Out of the Loop: How to Engage in Knowledge Sharing

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Donor, policy maker and community fatigue

- Donor and community fatigue
- Lack of policy change
- Lack of impact

A call for equity in research processes and outputs
Communication for development and popular education theories

- Theoretical advances in communication for development
- Theoretical support for participatory communication methods
- Pedagogy of the oppressed: interactive communication - effective in raising awareness and changing behaviors;
Inclusive communication processes most effective

- Participatory processes officially endorsed by: UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, World Bank
- Tool boxes, manuals and “how-tos” currently available (ODI, FAO, IIED, IUCN)
- Conceived to include “devolution as an obligation” (Fals-Borda 1986)

BUT........
Inclusive communication processes in practice?

• Scientists are neither educated nor encouraged to produce products for wide audience
• “Trickle down” and “Transfer” paradigms persist
• Tail end of research – often lacks participation
Most important performance indicators used by organizations to evaluate scientist’s work

- Scientific paper: 53.8%
- Fund raising: 7.1%
- Policy brief: 6.2%
- Brochures/popular publication: 3.3%
- Media coverage: 1.4%
- Seminar/conferences: 2.4%
- Training/educational materials: 4.8%
- Impact or influence: 16.2%

% of response: 0 - 60
Significant organizational disincentives

- Outputs for civil society and end users: lowest importance value for performance measurement - perceived as inconsequential
- Survey: local people 4th group considered in the design of projects and development of outputs
- 50% of respondents perceive local initiatives and training as key to impact, 15% share results with local people.
- Tail end of “participation” often lacking, products are irrelevant or inaccessible to communities, policy makers and the public.
Inclusive communication: convergence of theory and practice

- Information flow: not linear, but complex, interactive, multi-directional
- Communication for social change: empowers voiceless & strengthens cultural identity
- The research process has an holistic approach interdisciplinary
- Progressive methods of participatory research practiced in health and social sciences (INRM, ACM, Knowledge Systems)
Inclusive communication from Survey

- 54% - Build student capacity
- 47% - Enhance confidence and self esteem of partners
- 30% - Designed projects and developed products with local people
- 26% - Designed project with policy makers
Practice: Research process - respectful and relevant

- Humility
- Respect
- Humor
Integrate various knowledge systems and disciplines

- Recognize capacity of people to create knowledge
- Design projects to support co-production of knowledge
- Link interdisciplinary, local and scientific knowledge
- Be adaptive, flexible and innovative
Recognize and value culture
Integrate local knowledge systems more effectively

Theatre
Shadow play
Puppetry
Story telling
Culturally compelling communication

- Music
- Dance
- Games
Identify innovative communication channels

- Radio
- Internet
- Video
- Maps
- Images
- Newspapers
Cornerstones of effective communication

- Relevant information
- Timely
- Rigorous science (long-term, syntheses)
- Accessible language
- Key impact pathways
- Images convey complex information
End-user demand for rigor and relevance

- Not top-down or dumbed-down
- No nonsense
Importance of partnerships and multiple perspectives

- Fruit book (90 scientific collaborators, scores of farmers, and policy makers – various perspectives of forest value)

- Riches of the forest (60 scientific collaborators, reaching beyond scientists in different regions)
Reaching beyond what is planned

- Students, journalists, investors, financial analysts, health professionals
- Spin-off brochures, news, articles, etc.
- Rural literacy programs
Steps to promote equitable research and knowledge sharing

Research and Academic Institutions

- Restructure incentive structures
- Expand non-academic partnerships
- Balance publication record with originality, commitment, field experience
- Encourage knowledge brokers, social change agents, linkage mechanisms
- Encourage students to share with end-users
Steps to promote equitable research and knowledge sharing

Donors

• Support longer-term time frames
• Expand proposal requirements to include sharing of research results
• Identify initiatives with socio-cultural contexts and novel outputs
• Support small, locally driven projects
• Verify sufficient funds for translation, printing and distribution
Balancing knowledge and action