NATURAL RESOURCES SYSTEMS PROGRAMME

PROJECT REPORT[1]

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Report Title

A synthesis of communication products and practices across the RNRRS. Scientific report.

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1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 The aim of the project

The aim of the communication synthesis project is to develop, and make available: one (or more) evidence based framework for the management, monitoring and evaluation of communication for uptake promotion of DFID RNR research strategy, its programme and projects; and evidenced based good practice in planning and implementing communication plans for DFID RNR Research Strategy projects. In the final phase of the RNRR programmes the focus has been on uptake and marketing and this is where the communication synthesis study has concentrated its work.

1.2 Recent DFID work on communication for research

In 2003 DFID CRD commissioned a review of research communication for its new research strategy. The review identified four key 'gaps' in the flow of development research information:

1. Between the international research community (where most development research is carried out) and international policy makers and practitioners
2. Between the international level and national level
3. Between national level researchers and national level policy makers and practitioners
4. Between the above and end users.

The review proposed ways of dealing with the first three gaps, but was unable to address the fourth because of lack of time. The review was based on processes of consultation etc. However, in spite of the need for lessons to be learned from the RNRRS programmes (Surr 2002) the communication work of the programmes was little researched at that time. Of 16 organisations invited to the consultation workshop the RNRR programmes were represented by two people from NR International. Consequently the lessons which could have fed into the first research guidelines were minimal. This situation is now being remedied with the secondment of a communication specialist to DFID CRD Communication Team.

It is to be hoped that this synthesis study, particularly of the work of NRSP, will significantly contribute to thinking on how to deal with this fourth gap as well as having a valuable contribution to make to the other three. In carrying out the synthesis study we also hope to determine the effect that the previous research into communication has had on the programmes, on those who carry out research for them, and on the organisations for which researchers work.

1.3 DFID research into communication for uptake: the historical background

The need for research findings to be communicated more widely and effectively is a concern for those working in development whether they are research programme managers, researchers, funding agencies, or users of research. And the way in which this might be accomplished is the subject of much debate in conferences, workshops, research reports, strategy documents, literature reviews, case studies and guidelines.

This concern is not new and much effort has been directed by communication specialists to researching and practicing how best to communicate the findings of agricultural and health research in particular. Whilst initially this work was focused on poor rural communities and the organisations working with them, latterly it has also looked at urban and peri-urban populations and the policy/decision makers who might affect what is being done.

Over the last decade there has been considerable concern about the uptake of RNR research outputs, and the role of communication in achieving impact in wider development goals. This concern cuts across programme and project portfolios as is evidenced by several seminal studies commissioned to examine dissemination, uptake and impact. Some of these were sectoral (e.g. Henderson and Martin, 1997 on Plant Sciences, Morton, 1997 on Livestock Production) and some crosscut all RNR Programmes (e.g. Pearce, Bebbington and Farrington, 1993, Farrington and Edwards, 1993, Science Connections Limited 1994, Garforth and Usher 1996 and 1997).

In response to this concern DFID NRSP SEM commissioned research (Norrish et al 1999) to investigate the extent to which communication strategies were being put in place and implemented and the feasibility of implementing a communication strategy across all DFID RNRR programmes. This research, based on in-depth case studies, found that approaches to communication for uptake promotion were piecemeal. However it also revealed many strengths in the case study projects. Put in place in all projects these would provide a sound basis for improved communication and dissemination strategies. They included:

- an inception and design phase during which the communication context of different stakeholder groups can be investigated and a communication strategy which meets their needs and capacities can be negotiated
- good collaborative links often built up over time which provide the pathways for dissemination
- good relations between project leaders and collaborators
- the use of local skills which can help to build capacity and ensure sustainability
- the building up of local networks and activities to support them
- the attempts to match dissemination to different needs and contexts

These findings led to a set of recommendations for improved communication strategies at three levels, DFID RNRR Strategy, Programmes and Projects (Norrish et al 1999) and to a set of Guidelines (Norrish et al 2000). The Guidelines were intended to inform all programmes and be supplied to all project leaders.

Naturally the programme which had commissioned the research took on board the recommendations from 7073 and used them to start developing its own strategy (Annex D1) under the auspices of the manager of the newly contracted out NRSP (to what is now HTSPE). In 1999 the NRSP commissioned a short piece of work on developing a strategy for the dissemination of completed projects (Mulhall 1999). The work was based on a desk survey of project documents. A list of the kind of information which might be needed for NRSP to make a judgement on whether a project was worth dissemination included:

- whether there is a good distribution system in place (for PR, advocacy, promotion, dissemination etc)
- whether support is needed and whether it is in place (e.g. credit, inputs, training, markets)
- whether farmers and organisations working with farmers need training in the use of methods and technologies and whether it is available
- whether support, (training and/or finance) is needed for activities and for the possible adaptation, translation, reproduction, distribution and follow up of materials and is it available.
- project outputs have been validated by farmers and researchers and evidence of validation.
- that media products (materials) have been developed to the point of usability (in the right language, format, right place) and evidence of validation.

This kind of detailed information was hard to find in project documentation. This has implications for project reporting, and especially for what needed to go into the FTR and for the need for some kind of tracking or M7E in relation to communication. Communication activities and the status of materials development, production and use were not required to be documented in any strategic way. This made it difficult to see what had been done, who was involved, whether follow up had been carried out etc.

In 2000 a second piece of research (Norrish 2000) was commissioned by DFID NRSP for the purpose of informing what NRSP might require of project leaders in order for communication for uptake promotion to be effective. This was also based on a series of case studies designed to evaluate the communication activities and media products which were intended to help in uptake promotion. The main findings were that although in most projects some kind of materials had been produced their impact was slight due to a lack of understanding of the:

- role and importance of materials in relation to activities during a project and their role in wider dissemination
- need to involve those for whom materials were intended in their production
- understanding of the communication context within which people live and work
- understanding of the real costs (time, skills and money) of producing appropriate materials in sufficient numbers and distributing them.

Participatory research activities, farm and research station visits, opportunities to interact regularly with extension etc, (for research teams, their collaborators and farmers) on the other hand, were successful in achieving uptake during the life of a project However, their continuation once the project was over was often uncertain. These findings led to recommendations at NRSP programme and project level which were related to planning and implementing uptake promotion communication activities during the project cycle.

Between them, the two field based pieces of research carried out 14 in-depth case studies interviewing a range of stakeholders from programme managers to end users.

The overall findings from all the research were that for communication which enables learning and uptake to happen there has to be:

- engagement which means something to all actors at all levels: PMs with researchers, researchers with their collaborators, collaborators with intermediaries and end users, intermediaries with end users and so on (see also Scoones 1998)
- activities and communication products tailored to the needs of different groups
- communications strategies must be active and involve iterative processes which focus on collaboration with, and the communication needs of, a wide range of stakeholders. (Norrish et al, 2000)

Since the research in 1998 there has been concerted work in relation to communication for the uptake promotion of natural resources research in the other five programmes represented in this synthesis study, but little of it can be as directly attributable to R7073 as that of the NRSP and, through its direct links (FMSP programme manager is on the NRSP steering group) to FMSP. The strategies put in place by the different programmes, the way in which they have been implemented, and the effect they have had is the subject of research for this synthesis study and will inform its outputs.

2 The Communication Synthesis Research

2.1 Research approach

Initially we planned to adapt the M&E method Outcome Mapping combined with Most Significant Change as our methodology.

> 'Outcome Mapping focuses on one specific type of result: outcomes as behavioural change. Outcomes are defined as changes in the behaviour, relationships, activities, or actions of the people, groups, and organizations with whom a program works directly. These outcomes can be logically linked to a program's activities, although they are not necessarily directly caused by them. These changes are aimed at contributing to specific aspects of human and ecological well-being by providing partners with new tools, techniques, and resources to contribute to the development process. Boundary partners are those individuals, groups, and organizations with whom the program interacts directly and with whom the program anticipates opportunities for influence. Most activities will involve multiple outcomes because they have multiple boundary partners.' (Earl et al 2001 pp1)

The Most Significant Change (MSC) is a process which involves:

> 'the collection of significant changes (SC) stories emanating from the field level, and the systematic selection of the most significant of these stories by panels of designated stakeholders or/and staff. ... When the technique is implemented successfully, whole teams of people begin to focus their attention on program impact.

However, although the time frame was too short to enable us to develop this to any extent the conceptual basis of the two methods informed the way in which the checklists for questions was developed and in decisions on what to follow up.

Following the Outcome Mapping theory we based our work on the assumption that programmes would put in place strategies and management tools which would enable their programme expectations to be met. The boundary partners in this case would primarily be the project leaders and their teams. In turn project leaders would put in place communication plans, activities and products, which would enable them to meet their expectations. Their boundary partners would vary considerably depending on project and country. The emphasis in interviews and analysis was to be on expectations and outcomes. What expectations did the programmes have from the management tools and support systems which they had put in place? And at the project level what expectations did the project teams have of their communication activities and products. Where possible we wanted to track the involvement of beneficiaries in the planning of activities and development of products; and the effect of this on the usefulness of activities and the usability of products. The MSC element was confined to asking individuals interviewed to tell us what the most significant change was for them in relation to communication.

2.2 The main question to be addressed in the research

The main research question being addressed by the communication synthesis study is:

> Have the communication strategies put in place by NRSP and other RNRR Programmes made a difference and, if so, what difference, why, and what can we learn from them about improving research outcomes?

This question is based on a rudimentary theory of change or proposition. According to Weiss (1977) 'a theory of change refers to the causal processes through which change comes about as a result of a program's strategies and action.' It relates to how practitioners believe individual, intergroup, and social/ systemic change happens and how, specifically, their actions will produce positive results. The propositions underpinning the synthesis study are that by putting in place an active communication strategy uptake promotion will be improved though better, more targeted communication activities and media products and that researchers will develop a better understanding of the importance of communication and put it into practice in all their research. In the process researchers will affect the way in which their organisations think about communication for uptake promotion.

the overarching questions which we wanted to address to enable us to answer the main research question. The starting point for the study was to determine:

- what communication strategies the six collaborating programmes had put in place
- whether there were common components to these strategies
- how they were managed
- whether there had been learning across programmes about the different strategies.
- whether there had been any influence from the earlier research (R7073)

Having determined this we then moved on to the main focus of the research which was the effect of putting these strategies in place at the project level. Here we wanted to find out:

- what changes there have been in researchers knowledge, attitudes, practice, and products as a result of the proactive management emphasis on communication for uptake
- whether such emphasis had led to any changes in outcome

Finally we wanted to see:

- whether there had been any effect on communications work in the organisations whose researchers have been recipients of programmes' funding.

The research teams' plan for answering these question was to determine the strategies and frameworks which programmes had put in place and their desired outcomes. We would then track the implementation and actual outcomes of these strategies through a series of mini case studies based on suggestions from Programme Managers.

2.3 Questions NOT addressed by the research

A brief word on what the project did not set out to do. No attempt has been made to classify the kinds of products emanating from projects nor has an analysis been made of the different approaches needed to communicate them. This work has been done many times over in relation to the programmes, to other RNR research, particularly extension for sustainable development, for health work, and from communication specialists, both on theory and documenting of practice. Material in abundance already exists, some of it as case studies, some of it in books, some in journals and some in the grey literature. Those natural resources researchers associated with the six programmes discussed here should be familiar with the DFID NRSP SEM Guidelines (Garforth, Norrish *et al* Volumes 1 and 2).

In addition the communication literature, both theory and practice has much to offer from over 40 years of experience both theoretical and practical, in all the sectors (agriculture, health, social development, education etc. It was not the purpose of this project to extensively review the work of communication specialists, but for researchers with access to the web the following websites provide good comprehensive starting points both to what has happened in the past and what is happening now:
http://www.Southbound.com.my
http://www.streaminitiative.org
http://www.idrc.ca
http://www.comminit.com
http://www.fao.org/publications/

2.4 Research activities

The research was conducted through a desk review of relevant literature and programme and project documents; by face-to-face interviews in the UK, Bangladesh, Uganda and the Caribbean and by email and phone interviews where necessary.

Initial interviews with Programme Managers of the six collaborating programmes (LPP, FRP, CPP, CPHP NRSP and FMSP) and other relevant programme staff in the UK and overseas were conducted to determine:

- what communication strategies they had put in place
- who else we might need to interview
- possible case studies.

Programmes also provided further evidence through various programme documents and their 2004-5 annual reports to DFID. Based on the interviews with programme managers and the documents they supplied we were able to determine who we needed to interview and the kinds of programme specific questions which we needed to ask (Annex C1).

In consultation with the programme managers 19 mini case studies in the Uganda (Table 2) Bangladesh (Table 2) and the Caribbean (Table 1), were selected (see Annexes C2,C3, and C4 for projects selected, contacts list and project documents).

Table 1: Caribbean

Prog	Code	Name	Country
NRSP	R8364	Promoting an holistic approach to agrochemical management in the Caribbean	Caribbean
	R8325	Policy relevant knowledge on feasible alternative natural resource based strategies for enhancing livelihoods	Caribbean
	R8317	Pro-poor policies and institutional arrangements for coastal management in the Caribbean	Caribbean
FMSP	R8468	Capacity Building for the FMSP Stock Assessment Tools and Management Guidelines	Caribbean

Table 2:Uganda

Prog	Code	Name	Country
NRSP	R8400	Advancing the use of the products of NRSP's past and current research projects in Eastern Africa	Uganda, Kenya
	R8211	Understanding and enhancing youth livelihoods in rural East Africa	Uganda, Kenya
FRP	R6549	Investigation of factors affecting the nutritive value of *Calliandra Calothyrsus* leaf as fodder for ruminants	Kenya, Tanzania
CPP	R8104	Promoting potato seed-tuber management for increased ware yields in Kapchorwa District, Eastern Uganda	Uganda
	R8105	Farmer-led multiplication of rosette resistant groundnut varieties for Eastern Uganda	Uganda
LPP	ZC0244	Kampala focus point for urban livestock keeping	Uganda
CPP/LPP	R8281	Linking the demand for, and supply of, agricultural production and post-harvest information in Uganda	Uganda
CPHP	R8250	Decentralised market information service in Lira District, Uganda	Uganda
	R8273	Improving the livelihoods of small-scale sweet potato farmers in Central Uganda through a crop post harvest-based innovation system	Uganda

Table 3: Bangladesh

Prog	Code	Name	Country
NRSP	R8083	Strengthened rural services for improved livelihoods in Bangladesh	Bangladesh
	R8306	Better options for integrated floodplain management – uptake promotion	Bangladesh
FRP	R8399	Improved livelihoods through the development of small-scale fruit processing enterprises in Asia	Bangladesh
FMSP	R8486	Promotion of FMSP guidelines	Bangladesh
CPP	R8367	Promoting farmer adoption and policy change for rice and vegetable pest pheromones in Bangladesh	Bangladesh
CPHP	R8216	An actor oriented approach to NR sector value addition: investigating post harvest networks and coalitions to enhance livelihoods in the Bangladeshi charlands	Bangladesh

For the case studies we interviewed project leaders, members of their research teams, collaborating institutions and stakeholders, including beneficiaries. As ever in these situations we were able to interview more people around some of the projects than around others. The most complete are written up and can be found in Annex D3)

We also interviewed:

- overseas and UK programme staff with specific regional responsibilities for CPHP and LPP
- Director of IMA who ran the FRP training course
- participants from FRP organised training courses
- project leaders who have had to present communication plans in addition to filling in the usual project proposal document (RD1) for NRSP and FMSP
- researchers known to have taken on board NRSP approaches to communication and had an effect on the way communication is conducted in specific organisations (STREAM in Bangkok, ASARECA and related organisations in East Africa, CNRS in Bangladesh)

Additional evidence has been provided at a late stage in the research as projects have submitted their final technical reports some of which the project have been able to see and, in some cases, review.

3 COMMUNICATION SYNTHESIS FINDINGS: THE LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The literature review was designed to inform the project of any major shifts in thinking in relation to communication for RNRR since R7037 had been completed. In the event the findings from a huge amount of literature theoretical and practical, were interesting and somewhat disturbing in equal measure. Three issues were raised which are discussed more fully below: there was little or no literature from the natural resources sector, the debates in the wider literature appeared static and the work of communication researchers and practitioners was hardly discernable in that literature.

The review that follows references some of the material used, a full review seems unnecessary given that two extensive literature reviews have been published over the last couple of years (Hovland 2003, Vincent 2005).

3.2 Where is the literature dealing with RNRR communication?

Firstly, little or no literature dealing with renewable natural resources communication for research was found. The exceptions to this appear to be publications from FAO on communication for natural resource management (Feek and Morry 2003, Ramirez and Quarry 2004). The first of these is designed to ...'facilitate a process of mutual learning among different stakeholders interested in sharing experiences about communication for natural resource management. It looks at how experience is, and can be guided by theory and how theory can be derived from understanding experience. It challenges us to reflect on our own and others' work by treating theoretical approaches as interchangeable tools within a variety of different communication and natural resource management initiatives'.

Deriving theory from experience highlights the need for projects to document and share what is, and has happened, both successful and unsuccessful, in their communication activities and the development of products for use by a wide range of stakeholders. Reading of Final Technical Reports indicates that this is still an area which is not well documented unless the project is researching communication or there is a specific demand for communication to be reported on. Experience in communication is seldom written up for dissemination through easily accessible publications and websites. If communication experience were to be written up it is hard to see where it would be published to reach the research, as opposed to communication specialist, audience.

The Ramirez and Feek (2004) publication aims to help NR managers to shift the emphasis of their work to participation, consultation, listening and training; tasks where communication excels and provides practical support to NR decision makers. The work reflects the major shift in paradigms in which '...one is no longer attempting to create a need for the information disseminated, but instead, information is disseminated for which there is a need. Experts and development workers respond rather than dictate, they choose what is relevant to the context in which they are working. The emphasis is on communication exchange rather than on persuasion, as was the case in the diffusion model.'(Participatory Communication for Social Change

Servaes et al). Face -to- face communication is inherent to participation and means that researchers will find themselves spending more time in the field making and maintaining collaborative relationships which mean something to both sides. Donors, research managers and research teams need to be aware of this as it has implications for the kinds of skills needed in teams and the time and therefore cost which need to be taken `account of in proposals.

There may be little literature addressing communication for natural resources research but FAO holds regular roundtables on communication for development. These are conceived of as an informal international forum for donors and those working in communication where approaches can be harmonized, news of progress given and good practices shared. The organisers of the roundtables see Communication for Development as a powerful tool to mitigate poverty and hunger and promote social change in many countries, especially in the agriculture and rural development sectors. The most recent roundtable in 2004 commissioned papers for discussion around the following themes:

- Communication for Natural Resource Management (NRM)
- Communication in Research, Extension and Education
- Communication for Isolated and Marginalized Groups

The objective of the 2004 Roundtable was to examine, discuss and assess current trends in relation to these themes and to set priorities for future directions in this field. Each roundtable makes a declaration and an edited version of the guiding points from the 2004 declaration can be seen in BOX 1.

BOX 1: Summary of points from the FAO 2004 Roundtable declaration

- advocates and practitioners commit themselves to a deeper engagement with policy-makers to ensure that communication is recognized as a central component in all development initiatives. Of importance .... a systematic coordinated effort to establish a clear, accessible body of evidence drawn from current best practice.
- Donors and development agencies should set up well-resourced Communication for Development units to implement initiatives within their organizations and to promote Communication for Development with other donors and agencies.
- Governments, donors and development agencies should require the incorporation of a communication needs assessment in any development initiative ....
- The United Nations should set up an interagency group to analyze communication experiences, suggest improvements and develop a common approach to Communication for Development.
- Training initiatives should be fostered in developing countries, building on existing experiences. ... Participatory Development Communication should be integrated into existing development curricula..

3.3 Debates in the wider literature on research communication

Secondly it seemed as if the debate had moved on little from what it had been in the 1990's. or even earlier. This appears to be true whether the debates are coming from literature based in communication (e.g. Bessette 2004) or from researchers whose main areas of expertise are not communication. Rather than moving on, the debate appears in some ways static, focused on 'Communication of research for/and.(health,

social development, poverty reduction etc)..' each area of research doing its own literature review, its own case studies, analysis and frameworks, to reach a sort of plateau of understanding at which point the manual or guideline specific to that topic area of research is written. (It is not always clear whether these manuals have been pre-tested in any way, or whether any support is available to help people learn to use them, or adapt them to their own ways of working.) Missing from much of the wider debate are issues of usability and perhaps even more significantly of language (which language, what level of language, to translate or not, who should write, which language for workshops). Power is an important factor in making decisions about language use (Robinson1996) but is still largely ignored.

One new feature, which has introduced advocacy into the debate, of this considerable body of literature (coming from academic writing, conferences and workshops) is the exploration of the relationship between research and policy. Hovland's comprehensive Literature Review of Communication of Research for Poverty Reduction (2003) identifies common recommendations and highlights emerging gaps. These recommendations chime with those of R7037 and PD93 where the focus was on intermediaries and beneficiaries. These recommendations can be found, in one form or another, throughout the academic research literature, presentations at conferences and workshops, and in manuals and guidelines from around the world. They include the following (adapted from Hovland):

- Strengthen researchers' communication skills
- Aim for close collaboration between researchers and stakeholders
- Incorporate communication activities into project design from the start
- Encourage user engagement;
- Map existing information demand and information-use environment, promote participative communication for empowerment.
- Understand the environment in which research will be used – there are many factors which will determine uptake of which good communication is only a part.

The four areas that Hovland identifies as emerging gaps, or themes, in the literature are: the failure to see communication as a systemic issue, the failure to see the influence of wider systems on the effectiveness of communication, the lack of discussion regarding the involvement of user engagement and the fact that communication is still seen as a means to bring about corrective action rather than stimulating 'independent and critical debate.' On first reading these emerging gaps looked the most interesting in terms of new thinking. However, a second reading raised doubts about them. It seemed that they might be an artefact of the literature available to be reviewed, but that they were not necessarily representative of current practice in RNRRS programmes and projects. A quick review with some programme management staff confirmed this thinking. Programme managers are well aware that projects must communicate at what is called the systemic level and take account of political, social and economic contexts. An example of the kind of work which is being done is shown in BOX 2

BOX 2: Systemic level communication work

Research is part of an innovation system not a stand-alone. If the research entities and products are strong but they operate where policies are not conducive or market conditions and input supply systems are weak it is quite likely that the results cannot be taken up.

For example bio-pesticides were developed in Kenya which were effective against nematodes at a time when the most effective chemical was being withdrawn. But no matter how many papers, articles, videos etc were made in communicating their efficacy and cost effectiveness there was a barrier to adoption because their were no guidelines to register them for pest control use on a large scale. The market for these products existed (largely through the export horticulture sector where northern retailers were imposing rigorous standards) and the channels for influencing policy existed because pressure was exerted by large commercial enterprises.

The expertise from the research was brought together by the CPP to influence policy. A pragmatic approach was used in that a legal notice was developed to amend the Pest Control Act not to bring in a completely new act which would take time and money. (Francis Kimmins interview 2005)

Programmes and projects can and do facilitate different levels of user engagement in communication of research. However whilst programme and project experience in these areas needs to get into the wider consciousness the extent of double loop learning is a different matter. There is some evidence from this communication synthesis that it is happening, although it may not be formalised. Organisations are changing the way they do things, based on this learning and, perhaps more importantly, on their own capacity to act.

3.4 Where is the work of communication researchers and practitioners?

Thirdly, and, from a communication perspective arguably, the most important issue, the work done over the last few decades by communication professionals, academics, researchers and field workers, particularly in the field of natural resources research and health, gets little mention; and that communication researchers and practitioners are barely consulted. In 2003 a group of communication for development professionals working in natural resource management (where a lot of work is about communicating with farmers about the findings of research) met at a roundtable in FAO to discuss this very issue and set out an agenda for action on which little action seems to have been taken. The web was to play a part in this action plan. However, although there are now 'publically available websites dealing with communication (e.g. The Communication Initiative) and email discussion groups supported by websites where materials from those in the groups are deposited for all to access (e.g. Pelican and Drum Beat Chat and egov) it seems unlikely that these are reaching the audience of researches and policy makers who might benefit from them' (Ricardo Ramirez, Don Richardson pers comms 2005).

3.5 Manuals, guidelines and toolkits

It was not part of the original intention to review guidelines, manuals and toolkits to any extent, but what has been remarkable throughout the project has been the quantity of this kind of literature available. This wealth of material represents a lot of learning for the people who have been involved in its creation and production and provides a useful resource for others, particularly those in the North. Much of it is written by researchers rather than communication specialists. A quick glance through this material suggests that much of it is still written in a rather top-down manner. Most of it is in English although some may also be in one of the languages of wider communication (French or Spanish). A lot is now available (free) on the web, if you have a good enough connection, plentiful supply of paper and a printer (preferably colour). Some is still only available in hard copy. All these factors mean that much useful material it less available to those in the South.

The best practice guidelines for RNRR which were developed as a result of research commissioned by DFID through its Socio-Economic Methodologies programme (now defunct) are significantly absent from the work of, for example, the RAPID programme which is also funded by DFID. Where RNRR work does feature it tends to be there through personal long-term contact. For example the work features in the Vincent review as the communication synthesis project leader has worked for several years with Healthlink with whom Vincent was also working at the time of writing. There seems to be no formal mechanism by which new researchers are informed by the donors of what has already been researched even if it is in a different field.

One important set of guidelines from the perspective of this project has been the CRD Communication of research: Guidance notes for Research Consortia (Version 1 October 2005). The presence of the communication specialist in the CRD communication team has ensured that material produced through the RNRR Programmes has contributed to these notes. However their importance to this project is that their development during the process of this research raises questions about the role and value of this research. If the research is intended to make a contribution what can that contribution now be? Based on what the notes contain it would seem that issues of engagement: of making materials useful, usable and accessible through carrying out a communication needs and context analysis with stakeholders and through pre-testing, and addressing language issues, may still need attention; likewise the need for, and role of, communication specialists within teams; and how all of this work may be assessed. This synthesis research is also able to provide examples of good practice in communication planning, in which project teams enter into a chain of iterative communication processes (including M&E of communication) working with and involving a wide range of stakeholders with differing information needs.

3.6 Conclusion

From the perspective of a communication specialist there is little new in the recommendations in the literature to inform the next round of RNRR. Over the last forty years or so since the Fogo Process introduced the idea of participatory communication, communication for development has been largely about practice and learning what works and what does not. Developing theory has been an iterative process in which practitioners look at theory and try to put it into practice and

theorists look at the work of practitioners to refine and develop their ideas. This work is documented and written up in books and journal articles as well as in project reports and other grey literature. The question is how is this work is to become better known and built on? The gap between those working in research and those working in communication for development remains. Researchers want to know how to go about communication, what works and what does not, how to work with different groups of stakeholders to meet their needs and so on.

4 COMMUNICATION SYNTHESIS FINDINGS: FIELD WORK

4.1 Introduction

This section is structured around the three sets of questions which we wanted to address at the programme level, the 'other organisations' level and the project level. The central question that everything was designed to answer is given below as a reminder to the reader:

Have the communication strategies put in place by NRSP and the other (five) collaborating programmes made a difference and, if so, what difference, why, and what can we learn from them about improving research outcomes?

4.2 Findings: Programme communication strategies

As a starting point we needed to find out what the programmes were doing in relation to communication. The questions which we set out to answer were:

1. What communication strategies have the six collaborating programmes put in place and why?
2. Across programmes: What are the common and specific components of the different strategies and what was their source:
3. How have these common and/or specific components contributed to the effectiveness of each approach?
4. How have programmes found out about each other's work in this area?
5. What has been the effect of the RNRRS programmes on each other's communications work for uptake promotion?

Finally we wanted to know whether R7037 (all programmes) and PD93 (NRSP only) recommendations had had any effect on what programmes were doing.

4.2.1 General findings on programme communication strategies

The approach to communication has shifted significantly from that seen in the 1998 research (Norrish et al 1999). It is important to note and understand that the learning process for managers about communication has been a long one (Norrish Maastricht paper), Managers have had to learn on the job and had many a push from DFID in terms of changes to DFID's own goals, from the evidence of commissioned research and from research projects. The previous manager of NRSP has documented in her interview for this study the long learning process which she and the programme went through (see Annex D6). An understanding of this long learning process, combined with the evidence from this project, and work carried out for the review of programmes documenting the slow uptake and impact through NRSP and personal networks of R7073 and PD93 (see Annex D2), is useful for donors, research managers and researchers as they all move towards a new approach to research which has an even stronger emphasis on communication and uptake than has been in place in the previous programmes.

Having gone through this learning process managers are all now committed to communication for uptake although, as one manager put it as he pointed at a diagram

of communication stakeholders ' that (poor households) is the area we are still frightened of'' (quote from interview). However, at the level of strategy none of the programmes had an explicitly documented communication strategy, which could be handed to anyone who wanted to know about it. Probably the most comprehensive view of communication work is to be found in the programme annual reports to DFID in which managers have to provide evidence of programme plans for uptake for which 'communication is a key means' (quote from interview). In this sense all have strategies and programme documents which describe or support some or all components (e.g. Good Practice in Communication by Graham Farrell for CPHP, Conceptual Impact Model by Margaret Quin for NRSP)

Much of the commitment we see now has been brought about through a push from DFID to focus on uptake promotion in the final stages of the programmes and the switch to a poverty focus (also from DFID). However, the commitment is more than just a nod in the right direction and shows the learning that has taken place. This is evidenced by the Programme Managers' varied approaches to, and the emphasis they place on, different aspects of communication.

In the last phase of the RNRRS the focus has been on research into use through uptake projects. Managers are all actively involved in promoting their programmes, but the aspects of communication on which the synthesis study has focused are those which aim to get research into use mainly through project work.

Programme Managers promote and support communication at the project level in a variety of ways. They now expect projects to carry out a range of activities including: planning communication from the start of a project; communication for awareness and uptake; stakeholder (including beneficiaries) involvement in communication planning and execution; locally led research projects; addressing a wide range of stakeholders from national government policy makers to community-based organisations and groups; from the highly literate to those with no literacy skills; tailoring communication activities and products to communication context and livelihoods; making use of a wide range of media and face-to-face interactions, using local languages for communication. Communication is not seen in isolation; as one manager put it 'we have learnt ... that projects must communicate at what is called the systemic (i.e. taking account of the political, economic and social context) level if they are to be sustainable and to continue once the DFID funding ends' (Kimmins Interview).

Programmes have rather different approaches to achieving their expectations from projects; some rely on the requirements as set out in project proposals whilst others go way beyond this with requirements for the delivery, reviewing and revising of separate communication plans which have to be reported on at specified intervals.

All programmes provide budgets for communication, although these may be provided in different ways. For example: projects can negotiate for additional funding at the MTR when the communication plan is reviewed (NRSP); the programme (FRP) has a budget for communication which can be allocated as the need arises, because often the planned cost doubles and therefore funds retained to allow for this; FRP also have a programme level budget which allows for programme level communication activities, including contracting a specialist science writer and specialist designer;

CPHP has programme development money for communication work as needed and the Regional Representatives can suggest activities etc. and call down funds for this from the programme; LPP have a budget support to regional co-ordinators for communication work.

4.2.2 Specific Programme strategies: FRP, CPHP, CPP, LPP

All programmes have mandatory requirements for projects to propose some kind of communication plan. At the most basic level this requires projects to fill out sections of the RD1. This is what might now be called a conventional approach as it has been in place for some years. Proposers have to answer a set of questions which effectively constitute a rudimentary communication plan. The example shown in BOX 3 is fairly typical.

BOX 3: FRP RD1 2005

15e. Which are the identified client institutions?

Indicate which client institutions or intermediate-users of research products (information/technology/ methodology) have been identified and have explicitly agreed the objectives of the research: as for section 11 above. Indicate, wherever possible, if they are then willing (and have funds) to use the products of the research work proposed, to generate uptake and apply the research results so as to have a positive developmental impact.

15f. What are the proposed promotion pathways for the uptake of the project outputs?

Identify how the outputs of the project will reach the end-users. This is very important and should be described in some detail. You will be responsible for detailing promotion pathways. The following headings must be addressed:

i) Have any market studies for the outputs been produced?

ii) How will the outputs be made available to intended users?

iii) What are the further stages needed to develop outputs?
(e.g. testing and establishing manufacture of a marketable product, or, testing of developmentally relevant technologies)

iv) How, and by whom, might further stages be carried out and paid for?

v) What mechanisms will be used in dissemination, who will be the target audiences and who will handle the dissemination?
e.g. personal professional contact; publications; hand-over of actual materials; training; technical internal report; other (please specify). While academic publications are considered to be important, they are unlikely to be sufficient to meet the needs of this Programme. Include details of any training associated with the research, justifying it in the UK and in the host country. It should be noted that academic training per se is not a major role for the Knowledge Strategy.

Four of the programmes **FRP, CPHP, CPP, LPP** use this approach. Projects routinely report against these plans but there appears to be no regular feedback from the programme on these reports. An example of a filled in plan can be seen in Annex D4.

In addition to this common approach to the development of a communication plan each of the four programmes has taken a different approach to the way in which they support research teams in their communication work. These are set out below.

The **CPHP** has adopted an approach to research called Partners for Innovation. This involves a wider range of key actors and institutions (not just researchers and their

organisations); and continuous two-way communications between these actors so that the users and suppliers of new knowledge effectively understand each other's needs (see Barnett 2005 for a more detailed explanation of the approach). As part of this new approach the programme has appointed full time Regional Representatives (India, Ghana, Uganda and Zimbabwe) with their own budgets and ToRs mandated to help projects on project planning and communication. They:

- can meet with each other without the PM present. For the extension year of the programme they have consolidated work plans with PM's work plan into one log frame with responsibility spelt out
- have role to play in putting out call, initial reviewing, review of MTRs. Calls decentralised to regions
- each have a website, and try not to overlap in what websites provide, they are all linked to each other
- assist projects on communication issues.

Projects set up coalitions of partners and have regular meetings which are intended to increase learning between partners. This learning is documented in project reports. The programme also ran a workshop for all projects to learn from projects how the new approach was progressing. The focus on a wide range of stakeholders and continuous communication processes has something in common with the approach taken by NRSP and FMSP but there is no requirement to develop or report on communication plans.

FRP's Revised, 2000 Strategy states: "the need to address a wide range of audiences, from national government policy makers to community-based organisations and from completely literate to the functionally illiterate and innumerate, has encouraged FRP to foster a correspondingly wider range of media for communication of research outputs. Researchers are made aware of the need to target information to a wide range of different stakeholder. However, the main emphasis is on policy makers and projects must produce at least one policy or practice briefing note for which guidelines are available.

To help projects in their communication the FRP contracted Ian McDonald Associates (IMA) to work with them to devise a week long training course in communication methods and scientific advocacy which all researchers invited to attend. The course was held in the UK, Ghana, Thailand and ?? and was open to other programmes (only one person from another programme attended), On-going mentoring support after the course ended was provided by the training organisation. This course is now offered as part of IMA's regular overseas training programme and the work book which accompanied the course is freely available on the web.

The **LPP** set up a system of part-time country/regional dissemination, promotion and up scaling co-coordinator mentored by three UK experts with a remit to support project communication (e.g. Communication planning workshop with communication specialist, putting projects in touch with organisations with whom to collaborate). Although not specifically directed at communication there is a requirement for a pre-proposal stage stakeholder meetings and report which are funded (this does not mean project will be funded). Projects are also encouraged to hire in communications expertise.

The programme has been very proactive in commissioning research activities which address communication. John Morton's work (200?)on how research programmes can interact with parliamentarians (particularly where that may be hindering uptake in some way) is a good example of this. The LPP also by-passes the projects and puts together materials which are distributed, for example, to intermediaries in developing countries. They provide customised products (e.g. CDs) for specific stakeholders. A writer is contracted to rewrite scientific/technical information into user friendly language.

The **CPP** has employed a communication specialist to support projects and promote programme work. Fifty percent of her time is given over to CPP work and the rest is spent helping LPP, CPHP and FRP (all housed in the same NR International buildings). Although CPP leaves communication up to the individual project leaders the programme has been very involved in thinking about, and working on communication for uptake for some time. In 1999 it commissioned research projects specifically looking at the factors that affect uptake. These were presented at a workshop in 2000 (report) at which the six programmes being addressed in this study were represented by members of management teams and researchers. Two of the facilitators were authors of SEM Best Practice Guidelines on communication (Pat Norrish and Chris Garforth). Further work by a taskforce culminated in 2001 in a CPP Promotional Strategy (Garforth 2001).

4.2.3 Specific Programme strategies: NRSP and FMSP

Two programmes **NRSP and FMSP** have highly developed requirements which projects commissioned since 2003 must address. All projects must have a communications plan which is presented separately from other project documents. In addition projects have to spell out the communication expertise which will be provided either by the researchers themselves or by buying in communication expertise. Projects are supported in this mandatory requirement by guidelines provided by the programmes. NRSP projects are also provided with a guideline to proposers on CIM, the programmes conceptual impact model and a CD of 'good practice' projects to help researchers at different stages of the implementation of their communication plans.

The kind of questions which have to be addressed are exemplified by those formally set out in the NRSP Guidelines (BOX 4) on preparing a communication plan provided to all proposers at the concept note phase, and indicating what is expected at different stages of the project.

Projects are required to revise and report on communication plans at concept note, proposal, mid-term and FTR. These plans and progress reports are reviewed by at least the communication specialist and the PM and these reviews are fed back to the project leader. An example of a communication plan developed for NRSP can be seen in Annex D4 together with one extracted from an RD1. The difference in what is required is immediately obvious.

No specific criteria have been developed against which plans are reviewed, it is really down to the expertise of the communication specialist in consultation with other reviewers and the programme manager. The expectation is that project teams will

actively engage with stakeholders to develop communication plans rather than sit in their own offices to devise them. The focus is on stakeholder (from policy makers through to beneficiaries as appropriate) engagement and an understanding of what has to be communicated.

BOX 4: **NRSP's 10 key Communication Plan Questions**

Q1 What are the aims of the project's Communication Plan in relation to the project purpose?

Q2 Who within the project team will be responsible for the implementation of the Communication Plan?

Q3 Who are the communication stakeholders for the project?

Q4 What are the research products and other issues that the project team need to communicate about with the communication stakeholders?

Q5 What are the current knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of the communication stakeholders in relation to the products to be promoted?

Q6 What are the objectives of communicating about the products to the communication stakeholders (i.e. what might they want to be able to do once the project team have communicated with them)?

Q7 What media and channels might be used to communicate with the various communication stakeholders in relation to the research products (e.g. what is accessible to them, what are their preferences, what can be sustained after the project is over)?

Q8 How will the project team ensure that communication materials are useful (e.g. contain relevant information), usable (e.g. in a language they understand) and accessible (e.g. at a suitable time and place) for those with whom the project wishes to communicate during and after the project?

Q9 Are the proposed Communication Plan activities and materials included in the project budget?

Q10 How will the project team monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Communication Plan and its component parts?

Source: NRSP Communication Plan Guidelines Research/Uptake Projects

Finally, the FMSP require all uptake projects to report against their communication plan in the FTR which is then reviewed by a communication specialist against specific criteria; for NRSP selected FTRs with a heavy communication component are also reviewed by the SG communication specialist, but not against formally set out criteria.

NRSP has a communication specialist on its steering group whose main role has been in carrying out research for the programme (PD93) helping to put together guidelines for researchers, and reviewing communication plans at all stages of a project. FMSP uses the same person as a consultant and has also paid for one of its own management staff to be trained through the FRP training programme.

4.3 Programmes learning from each other

There is very little evidence of cross programme learning or networking on communication, even amongst those programmes which share an organisation and a building. Time seems to be a factor here 'DFID expects programmes to do it but it demands time and there are many other programme-level things that demand time and so networking slips.'

However, an opportunity for leaning from each other was provided by the CPP Workshop in 2000 on the factors affecting uptake and adoption of DFID CPP research outputs (Hainsworth and Eden-Green Eds. 2000). CPHP and NRSP programme managers attended and other programmes were represented by members of the management teams.

In the case of FMSP considerable learning has taken place because the FMSP manager is a member of the NRSP Steering Group which meets regularly throughout the year for a full day.

The lack of cross programme learning means that, with the exception of the CPP workshop and FMSP PM SG membership, it is difficult to discern how programmes find out about each other's communication work. At the programme level materials which are for general distribution (e.g. NRSP Highlights, FRP Prunings) are sent to all programmes, other than this little exchange appears to goes on.

4.4 The effect of recommendations and guidelines from R7037 (all programmes) and PD93 (NRSP only) on programme communication strategies

As has been mentioned previously NRSP and, through close association, FMSP have both been strongly affected by 7073 and PD93. In particular NRSP has taken on-board most of the recommendations. The work of Norrish and Garforth has directly affected CPP through their close collaboration over the CPP workshop and on the task force which helped to determine CPP's overall strategy. It is less easy to see what the effect has been on the other programmes, although the fact that the programme managers were all involved in the research carried out for R7037 suggest that it must have made some contribution to programme thinking.

4.5 The effect of programme strategies on researchers and their work

Project level questions

1. What have been the effects (organisational and individual, in knowledge attitude and practices) of RNRRS programmes being proactive in communication for the uptake and promotion of research products?

2. What has been the change in Outcomes?

4.5.1 Changes in attitude to communication

PLs and members of project teams appreciate the mandatory requirement/emphasis on communication especially the focus on which stakeholders need/want what in terms of communication (BOX 5).

BOX 5: Researchers support for mandatory communication plans

The mandatory communication plan is useful in that it forces one to think about institutional linkages and the actors and institutions one has to address to bring about change. I think that it has improved the quality of our work in that we have had to address institutional issues and focus on communicating our results in forms that address institutional issues and can be understood by those in relevant institutions at the interface with communities and policy communications. It has also been useful in our project, in that part of our research is to critically analyse the institutional processes in managing the environment.

With few exceptions researchers think that communication is an important part of project work and feel that it is their responsibility. This does seem to be a change in attitude from 1998, but one which is hardly surprising given the emphasis by DFID on uptake, and, in the UK, a general push on the communication of science to different audiences. As with the programme managers this change seems to be more than lip service, researchers are really becoming interested in all aspects of communication, innovatory in their approach to it, and developing a critical faculty in relation to their own communication work. this is best seen in this synthesis study in a short set of comments from FMSP researchers working on uptake projects (Annex D5).

Although researchers were generally happy about the focus on communication some serious questions were raised specifically in relation to research projects per se rather than uptake projects which is what this research has focused on. These are exemplified by the extracts from interviews with two project leaders (one in the UK one from Ghana) discussed below and the extracts taken from their interview in Boxes 6 and 7.

One team of researchers found their communications project to be 'very positive and challenging and also very successful. This is in the large part due to the communication matrix.' (quote from interview). Never-the-less the PL raised some serious questions about the problems he and his team found with the approach being taken to communication in the programme he was working for. The most important point raised for all concerned in communication of research is this: "The communications strategy did not provide the option or opportunity to consider the following strategy: Complete work and evidence-base to a point where it can be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal, preferably a very high profile journal such as Science or Nature, when published there then use this as the benchmark for the quality of information to be communicated. This is a higher risk strategy, but provides much higher returns and is defensible." This statement relates directly to the question which has to be answered by all uptake projects about what they have to communicate about. It is difficult to start an uptake project if the research outputs have not been clarified, and of course, validated.

BOX 6: Issues of research quality and communication

We have raised concerns, which may be outside of the remit of your project but which you may nevertheless find interesting. Our project was led primarily by natural scientists whose main funder and customer is the UK Department for Food, and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). The entry level our organisation uses for scientific advice provided to DEFRA is that it must have been published in a peer-reviewed journal. This is the fundamental 'gold standard' quality check used in natural sciences.

We thus found it very difficult to consider communicating a research product that consisted solely of a DFID final technical report. To our mind this does not constitute an appropriate knowledge-base upon which to base a communications strategy. Final technical reports are peer-reviewed, but they would not be considered to be the same independent rigorous test of quality and validity. This would not be considered to be a credible evidence base. We felt that by communicating such information we ran the risk of sending out messages that were not defensible. A question that nagged us a lot through out the project was whether you (or the appropriate minister) would like to write and implement policy based on evidence that the authors did not (yet) consider to be defensible?

The communications strategy did not provide the option or opportunity to consider the following strategy: Complete work and evidence -base to a point where it can be submitted to a peer-reviewed journal, preferably a very high profile journal such as Science or Nature, when published there then use this as the benchmark for the quality of information to be communicated. This is a higher risk strategy, but provides much higher returns and is defensible.

By the same arguments we were uncomfortable using a communication strategy which had only been published in report form. We would have preferred to base our communications strategy on a more independent document, e.g. book published by credible publisher, paper published in a communication journal etc.

I accept that our team members may represent a fairly small and unusual constituency within your target audience, and consequently I would not necessarily expect a generic document to be able to encompass all potential issues and viewpoints. Overall I think we found our communications project to be very positive and challenging and also very successful. This is in the large part due to the communication matrix. (Quote from interview)

The relationship of quality to the way in which communication strategies are developed is shown in the full statement from the PLs interview (see BOX 6). These are important enough to be included here in their entirety as they not only question the way communication is carried out, but issues of quality of research which are rarely raised in the literature on communication of research. This issue of quality was raised in a different way by another researcher this time in relation to the pressure to communicate from the start of a project and the dangers inherent in communicating before research results have been generated and reflected on (BOX 7).

4.5.2 Researchers use of guidelines

In general research teams appreciate the emphasis on communication especially the focus on which stakeholders need/want what in terms of communication. The guidelines ‘Added quite a lot of value asking people to jump through hoops... written in such a way that you had to think about it, because not prescriptive. Amused

by getting it all, but when you saw it were inspired to come up with succinct strategy...' (quote from Interview). Most NRSP and FMSP project leaders have used the communication plan guidelines sent out by the programmes although none mentioned use of the examples available on CD. It might be that the examples appear daunting and help is needed to use them. Those researcher who seemed to get the most from guidelines mentioned the value of personal guidance from a communication specialist on using them. In one case a preference was expressed for help to come from an in country specialist if possible so that help could be provided as and when needed through the development and implementation of a communication plan rather than one input during the planning phase. This appeared to lead to a faster learning curve for all concerned.

BOX 7: Dangers in the pressure to communicate

... research results have to be generated and reflected upon before they can be communicated. This takes considerable time. Yet there is pressure to start communicating results from day one of the project. This can result in the project beginning to communicate when it has nothing substantial to communicate. This is not so much a problem with target groups and end-users involved in the processes of carrying out research as with target institutions and intermediaries. This can have two undesirable impacts. Firstly, actors within the communication intermediaries and institutions view the researchers as not being serious, and wasting their time, and dismiss the research. This is not necessarily such a serious problem, since with tenaciousness and patience the researchers can gradually overcome these negative images, while having built up some sort of relationship and familiarity with the target groups. However, this is more difficult with more powerful actors (who are usually intermediaries and target institutions), because high up policy actors, donors and politicians have the power to totally dismiss researchers and refuse to interact with them again. The second danger is that when the research is not well advanced and the research group establish a reference group, the reference group becomes a talking shop in which received wisdom is expressed by the target group, and the research becomes compromised by conventional wisdom rather than by trying to see things in a new light. The intellectual comfort zone of policy makers then comes to impose itself on the project, and the pressures of communicating results in poor research being carried out.

Very few project leaders working for the other four programmes mentioned use of the SEM Best Practice Guidelines or the NRSP Brief on Communication for Scaling-up.

Whilst guidelines were appreciated and used some felt that they acted as straight jackets whereas what was needed was flexibility for researchers to bring on board new stakeholders as a project developed and to cater to changing contexts and communication needs as necessary (BOX 8).

BOX 8: The need for flexibility

...The communication plan is much easier to implement when the project does not challenge the status quo. However, when the project does challenge the status quo one needs a much more flexible plan, which is able to enter into unforeseen and unexpected alliances when the opportunity occurs, and which is not worried about grinding away with little support from those in dominant positions in the policy process or with opposition and hostility to the project findings.

The notion that guidelines act as straight jackets may be more one of perception than of the reality of what PMs want. However, it may be that presentation of guidelines needs to emphasise the spirit rather than the letter of the law, but also give guidance on which are the minimum letters which do need to be observed to ensure the effectiveness of the communication plan developed by the project. This kind of flexibility which many projects adopted and which the critics appear to want is time consuming and suggests that programme managers need to address the way in which a budget system could be devised to support such flexibility.

4.5.3 Training

There is more ambivalence towards short courses of training in communication and advocacy (FRP) or training workshops in developing a communication plan for a specific project (LPP). What was liked on the FRP courses was as much to do with the fact that the workshop brought research teams working on forestry projects together as the training content. Being together for a week gave the participants a valued opportunity to discuss common problems and to meet and spend time with others involved in similar work. Such opportunities for cross project working and learning seem rare.

The most obvious finding seems to be that those with little previous exposure to communication planning appreciated the one week FRP training course the most. It was unfortunate that those whose projects were well advanced were not able to put into practice what they were learning on their own projects. Luckily the learning was not lost as several participants ndicat4d that they are now committed to communication planning to the extent that they are building it into project proposals even if, as one reported, ' they (other funders) are not as rigorous in their demands (on communication) as DFID. many were able to name research proposals to other donors for which they had used what they had learnt. The FRP course was supported by a workbook and one respondent said that he uses it all the time for planning communication.

For those with more experience of communication for research uptake and of having to put communication in place '...the course was useful as it confirmed that the approach being taken to communication in the project was the right way to go. My approach to communication had already changed about 5 years ago...'. Suggestions for improving the training workshops came mostly from these participants and focused on:

- content: there should be more emphasis on practice than on theory and that examples should be drawn from forestry
- timing of training: to be of real help, training needs to be done at the very start of a project
- facilitators should be experienced in communication in developing countries so that they can readily draw on their experience.

The LPP workshops, which were designed specifically for developing communication plans, was much appreciated as they came at the start of the project cycle and was directly linked to each project. Unfortunately the enthusiasm generated was somewhat dampened when the budget needed for putting the plans in place was not

forthcoming. This appears to be an issue of programme timing and budget allocation rather than of the wrong kind of on-the-job training. The person who led the workshop was later included in a series of Small Stock workshops at which communication was a feature and it was ‚Clear from this that project teams are more aware of communication issues ‚This raises the question of follow up-on any kind of capacity building.

For both courses on-going mentoring was provided after the end of the courses by those who ran them. However, although this feature was met with approval little use was made of it for reasons which are unclear, but could be because ‘most project teams were old hands and probably didn’t see the need for another layer of expertise or there may not have been a strong enough steer from the programme management to projects to make use of the service‘ (quote from Interview).

4.5.4 Regional representatives

Two programmes had regional representatives and projects have found their help invaluable in several ways. The regional representatives are able to help researchers put project applications together, and in some cases provide training in the use of the logframes and in the development of communication plans. They know their own countries and regions well and are able to help projects draw up lists of relevant stakeholders from all sectors, including the private sector. They can help in setting up specific communication activities and advise on products. Those projects that have had contact with the regional representative have benefited from their help. Their role appears to be one of support in ensuring that programme requirements are met by the projects and through this role they are helping to build capacity.

4.5.5 Engagement with stakeholders

Mini case study projects and the review of selected project documents have provided detailed and concrete examples of the development and implementation of communication plans. What these have demonstrated is the extent of stakeholder engagement needed for any kind of uptake to occur and the differences in approach to stakeholders and their communication needs which have to be put in place in each country and even regions of countries.

The length of time needed to negotiate with stakeholders, even when there is a functioning network which can be plugged into is considerable. Identifying uptake pathways and developing communication strategies through iterative processes of consultation and pre-testing with the different groups to be reached by those pathways takes time and skill. Effective engagement with stakeholders is fundamental to communication for uptake promotion. The amount of time needed for researchers to engage with stakeholders has to be a major consideration for researchers when putting proposals together and for funders and managers when considering proposals. Making a decision in an office is not really an option.

Stakeholder engagement is about preparing what John Best has called ‘fertile ground’ and requires constant attention to stakeholders needs and to engagement. Without this kind of engagement the kind of ‘just in time’ communication described in BOX 9

would not be possible. Having your ear to the ground requires you to be there and be engaged with what is happening on a regular basis.

BOX 9: Stakeholder engagement - preparing the fertile ground

... in the very interesting NRSP Bihar livelihoods project in India, we think we have got a message about institutional partnerships (i.e. NGO/Government/private sector) in agricultural R&D into the relevant quarter (i.e. reasonably high up in ICAR). This has taken:

1. A 3-day workshop in Delhi (at which actors in successful partnerships shared their experiences).
2. Some in-office meetings with key people, to explain what the initiative was all about and get them along to the last day of the workshop for a panel discussion.
3. A post-workshop meeting with one of the key people which was supported by…
4. A post workshop brief (produced within 24 hrs after the meeting) and sent to key people.
5. A policy brief (24 pages) distilling/generalising the workshop outputs and offering some operational guidelines: this took 16 days of a professional writer (in addition to his attending the workshop) and a 3-4 month time-span (we are just looking at a final poof).
6. A beginning World Bank project (National Agric Innovation Project - NIAP) in which one of the buzz-words is 'partnership'.

It could well be argued that (6) was the most important of all the above! Fertile ground in which a message can take root is needed, and here the World Bank project may well have provided the fertiliser. However, getting the message to the appropriate bit of ground took quite an effort (and cost) John Best personal communication. (John Best pers comms. 2006)

The need for face-to-face, often one-to-one interaction (BOX 10) has been emphasised by many projects, in some cases workshops have had to be abandoned as the preferred means of communication for example to policy makers, as the real decision makers don't attend. Having to switch to one-to-one obviously involved more time and effort and is usually not a one off operation, but tweeds constant attention to get people on board.

BOX 10: The need for face-to-face interaction

getting the main issues and concerns on the agenda of CARICOM. This required face-to-face interaction with the CARICOM Secretariat and the political directorate. These meetings assumed significant importance and were considered critical by the project leader in achieving buy in at the levels of the political directorate and senior policy makers and policy implementers. Policy papers were important, but the presence of project members at regional meetings and their lobbying efforts were critical activities to ensuring that the issues were placed on the agenda.
Quote from interview

For uptake/up scaling projects researchers need to ensure that what they have to offer applies not only to the place where the original research was carried out but also to the places, countries and organisations where they think it might have wider application. Feasibility studies need to be carried out (NRSP PD 124, R8400, and R8390) This takes time and although big workshops to introduce and talk things through will often

work, unless the real decision makers are present they will provide little more than talking shops (R8400). Time has to be spent engaging with the decision makers at the start (may be even before a project is fully funded) and throughout (see BOX 11). This is especially true when taking research findings to a new country where the political, social and economic context will almost certainly be completely different (NRSP R 8390 FTR).

BOX 11: Engaging with decision makers

COSOFAP (Consortium for Scaling Up Options for Increased Productivity in Western Kenya), was identified at the concept note stage for an uptake project to cover the western region of the country. During the project it 'has continuously been able to build the capacity of farmers and its partners who in turn help train other farmers and scale up the adoption of the research products ... COSOFAP has also helped to strengthen regional and sub-regional networks that help promote institutional and policy environments conducive to scaling up and dissemination of agricultural technologies. These have been made possible through the development of strong links with high level decision makers in the government and advocating for improved natural resource and agricultural policies.' Source: J.K. Duff FTR R8400 NRSP

4.5.6 Time frames for M&E

Time is not only needed for the kinds of engagement discussed above, but is also a major factor in interviews in relation to time frames for uptake and impact monitoring and assessment can be seen from the quotations from interviews in BOX 12.

BOX 12: Time frames for M&E and impact

QUOTE 1 One frustration we had with this project was that it focused very interestingly and relevantly on uptake but then of course the time frame is completely dysfunctional for actually measuring uptake and it would in fact be extremely interesting to assess uptake but that means structuring the project in a different kind of way. It may mean doing what they've done now and then having another phase a year from now and three years from now and five years from now. But it means a different kind of structuring or it means having lower expectations about what you can learn. You can learn that people received the message, referred to the message, remembered the message but can't really say that that message changed people's behaviour in such a short time frame.

QUOTE 2 Time frame is another consideration that needs to be taken into account. The view was expressed in the discussions held with project leaders that, in terms of being able to definitely address the issue of uptake, the project cycle had definite limitations. KAP studies can, within the project cycle, reasonable be expected to measure changes in knowledge and attitude to a certain extent, but the area of practice is a longer term prospect. The project team identified this as an area of concern. It was felt that there was insufficient time within the framework of the project cycle to pursue some of the issues that would contribute to broadening the knowledge base of outcomes of the project.

QUOTE 3 The timeline is one factor that requires some attention. The project is slated to end until mid 2006. By that time, it is fairly safe to assume that the KAP at that stage will be able to measure knowledge and attitude change against the baseline studies, but it is likely that changes in practice will be a longer term prospect. This is particularly so when, for example, one of the indicators of change in practice has to do with 'more scientific and responsible management in the future' (project communication matrix). This is not likely to be readily apparent within the time frame of the project.

4.5.7 Budgets

Budgets are related to the time issues set out above. Although all programmes provide budgets for communication activities and the production of materials there is still a perception amongst researchers that there is not enough money for them to do things as they would really like. Part of the problem here may be that neither research managers, nor researchers fully understand the kind of communication processes which need to be gone through, and therefore budgeted for. The other problem is that we simply have very little idea of what communication activities and products really cost. Few (but see Felsing 1999), if any, detailed budgets for communication activities or development and production of materials are publically available. Although budgets have to be put in place they are often not detailed, however, this situation may be changing. The focus on uptake and on research into communication may force more detailed budgets to be put in place. Would it be useful for project teams have access to recent detailed budgets from the countries they will be working in?

4.5.8 Skills

The range of skills needed for good communication includes how to :

- develop communication plans,
- carry out stakeholder communication needs and context analysis,
- facilitate and maintain good collaborative (one-on-one or group) working practices
- write policy briefs and act as advocates
- write, pre-test design and produce written materials, videos and websites
- run on-line discussions
- monitor activities and materials in use.

It seems that mandatory requirements and short training courses will only get you so far. Whilst some projects are working in very enlightened ways, the study also shows that there are skills gaps that are not being met even with the support provided by programmes in the form of guidelines and training.

Whilst here is some evidence that facilitation skills may need attention, the skills gaps are most clearly seen in the extent to which research teams do or do not engage with stakeholders to determine: communication needs and context; the way in which the

writing, design and production of printed materials such as posters, leaflets and manuals is undertaken.

4.5.9 Development of communication products

Whilst many projects are producing excellent materials for others this is still the main stumbling block for which no amount of communication planning is of any help.

Materials have to be complete, suited to the task in hand and technically/scientifically correct and validated, in a language that people understand and available where they can easily be got hold of; in other words they have to be useful and usable (Wright 1980). How to achieve this is still an issue for many projects. Materials are often written in isolation from end users, are written in English rather than in the language of use and then translated if there is enough money in the budget for that, once written, are pre-tested on peers rather than end users and so on. This means close attention user needs and to some form of pre-testing which takes account of how and where people want to use materials. Whilst researchers are being encouraged to carry out pre-testing, and are indeed doing it, reviews of the products by end users (BOXES 13 + 14) and communication specialists lead to concerns about their quality.

BOX 13: **Reviewers comments**

Communication Specialist Reviewer's comments: Even with English as a first language, the content, style and sheer size of the documents (a practical guide and technical guidelines) was difficult to negotiate....they would defeat a lot of readers. Prose style laborious, with too many extended, multi-clause sentences. Layout didn't help; tables, figures and boxes need to earn their place by being genuinely useful, and even then they should not interrupt the flow of the body text. Some graphics are illegible...

BOX 14: **Beneficiary farmers comments**

QUOTE 1: More materials (both different and more copies) distributed so that farmers coming back can hand them out.

QUOTE 2: Beneficiaries comments on a poster: The heading should be in bold capital letters and the font (size) needs to be increased. Round numbering shines and not easy to read from a distance. Not every one can read and understand English - need to translate it to the local language as well. It contains too many words cramped up, yet it is a poster not a book chapter! Problems are on top and not matched with the solutions, which are below. Perhaps uniform numbering could have helped out on this.

QUOTE 3: No brochure was given. Need one with names for the parts of the plough so that when there is a problem we can specify where the problem is.

QUOTE 4: Some pictures that later appeared in the materials were not representative of Mbale, perhaps taken elsewhere. One contained contour bunds running uphill!...No women on the top of the handouts, yet women are heavily involved in agriculture in Mbale.

This suggests that researchers may not be carrying out a communication needs and context analysis, or, if they are, are then testing for the wrong things, with the wrong people. It may be they do not have the skills to pre-test; to analyse the pre- test results; or to integrate the analysis into product revisions. According to the LPP communication specialist regional representative and mentor "Within projects people are definitely producing more materials, but a lot of it is poor quality, the issues which we used to focus on are still issues (which language, level of language, illustrations, complete content etc.). Projects are producing materials without reference to anyone with communication skills." (project interview).

Having communication materials reviewed by communication specialists for the FTR may seem like a good idea, but typically by then it is too late in the project life to act on the comments of the specialists (C. Mees pers comms January 2006). The employment, in the early stages of design, by a competent typographic designer trained in usability studies and someone with skills in pre-testing would help to avoid the problems caused by poor pre-testing.

In general communication activities get less comment or criticism but a few issues were raised in particular about exchange visits which are generally highly praised and seen as a major mechanism for learning. When working with farmers groups one exchange visits are usually carried out by representatives of the group who pass on what they have learned. The comments in BOX 15 below raise questions about the ways in which this kind of learning could be improved.

BOX 15: Learning from exchange visits

- It would be good if the farmers who went on these trips could take photos to bring back and show the rest of the group.
- Should not make visits to other farm groups alone, more than one person should go to help with feed back to the group with regard to deciding whether to accept the group or not.
- For local exchanges it would be better if they could spend longer than a day there. If they stayed the night there would be more time for discussion.

4.5.10 Language issues

The issue of language is one which still needs to be addressed by most projects. In this respect practice has changed little over the last decade. Materials are still largely produced in English, or one of the languages of wider communication (French or Spanish) rather than in the language of use. With luck the budget will include money for translation, but this is not always the case. Workshops are also still primarily run in English, which can lead to less participation or even exclusion. There are experienced facilitators who can run multi-lingual workshops and there are ways in which English speaking team members and local language speakers can work together on writing materials (Norrish 19). The work of STREAM is an exception to these general statements. Their regional hub co-ordinators are selected for their ability not just as researchers, but as communicators in English and their own national language, as well as, in some cases, more local languages. This means that STREAM is in a

position to produce documents in all the main languages of the region more or less simultaneously. In addition STREAM has put in place mechanisms to enable its staff to work together on language and meaning, bringing in a language expert to run the workshops. A STREAM workshop is a multi-lingual experience with a lot of negotiation within and between language groups. It has lessons for programmes and projects.

4.6 The effect of RNRR Projects on communication work in other organisations

Finally the project wanted to know whether there had been any effect on communications work in the organisations whose researchers have been recipients of programmes' funding. For this we looked at the work of, and interviewed where possible, researchers known to have taken on board NRSP approaches to communication and to have had an effect on the way communication is conducted in specific organisations. The organisations and individuals concerned were Graham Haylor and STREAM in Bangkok, Professor Nuhu Hatibu in ASARECA, and Dr Moles Raman director of CNRS in Bangladesh.

Graham Haylor who set up STREAM has a long history of association with NRSP and its communication work. Whilst working in the UK at the University of Stirling he had 'always had a commitment to communication, but the problem was how to share findings' For that he needed to find out the state of the art in communication and asked advice in 1998 from the R7037 research team and also went to communication literature. This was for advice on a project in India. He learned a lot from R7037 and its project leader co-authored a paper with his research team on the project in India. This learning was to be taken into his work in STREAM which has communication and learning at its core. STREAM has ethos of valuing all information from all stakeholders; it tries to acknowledge the value of information for its own sake rather than where it comes from. Stakeholder links have to be fostered and facilitated from the beginning. Understanding who is a stakeholder seems pretty basic 'if you have no stake you are not really a stakeholder just someone who knows about the project.'

'When it comes to groups of people who STREAM are most interested in supporting (farmers) then they (STREAM) have to be terribly sure that farmers understand what is going on and taking a role and that communication at that level is successful. STREAM is now running workshops increasingly in villages.'

Professor Nuhu Hatibu is another example of someone who has had a long and close association with NRSP and whose work has been very much influenced by the personal contact with the previous Programme Manager who was passionate and enthusiastic about uptake, up scaling and communication. His most recent work on Institutionalised scaling-up and uptake promotion of outputs from soil and water management research in East and Central Africa has built on previous work and extensively used the guidelines developed from R7073. What follows is extracted from the project completion summary form:

> 'The project was designed to produce three major outputs, with respect to increased understanding of major constraints and barriers, raised awareness of

research managers, and improved capacity and skills of researchers. The target was to create a community of champions for scaling-up, uptake, and utilization of existing and future results and experiences from both research and development work on integrated management of land and water in the sub-region. ...

...Nearly all the indicators specified for the delivery of outputs have been met. For output 1 reports identifying constraints, barriers and key recommendations were produced and are already in use for awareness raising in the region. Analysis of stakeholders led to a strong project Communication Plan (CP) which will form part of SWMnet knowledge sharing plan. The CP has been adopted by several organizations as a template and is thus supporting the inclusion of robust CPs in new projects in the region. For output 2, remarkable achievement was recorded and strong champions of communication planning and uptake promotion are in place. Relevant actions of target organizations have been facilitated and accelerated by this project. Notable of these is ASARECA itself and consequently its member NARS, who have decided to consider a communication plan and an uptake promotion strategy (see BOX 16) for the emailed advert that set his in motion) – as high priority criteria in the appraisal, monitoring and evaluation of research projects. Certainly, these actions would have happened, but the project helped through better awareness on the seriousness of the problem and the introduction of alternative solutions - through its communication products. For output 3, three training sessions at regional level and two at country levels have been implemented for research planners and managers. The training modules and manuals developed are already being used by others. More importantly, the capacity with respect to preparing CPs has been increased in the region and evidence is already being seen in new projects being prepared. ‘

BOX 16: Advert circulated by email from ASARECA

From: Gillian Nantume [mailto:g.nantume@asareca.org]
Sent: Wednesday, August 17, 2005 9:46 AM
To: rain@asareca.org
Subject: Call for show of Interest: ASARECA Communication & Knowledge Management Strategy

Dear Colleagues,

The Regional Agricultural Information Network (RAIN) a network of The Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) is planning to undertake a consultancy to develop a communication and knowledge management strategy for ASARECA to improve its internal and external functions. RAIN proposes to launch this activity by October 2005.

RAIN Coordinating Unit
Plot 5 Mpigi Road
Entebbe, Uganda
Tel: +256 41 322129/321775

Cell: +256 77 403585
Fax: +256 41 322593
Email: <mailto:rain@asareca.org>rain@asareca.org

CNRS is an organisation which 'thought we were experts at communication, now realise we are learners" . Dr Mokhles Rahman the director has worked on several projects for NRSP and the most recent have been uptake and communication research projects where they have worked with a UK communication specialist. During this work they came to realise that their approach to communication had been much too narrow and that communication needs attention from the start of a project, that materials need adequate pre-testing, and that they need to include national as well as local stakeholders in their work. CNRS now see the need to involve others in planning communication – previously they planned by themselves. Working on these projects has helped to increase the organisational capacity in communication but they also felt that communication guidelines alone were not sufficient, projects either need a communication specialist to help them or training. CNRS is now fertile ground for communication capacity building. Their director has his own experience to build on and several of the staff have been involved in projects.

The detail provided in this section shows the work of individuals, this theme is developed further in a matrix in Annex D2. We are developing this with regular updates so it represents a picture at one time rather than something finished. As an example of uptake it provides lessons on the length of time it takes to get ideas into more general use and the extent of support needed for people to be able to use the guidelines in which new ideas on practice are incorporated. In all three of the examples in this section the influence of one individual on another and through them to the organisation is crucial.

4.7 Uptake projects which have communication research built in

Several of the uptake projects funded by NRSP and FMSP had built into them a communication research element (Table 4).

Table 4: Communication research projects

Prog	Code	Name	Country
NRSP	R8400	Advancing the use of the products of NRSP's past and current research projects in Eastern Africa	Uganda, Kenya
NRSP	R8083	Strengthened rural services for improved livelihoods in Bangladesh	Bangladesh
	R8363	Haylor	ASEAN Region
	R8390	Needs Assessment and uptake promotion of RWH research in Nigeria	Nigeria
	R8223	A learning and communications programme for the PAPD methodology	Bangladesh
	R8317	Pro-poor policies and institutional arrangements for coastal management in the Caribbean	Caribbean
FMSP	R8486	Promotion of FMSP guidelines for floodplain management and sluice gate control	Bangladesh
	R8468	Capacity Building for the FMSP Stock Assessment Tools and Management Guidelines	Caribbean

Prog	Code	Name	Country
	R8461, R8464, R8470	Data for co Management: Parfish	Uganda
	R8475	Promoting new knowledge on climate change	

When this synthesis project was first conceived we did not envisage that any of them would be finished in time to contribute to this project, but the delay in the synthesis project has enabled us: to see the FTRs of those project; in one or two cases to be present at pre- FTR presentations; and to see project materials and to discuss them with project leaders.

These projects all have team members with extensive knowledge, experience and/or qualifications in communication. They are the only projects in which we can trace the setting up, implementation, role of communication specialists, and initial M&E of a communication plan through the various project documents and reports as required by the programme. For this reason they will form the backbone of the good practice examples for DFID and have contributed significantly to the findings of this communication synthesis study. Contributions include:

- the need for a communication 'driver'
- the kinds of communication expertise needed at different stages of a project
- the extent of stakeholder engagement needed for any kind of uptake to occur
- the differences in approach to stakeholders and their communication needs which have to be put in place in each country and even regions of countries
- the length of time needed to negotiate with stakeholders, even when there is a functioning network which can be plugged into.
- the need for the right kind of pre-testing to ensure that materials are usable by different groups before large scale printing and distribution is thought of.
- the use of project monitoring as part of the iterative testing of pathways and products
- the extent of support needed to enable stakeholders to make use of materials provided.
- the work of organisations which consider communication as one of their core competencies.
- developing suitable materials and concentrating on how these work within the environment for which they were developed.
- documenting, openly and honestly the difficulties of moving a successful project outcome from one context to another and he communication work needed jus to get the feasibility work off the ground.

A strong feature of all these projects is the extent of documentation which the researchers have carried out. Projects have been very honest and provided 'warts and all' documentation. They provide knowledge of how much work is really involved in uptake activities with a focus on different kinds of communication, particularly the detail of one-on-one work (reasons for it, what came out of it, and so on). This is an area where we have little detail so this ism particularly useful. Being able to see what works and what doesn't and why would be useful for others carrying out similar work and would help greatly in follow-up M&E. Whilst several of these projects have

managed to put in place some sort of end of project M&E there is much more to be learned from M&E carried out a while after the projects have finished. M&E of this kind of project would provide rich learning for future programme and projects and for donors. It will be a great loss if the introduction of new research programmes under CRD means that continued lesson learning from these projects is lost.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 The main findings

The overall effect of what the programmes have put in place is a change in attitude and working practices across programmes and projects. The commitment to communication is there at all levels and there is a real effort to make communication activities and products suitable for the context in which people live and work. The main findings from across the programmes are:

- Effective engagement with stakeholders is central to communication for uptake promotion. Sufficient time and resources are needed for effective engagement.
- Management tools in the form of mandatory requirements in relation to the planning and implementing of communication plans, even when supported by guidelines, are not sufficient to ensure that project teams engage with stakeholders at all levels; have the range of skills needed to carry out communication activities; or those needed to work through the processes of design and pre-testing necessary to deliver usable materials.
- Communication products are often fail to meet tests of usability: completeness of information, in a language that is accessible, technically accurate, and available where people can easily get hold of them. There is really no substitute for good communication context and needs analysis. Effective pre-testing of materials in the early stages of their development can improve quality and ensure materials are both useful and usable. Employing communication specialists with skills carrying out context and needs analysis and in pre-testing and usability studies should be considered.
- Short training courses in communication planning are useful if the content is practical and relevant, and they are carried out at the beginning of a project. However, the content of training needs to be carefully considered in the light of the range of skills needed for successful communication. Questions need to be asked about whether it is reasonable or feasible for all researchers to be trained in all the necessary skills or whether they need to be trained in awareness of what is needed and how to work with communication professionals to achieve that.
- Based on the previous point the solution would be to include communication specialists as equal members in project teams from the inception phase to provide specialist knowledge and experience and to train and assist in the communication skills and activities needed
- The skills, resources and time to achieve effective communication are typically underestimated in project planning and implementation. Funders and programme managers need to recognise this and establish procedures to ensure that communication is adequately resourced..
- Prolonged contact through linked projects funded by one programme can help individuals, and through them the organisations they are working in, effect changes in their communication work. These drivers of communication are important in capacity building in the south; especially in their realisation of the need for officials at the highest levels, the academic institutions which are training the next

generation of researchers, as well as existing researchers, to have an awareness of why communication is important and to be doing something about it.

- Learning from experience needs to be built in to donors, programmes and projects regular work.

5.2 Implications for a conceptual framework for communication for research into use

None of the cooperating RNNR programmes have a comprehensive framework for communication of research although they do have various strategies in place. From the research on these strategies it is possible to start to build a framework. It is a framework consisting of certain conditions which need to be met for communication to have a chance of succeeding and therefore for any kind of wider uptake to happen. Whilst few if any of the conditions which need to be met are new (see Norrish ??) to those working in the field putting them together in a framework which would then be supported by management does seem to represent at least a shift in focus.

Donors need to ensure that research managers understand the importance of communication and what is needed to help it have a chance of succeeding so that they (research managers) can put in place calls for bids for research programmes, management tools and support for research teams which will enable them to do the best they can in planning and implementing communication strategies.

Everyone involved needs also to understand that stakeholders will all have different priorities, you may not be able to get your work as a number one priority even during the lifetime of the project. And even where it is top of peoples list during a project it may well slip into being just one of number of things to be taken account of when the funding comes to an end.

Adaptation of a projects research outputs to different contexts (political, social, economic etc) is vital for uptake promotion and scaling up. Understanding that it has to happen is not always taken on board (and it has to be said that the easy accessibility of the web and the cheapness with which CDs can now be made available can make it seem as if provision of information is all that is needed for scaling up). It's not just that methods of work or new crops have to be adapted but the communication around them has to be developed anew for different groups, as do the communication products.

5.2.1 What a framework might look like

ENGAGEMENT with stakeholders is the corner stone (stakeholders includes partners, collaborators, coalitions members, beneficiaries etc., whether from the GO, NGO, or private sectors).

TIME is a critical component of any framework. It is needed for intensive and extensive engagement with stakeholders on a personal and organisational level to get all partners on-board, embedding in local organisations. It is also needed for carrying out communication needs and context work with stakeholders. In the case of uptake promotion time is needed for feasibility studies which involve checking out what has

already worked and why and what potential there is in other locations for similar work.

Time is needed to develop and pre-test communication products with and for different groups. Horses for courses – time needed to develop the right kinds of materials for different groups, but also an understanding that sometimes something quite rough and ready will do (John Best quote) Pre-testing and ensuring that products are fit for purpose. And time for routine tracking of communication products and the effects of communication activities(M&E): and for post project M&E (this may mean phasing M&E and budget for it so that work is planned and can be carried out, one, two, three.. years after end of original work).

FLEXIBILITY is needed for projects to bring on more stakeholders as time goes by and to develop products as needed. Scaling up and scaling out may not be one off operations, but carried out over a number of years in different countries and possibly needing on-going support, planning and budgets need flexibility for this to be built in

FAST LEARNING is needed from practice across projects, programmes and between them and donors. There is lots of good work going on in projects all the time. Bringing those working on similar projects or on projects working in similar ways etc, together in workshops may be one way of doing it, but there is also a need for someone with a good overview to put people in touch with each other at an early planning stage. This could happen from the donor's office or from a programme.

SKILLS a wide range of communication skills are needed including skills to:

- develop communication plans,
- carry out stakeholder communication needs and context analysis,
- facilitate and maintain good collaborative (one-on-one or group) working practices
- write policy briefs and act as advocates
- write, pre-test design and produce written materials, videos and websites
- run on-line discussions
- monitor activities and materials in use, both during and after end of project.

These skills may come from within research teams and their various collaborating organisations or may need to be brought in from professionals – the management trick is to be able to make some kind of judgement that they are actually there.

M&E: something routine and on-going is needed to keep track of who has been seen, who has attended what, who has received what so that M&E of use can be carried out even if it is only rudimentary during the life of a project. this would also enable later M&E for use and impact to be carried out.

SUPPORT - training as needed, straightforward and easy to use guidelines (easier said than done and would need pre-testing) with support in their use provided as needed (see MandE group for a good example of the kind of support that can be offered)

BUDGETS need to be flexible enough to cover intense engagement, development of communication activities and products which are directed at properly disaggregated

stakeholder groups and so on. To achieve this flexibility there may need to be a reserve 'research communication' fund, specifically for additional communication work.

How can donors ensure this, what mechanisms and donor management tools should they be putting in place? Whilst it appears on the surface that requiring research managers to put in place communication plans may be the answer the communication synthesis study shows that this may not in fact lead to good, complete and usable communication at the point of use. For this a range of specific communication (and facilitation) skills are needed. Skills which it could be said researchers do not have and maybe should not be expected to acquire. Even those researcher who have taken on board the importance of communication and are enthusiastic about it and have learnt a lot over the years can falter when it comes to such things as pre-testing.

The CRD communication team communication specialist has been helping some of the new research programme consortia (RPCs) with their communication plans and this would seem to be a good solution **if** the person doing the supporting understands about communication right through the chain. DFID is also committed in its new research phase to building capacity. This needs to happen at all levels. If the research managers do not fully understand the importance of communication and what it takes to put it in place then there is little hope that the implementers of research (especially research into use) will be able to do it as research managers will not understand how to set up research 'calls' or to make proper judgments on responses and especially on communication plans and budgets.

5.3 Concluding remarks

The work that the programmers have been doing is rich and varied and learning from them now could lead to a better understanding of what works and why for donors, research managers and researchers. The issue is how learning can be engineered. There is more and more reliance on the web, but as Guilt et al (no date given) have pointed out in recent research looking at learning from ICTs 'Learning requires interactive human processes. It is difficult enough face-to-face but across anonymous distances, the challenges are amplified'. These challenges remain.

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