NATURAL RESOURCES SYSTEMS PROGRAMME
PROJECT REPORT[1]

DFID Project Number

R8325

Report Title

Communicating policy relevant knowledge.
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NRSP Production System

Land Water Interface

SUSTAINING LIVELIHOODS FOR PEOPLE ON THE CARIBBEAN COAST

Communicating Policy-Relevant Knowledge

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SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

Enhancing linkages between policy intent and policy implementation, towards achieving sustainable livelihoods among marginalised communities along the Caribbean coast, was the major focus of a research project undertaken during 2004-2005 by the University of the West Indies Sustainable Economic Development Unit (**UWI SEDU**), with support from the UK Department for International Development (**DFID**). The concentration on Community-based Sustainable Tourism recognised the multiple possibilities of this burgeoning industry, in providing both product inputs and direct services, to enhance linkages between producers in the communities and mainstream tourism interests.

KEY POINTS: Communication of results of UWI-SEDU research to policy makers was a key objective of the project. This policy brief describes the elements involved in preparing the Communication plan; as well as specific strategies used to generate participation, support activities and share research findings and lessons learned.

Introduction

The development and implementation of a communication plan is central to the success of a wide range of projects, and was central to the dissemination of knowledge generated from a two-phase project undertaken by the University of the West Indies Sustainable Economic Development Unit (UWI-SEDU) during 2003-2005. The project, sponsored by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), incorporated R8135 (Feasibility of Alternative Sustainable, Coastal Resource-based Enhanced Livelihood Strategies) and the follow-up R8325 (Policy-relevant Knowledge on Feasible Alternative Natural Resource based Strategies for Enhancing Livelihoods). Indeed, specific R8325 communication objectives involved:

— Communicating policy-relevant knowledge generated from R8135 (Phase 1) research;

—Supporting initiatives to generate collaboration towards filling identified gaps between policy knowledge and implementation (Phase 2);

—Communicating resultant knowledge.

This policy brief draws on the process used to develop the communication strategy for Phase 2, to present a generic outline approach.

Chilldren at a community meeting in St Lucia, fascinated to see their image projected n one youth's t-shirt.

Developing the Communication Plan

Developing the Communications Plan involves identifying the following:

What/Why? — Knowing your Objective;

Who? — Identifying Audience;

What? — Communicating Knowledge;

How? — Developing Strategies/ Determining Channels;

Also — Incorporating Other Considerations:Research, Validation of Findings, Feedback, Monitoring & Evaluation.

Keys to the Communication Process

What/Why?

Knowing what you are seeking to achieve, through the communication process, is central to success. In this case, the objectives, as stated in the Preamble, were already clear. The statement of a broad objective and more limited aims, may be a useful distinction.

Who?

Your target audience determines what activities you plan at the micro level; how you channel communication material; what level of material you develop; what language you use. You may have more than one target audience. In this instance we identified a broad group of stakeholders, defined as individuals and groups with a stake in the outcome of the project or programme; and a more specific group of Target Institutions (TIs), identified for specific interventions. Our main audience for communication products was clearly defined in the title of the project, which set out to provide *Policy-relevant knowledge.*

What?

Communication strategies may be developed with a range of intents—in this case: to communicate knowledge; inform on projects, activities etc; validate; persuade; test and hone the project hypothesis; inform on existing research products; generate interface between policymakers, implementers and intermediaries, and the natural resource users living in poverty at the coastal community level; and to generate feedback.

How?

The identification of appropriate methodologies and channels to suit the aims of the project and the needs of the target audiences, sets the stage for success. In the case of the SEDU-DFID project, relevant communications uptake channels were identified for specific target audiences.

Specific Strategies

Communication for Persuasion:

Face-to-face meetings, workshops and community meetings were key communication strategies to inform stakeholders of research findings, seek validation and persuade Target Institutions to join in project activities.

Communication to Support Project Activities:

Communication strategies were developed to support project activities. Outputs included meeting materials, media strategies for specific events—primarily Credit Fairs and Workshops— and the development of relevant, appropriate collateral materials.

Communication Products/Materials:

Specific communication products were developed to translate knowledge generated by research into forms accessible to stakeholders or to maintain a flow of information on the project. These had specific distribution points but could also be effectively used at face-to-face meetings and workshops as well as in situations such as the credit fairs.

TARGET AUDIENCES

- Policy-makers
- Policy Implementers
  - Government officials
  - Statutory/Quasi-government agencies
  - Micro-Credit/finance providers
  - Non-government agencies
- Community members & groups
- Other interests

Target Audiences: What do we want to know?

- Audience characteristics, in relation to the project.
- What are their identified needs and how can the project meet them?
- What will it take to encourage their buy-in to the process?
- How will their buy-in affect the process and the outcomes of the project?
- What communication channels will work for which group?

STRATEGIES & CHANNELS

- Communication strategies and channels go hand in hand
- Ground in Objectives, Audience & Audience Context/Realities
- Identify expected outcomes
- Identify timelines and how activities relate to each other

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES DEPLOYED

- Communication for Persuasion;
- Communication in support of activities;
- Development of communication products to spread research-based knowledge

COMMUNICATION FOR PERSUASION

◆ Working with the local/regional context:
  – Face to Face meetings and follow-up especially in extra-institutional situations (e.g. coming from out of country);
  – Mediated interface (e.g. pulling together multiple disparate stakeholders in preparation for the Credit Fairs);
  – Appropriate technology (e.g. town crier in Anse la Raye);
  – Realities of politics (community and representational) and bureaucracy

Persuasion & Validation

Left – Team meetis with St Lucia's Minister of Tourism to present 'People & the Caribbean Project' and solicit buy-in;

Right – Powerpoint presentation introduces high level public service officers in Grenada, to the project, setting the stage for validation and buy-in.

Left – A cereal farmer makes a point at a community meeting in Hopkins, Belize.

Right – ne-on-one discussion between team memebers and stakeholder at the Praslin Credit Fair in St Lucia.

A CASE IN POINT: Presenting & Validating Findings

Target Audience: Policymakers, Public sector and non-government policy implementers, community members

Aim: To communicate findings of the original research on alternative, sustainable NR-based livelihoods for Caribbean coastal residents living in poverty, and to validate the findings and consequent hypothesis that the major gap between existing policy and its implementation can be bridged through collaboration and partnership.

Strategies: Field visits to communicate and validate the findings, encourage buy-in and initiate discussions towards identification of 'do-able' activities. These visits included workshops with PowerPoint presentations, break-out groups, and feedback questionnaires; meetings with high level policy makers; community meetings to share findings with the original case study communities; meetings with policy implementers to discuss possible 'do-able activities'.

DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION PRODUCTS

STRATEGIES
→ EXISTING KNOWLEDGE
→ RESEARCH → KNOWLEDGE → COMMUNICATION PRODUCTS
→ ACTIVITIES

CHANNELS

AUDIENCE

Products

Credit Tree

Project Report

Sustaining Livelihoods Newsletter

Media Coverage

Powerpoint Presentations

Policy Brief

Project communication products included Powerpoint presentations for workshops; printed documents, illustrative material and media support material.

CASE IN POINT: *Policy Briefs*

Target Audience: Policymakers

Aim: Provide data and findings generated by the project, in brief focused form.

Means: Synthesis of analysis and data from Country Reports, including results of 'do-able activities' and original research.

Strategy: Development of policy briefs. Specific briefs based in original research cover the following:

- Legal/Institutional & Policy Environment for Natural Resource Based Livelihood Strategies;
- Environmental Basis for Assessing the Sustainability of Traditional NR-Based Livelihoods;
- Poverty & Sustainable Livelihoods in the Caribbean;
- Achieving Community-based Tourism that benefits the Poor in the LWI.

Distribution: via website (www.uwi.tt\sedu and CSED-NET); Information on availability spread via newsletter, flyer, workshops, circulation list.

Further Policy Briefs: A new series of policy briefs have been generated to support Guidelines developed as a main output of the project. Titles include:

- Community-based Sustainable Tourism;
- Sustainable Tourism Linkages: Case Study— Seamoss production in Praslin, St Lucia;
- Physical Planning Guidelines for Community-based Sustainable Tourism;
- Finance/Credit Availability and Access;
- Communicating Policy-Relevant Knowledge.

CASE IN POINT: *Project Newsletter*

Target Audience: All stakeholders

Aim: To keep stakeholders up-to-date on project activities and plans; to allow timely assessment of project process by team members who contribute updates etc to the newsletter.

Strategy: Regular issues of the newsletter including reports from all project countries and communities; comments of stakeholders; photographs of stakeholders etc.

Output: Three issues of the UWI-SEDU Sustaining Livelihoods newsletter: October 2004; February 2005; August 2005; (October 2005 pending).

Distribution: via website (www.uwi.tt\sedu and CSEDNET); Hard copies printed and distributed to stakeholders and at meetings and events.

COMMUNICATION IN SUPPORT OF ACTIVITIES

- Meetings to validate, communicate and plan;
- Credit Fairs;
- Guidelines workshops;
- Sea Moss activity and proposed fish fry initiative in Marquis would also have potential communication elements.

CASE IN POINT: Credit Fairs

Target Audience: Policymakers (private and public micro-finance institutions & officials); Potential credit users among persons living off NR-based coastal resources.

Aim: To overcome credit/finance access and knowledge shortages and other issues identified in the research; to provide some pay-back to the community by supplying identified knowledge lacks.

Means: Initiating/nurturing collaboration among credit/finance providers towards improved interface with the potential community users.

Strategy: Community credit fair (concept widened to business fair covering credit and finance); fairs were held in St Lucia (Anse-la-Raye, Praslin) and Hopkins, Belize.
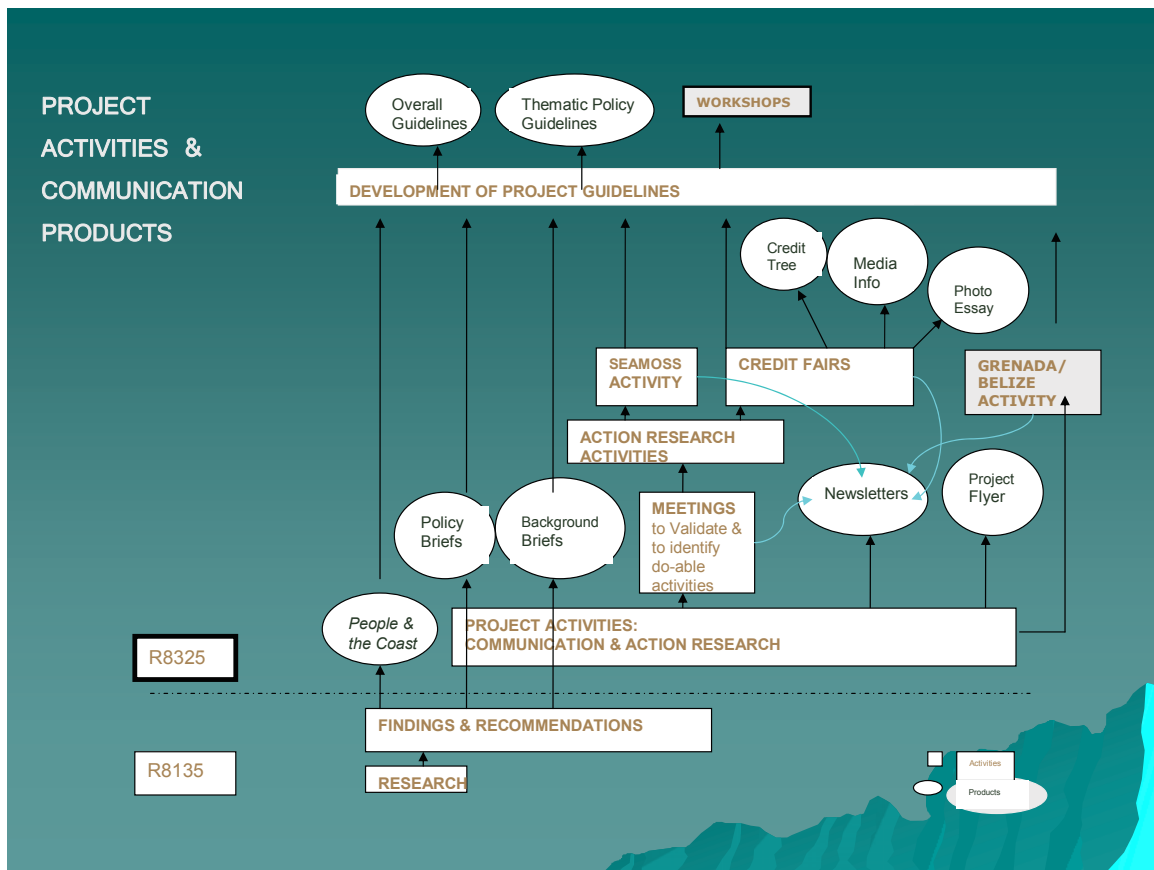
Steps:

- Validation of strategy among potential institutional players, with follow-up at policy and community levels via facilitated meetings;
- Development of planning group led by an in-country facilitator;
- Logistics arranged via community contact and appropriate channels:town crier, banner etc;
- Media programme (interviews, news releases and coverage);
- Appropriate material developed: 'Credit Tree' setting out agencies, offerings and focus areas;
- Work started on 'Glossary' of relevant terms;
- Distribution of other relevant material including the project newsletter; a subsequent issue of which highlighted the fair;
- Participating institutions provided information, conducted interviews, made a brief presentation;
- Entertainment was provided;
- A brief feedback questionnaire was administered to community participants;
- A follow-up meeting was held with the participating institutions.

On-Going Incorporation of Research Inputs

Key elements of research knowledge, fed into various communications products or taken into consideration in planning communications strategies and develop the final project Guidelines, include the following:

- Validation Report including output of initial feedback questionnaire;
- Feedback from Fairs;
- SeaMoss meetings —-Report
- Meeting Reports — analysis — Country Reports

Diagram: PROJECT ACTIVITIES & COMMUNICATION PRODUCTS, showing relationships between Overall Guidelines, Thematic Policy Guidelines, WORKSHOPS, DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECT GUIDELINES, Credit Tree, Media Info, Photo Essay, SEAMOSS ACTIVITY, CREDIT FAIRS, GRENADA/BELIZE ACTIVITY, ACTION RESEARCH ACTIVITIES, Policy Briefs, Background Briefs, MEETINGS to Validate & to identify do-able activities, Newsletters, Project Flyer, People & the Coast, PROJECT ACTIVITIES: COMMUNICATION & ACTION RESEARCH (R8325), FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS, RESEARCH (R8135).

Lessons Learned

The project experience led to the identification of the following specific lessons:

- The importance of early buy-in by team members and stakeholders (e.g. among credit and finance institutions in run-up and follow-up to credit fair) for overall project as well as for individual 'do-able' activities;
- Within the Caribbean context, the critical importance of face-to-face contact; follow-up; national and regional contacts;
- The importance and limitations of mass media communication for an evolving project;
- The use, benefits and drawbacks of communication technology (e-mail, website etc) in communicating project information;
- The importance of appropriate technology e.g. town crier;
- The importance of effectively incorporating research-driven knowledge (research findings, feedback data, meeting and country reports etc) into communication products;
- The usefulness of a newsletter for on-going information flow, keeping focus, linkages etc;
- The importance of effective distribution networks for communication products;
- The importance of keeping faith with research sources/case study communities, even though they are not identified as key target audiences for project outputs;
- The need to maintain creativity and flexibility in responses to an evolving situation.