

# Communicating research through the media

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A banner with a reddish-brown background featuring a photograph of two people. The text is overlaid on the image.

PANOS Institute Southern Africa  
*empowering local communities in  
southern Africa*

The RELAY logo, with 'RELAY' in a stylized font where the 'L' is a vertical bar with horizontal lines, set against a white background with a blue and purple gradient.

RELAY

# Objective of presentation

- ▶ My role is to:
  - a. Give a brief on communicating research information/knowledge
  - b. Suggest on how to implement research into use in the communities

# Outline

- ▶ What is communicating research through the media?
- ▶ What are the aims of communicating research?
- ▶ What does it involve?
- ▶ What are the potential challenges and opportunities for research into use?
- ▶ Conclusion and some recommendations

# What is communicating research?

- A media practice involving coverage that seeks to provide useful “...information on social and hard scientific findings or news consisting the following: discoveries, inventions, controversies and scientific breakthroughs” – Panos Southern Africa RELAY, Nov 2007, Swaziland

# What does it involve?

- ▶ Journalism
- ▶ Development research
- ▶ Networks between the two above and other development actors / Mutual collaboration based on trust
- ▶ Capacity building
- ▶ Interpretation and reporting research
- ▶ Ethics or professionalism

- ▶ Ensuring that decision making on development issues is pro-poor and based on strong evidence
- ▶ Media in developing countries has increased access to local and international research findings
- ▶ Voices of those most affected (farmers) by the issues being raised by research are able to take part in media debates on these issues
- ▶ Journalists have increased capacity to engage with research

- ▶ Researchers have increased capacity to engage with journalists and the media in reaching their targets, end-users
- ▶ Media debate around development research is more sustained and comprehensive
- ▶ Media debate engages a broader group of stakeholders and has a greater impact on policy and practice

- ▶ Increased understanding of the role the media can play in creating inclusive public debate around research to influence policy and practice
- ▶ Greater commitment amongst key actors (large research donors and in-country research institutions) to
  - a. communicating research to mass audiences
  - b. engaging in public debate around research findings and recommendations



# Communicating research – Challenges

- ▶ Researchers can misrepresent research
- ▶ Journalists can misrepresent research
- ▶ Researchers may lack incentives to communicate research
- ▶ Journalists may lack the skills and or confidence to engage research(ers)
- ▶ Editors may not be interested in publishing issues raised by research – i.e. eds. playing a public interest role

- ▶ Policy makers may ignore public debate around issues raised by research through the media
- ▶ Policy makers may respond inappropriately to public debate on issues raised by research in the media
- ▶ A lot of research about Zambia (and the region) is laden with western values and interests
- ▶ Research may not be (seem) relevant or interesting to the ordinary people

# Communicating research – Opportunities

- Researchers can ensure their research has impact on development agenda – e.g. 8 MDGs
- Journalists can produce well-informed quality journalism in the public interest
- Editors can support journalistic specialization, build capacity of their staff and the credibility of their medium

- Policy makers will be exposed to public debate around issues raised or informed by research
- Ordinary people can make commentary on findings and recommendation and be part of research process
- Research that is scrutinised in the public domain is transparent and legitimate

# Reporting research – Why bother?


- ▶ The two district inception workshops discussed identified:
- ▶ Inadequate information points at the point of delivery – There is need to assist research to package information that is sellable to the end users and improve on the use of radio for communicating research
- ▶ Monopoly of research process by research – To facilitate for information sharing among the stakeholders in the platform, packaging and coordinated dissemination

# Relevance, influence and journalism

- To support social justice and development processes research needs to be relevant to ordinary peoples needs and experiences
- Often, research needs to be debated in public to have influence, not to be hidden away in a library or in a government official's desk
- Journalism can play a role in ensuring debates around research findings feed into national debates around development

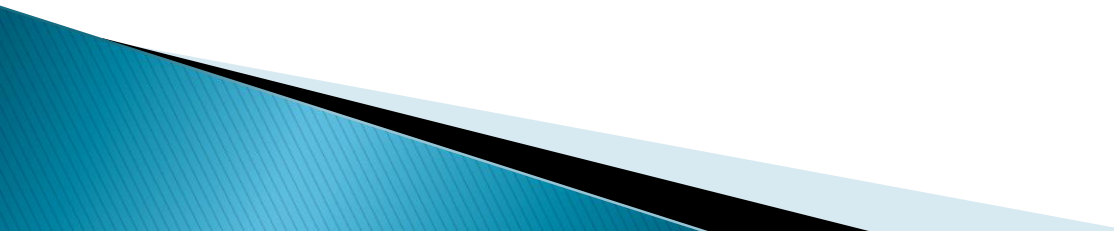
# Conclusion and recommendations

- ▶ There is vast opportunity for RIU to show case grassroots creation of a critical mass and demand for the end users of research
- ▶ RIU should consider partnering with the media in the target communities for improved farming and poverty reduction

- ▶ Tried and tested technologies in Conservation Agriculture and community based natural resources management through extensive research needs to be debated on at a larger scale by small scale farmers, policy and the public
  - ▶ RIU can facilitate this process through extensive involvement of media, research, policy, farmers and other development actors at the grassroots level
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- ▶ As information, research and other appropriate technologies are communicated through the media most of these challenges in knowledge market will be resolved to a greater extent
- ▶ Some activities could include community radio, magazines and other print formats, drama, film festivals, Insaka at community level, field days, farmer field schools, exposure visit or exchange visits

- ▶ RIU should think of making a case in the knowledge/information platform by looking at how best they can create adequate awareness of research findings and stimulate demand for research among the end users
  - ▶ RIU can remobilize the information centers (with ZNFU) around community radios to demand for research and technologies in CA – the RLCs or RFF concept improved
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▶ Thank you for your attention

