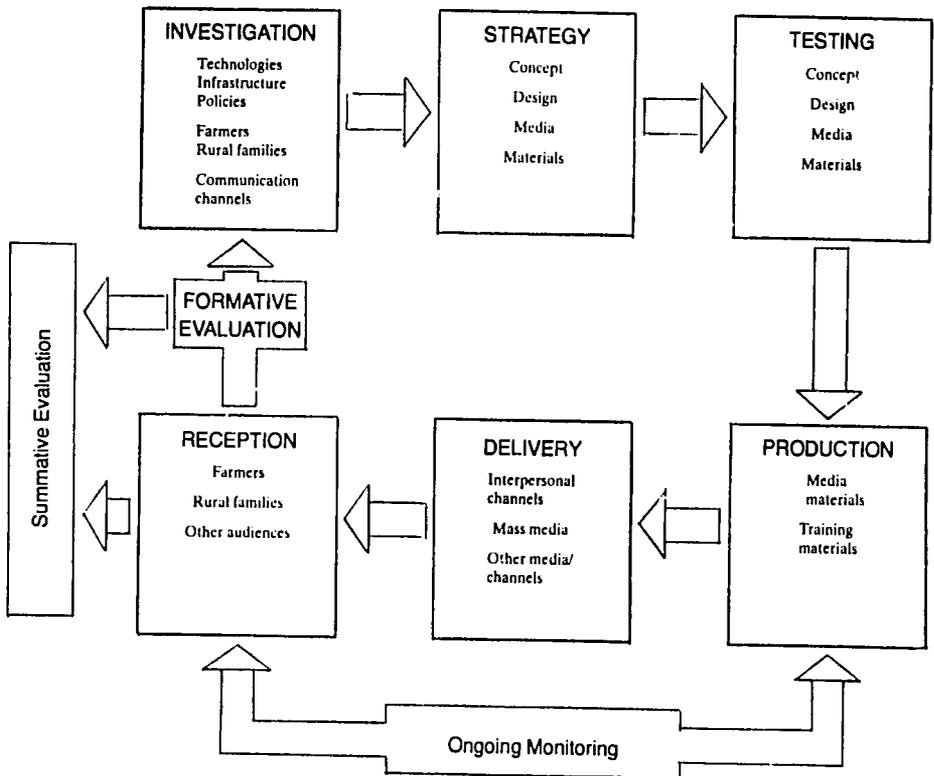
CTTA typically establishes a pilot project in a selected region in each collaborating country to introduce and test improved communication strategies; and assists in institutionalizing and extending them into other regions of the country. Within its overall scope of work and these general parameters, the Project has wide flexibility to adapt its activities to the particular needs of countries with which it collaborates.

guided by systematic strategies based on careful technology identification, developmental investigation, and continuous monitoring. The strategies are developed through the iterative process illustrated below.

Of course, ultimate success in applying even the best strategy depends largely upon the degree to which the communication support program is integrated into the total extension or other technology transfer program.

The CTTA communication program is

CTTA Communication Process



INVESTIGATION
 Technologies
 Infrastructure
 Policies
 Farmers
 Rural families
 Communication
 channels

The communication process begins by identifying available agricultural technologies and studying farmers and rural families in the target region.

A continuing supply of appropriate, locally-adapted technologies is essential to communication program success. Therefore, the first step is to determine the stage of readiness for diffusion of available technologies—from the perspectives of research, agricultural infrastructure, and policies that provide incentives or disincentives for farmer adoption.

The next step is to assess those technologies from farmers' perspectives—perceived dependability; economic benefit; risk; similarity to present practices; practicality, considering farmers' resource constraints; and possible negative consequences of not adopting.

Knowledge and understanding of the farmers also are needed. CTTA uses various research techniques (collectively termed developmental investigation) to learn more about farmers' and rural families':

- cultural and social characteristics,
- vocabulary,
- receptivity to change,
- ways of receiving and using new information,

- practices and adoption levels,
- hidden constraints that may be encountered in trying an innovation, and
- variability.

Behavioral analysis, social marketing, anthropology, and other social sciences are used extensively in obtaining and interpreting these types of information.

STRATEGY
 Concept
 Design
 Media
 Materials

The CTTA communication strategy is based on technology assessment and developmental investigation. Strategy development involves:

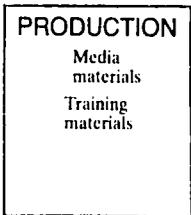
- determining message content and defining the behavioral framework;
- defining and segmenting the farmer audience;
- selecting mutually reinforcing channels for delivering information; and
- developing a system for coordinated message development, pretesting, timely production and delivery of farmer-oriented information through the selected channels, formative evaluation, and feedback.

Strategy development incorporates concepts from extension, development, communication, social marketing, and instructional design; and experience from other communication projects in agriculture, health and education.



Preliminary strategies, messages and media materials are fieldtested to ascertain their effectiveness in transferring information to farmers.

Principles and methods from social marketing and the behavioral sciences are integrated with those of agricultural extension and communication in this testing phase.

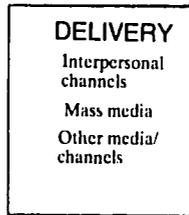


Key elements in producing information materials that serve the program and its audience are:

- detailed production schedules, rigorously followed;

- close coordination among those responsible for message development, materials planning and production, formative evaluation, and feedback;
- careful checks on content accuracy and production quality;
- systematic pretesting of representative materials; and
- prompt response to formative evaluation results and feedback.

Continual interaction (networking) with those involved in other areas of the technology development and transfer system, also critically important, is carefully nurtured and maintained.



The multi-channel strategy includes timely delivery of information targeted to specific audience segments—as well as general information disseminated more broadly—through mass media, interpersonal communication and other relevant channels.

Public sector channels such as extension agents and media programs are used to the maximum possible extent. Private sector channels are also used extensively—such as radio stations, newspapers, farmers’ organizations, input supplier field agents and sales people, marketers, and local volunteers.

RECEPTION

Farmers
Rural families
Other audiences

The ultimate success of CTTA depends upon the extent to which farmer adoption of new or presently underutilized agricultural technologies increases as the result of effective communication support to extension and other technology transfer programs.

FORMATIVE EVALUATION

In CTTA, formative evaluation includes studies carried out as part of project implementation to determine if the messages disseminated to farmers have been timely, well-received, understood, and considered to be practical; and whether the various program elements are functioning as planned.

Methods and techniques used in developmental investigation are also used extensively in formative evaluation studies.

Summative Evaluation

Summative evaluation proceeds concurrently with project implementation in each country. Although the summative evaluation is independent of implementation, evaluation and implementation staff work in close coordination.

Ongoing Monitoring

Communication programs must have the capacity and flexibility to respond promptly and appropriately to unanticipated situations.

CTTA uses systematic feedback and networking—with farmers, researchers, extensionists, policymakers, input suppliers, and other private and public sector institutions and organizations—to maintain the multi-directional flow of information essential for these purposes.

Training and Support

Training and support are not shown in the communication process illustration because they are ongoing and concurrent functions. However, CTTA emphasizes training at all levels for both project staff and public and private sector staff who are channels to reach the farmers.

The Communication for Technology Transfer in Agriculture Project is administered by the Academy for Educational Development as prime contractor; with the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences of Cornell University and (for summative evaluation) Applied Communication Technology, Inc., as subcontractors. Institutions collaborating in the Project include Dordmus Porter Novelli (Social Marketing), Iowa State University, Virginia State University, and the University of Wisconsin. Consultants are drawn from these institutions and from around the world.

CTTA is jointly developed, managed, and funded by the Offices of Education, Agriculture, and Rural Development of the Bureau for Science and Technology of the United States Agency for International Development in collaboration with Regional Bureau Technical Staff and the USAID Mission at each collaborating site. The project requires cost-sharing between AID/Washington and the USAID Mission in each collaborating country. Local CTTA activities can be funded directly by USAID Mission projects under the CTTA contract.