Communication Tools and Knowledge Sharing Mechanisms for Crop Residues Best-Bet Technologies

User Manual

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Efficient use of Crop Residues: Animal Feed Vs Conservation Agriculture Research Project

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Introduction

Presently, public awareness through various communication tools has become an increasingly important way of creating a better understanding of the key role agricultural technologies play in agricultural and rural development.

Therefore communication is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Its purpose is to bring behavioral and attitudinal changes towards certain actions. Such activities could be to convince farmers, to adopt improved technologies that enhance the betterment of rural households by providing operational information or message. Communications could also influence governments at different levels and other stakeholders to support agricultural technologies promotion and dissemination.

In general, communications refers to the process of increasing awareness of improved agricultural technologies among the farmers. It means improving and maintaining understanding and cooperation between researchers, extension agents, institutions, or organizations. It also includes efforts to get coverage in electronic and print media; lobbying to change policy decisions; and maintaining a good reputation in the eyes of the government, and other stakeholders.

In a way, the purpose of agricultural communications is to make your agricultural technologies are visible in the eyes of the farmers.

The following communication tools are meant to display their significance in reaching farmers with resourceful agricultural technologies and techniques. The various communication tools are expounded to yield maximum understanding among agricultural extension agents and farmers.

The Communications Process

Over the years, people's views of communication have evolved from the linear to the transactional to the convergence models. The historical perspective is one way of looking at such evolution.
The earliest view was of communication being a purely unidirectional activity, best exemplified by Aristotle’s model. Here, communication is viewed as a simple, one-way transmission of messages from a source to a receiver with the intention of producing some effect just like shooting an arrow into a non-moving target. The desired effect is to convince the listeners to the speaker’s point of view, which is very much a source-dominated description of communication. For example, the traditional view is for an extension worker to go into the village and share with the farmers the latest NRM-related technology through straight lectures. With the concept of feedback came the transitional to messages, provide feedback to the other person, and then a transaction is happening. Communication now has shifted from Aristotle’s monologue to the models which can be described as examples of dialogue.

Communication in this respect becomes two-way and interactive. The example of the extension worker going to a farmers’ village to share the latest new agricultural technologies still holds, except that feedback from the farmers is now given emphasis. The latest view considers communication as a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach mutual understanding.

The extension worker, for instance, does not merely lecture to the farmers on the latest technology. She/he sits down with them, facilitates discussion between and among the farmers, mediates during conflicts, and leads everyone towards a common understanding of the technology.

**Communication for Development**

Communication is central to agricultural development. It facilitates participatory development. That is, development made possible by a bottom-up approach to develop, giving the farmers a voice in their own journey towards progress. Communication has indeed been one of the vital forces that allows for people empowerment.

Development communication as an art and a science practiced to:
• Instill livelihood skills in others;
• Teach those skills in a manner that sharpens decision-making ability; and
• Emphasize both skills and values in doing their jobs.

The development communicator has a three-pronged role: that of a facilitator, a mediator, and a consensus-builder. As a mediator, she or he acts as an intermediary between and among stakeholders, guiding the people towards consensus—collective opinion, harmony, cooperation, unanimity, and oneness.

Knowing the Audience and Building Loyalty

Agricultural technology promotion and dissemination communication should aim to build an offer in response to their needs. In this respect, the challenge is so much obtaining a large volume useful information and knowledge.

It is all the more important to think in terms of what you offer development agents, subject matter specialists and farmers, in terms of targeted, specifically adapted products and services; because a large percentage of these needs comes from an audience that is not used to visiting documentation centers or looking for information to solve its problems.

The knowledge and demands of your audiences should guide all the services you are offering. This is crucial to their practicality and determines:

• The focus of the subjects chosen, types of information, and level of information processing;
• The assessment of the activity and its adequacy in relation to demand; and
• The ability to demonstrate the usefulness of the services
In our situation, communication frequently neglects targeting a priority audience, and the elaboration of a strategy. On the other hand, agricultural technology promotion and dissemination involve numerous, diverse fields. Therefore, communication must attempt to address these fields or, at least, guide development agents and subject matter specialists to reliable existing resources. As related with the type of audience, they will handle. Therefore, you should be able to understand and know your audience before you launch a communication program or strategy and capture their loyalty for a better impact.

Planning Communication

Communication planning for agricultural technology promotion and dissemination is a logical process guided by a systematic and rationally. This could be developed through situation-specific data gathered using participatory research techniques. This approach, in turn, could be the basis of a strategic design that is based on identified crucial problems for setting long-term objectives; and capable of providing practical guidelines for field applications.

Phases of participatory communication planning are detailed as follows

Preliminary situation assessment

Situation assessment could be done most effectively in a participatory manner through participatory research appraisal using the following methods

Audience analysis
This is essentially “listening” to what farmers or other potential users of information need. They are the ones whom the communication intends to reach. They are the sole stakeholders of a communication. Collecting baseline information about these stakeholders is an essential preliminary step towards developing a communication strategy. Segmentation or dividing large groups of stakeholders into smaller groups helps achieve
focus in communication strategy development. Segmentation is usually done in two ways:

- Conventional segmentation according to socioeconomic status (income, education, age, sex, etc.), place or residence (urban-rural), and language ethnic group;
- Innovative segmentation based on behavior, needs, and values and lifestyles.

**Situation analysis**

In doing situation analysis, you should look at both the possible problem to be addressed by the communication program and the conditions surrounding such problem. What are the factors which cause a gap between the existing and desired behavior of stakeholders? Is the problem due to the stakeholders’ the lack of awareness or knowledge of the nature of the problem? Or is it attitudinal nature? Could the gap be due to their lack of skills to carry out certain practices? Situation analysis likewise includes assessing the communication resources in the area which could be tapped for the communication program. Knowledge of the area’s mass media and small media, as well as interpersonal means of communication, should contribute substantially to strategy development.

**Program analysis**

When doing program analysis, you need to take both an inward and an outward look at the situation that is, looking at your organization’s vision, policies, resources, strengths, and weakness relevant to the problem. Are there adequate resources to realize your vision? How well are you using available resources? At the same time, it is important to scan the environment for existing programs that could affect, positively or negatively the communication strategy to be developed.

**Designing a communication strategy**

Communication strategy is the combination of methods, messages, and approaches by which the planner seeks to achieve the communication objectives. The second phase of the process charts the direction of the communication program. It is at this stage where objectives and the corresponding standards and indicators for monitoring and evaluation are formulated. The very word strategy suggests a unique combination of
techniques or approaches by which to achieve program goals and objectives. During strategy design formulation, you should begin with the following issues in mind:

- Preliminary action plan;
- Communication modes/approaches; and
- Basic messages and discussion themes.

Designing messages and discussion themes

The main activities under the message design phase are selection of message appeals and approaches and selection of communication channels and media. The big challenge at this stage is the development of the big idea or the creative concept around which the whole communication program would revolve. Involving the stakeholders in message and materials development increases the likelihood that the communication program would help achieve the bigger development goal.

Communication Methods and Materials Development

Actual development of communication methods and materials is undertaken once the communication strategy is in place. A useful reminder to you concerns the importance of testing not only the materials themselves, but also the creative idea and the messages. Pretesting allows for adjustments in the communication activities before substantial time, efforts, and resources are spent on their actual production. Pretesting measures the effectiveness of messages, methods, and materials in terms of their power to attract attention, understood, accepted, and generate the feeling of self-involvement among the stakeholders.

Management and Implementation

Management of the organization carrying out the communication program and networking is the most important activities in this phase. After all the
preparatory stages, launching and carrying out the communication takes priority. Together with this, come monitoring the process of dissemination, transmission, and reception of communication inputs. The aspects of management also cover improving the process and the concept of leadership as they affect the implementation of communication programs.

Different communication tools are discussed as follows

**Multimedia**

Multimedia presentations using play a key role in presentations and lectures for training, seminars, conferences, and workshops. Presentations can have a better impact if the presentations are well done. Audiovisuals help reveal spoken message if used well. They brighten up presentation and make it memorable. The following are insights of the processes in employing multimedia presentations.

**Preparing Presentations**

- First develop the contents of your presentation
- Organize the contents of slide presentation (key points and ideas to be communicated to the audience should follow a logical pattern)
- The first slide should identify the presenter (his/her address and the event date and venue of presentation)
- The second slide may include the list of contents
- Select enough slides to go with the time allotted for the presentation
- Perform a rehearsal session for each slide, before the actual presentation, as each slide bears different amount of content to be presented (when rehearsing each slide, errors or omissions can be noticed and corrected)
- Finish with a conclusion slide to make your presentation an orderly finish.

**Designing Presentations**

- Choose appropriate colors to give emphasis to key points or magnify similarities or differences
- Do not use more than three colors per slide; use light colors for images and fonts, dark colors for the background; or vice versa (e.g., White or yellow fonts against a blue or black background or vice versa)
- Consider varying colors you use for color-blind people
• Make sure that the light intensity of the meeting room fits the visual effects of your presentation
• Make faster slide transition (as much as possible avoid applying slide transitions)
• Limit the use of animations to certain aspects; however, you may apply animations to better express different ideas appearing on one slide
• Be consistent in using design templates and color schemes; and use only templates and colors with better reflective surface for the fonts and graphics of your slide.

Text Preparation
• Limit text to 25-30 words or 35-40 data per slide
• Do not use more than 9 lines on a slide; use one or two lines for the title and subtitle
• Use short or telegraphic sentences in bullet form
• Use spaces between sentences to enhance readability.

Selecting Fonts
• Use 16 to 24 points font for sentences and 32 to 44 points font for titles as the minimum depending on the number of characters
• Use fonts that can be read at a distance and avoid complex fonts
• Do not mix too many font types, sizes and colors on a slide
• Use appropriate cases of fonts for sentences and headings/titles
• Keep tables to a maximum of 6 rows and 6 columns
• Check grammar and spelling (there is nothing inferior to seeing mistakes elaborated on a screen)
• Check if text is easily readable when projected (remember, for a screen of 2 m width, the minimum reaching distance is 2 m and the maximum 12 m).

Presentation
• Arrive early to check and test the equipment, get acquainted with the room and ensure that the multimedia projector and the computer are in order
• Allow the audience enough time to read and understand your message before changing the slide
• Limit the content of a slide to a single idea
• Face the audience during the entire presentation
• Do not read slides word-for-word (your audience can read them and interpret what the slide means, unless there are key points you should stress)

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- Do not point by your hand/ finger to the screen to focus on specific points, instead use the cursor or electronic pointers
- Remove slides from the screen that you do not talk about (remember it is better to have a black screen than a slide or part of it that bears no relation to what you are presenting)
- Avoid talking while changing slides as this distracts your audience (silence is acceptable during this action)
- Position the multimedia projector in such a way that it does not block the view of anyone in the audience
- Do not use vertical images as screens are usually designed for horizontal presentations
- Use sound and graphic effects when only necessary.

Posters

Well designed, colorful, and message to the point posters with conspicuous images are powerful public awareness tools. In messaging improved agricultural technologies activities, posters are divided into different categories. The most common ones are characterized as follows:

Announcement Posters
Announcement posters are produced to inform people and organizations about forthcoming events. In producing such posters, make sure that

- Every detail is clearly noted (venue, date, time of day, topic, highlights, guest speakers, etc.)
- You use large and display fonts for the title to catch the eyes of people from as far position as possible
- Vivid background colors are used so that the fonts stand out clearly against it
- Posters are posted in prominent places (clear positions)
- Posters are sent to concerned participants and audiences in advance of the date of the event.

Explanatory and Educational Posters
Explanatory and educational posters are produced to explain new technologies to nonscientific audiences. In producing such posters, make sure that
Promotional Posters
Promotional posters are produced to carry institutional or societal messages to a wider audience. When producing them, please note that

- The poster is clearly stating the identity of the organization/society (what it does and where it is located)
- There is no ambiguity in the content of the message
- Simple language is used and words or symbolic languages that could confuse readers or that have multiple meanings are avoided
- A few words are used as much as possible
- Attractive illustrations and fonts that are noticeable from a distance are used
- The relevant logo is placed on prominent position so that readers will recall it when seeing it later on other public knowledge (awareness) materials, letterheads, and letter envelopes, and publications.

Advocacy Posters
Advocacy posters are produced to urge people to adjust to new viewpoints (campaigns). When producing them make sure that

- The message is clear and strongly worded to change people's viewpoints, beliefs, and convince them to do things in a different way
- Confused messages and inappropriate illustrations are not included, not to turn people against rather than for the action being advocated
- You are applying the suggestions for promotional posters.

Public Speaking
Speaking in an audience—in panel discussion, press conferences, briefings, press releases, welcome, opening and closing speeches—is the most direct form of personal public awareness. When well done, it cannot only inform the listeners successfully, but can also persuade them, solicit their attention, detach them away from previously held attitudes, and even rally them to a
causc. Most great public speakers are born with that capacity, personality, voice, or presence to inspire. But even a novice can produce an acceptable speech by learning techniques and practicing them before and during the presentation.

Before the speech

- Take time to plan the content of the talk, making sure that the style of language used will be understood by the target audience, and that the message being conveyed is one which the audience will identify and accept favorably.
- Ask the organization's best writer to produce the first draft of the talk, based on materials provided by the speaker.
- Once the speaker has approved the draft, send it to key staff members for comments, suggestions, and other inputs, the results of which will be incorporated into the final draft.
- Ask those same staff members to suggest questions that might be asked by the audience after the speech. Have answers prepared for those questions and have the speaker memorize them.
- Carry out at least one rehearsal of the talk in front of colleagues and ask for any suggestions on improving delivery, timing, etc.
- Visit the location where the speech will be given, to get a feeling of the space.
- Has someone checked any audiovisual equipment that will be used?

During the Speech

- The speaker should begin by introducing the organization and him/herself, thanking the audience for coming, outlining the topic and objective of the talk, and stating approximately how long it will take.
- To quickly grab the audience's attention, it is often advised to start with an anecdote that is related to the topic. If this is done, it is also recommended that the speaker return to the anecdote or a similar one at the end of the talk.
- During the talk, the speaker should not speak in a monotone but should raise and lower the volume of his/her voice whenever appropriate. Pauses, before or after significant points are made, help to hold listeners' interest, as do questions—either rhetorical or with the answers provided later. Humor is also good for retaining attention, but this should be tested carefully first on colleagues first as not everyone's sense of humor is the same.
- Gestures also help to keep people's eyes on the speaker, but not too many and not too wild.
- After the question period is over, concluding remarks should once again thank the audience for attending and, where necessary, congratulate the organizers.
Field Days

Field days are organized so to directly inform the stakeholders of success stories as well as the research they are doing.

The Events
From experience, it has been observed that stakeholders participating in the field days will have the opportunity to see available technologies and technologies in the pipeline. Moreover, they will be able to interact with researchers, and extension agents for more accurate information than they would get from other media resources only. It has also been noted that field days are useful events for the following reasons:

Researchers and extension agents are better able to communicate significant messages directly to farmers. Instant feedback is obtained, which allow extension agents and researchers learn whether farmers understand what extension agents and researchers are doing and producing and learn the issues they are missing or not taking into consideration. Thus, the extension agents and researchers can possibly make changes suggested and move towards a more client-oriented research.

Before planning and launching field days, a better understanding of the following principal elements is crucial.

Field days enhance the mutual relationship between researches, extension, farmers, and stakeholders. Such events are meant for awareness creation. Much time is required to organize the events. Accommodation for visitors is high. However, the cost of public relations materials could be high. The labor requirement is high. Costs of transportation, refreshment, lunch, public awareness materials, and media coverage are expensive. For the lack of focus on the event, stakeholders could be over-loaded with information and left confused. Therefore, good planning based on the above considerations is critical. Planning a field day should include the following procedures:
Getting Ready

- Assess the preferences of the stakeholders
- Identify the best method of handling the event
- Stick to one theme per field day
- Prepare precise and concise explanation of the selected thematic issues
- Avoid information overload, particularly with unnecessary details
- Have a wider media coverage
- Prepare the program of the event
- Assign adequate staff for different tasks
- Provide adequate orientation to the assigned staff so that confusions during the field day are minimized
- Have at least one rehearsal before the field day and correct possible mistakes that could happen in the process of the field day
- Plan the field day to be conducted during appropriate time or season.

Launching

- Arrange transport facilities for visitors
- Get a prominent person, if possible, linked with the theme of the event to open the field day
- Make sure time schedule is respected
- Use simple language and assign a translator for certain languages of local relevance;
- Besides elaborating the main issues, allow question and answer sessions during the visit
- Hand out information materials (print)
- Provide refreshments and lunch if the field day is a full-day event.

Follow-up

Assess appreciation levels, by conducting an evaluation within a month
Review the assessment and take lessons learned for subsequent field days
Acknowledge cooperating institutions and individuals who helped significantly in organizing the field day.

Exhibitions

Exhibitions are important tools for public awareness campaigns. They provide an opportunity for the organization to present its activities to a
mixed audience in a variety of ways and to interact with its public. It enables the organization to inform and receive feedback from individuals and institutions relevant to its work.

Types
There are different types of exhibitions, defined according to their level and purpose.

- **National Exhibitions**: such as agricultural shows, aim to create public awareness, attracting government support, providing information on an organization and its activities as well as promoting networking

- **Local Exhibitions**: at local level promote awareness of activities to the public, which may include potential or actual beneficiaries and partners

Exhibitions could be general or sector-specific, targeting organizations working in a particular field. Examples of the national exhibition type are the agricultural shows common in Ethiopia. Some exhibits could be moved from place to place to be mounted wherever an organization has activities.

Procedure
The first step is to decide whether to exhibit or not. This will be determined by an analysis of the purpose and potential benefits as well as the costs involved. In costing, the items that have to be taken into account include

- Exhibition space
- Display panels, tables, chairs, flooring, lightning, telephones, audio visual equipment and other facilities
- Personnel
- Publicity (advertising, invitations)
- Opening reception
- Refreshments
- Unforeseen costs (contingencies).

Once the decision to exhibit has been made, careful planning should follow. Everything—from staffing, assembling of materials and travel arrangements—must be taken care of. The time needed for planning
depends on the type and size of the exhibit, but all consume much time and resources. A responsible person is needed to manage the schedule.

Design
The success of the exhibit will largely depend on the quality of the display. A good display has

- Originality and style
- Pictures and posters effectively displayed
- A variety of exhibits that demonstrate your work (These include produces, plants, implements, laboratory instruments, sometimes livestock)
- Easily accessible promotional materials for various target groups
- A comfortable setting that has space for face-to-face interaction (if possible, set aside sitting space for longer discussions)
- Audiovisual material (such as video and multimedia presentations)
- A striking feature (that attracts visitors such as mobile displays and demonstrations)
- The right size (A large stand should be designed in a style that allows people to walk through)

The design should be determined by the space available and its location (whether it is in a passageway, at the corner of a hall, indoors, or in the open). It is also influenced by the aim of the exhibit and the audience (public, farmers, youth, etc.). You should also prepare a time schedule to ensure that the exhibit is ready by the opening day. An adequate number of promotional materials should be prepared and assembled well in advance.

Publicity
It is important to inform people about the exhibit. In exhibitions involving many displays, the organizers normally arrange for advance publicity. You can announce its exhibit through press releases, advertising (radio, newspapers, posters, notice boards, banners, and Invitations)

The staff designated to attend visitors at the exhibition should have their responsibilities clearly spelled out in a briefing. The staff selected should be able to communicate effectively, preferably in different languages. They should also be knowledgeable about the activities of the organization in
order to adequately answer questions from visitors, including the press. The exhibit should not be left in the hands of junior staff members.

On the opening day, it is a good idea to organize a reception and get a well-known personality to be the key speaker. Institutional partners and relevant stakeholders should be on the guest list. The function does not have to be in the evening, a morning reception is just as appropriate.

If an award has been won, display it. During the exhibit, record the number of visitors and their contact information (names, organization, addresses, and areas of interest). This information may be added to a mailing list. It will also enable the organization to determine what kind of people visited the exhibit and what they liked, or disliked, about it.

The exhibit should be kept fresh, orderly, and clean. Every day when the exhibition closes, make sure that everything is refreshed for the next day. Follow up on any promises to supply materials or information that may have been made available to visitors.

Subsequently, a meeting should be held to discuss and evaluate the event. This is necessary for internal audit purposes. Lessons learned can help improve similar events in the future.

**Conferences**

**Getting Started**

To develop a successful conference, you must employ the talents, cooperation, coordination, and participation of many individuals. For this reason, it is best to establish a Conference Planning Committee very early in the planning process, even before a decision is made to actually hold a conference. Look for persons to serve on your committee these persons should:

- Be qualified to serve due to their experience on substantive issues, respected by professionals in the field.
- Have organizational, negotiation, or communication skills
- Be dependable
• Be able to accept responsibility
• Work well with others
• Be able to make decisions
• Be ready to abide by the decision of the majority

Typically, the Conference Planning Committee shares responsibility with the Conference Coordinator and the Sponsor in:

• Serving in an advisory capacity
• Approving scheduling and logistical decisions
• Responding to recommendations and suggestions on conference content

The Conference Coordinator

One of the first responsibilities of the Conference Planning Committee may be selecting one of its members to serve as the Conference Coordinator. Another common practice is for the sponsor to designate a coordinator who is not a member of the committee. An internal or external person may be appointed as coordinator. An internal coordinator is a member or employee of the sponsoring agency or organization. The most common practice is to appoint an internal coordinator. An external coordinator is generally a person who is exceptionally skilled in conference planning and is 'loaned' to the sponsor by an outside agency or contracted by the sponsor for conference services. You need someone with all the qualities stated earlier for committee members plus a few more. Lock for a person who:

• Possesses good organizational skills
• Is a good communicator
• Has an eye for details
• Can function well even if things get a little stressful

The responsibilities of the coordinator and secretariat together may include the following.

Management Functions
• Preparing a conference budget
• Setting the schedule for completing tasks leading to the conference
• Conducting site visits
• Negotiating contracts with hotels/meeting facilities
• Recommending and correspond with speakers/entertainers/exhibitors
• Preparing session descriptions
• Setting the flow of the conference and planning the program.
• Recruiting and training conference staff/volunteers.
• Managing conference crises
• Authorizing onsite expenditures
• Developing session and conference evaluations
• Ensuring bills are paid

Administrative Functions
• Organize, schedule, and staff Conference Planning Committee meetings.
• Develop conference notice, brochures, and registration forms.
• Communicate with the conference registration officer.
• Order conference supplies, materials, and equipment; work with suppliers.
• Prepare name badges, signs, banners and the program book
• Order room setups for all workshops/sessions
• Handle logistics for VIPs.
• Recruit and train conference staff/volunteers.
• Process conference registrations in the office and onsite

Purpose of the Conference
The purpose of the conference should be clearly established before the planning process begins. Before proceeding any further, the need for and purpose of the conference must be determined. The Conference Planning Committee can be a valuable asset in guiding and advising the sponsor on establishing the purpose of the conference. Remember, your planning committee is a broad representation of your target audience; do not underestimate the committee's value. Following are tips to guide you in developing a statement of the conference's purpose:

• Establish a clear and emphatic purpose. Some conferences fail simply because their purpose was not fully addressed.
• Know what others are doing. For example, if your conference will address a specific discipline such as grain legume breeding, find out what legume breeders are doing in terms of training and education.
• Learn the needs of your target audience. Do not tell your target audience what information and training they need—let them tell you. Surveys are helpful to determine need.
What is the Target Audience?
You can see that this topic is closely linked to defining your purpose, but the question of audience composition merits a separate answer. In the conference planning process, the purpose is determined first, and then the appropriate participants are identified.

Number of Participants
The number of conferees must relate to other factors. Consider the following:

- Target audience. Do not plan a conference of 500 when your pool of expected attendees numbers only 200.
- Conference budget. The financial resources available to spend on the conference will directly affect your program and the number of invited participants.
- Number of meeting rooms and room capacities. The number of available meeting rooms can limit the number of concurrent workshops you can hold. Total seating capacity limits the number of participants you can invite.
- Hotel accommodations. The number of sleeping rooms and hotel capacity are extremely important when an overnight stay is required for conference participants.
- Number of conferences staff and volunteers. Although staffing is usually determined by the number of participants, this may be a factor if you have a limited number of conference staff available.
- Size of hall. When plenary sessions, meals, or other general sessions are part of your program, the number of participants is again limited by room capacity.
- Conference dates. Select dates that do not conflict with other events, including holidays or religious observances.

Conferences Dates
Conference planners should consider a timetable of at least 12 months to organize a conference. This should provide all the time you will need to handle the planning and administrative tasks. Of course, these tasks can usually be accomplished in much less time, but the earlier you start, the easier your job will be. When you are identifying preferred dates, some thought should be given to:
• Dates of other conferences competing for your target audience
• National and religious holidays and events
• Expected weather conditions
• Dates of school openings and closings.
• Peak convention seasons.

Conference Budget
In preparing the budget, conference planners need to prepare an extensive budget checklist, and then determine which costs will be paid by the conference master account and which will be paid by persons attending the conference. This division of expenses is sometime referred to as a split folio. A folio can be split many ways between master account charges and individual guest charges. Be sure to clearly communicate your split folio plan to the hotel, in writing, when your letter of agreement is prepared. (The letter of agreement is a written confirmation of agreements between you and the hotel that is sent out prior to the contract.)

Site Selection
Another important decision you will need to make early in the conference planning process is site selection. Early is a key word here. The more time you have to choose a site, the greater your options will be. The more options you have, the greater your ability to obtain preferred dates and negotiate with hotels and meeting facilities will be.

Matching Conferences with Facilities
Matching your conference with the right type of facility can make a good conference a great conference. This requires some considerate planning. For example, if you were planning a lot of "free time," especially in the evening, you would not want to use a conference center that is located far away from restaurants and local attractions. You need to consider what type of facility can best serve your needs. When you know your audience, understand the purpose of your conference, and have planned an appropriate conference program, choosing the proper type of facility will be easy.
Exhibit Requirements
Not all conferences require exhibit space. If your meeting includes an exposition, the following items should be included in your agreement

- Assigned exhibit space. Include location and any limits on size, weight, types, or number of exhibits. It's an advantage to have an exhibit area in which food is served or sold, and to have open space between your exhibit and registration area and that of other hotel patrons.
- Charges for exhibit space. Exhibit space may be complimentary; it's negotiable.
- Set up and dismantle dates. Indicate the times your groups will have access to the space for setup and the date and time for dismantling exhibits. Clearly state the times exhibit areas may be open and when the area needs to be cleared.
- Utilities available. Include what's available (electricity, lighting, gas, compressed air, water, drains, etc.) And any charges or limitations.
- Storage and security. Include arrangements for storage, storage limitations, access, and security arrangements.
- Materials. Include specifications for who is responsible for getting materials to the exhibit space.

Food and Beverage
Specific functions should be listed. These include the number of breakfasts, lunches, dinners, coffee breaks, cocktail receptions, etc., that you plan hold; the day and date for each function; and the estimated attendance for each function. Hotel policies will determine how many days in advance the group must give a minimum guarantee of the number of people who will attend each function. Hotels usually set for up to five percent over the guaranteed minimum; the specific percentage as directed by the group should be included in the agreement.

Post-conference report
The hotel should agree to provide the group with a conference report a certain date after the conference. The report should include room pickup; the number of singles/doubles, no shows, and cancellations; and food and beverage activity, including room service, restaurant usage, banquet functions, and other food and beverage functions.

[21]
The conference purpose has been defined
The audience profile has been determined
The number of participants has been estimated

A well-planned program relates these three factors with conference events, presentation methods, and event scheduling. Your mission here is to design the best combination of events, presentation methods, and scheduling to serve your conference.

Speakers and Presenters
The term speaker often refers to a person who makes a presentation at a general session. Presenters are persons who make presentations at other sessions, such as concurrent sessions, workshops, and breakouts.

Few things can do more damage to a beautifully conceived conference than inappropriate topics or incompetent speakers. Usually, your speaker's need will depend on the topics to be addressed, but sometimes this may get reversed. If a speaker is selected because of his or her reputation for making dynamic presentations and the topic is determined solely by the speaker's preference, this can lead to an unpleasant surprise when the topic is out of sync with the purpose of the conference.

One way to avoid this problem with speaker topics is to put out a call for papers. Speakers can then be chosen from respondents. The other method is careful planning by the Conference Planning Committee, the coordinator, and the sponsor. If the people responsible for the conference have done their homework, they will know what topics they want to cover, and their job will be narrowed to searching for speakers with expertise on the chosen topics.

Registration
Registration involves an exchange of information, between the conference organizers and conference. It should be a fast, simple, and painless process.

Using Signs
Place signs at the doors of all workshops listing workshop number (if appropriate), workshop title, name of presenter, and workshop time. Place
directional signs in the lobbies, at end of hallways, and at the top and bottom of staircases: getting lost in a meeting facility is frustrating. Designate a person or several people to be in charge of signs.

Following the Agenda
Changes to the agenda are sometimes unavoidable. Adjust when you must. Stay on schedule even when the agenda has been changed. Make sure monitors, introduces, and the person handling "housekeeping announcements" understand when possible, announce changes in the confirmation letter sent to conferees, at general sessions and workshops, and at the information center. Print and distribute flyers in the change warrants it.

Staffing
During the conference, the coordinator's time is in great demand. The coordinator is busy with managing, overseeing, directing, deciding, greeting, meeting, and sometimes peacekeeping. An informed and trained staff of volunteers is necessary for a conference to run smoothly. Learn to delegate conference responsibilities and clearly communicate what needs to be accomplished.

Evaluation
The most common method of evaluation is the use of an evaluation form. The forum is designed as a questionnaire to gauge conferees' reactions to and thoughts on various components of the conference. The forms can be distributed and collected at the conference, distributed at the conference and returned either at the conference or by mail, and distributed and returned by mail.

Mailing your evaluation forms to conferees involves an additional cost, but such a mailing often draws a more reflective response. Evaluating every element of the conference probably isn't worth the effort it would take to do so. In addition, there comes a point at which completing an evaluation form becomes burdensome to the respondent. Most planners want to know what the major elements of the conference worked, what didn't work, and what can be refined in the future. Consider evaluating:
• Conference Planning Committee, Conference Coordinator, and Conference staff
• Conference site
• Workshop and Plenary sessions topics
• Speakers and presenters
• Special events (tours, receptions, etc.)
• Conference registration process
• Tea and coffee, and lunch breaks
• Clarity of conference purpose
• Conference program book

Essential Tools for Communications

Print Media
Printed media can combine words, pictures, and diagrams to convey accurate and clear information. These include; posters, booklets, leaflets, circulars or newsletter, and newspapers. Their great advantage is that they can be looked at for as long as the viewer wishes, and can be referred to again and again. This makes them ideal as permanent reminders of extension messages. However, they are only useful in areas where a reasonable proportion of the population can read. Over 25% of the rural population in the project area was literate (CSA, 2007) considering local language and this proportion of the population will be benefited from using these communication tools. Moreover, young educated farmers are now becoming agricultural successors and hence more literacy rate is expected in the near future to use these knowledge sharing aids.

Although publications have a long shelf life and may be useful sources of reference their effectiveness is limited by: failure to consider the needs of users in the design and content of publications (e.g. extension workers often find booklets and leaflets intended for farmers more useful than those they receive from research institutions); language that is inappropriate for the intended audience; low literacy levels among some categories of end users; and poor circulation, due partly to the escalating cost of maintaining journal subscriptions (intermediate users).
Leaflets are effective reminders of technical detail, particularly regarding quantitative information which are poorly remembered from audio-visual media and visual (diagrams) or verbal descriptions that can be essential to identification of phenomena and organisms in the field. For effective communication, writing and printing media have to be creative, credible, convincing, complete, current, clear, and concise.

Non-print Media
Many of these non-printing media are mostly useful for people who cannot read and write. Therefore, these communication tools are very important for the majority of illiterate rural population such as the project area. Speaking and radio or video must be command attention, cater to the heart and the head, call to action, clarify the message, communicate a benefit, create trust and convey a consistent message. A combination of these will to be of value.

Radio
Radio is a particularly useful mass medium for extension. Battery-operated radios are available in some rural communities. Information can reach households directly and instantly throughout a region or country. Urgent news or warnings can be communicated far more quickly than through posters, extension agents, or newspapers. It is possible to make information reach to large number of audiences at a time by using a radio and microphone in the village where many people are found. Even an extension agent can speak using microphone and share information on crop residue best-bet technologies to many farmers while they are working at their farms.

Despite radio's mass audience, a good presenter can make programs seem very informal and personal, giving the impression that an individual listener is being spoken to directly. Radio is one of the best ways of spreading awareness of new ideas to large numbers of people and can be used to publicize extension activities. It can also enable one community or group to share its experiences with others.
Visual aids
These are classified as non-projected visual aids such as chalkboard, bulletin and magnetic boards, wall newspapers, pictures, cartoons, models, real objects, exhibits/displays, charts, posters and demonstrations. These are mostly useful for group situation (small size of audiences). And projected-visual aids like slide and overhead projectors for large audiences. Non-projected visual aids can be photographed and converted to slides. These aids are relatively cheap and simple to share relevant information on crop residue best-bet technologies. Development agents can use these tools to share agricultural knowledge.

Audio-visuals
The terms visual and audio-visual aid refer to anything that an extension worker or anybody else uses to help facilitate communication when interacting with a group, in this case farmers or livestock keepers on the one hand, or during discussions with decision makers at a policy level on the other hand. The spoken word is the main communication tool, but whether one is speaking to a large village meeting or discussing a problem in a field with a farmer, the impact and effectiveness can be greatly increased by the use of suitable visual and audio-visual aids. When selected and used properly, these aids can help in presenting the message.

Television: Television still reaches mainly urban audiences; some of whom may be managers and key decision-makers within intermediate user agencies, and individuals with influence over farming decisions by relatives on family holdings in rural areas. However, in many developing countries the accessibility of TV is increasing and audiences are growing in rural areas. Satellite channels and networks offer potentially very large international audiences. With multiple channels available to viewers, however, agricultural broadcasts must compete for attention with entertainment, sport and current affairs programs. Local and national TV channels are will provide more suitable platforms for agricultural and livestock extension messages. Farmers found near to towns, roadsides and accessible to electricity are beneficial to this channel. It is also possible to communicate crop residue best-bet technologies recorded with CDs and DVDs using TV channels.
Video: Video combines most of the advantages of both film and audio-cassettes. Recordings are immediately available for viewing and listening on a computer or TV. This enables the production team to re-record any material that they are not satisfied with. Simple editing can be done by copying required sections (clips) in the order in which they are to appear in the finished production. More accurate and complicated editing requires special editing equipment, and increasingly this can be done using computer software on laptop PCs. Video can be used as a tool in demonstrations, as an aid to learning (e.g. how-to-do it videos), as well as an integral part of community-led programs of change and development - participatory video. Using video as a participatory tool is growing in popularity, driven partly by the ongoing improvements in video technology, as well as by an increasing availability of suitable computers, software and trained personnel. Video can be used as a tool by communities to scrutinize their problems and find solutions. The video camera is able to "participate" in community discussions, document scenes, and record interviews with individuals. The recorded segments can be played back and shown to the community - generating further discussion recordings.

Role Play and Drama: Theatre, puppets, dance, and music are firmly rooted in the traditional cultural and artistic expressions of many communities in poorer countries. Along with drama, these forms of collective participation and entertainment can be used to develop and impart messages oriented towards livestock development and natural resource conservation measures. It is therefore, possible to use these tools in the project area to communicate the best-be crop residue technologies by using the local (Oromifa) language.

Field days: Farmers like to see how a new idea works and what effect it can have on their crop or livestock production. This can be done by means of an on-farm demonstration. A good, practical demonstration is an invaluable method in extension work. It is a particularly powerful method to use with farmers who do not read easily and who therefore cannot rely on print media for up to date agricultural information. A demonstration can give such farmers an opportunity to observe, at first hand, the differences between a recommended practice and their own current practices.
strength of the demonstration should lie in its simplicity and its ability to present the farmer with concrete results.

Local notice boards: Local notice boards can be used very effectively to display leaflets, posters and short notes, as well as to advertise the dates, locations, and times of meetings. The presentation should be made to be eye-catching, and some of the guidelines given under audio-visual aids are also relevant on notice boards. In addition, material on display on a notice board should be renewed on a regular basis, or removed once the event is over. Local notice boards may, of course, also be associated with Village Information Centers.

Telephone: A commonly used method of obtaining information is telephone, where the technologies are widely used, but currently not much used in developing countries. However, the number of extension agents with access to a telephone is increasing, as is the availability of public telephones and mobile networks in rural areas. There is unlikely to be an extended discussion and it is more likely that the farmer wants a specific piece of advice or information, or calls to ask someone to come and visit the farm. Because the neither party can see each other, all communication is verbal – missing out possibly important communication cues. An extension worker therefore needs to take care and be clear what the farmer’s needs are. Research conducted in Uganda indicated that the use of mobile telephone text messaging services (SMS) for sharing information is very effective.

Farmer-to-farmer extension (model farmers): Farmer to farmer extension should be recognized as an important component of knowledge sharing process in crop residue best-bet technologies utilization. It is difficult to train all the farmers as the same time because of time and other resource limitations. Therefore, model farmers can be used as knowledge brokers and empowering them with the skills to collect, store, analyze, and disseminate crop residue best-bet technologies within their communities. Moreover, 15% of information about agricultural technologies was sourced from model/contact farmers.

Social networks: A group meeting is a common extension method. Although there may be an air of informality about such meetings, they
nevertheless need to be carefully thought out and planned. The group or community meeting is a useful educational forum where the agent and farmers can come together, and ideas can be openly discussed and analyzed. An extension worker may have information about a new policy or agricultural practice, in which case he or she will want to introduce this information, seek the opinions of community members, and gain their support for extension activities. On the other hand, the agent may want to start a discussion about local issues and development potential, in which case the information will come from those attending the meeting rather than the agent. There are, in fact, several possible purposes for such community or group meetings, in each of which the extension worker has a different role to play. The different research works indicated that there are many opportunities for group dissemination or knowledge sharing by making use of existing social networks. In addition to the existing social groups, a new group of farmers could also be formed on the interest of the farmers and the nature of the technologies that can be utilized. The groups might be called “Farmers’ Research Groups”, “Farmers’ Extension Groups,” and “Farmers’ Field School.”

Village information centers: Village Information Centers (VIC) have an increasingly important role to play in communication and dissemination of agricultural and crop residue management information to rural communities - along with a range of other rural development-oriented information. The ability of VICs to interact with a wide spectrum of people in rural areas, from school children through to the elderly, and the potential for two-way communication represents a significant advantage. Village Information Centers have also, notably in the Indian sub-continent, become synonymous with the use and spread of Internet to rural areas, and E-learning

Extension services: Extension can have an important role in feeding back information on farmers' constraints and potentials, to encourage relevant research. It can also introduce the research system to innovations by farmers. Farmers, regardless of their resource and socioeconomic status, will adopt new technologies and modify resource use when they consider the change is relevant to their circumstances and can help them achieve their goals. An extension service can have an important function in speeding farmers' adoption of measures that can enhance their productivity
and welfare. Hence, extension has the potential to increase the rate of adoption by directly increasing awareness, by helping producers acquire skills, and by helping they understand a technology and its relevance to their circumstances.

**Objects and specimens**
Real objects and specimens, if readily available, are useful in demonstrations. If they can be preserved without altering their physical properties, they are useful for repeated use and review. However their availability is highly seasonal. For example, specimens of insect pests can help farmers distinguish which insects are harmful to their crops. Specimens of diseased plants can also be used to identify their symptoms of plant diseases found in the locality.

**Participatory Communication**

Our experience in agricultural research and development has shown that long-lasting changes to improve farm families’ wellbeing does not come with just simple communication undertakings.

Farmers change their practices when they see a need and have the means to do so. While communication address farmers’s lack of or wrong knowledge, therefore you may simply realize that communication is not an effortless task of giving farmers some information that you presume they do not yet have. Hence, communication by itself is a key process of bringing farmers and experts together to cooperate towards addressing problem such as farm productivity, marketing, degradation of the environment and natural resources on which farmer’s livelihoods and survival rely.

Participatory communication is not just a set of techniques or procedures to make farmers change their knowledge, attitudes, and practices. Rather, it is a firm belief that farmers should voluntarily engage in vital activities in their farms as part of a process of gaining critical understanding of why they are doing so.
If farmers understand why and voluntarily change their practices and activities, such changes are likely to be more long lasting. It is also believed that could initiate actions that bring about social change beyond individual behavior change. Therefore, they will begin to work together in agreement to make changes happen at the community level.

It is well known that adult farmers better learners. In working with adult learners, development / change agents ought to consider several principles and conditions in adult learning.

- **Adults have wide experience.** It is better to ask them first about their experience rather than teach them as if they know nothing. They can then learn new ways of thinking and doing things starting from what they have experienced.
- **Adults learn best as a result of experience.** They do not readily accept what change agents tell them because they often think they know better as a result of their own experience. It is better to first acknowledge adult learners’ experience and based on their experience, introduce relevant ideas or practices.
- **Adults are interested and learn quickly about those things that are relevant in their lives.** As long as they can relate new ideas and practices with their own needs and interest, adults will be willing and ready to learn.
- **As adults grow older, their memories grow weaker, but their powers of observation and reasoning grow stronger.** Because of this, you need to repeat your messages to adult learners in different ways to make sure that they remember the important points, without sounding too repetitive in an annoying way. You often need to devise ways of helping adults remember, like using a catchy name or acronym for a series of ideas or steps in a practice.
- **Each learner has his/ her own unique way of learning.** Whether adults or children, learners are different from one another in the way they learn. Some learn faster, others, more slowly. Some can learn many things at the same time; others need to concentrate on one thing at a time. Some learn better with the help of others, others, others learn well just by themselves.
- **Adult learners enjoy working together with other learners** (although they also like to work alone). Because of their wide experiences, adults like to learn with other adults and listen to others’ experiences as well as share their own. However, they can also work independently of others because they like to make their own decisions at times.
• Adults have a sense of personal dignity. It is thus always important to treat adult learners with respect, like colleagues rather than like subordinates or as "students." After all, they have their own wide experiences relevant to their own realities, from which change agents can also learn.

• Learning is a painful process. Because learning means changing one's ways of thinking or of doing things, it can mean giving up thoughts or ways we have become comfortable with. Changing them means bearing some discomfort in the process.

• Learning is an evolutionary process. It often does not happen overnight or quickly enough to make us see the change. Sometimes, changes in a person are happening internally first before you can possibly see changes in their actions. Hence, when you do not see visible changes in a person's behavior, it may not necessarily follow that there is no change happening in his outlook or way of thinking.

In general, adults learn best in a non-threatening climate of respect, acceptance, and trust; where there is cooperative evaluation and self-evaluation; and when the focus is more on the process than on the content of learning.

Qualities of a Communications Facilitator

The qualities relevant for facilitators may include:

Social/interpersonal communication skills
These include qualities like trust, sensitivity to feelings, propriety and values of farmers and other stakeholders, commitment to farmers's well being and development, sufficient self-confidence to accept ambiguity and vulnerability, humility, respect, patience, skills for encouraging those who defer and keep quiet speak out, empathy, flexibility of attitude enabling her to adjust to pace at which farmers's participation can proceed with success, willingness to be honest, genuine humor; enthusiasm, alertness, credibility, and sufficient rapport with people.

Group processing skills
These include managing meetings and problem-solving activities, eliciting information, and organizing and planning skills.

Knowledge of scientific principles and techniques
Because agricultural technology promotion and transfer apply principles of biological and technical sciences, facilitators need to have a clear understanding of science and the scientific methods.

**Teaching skills**
Facilitators should understand how farmers learn; especially how adult farmers learn. They must understand the requirements of critical thinking in order to be able to facilitate such critical thinking among audiences.

**Technical skills**
These are how-to’s in technology promotion and transfer. Facilitators of thus need to possess the relevant agricultural technology promotion and transfer know-how, experiences, and skills in order to provide the proper guidance. As facilitators, however, you may tap other experts and resource persons where their technical expertise fails short in order to learn together with learning participants.

**Clear vision of technology promotion and transfer and its issues**
As a communications facilitator you should not just be well-versed in technology promotion and transfer, but you should understand the process of social change and have a clear view of the kind of development farmers should strive for. Principles of people-centeredness, participation, self-determination, and empowerment; holistic and balanced development in the economic, social, cultural, and political aspects; sustainability; positive universal values; and respect for unique potentials and resources of each community should guide this development vision.

## Facilitator Roles

**A coach in team-building**
You as a facilitator are less of a teacher and more of a guide who see to it that farmers or members of a group of learners are able to work and learn together. You should be able to maintain working and friendly relations among the members of a group.

Create an appropriate climate
You should be able to arrange the setting and learning environment to make sure that it is conducive for learning. In addition, you should make sure that the overall emotional atmosphere of the learning session is pleasant and friendly rather than threatening and pressure-drive. This is to encourage creativity, openness, and critical thinking among learning farmers. This is especially important where the farmers are villagers whose educational attainment may have been limited, and their situation limits their self-confidence to speak up in groups or with extension workers/development agents.

Asks questions, do not present solutions
You should be able to challenge farmers to take control of the communications/learning process and discover answers to problems and questions, allowing learners to draw answers to challenges they face from their own experiences and insights. Do not shortcut the critical thinking process that farmers need to go through; hence refrain from immediately presenting and prescribing solutions coming from experts. This is because you would assume that learners to have just the same capacity as, if not better capacity than experts to come up with bright ideas relevant to their own needs and realities.

Encourages search for causes and solutions
Emphasize on the process of communications, making sure that farmers understand fully why they choose a certain option over another. Encourage farmers to think critically and even test options by experimentation.

Assists farmers to discover as much as possible for themselves
The difference between the traditional extension worker and the communications facilitator is that the latter takes care not to encourage too much dependence from farmers. Instead, he/she encourage farmers to seek solutions to problems by themselves, showing them where they may access additional information that will be useful.

Provides access to theory or scientific knowledge
To assist farmers whose experience and understanding may be limited by their limited education and exposure, you should not refrain from inviting experts or finding and providing reference materials that will expand the
scope of options than can help improve the situation of the learners. This will encourage farmers to hold the full responsibility to decide on which solution to adopt, making sure they fully understand the consequences of their decision. This is where bringing in technical experts and reference materials that can explain such consequences are crucial.

Help farmers in planning action
Your role is to guide in the step-by-step planning process as part of empowering farmers as learning group. These steps in planning include a) situation analysis; b) goal and objective setting; c) strategy and activity planning; d) monitoring and evaluation planning; e) budgeting; f) assignment of tasks; and g) scheduling.

Disseminates results to wider audience
You should also see to it that the results of farmers’ critical thinking and experimentation can benefit the wider community by sharing these with them. Informing the wider community about the learner group’s action plans may also generate support and cooperation from them. Therefore, you should set a pleasant, positive learning climate that encourages them to be open, to participate, and to test their ideas.

To set such a positive tone, facilitators should:

- Convey warmth and friendliness
- Listen very carefully
- Dress appropriately
- Be accepting of any and all opinions
- Actively encourage participation
- Become actively involved in the group
- Be kind, but also firm

Search for the underlying meaning of participants’ comments by probing.
You as a communicator or facilitator should know how and when to ask probing questions to help everyone understand fully a member’s statements during a group discussion.

Show incomplete understanding
When communications with farmers you must assume the role of being co-
learners rather than an expert. By showing that they do not know
everything, participants will not feel threatened to contribute to the
discussion and help in the joint search for answers to issues and questions.

Be flexible in running the group
At times you should be able to change your style of communication as may
be required in order to see to it that learning goals are met.

Show sensitivity in probing farmers
In following up to clarify farmers' statements, you should see to it that
farmers' feelings of awkwardness are not aggravated.

Stay focused on the purpose of the discussion while being actively involved
You should help a learning group of farmers to reach the learning goals of a
session and should not lose track of such goals when you are exercising
flexibility