Designing Communication Processes that Help Decision Makers

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IRI Advanced Training Institute
Module 6, July 25th 2002
Overview

- Background, why method matters
- Approaches, a quick review
  - Discussion groups
  - Scenario building
  - Problems and solutions with radio
- Summary
The communication problem

- Communicating climate forecasts:
  - Like any “new” technology
  - Assumed useful
  - Tendency to ignore existing solutions
  - Transfer from “us” to “them”
Towards solutions to the problem

Key idea: Communication is “the reciprocal construction, coordination and clarification of meaning by interacting people.”

Michael Kaye, 1994
Towards solutions

- Key words: Participatory, shared, interacting.
- Each group has something to contribute.
- New information only becomes useful knowledge if it is integrated into a decision context.
Putting the ideas into practice: Discussion Groups

- Recognize local climate knowledge
- Elicit ideas on how participants use local forecasts
- Draw parallels between forecast systems
- Use memories of past climate events to explore impacts on household/farm/community
Hurdles to overcome

- Balance between “new” and “old” (or local and external) information
- Demystify “science” while treating all knowledge with respect
- Memories of past extreme events can be exaggerated
- Don’t expect too much
Things to consider in forming discussion groups

- Participants more comfortable with peers
- Be sensitive to time of day
- Use existing groups
- Once going, some groups may continue on their own
Decision Activity: Scenario Building

- In groups or with individuals
- Describe a range of climate outcomes (3?)
- Define options
- Map interaction of climate/options to arrive at list of possible impacts
- Use this “map” to think about best choices
Radio – problems and solutions

- Radio by nature one-way
- To address this:
  - Include interviews with farmers, decision makers in broadcast
  - Use call-in Q &A
  - Use local language, research local terms
  - Organize radio listening groups
Summary

- Communication a process of *knowledge creation through interaction*
- Create opportunities for two-way *dialogue*
- Encourage participants to *deconstruct and reconstruct* information
- Allows for knowledge to be *integrated into decision process*