Communicating research through the media

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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

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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

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• 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
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

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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.
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.
Thank you for your attention