COMDEV ASIA

Virtual Consultations on

"Communication for Development, Community Media and ICTs for Family Farming and Rural Development in Asia Pacific"

FINAL REPORT

25 August - 12 September, 2014

CONTENTS

"Communication for Development, Community Media and ICTs for Family Farming and Rural Development in Asia Pacific"

1. INTRODUCTION

During the 66th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, 2014 was formally declared to be the "International Year of Family Farming" (IYFF). To recognize and celebrate the importance of family farming for eradicating poverty and improving global food security the United Nations tasked Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to facilitate its implementation in collaboration with Governments, UNDP, IFAD, the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and other relevant organizations of the United Nations system, as well as relevant non-governmental organizations.

The celebration of the IYFF is an opportunity to raise the profile of family farming by focusing world's attention on its important role in eradicating hunger and poverty, providing food security and nutrition, improving livelihoods, managing natural resources and protecting the environment.

Within the framework of the 2014 International Year of Family Farming, FAO is organizing in collaboration with the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) the **Forum on Communication for Development & Community Media for Family Farming (FCCM)** to take place in Rome, Italy, 23-24 October 2014.

The main objective of the FCCM is to showcase the role of Communication for Development (ComDev) as a driver for innovation and family farmers' participation in rural development. It will focus on advancing the policy agenda for the sector, addressing opportunities for inclusive rural communication services and promoting ComDev as a key component of agricultural and rural development policies. The FCCM will address opportunities for promoting new rural communication services as sustained, inclusive and efficient communication processes involving family farmers and the rural population

2. BACKGROUND

❖ Virtual Consultation

As part of the preparatory activities for the **Forum on Communication for Development & Community Media for Family Farming** (FCCM) a series of regional virtual consultations (Africa, Asia and Latin America) took place from 25 August through 12 September to collect different regional and sector perspectives as a contribution to the FCCM. The online discussions in Asia were facilitated through the FAO-AMARC regional platform ComDev Asia. The regional virtual consultations has allowed for knowledge sharing and dialogue among rural development actors in order to advocate for ComDev as a driver for change in family farming and set up regional agendas.

The main goals of the regional consultations were:

- Showcase the contribution of ComDev, community media and ICTs to family farming in Asia Pacific through concrete examples;

- Identify main trends, challenges and priorities for ComDev in family farming and rural development in the region;
- Agree on a common agenda to promote and to enhance collaboration in ComDev at the Asia Pacific regional level.

Asia and the Pacific comprise 60% of the world's population. It is the region where 70% of family farmers in the world are found. There are at least 40% and up to 90% family farmers in the region who are also small-scale farmers, fishers, herders. Family farmers produce 80% of the region's food security.

❖ **Themes**

The regional consultation on **"Communication for development, community media and ICTs for family farming and rural development in Asia Pacific"** focussed on good practices, trends and proposals for implementing inclusive and demand-driven ComDev services in the agricultural sector, improving the participation of community media and community based organizations.

The regional consultations had been organized around the following three main themes:

A. The role of communication for development, community media and ICTs for family farming and rural development in Asia Pacific
B. Enabling environment and priority areas for action
C. The way forward

3. THEMATIC REPORT

1. Theme: The Role of Communication for Development, Community Media and ICTs for Family Farming and Rural Development in Asia Pacific.

The key issues related to family farming in Asia Pacific were discussed so that appropriate
communication tools could be determined to address the issues. Though there are a number of emerging communication tools that can be adapted to family farmer's priorities the priority lay with mobile telephony due to its high penetration in the region and community radio as it is localised and wide coverage of target audience.

> *"The need of information as text messages have changed and farmers are more interested in voice, pictures and videos which gives them a better idea about agricultural methods and practices. With these needs, the services have evolved fast".* **Saravanan Raj, India (August 29th, 2014).**

The key issues facing family farming in Asia Pacific were:

- **Farming becoming more expensive and less remunerative**
  Farming in Asia Pacific is becoming more expensive and less remunerative due to climate change, natural resource degradation, uncertain market scenario, new pest and diseases occurrences, and small and fragmented land holdings, certain

government policies on employment guarantee, absence of timely information and lack of other support services along the entire agricultural value chain.

Unscientific farming is also another problem in the developing countries like India. For short term benefit farmers are compromising in maintaining quality and there is widespread use of harmful pesticides.

Nepal is an agricultural country with two third of its populations based on agriculture and its related activities yet 32 out of its 75 districts are food insecure. There are a number of reasons for this like traditional methods of agriculture, low input, small land holdings, hilly and mountainous landscapes, low productivity, fluctuating markets, muscle drain, climate change, etc.

Increasing infrastructure development and digital innovativeness in Asia has not impacted family farmers.

Some government policies on employment guarantees has adversely impacted farming as seen in Northeast India

- **Youth not interested in farming profession**

  Agriculture is not an attractive opportunity for youth who are not willing to take up farming as a profession. For example in China, the percentage of youth moving out of the agriculture sector increased to 90 per cent in 2011-12 compared to 20 per cent in 2001.

  Modern technology could be used to make it appealing to youth to take up farming.

- **Conservation of traditional knowledge and local seeds**

  There is a need for conservation of traditional knowledge to ensure food security and preservation of local seeds.

  Intensive input agriculture may not be the solution to ensure food security as it has been seen in the semi-arid region of Sanga Reddy/ Medak district in the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh state (now situated in the newly formed Telangana state) of India. Farmers in this region are applying their traditional methods of diverse cropping using traditional means of agriculture to ensure food security. Food sovereignty is being achieved by the farmers by developing community gene banks (seed banks that they share with each other in times of need), designed their own watersheds that rescue them when rain fails (which it does more than often) and importantly, rely on crops that can grow on less water. These good practices can be shared and propagated through community radio and community video as it is being done by Deccan Development Society.

- **Limited agriculture extension specialist**

  In many Pacific Island countries, government agricultural extension services have been reduced in recent years due to shrinking national budgets. The cost of moving around to rural areas and outer islands is quite high, so agricultural extension agents tend to not visit too often. This further reduces information dissemination to rural communities. Extension officials also tend to still use traditional top-down methods and they lack the awareness and skills to use communication technology (such as video) in agricultural extension work. There is much opportunity to use

communication technology, such as participatory video, to capture traditional agricultural and environmental-management knowledge.

Agricultural research and extension actors/specialist in the other countries of Asia Pacific are limited and most lack ICT capacity and skills. There is no use of technology like participatory videos to share traditional and modern knowledge.

- **Language barrier**
  Language is a barrier for information transfer. This is seen across the region from the Pacific islands, Indonesia to India and also within the countries themselves. More information in local languages and local context would aid family farmers of the region.

- **Trend towards processed food**
  Growing trend of buying processed food which is not only impacting family farming but also having an adverse effect on the health of the population as seen in the case of the Pacific Islands. People prefer to buy processed or imported foods often as a sign of social status and this is hampering family farming, as it is easier to buy tuna in a tin than spend long hours in the sun fishing.

Emerging communication tools to aid family farming in Asia Pacific

Though there are a number of current and emerging tools suitable and adaptable to family farming in the region like mobile telephony, community radio, community video and the telephone, television, etc, the highest priority was given to mobile telephony and community radio/ community video which have demonstrated their usefulness in aiding family farming**.**

- **Mobile Telephony**
  The most promising communication/community media/ ICT tool for family farming is the mobile telephony that has a vast penetration and wide appeal to the rural population across the Asia Pacific region.

  There have been successful initiatives of using the mobile phone like the m-agriculture project 'Mobile based Agro-Advisory System for the Farmers of North-East India' (m4agriNEI) implemented in Arunachal Pradesh of India where a multi model and mobile based (both smart and ordinary phone) agro-advisory system has helped the family farmers. More information on the project can be found at https://www.facebook.com/m4agrinei; http://ict4ag.org/en/plug-and-play-day/m4agrinei.html ; http://m4agrinei.in/images/banners/brochurefront.pdf.

  Similarly android application like TARKALI – an application to know the prices of vegetables and fruit in the wholesale market has positive influence in marketing chains in Nepal. Another example from Nepal was the instant messaging system as per subscription called "Hath Hath ma Suchana" (Information on Hand) initiated by KrishiGhar (krishighar.com/) is an innovative way to interact with farmers for delivering agriculture based information to their mobiles.

  Rice farmers in Davao, Oriental, Philippines are using Short Messaging Services (SMS) that has enabled the farmers to solicit and obtain messages from specialists outside their province. This has all allowed for farm work all year round at all stages of rice cropping, it has been useful in addressing urgent problems in the

farm like pests and diseases, correct fertilizer formulation, and soil nutrient deficiencies and have allowed farmers to have access to knowledge. This initiative has led the farmers to be actively involved in knowledge production via SMS leading to agricultural specialists and farmers becoming "co-creators" of knowledge as opposed to their traditional roles as knowledge generator and user, respectively. More information on this study carried out by Dr. Ronan Zagado, senior science research specialist at PhilRice is available at http://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/handle/2440/83764.

Interesting studies have been conducted in the Philippines on the use of mobile phone among coffee farmers which showed how the farmers have effectively used mobile phone during harvesting and selling of their crops.

- **Community Radio and Community Video**
  The other mediums are community radio and community video that have a huge potential to address the information needs of family farmers. As these communication medium use local languages it is easier for the target group to understand and the information is delivered according to local need and context.

  The community media trust of the Deccan Development Society is propagating traditional farming practices using both radio and video. Women themselves produce programmes and broadcast/screen them in different villages across the year with programmes that focus on successes, local knowledge systems, relationship between farming and culture and other issues pertinent to the area.

  Similar experience was shared by community radio Gurgaon ki Awaaz from Gurgaon, India on how the radio is assisting in providing relevant information and knowledge to farmers by combining radio with mobile phones to send nuggets of information (audio) and SMS to registered learners. Some other good examples are Video Volunteers, Digital Green, Video SEWA, Dristi, etc all based in India which have demonstrated that community radio and community video can aid family farming in the region.

  In Nepal, radio talk show program “JTA ra Tapae ko Budi Ama” (meaning Junior Technical Assistant and old grandmother) initiated by Department of Agriculture is an interesting and enjoyable way to disseminate information related to agriculture and livestock to farming community explaining in layman's term http://www.ekantipur.com/the-kathmandu-post/2014/03/28/onsaturday/the-voice-of-budhi-aama/260971.html

2. *Theme: Enabling Environment and Priority Areas for Action for Communication for Development, Community Media and ICTs for Family Farming and Rural Development in Asia Pacific*

The priority areas of action for family farming and rural development were raised in order to look into enabling factors for implementation of rural communication services in Asia Pacific region. Steps which countries and farmer organisations can take to promote rural communication policies and initiatives for family farming in the Asia Pacific region have also been recommended.

"In my opinion, before capacity building for the communicators, awareness creation among the policy makers and organisations is more important for an environment, where we can reach the last person of the society". **Ankuran Dutta, India (September 4th, 2014).**

The priority areas of action for family farming and rural development in Asia Pacific are:

- **Advocacy for Rural Communication Rights**
  There is a need to advocate rural communication rights and these have to be stated clearly in national broadcast regulations. Public service broadcasting requirements should be placed onto commercial broadcasters as part of the licensing regime to create and deliver programming that is relevant to farmers and other rural residents. Most programmes especially on FM broadcasters focus primarily on urban and youth audiences and the information needs of rural communities are not really considered.

  Telecommunication policy and regulatory environment should help to drive down the cost of mobile telephone services.

  There is a need for researching and championing local broadcast / telecommunications law in order to demonstrate the benefits of a mixed broadcast sector (state, private, community) to everyone. The focus should be on drawing the attention of those in political office to their responsibilities for access to diversity on the airwaves especially the rural community.

- **Policy and Regulatory Environments**
  Much of agricultural-development work is driven by international aid around export commodities that are of interest to the donor country and very few projects address local staple crops and food security issues. There is very little capacity within Pacific Island countries to do their own research, although this is slowly changing.

  There is a need for more advocacies on an enabling policy environment for C4D, broadcasting and licensing policies in the Pacific Island countries. Most of the Pacific's national telecommunication policies and regulations were written by international actors and not locals as a result it privileges ICTs and not broadcasting.

- **Establishment of Comdev Training Centre**
  Such Comdev training centre should provide re-orientation and training to agricultural workers. This would create a critical mass of development or extension workers trained in ComDev which would support and sustain the ComDev efforts in family farming. Some organisations interested in this effort are Sarawak Development Institute (SDI) in Malaysia and Agriculture Information Services of Ministry of Agriculture in Bangladesh.

  While establishing a ComDev training centre it is important to assess a bottom up approach first, sensitization of local groups is essential and ensuring that the training and communication would address the versatility of cultural and ethnic specialties of the target community. Such centre could also help local activists get mobilized and translate messages and information into their own languages thereby filling in the information gap.

- **Capacity Building and Greater Investment in ComDev**
  Capacity building should be the first priority for new technologies like community television, community video and mobile telephony. Not only on the programming but the environment to deliver the community media materials for the target audience in proper way has to be created.

  Universities can be effective at encouraging policymakers to invest in rural ComDev for more effective agricultural partnerships and innovation. For students (future agriculture/rural communicators and extension workers) training is very important and small research projects involving partnerships with the community really works as demonstrated by the project called Mobilizing Knowledge for Sustainable Agriculture. The partnership development program involved Wayamba University in Sri Lanka, 2 universities in Canada and a regional association LIRNEAsia through multi-stakeholder communication, using ICTs and Open Source Software. For more information please visit http://mobilizingknowledge.blogspot.ca/

  Greater investment for the training of ComDev practitioners and professionals must be there from governments in Asia Pacific in order to build their capacity and provide support for family farmers.

- **Scholarships, Research and Training Networks**
  ICTs and performance arts (music, dance) could be more deeply incorporated into youth farmer groups or school courses. By projecting the image that today's farmer/fisher is entrepreneurial, tech savvy, socially networked, and destined for success could draw more students to the sector.

  More scholarships and funding for graduate studies in ComDev is needed especially in Asia and Africa where students are interested but lack of funding hinders their efforts.
  In order to create appropriate low-cost, low-power ICTs there is a need to work closely with local universities, TAFEs and others. Development of mobile-phone "apps" suited to local languages and end-user conditions would help to find more agriculture champions among the teaching faculty in computing science and engineering programs.

  Priority area for ComDev in agriculture and rural development involves strong college and university research and training networks. Ideally these networks should also be networked across regions.

- **Multi-Pronged Communications Strategy and Awareness Creation**
  Locally produced broadcast content may provide an incentive for a community to mobilise and renegotiate the benefits they receive from extractive industries, which return far less to the communities that are engaged in the production of the raw and sometimes processed goods. Another, parallel, strategy is to make links with community broadcasters in the donor state and work with them in producing content that can be used within the donor state to leverage the outcomes in favour of the "aid" recipients. In effect it is recognising that there are multiple audiences who can influence potential outcomes and then developing ways of packaging a message specifically for the specific audience. Hence a multi-pronged communications strategy is needed when attempting to influence change.

Awareness creation among the policy makers and organisations is equally important for an enabling environment.

The enabling factors for implementation of rural communication services and policies in the agricultural sector in the region are:

- **Efficient Use of Universal Access (UA) funds**
  Many Island countries levy Universal Access (UA) fees onto telecommunications providers that theoretically will be used to subsidise the expansion of internet and mobile telephone services into rural areas but often lie unused in bank accounts or treated as general-fund revenues, not special fund revenues. Some of this Universal Access (UA) funds can be used to seed small-project grants around rural communication rights. For example, funds could be used to seed community radio stations or to drive the creation of farmer-made agricultural extension information. This would also strengthen the demand for rural ICT services because more rural residents would be using the networks.

- **Skilled DevCom Professionals**
  Establishment of development communication office manned by highly trained DevCom professionals aids in community development and extension work for family farming as demonstrated by PhilRice in Philippines.

- **Community Radio**
  In developing countries where internet access is low community radio has the potentiality to deliver development contents to a large number of farmers at a time. For example, Krishi Radio is a community radio based in Borguna, Bangladesh serving the farmers and fisher community of the region since January, 2012 operated by the Agriculture Ministry of the government http://krishi.communityradio.com.bd/ . This radio was started with the financial assistance from FAO and in a country like Bangladesh, where about 75% population are based on agriculture innovative programming based on 'Agrotainment' (Agriculture + entertainment) is serving the rural population with development messages on agriculture.

  Radios can be used to create awareness, share information and give a voice to the community. It can inform the community of what the constitutional obligations are and by building alliances with other groups who are engaged in the struggle for constitutional recognition it may be an effective factor for implementation of rural communication services and policies in the agricultural sector also.

- **Mobile Telephony**
  Mobile telephony is the best medium to deliver development and learning contents to the farmers as demonstrated by the project called Lifelong Learning for Farmers http://www.col.org/progServ/programmes/livelihoods/L3farmers/Pages/default.aspx . Dr K. Balasubhramanian from the Commonwealth of Learning is working for the project and has applied this methodology with success for rural farmers in India, Sri Lanka, Jamaica, Kenya, Mauritius and Papua New Guinea.

Steps that countries and farmer organizations can take to promote rural communication policies and initiatives for family farming in the region:

- **Farmers' Day/Farmers Exhibition**
  Observing national farmers' day or by holding a national farmers exhibition is a way to celebrate farmers/fisher folk and their traditional knowledge. These could be through product displays, photo exhibits, local art, song, theatre, and dance, in addition to more conventional mediated C4D applications like video and community radio. If ICTs can be positioned as essential services for sustainable agriculture, then the youth will be further attracted to consider agriculture as a vocation.

- **Better Deals for Farmers**
  Local NGOs groups can negotiate with corporate to provide benefits to the farmers. A case in point was the Swaminathan Foundation Chennai, India that has an agreement with a telephone operator "Airtel" for green SIM card which allows three free voice messages to the farmers. This has also prompted other companies to come up with similar facilities for the farmers.

3. Theme: The Way Forward for Communication for Development, Community Media and ICTs for Family Farming and Rural Development in Asia Pacific

The processes and methodologies that can be applied to design demand driven and inclusive rural communication policies/services to advance family farming in Asia Pacific region have been put forth. It also highlights the types of initiatives that can be put into practice and how individual and organisations can participate or contribute towards this endeavour.

> *"It would do well to rethink overemphasis on ICTs. They surely are not a magic wand that will address all our concerns. This, however, is not to say that we should not utilize them. The only point is to use them where appropriate."* **Jaime A Manalo IV, Philippines (September 12th, 2014)**

The processes and methodologies that can be applied to design demand driven and inclusive rural communication policies/services to advance family farming in Asia Pacific

- **Planning and Scoping Study**
  Designing rural communication services including enabling policies require planning. The benefits of a good ComDev plan far outweigh the time invested doing the plan as errors are minimized and resources are used more efficiently.

  Preparatory work has to be done to understand the current situation, issues and the various stakeholders who are affected before any intervention. This stage requires participatory communication methods and tools that will help generate the needed information/data. Then this information has to be processed systematically so that any communication service that will be designed will be relevant to the farmers' needs and demands.

  Participatory and focussed discussion, capacity building with recent development in technology vis a vise availability and applicability in particular area, listing priority,

situation analysis and planning must be undertaken. These methods give valuable and well thought through responses that help much in crafting relevant interventions.

Motivated 'agents of change' need to be trained and put in charge of small blocks of operation with controlled area. The results from the intervention needed to be analyzed, compared and reviewed so as to correct the faults and planning for implementation at a large scale can then take place.

For example the Infomediary Campaign, an action research of PhilRice, Philippines that aims to mobilize high school students to serve as information providers in their respective rice farming communities was initially thought of as ICT-based project. However when the site was visited they found that they did not even have electricity.

In 2009, PhilRice did a research on "E-readiness of the farmers in the five top rice-producing provinces of the Philippines". It was a survey with close to 1000 farmers as respondents. From there, it was noted that the farmers wanted to receive information from printed publications so they can easily refer back to it should they have questions. ICT anxiety or the feeling of discomfort is one thing that has been repeatedly outlined in the papers. Given these conditions, it would do well to rethink overemphasis on ICTs and use them where appropriate.

- **Need to Bring Research Findings to the Farmers**
  Government and the universities should re-consider the objectives and think how the researches and academic discourses can be brought to the field easily and frequently to help the farmers.

  There is a need to re-look on the target, output and outcome of the extension services of the agricultural universities. The agriculture education should not be confined to the campus of the institutions, it must go to the field and the information should be disseminated for the real practitioners in a participatory model of communication.

  Mechanism of delivery including the support system for implementation should be developed along with monitoring and evaluation at grass root level.

  A sourcebook on "Comdev Planning for Rural Development" by FAO and College of Development Communication in University of Philippines, Los Banos targeted for development workers, communication practitioners, agriculture technicians has been introduced and will be shortly uploaded on the ComDev Asia website

- **Promote Positive Image of Agriculture**
  There is a need to change the negative image of agriculture and promote it as a profession that ensures sustainable food production.

  Agriculture is still an unattractive career choice, especially for youth and seen as a last-chance option, that of returning to the village to farm after failing to find steady employment in the city. Modern communication technologies could be seen as a way to attract youth to farming by making it appear to be "modern" and sophisticated. To promote farming among young people and to raise profile of family farmers ICTs can play a bigger role.

  Agriculture and farming activities should be promoted by media. Separate channel to broadcast agriculture news, give updates on innovation and best practices to family farmers from different topographical landscapes would advance agriculture.

- **Tapping into the Potential of Mobile Telephony and Community/Farm Radio**
  While using different tools of communication, it should be noted that the tools are familiar to the rural farmers.

  Mobile phone has more potentiality to reach the farmers individually in Asia. It is the best means of ICT for the rural smallholder farmers as it is portable, handy and cost effective. In Nepal alone it has reached more than 80% of the population with android penetration reaching 60% of the people.

  The preference should be on community media or concept like community radio or farm radio as a tool for information sharing for the farmers. But again the programme designing should not be one way; it must be participatory for learning for development environment.

  An example of this participatory process was followed by Agriculture Information Services (AIS) in the Ministry of Agriculture in Bangladesh while installing its community radio for farming villages. Baseline study on listenership and potential for community participation were conducted. Data on the villagers' information needs, radio access and ownership, preferred radio programs, formats, time, music, etc were collected and addressed. This participatory process has lead to the ownership of the radio by the villagers who now are active volunteers in collecting community news, airing news and features, and even rendering their talents in singing on the radio.

- **Role of community based organizations and social capital**
  Community based organizations (like farmers associations, farmers clubs, farmers producer companies, federations of self help groups, etc) can successfully mobilize the community and actively participate in learning programmes. In the context of such socially mobilized groups the learning/extension takes place in the already established social capital. It facilitates horizontal transfer of knowledge; hence the benefits are not restricted to the individual learners but extended to other family members, relatives, neighbours and other peer group members.

- **Scaling up of best practice**
  Wide spread adoption of evidence based best practices often takes long time, therefore scaling up of best practices can take place through multiple efforts such as creating networks, organize meetings, conferences, advocating for policy formulation/changes etc. Credible business partnership between the major stakeholders operating in the region should be the premise for the replication of best practice model.

- **Women Farmers and Gender Digital Divide**
  Women farmers should be recognised too and should not be limited to being called 'housewife' or 'farmer's wives'.

  Often women do not have ownership access to communication tools like radio sets or mobile telephones, etc. Those in the business of designing ICT materials must keep this in mind too if they are to address the women farmers who make up 25% of the world's population and are often the heads of households.

  All are aware of the gender and technology divide however there is a need to understand more clearly the 'Gender Digital Divide' and its ramifications on intra household dynamics, women's agricultural and household work and their bargaining

power. A gender disaggregated understanding of ICTs is much needed and cannot assume that men and women are impacted equally.

In a presently ongoing study of IVR operating in Jharkhand huge differentials in men and women engagement is seen. Studies of community radio stations are indicating that community radio stations policies and structures influence women's participation and articulations about issues. Special strategies and affirmative action by community radio stations and other ICT based initiatives influences and enhance women's access and participation in ICT based services. Clearly there is a need to evolve suitable policy and programme strategies for bridging this gap.

Initiating learning through community based organizations helps to overcome the well established correlation between the digital divide and the gender divide, if the use of technology is placed in an appropriate socio cultural context. Access to technology and information subtly enhances women's power to go beyond the culturally constructed space, associate with external agencies and effectively participate in the market economy. Learning through modern ICT tools like mobile phones results in role reversal in the family context where the women learners shares her learning with the men in their families and also help men to realize the importance of learning. Some new ICT technologies are helping to overcome the social barriers women generally face and help to have access to information and learning but more needs to be done while designing a development communication programme for women farmers.

Types of initiatives that should be put into practice to advance family farming in Asia Pacific

- **Institutional, NGO and Corporate Initiatives**
  Institution initiatives that is a mixed pool system i.e. NGOs and local governance is the most suitable combination for aiding family farming. Other type of initiatives such as individual/NGO based and corporate based also work as long as these are directly impacting stake holders' lives.

- **Community Learning Programme**
  Another effective initiative is the Community Learning Programme promoted by Commonwealth of Learning and Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia that is participatory for learning for development environment.

  This model is focused on the local level, generally in one or perhaps two districts and involves local stakeholders from the outset in decision-making about topics, messages, and programme design and execution, it brings together different types of groups – community networks, media/ICT outlets, health and development experts, public policy representatives – into collaborative programme design, management and evaluation processes. It uses traditional cultural formats, such as storytelling, drama, music and other folk media. It also promotes multichannel and blended approaches, e.g. combining radio with mobile telephony, and face-to-face interactions and community mobilisation with engaging media content and using tools that are familiar to the farmer.

- **Digitization and Revising Agricultural Studies**
  There is a need to digitalize agriculture information to enhance learning and research in most countries in Asia Pacific. Such managed information systems can also be made easily available to the farmers.

Most agriculture courses being taught in Agricultural Universities across the region are outdated and limited in learning. The agricultural universities have their agricultural extension services but how many messages are being practically delivered to the farmers? The educational institutions should think for the impact of education in the rural areas. There is also the need to re-look on the target, output and outcome of the extension services of the universities. In developing countries like India, Bangladesh, Nepal, the agriculture education should not be confined to the campus of the institutions. It must go to the field and the information should be disseminated for the real practitioners.

- **Youth Involvement in Agriculture**
  There is massive low interest of young people in agriculture. This is something that needs to be addressed in order to take into consideration future issues on the scarcity of food producers/scientists. This issue has surface in several international conferences, the latest being the "Asia Pacific Association of Educators in Agriculture and the Environment" in Naga City, Philippines last month and is also documented quite extensively in the literature.

  Across Asia there is this phenomenon called the youth bulge, this is simply the massive number of people whose ages range from 15-24 years old. If initiatives will be directed towards this age group, this will be a significant force to be reckoned with.

- **Mobile Telephony**
  Comparing with other modern ICT tools, mobile phone is the electronic communication technology most widely used in developing countries and has several advantages compared to other ICT tools in terms of reach-ability, affordability, status of literacy to use the tool, gender disparity etc., and never involves any opportunity costs. If mobile is used particularly for continuous learning and development for women and men farmers, context specific need based continuous learning makes sense to their life. It also promotes horizontal learning, which ensures an even distribution of information and knowledge in the existing system of uneven distribution of information and knowledge management particularly in the farming families which are divided into different social and economic groups.

Organisational and individual contribution and participation towards advancing family farming in the region

1. The College of Development Communication in University of Philippines, Los Banos in the Philippines can participate and contribute in the area of capacity building in ComDev planning for family farming.
2. Krishak Biradari (Farmer's Brotherhood) from India has membership of more than ten thousands family farmers and almost 12 nodal agencies who coordinate all the family farmers. Most of the farmers (almost 90%) are small family farmers having a land holding almost less than 1 hectare and belong to tribal groups, backward castes and are below poverty line in general. This group can pose a good case study and example for such issues.
3. Pradeep Sharma from Krishak Biradari, India (email: pradeeptsharma@rediffmail.com / sewa.service@gmail.com) can mobilize such programmes in India and abroad if needed, negotiate with governmental agencies and other like minded organizations all over the country for this

purpose. He can also help other groups for policy advocacy issues and design campaigns to save family farming in Asia Pacific.

4. Through Lifelong learning of Farmers (L3F) programme Commonwealth of Learning has gained considerable experience in using different ICT tools like mobile, community radio, community managed web based learning etc. One of the methods adopted is south south exchange for the mutual learning of partners from different commonwealth developing countries. COL can share the experiences gained with other partners and also coordinate the south south exchange programme as a learning methodology.
5. Ankuran Dutta from Commonwealth of Learning (email: adutta@col.org) has developed an idea on 'C3' that is Community Communications Centre (http://cemca.org.in/blog/). It is a revised version of some UNESCO models on Community Information Centre, Community Multimedia Centre etc and is based on participatory model not information dissemination model and can be a solution in the near future.
6. Networks like AgriYouthNepal (http://agriyouthnepal.com/) can play a great role in empowering youths towards use of ICT in agriculture development. AgriYouthNepal is building an android application in Nepali language with digitalized agricultural information for students and farmers to help contribute for effective implementation of ICT in agriculture in Nepal.
7. Platforms like ComDev Asia should bring more innovations to uplift economic standard of small holder farmers by sharing knowledge that can be put into practice.
8. Madan Poudel (email: madan@agriyouthnepal.com / cashsee.maddy@gmail.com) and his network AgriYouthNepal have got good knowledge of web 2.0 technology and are willing to carry out projects on ICT for agriculture development.
9. Jaime A Manalo IV (email: ja.manalo4@philrice.gov.ph) is leading the Infomediary Campaign at the Philippine Rice Research Institute, which is now being implemented in 81 high schools all over the country. The aims are to bring back the love for science of rice farming among young people, promote agriculture as a good option when they go to universities, and create a new communication pathway on agriculture in rural communities since they are being mobilized to serve as infomediaries (information providers in their respective rice farming communities). There are plenty of papers on the campaign and videos which are available online at: www.infomediary4d.com.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The virtual consultations on the “Role of communication for development, community media and ICTs in family farming and rural development in Asia Pacific” highlighted he key issues facing the sector, which communication tools can be applied, prioritised the areas of action, shared enabling factors for rural communication, put forth possible ways for countries and organisations to promote family farming, discussed processes for designing demand driven and inclusive rural communication policies, proposed initiatives that can be put into practice and got insights into how organisations and individuals can contribute towards the effort. It was an enriching discussion which also came up with the following challenges and recommendations for the sector in Asia Pacific region.

❖ Challenges

- ICT interventions in rural setting must take into consideration the challenge of unreliable electricity and slow internet speed in the region. Options like encouraging telecom providers to roll out services to unprofitable rural areas and affordable solar-powered telephone rechargers would be useful in this regard.
- How can developing countries balance its development objectives to meet international funding whose priority may be different than its domestic needs?
- The recurring cost for ICTs and communication medium is still expensive in the developing countries. The art to deliver messages in very limited duration is also a challenge and needs training for the development communicators.
- Funding from government and development agencies to support studies, research and build capacity in ComDev for family farming and rural development is not adequate.
- It is a known fact that women do the bulk of labour work on the farms. Women should have joint ownership of the farm land along with their husbands. Usually, the farm land is owned by the men in the house. This needs to change as men use women as free labour and do not take their opinion into consideration. In recent past, women have been given inheritance rights in India but women have to go through a long struggle to get it implemented.
- Women do not have an equal say in the decision-making related to the family farms. Ensuring joint ownership will not automatically translate in women having an equal say.
- The farmers (including women farmers) cannot make an informed choice of switching from traditional crop (suitable to the local ecological conditions) to cash crop (which may not be suited to the specific region and end up draining the natural resources of the region) to genetically modified crop as they do not have adequate information about the long-term and short-term advantages and disadvantages from economical and ecological perspectives. The messages reaching them through the vested interests - either through market forces or the government, but there is none from neutral agencies.
- There is an increasing disturbing trend the world over of accessing commons and small land holding for development projects. Small farmers are selling a land in the hope of making money. They do not realize that they will end up losing their livelihood in the process and will be further pushed into poverty and debt. Often such families end up working as landless labourers on other's farms or unskilled labour in rural and urban areas.
- The issue of informed choices and growing trend of selling farmlands for development projects have a huge impact on both food security and food sovereignty of some of the poor/marginal communities of the Asia Pacific region and needs to be addressed.

❖ Recommendations

- Given the potential of ICTs in the Asia Pacific region to help address the needs of the family farmers it is imperative to remember that community media, mobile, video, and other ICTs tools are also extra financial burdens to farmers who barely raise enough crops to feed themselves. Hence there is a dire need to create an inexpensive ICT tools that can be used for free by ordinary farmers and farm workers.
- Though 25% of the world's population is composed of women farmers, often heads of households they are often absent in the debate. Majority of rural women still have limited or no access to media. Most rural households in Nepal

are being headed by women as the men are leaving as migrant workers and they are tending the farmlands which hitherto were done by men. There is a gendered digital divide in the region and in order to reach out to the women farmers, ICT interventions should be targeted towards women also. Some positive initiatives like the Sangham radio and SEWA in India are run by women and it is giving voice to the women. Similar initiatives must be started for women farmers of the region.

- There is need for an enabling policy environment for rural communications and community broadcasting. Most of the Pacific Islands' national telecommunication policies and regulations were written by international actors, not locals and privilege ICTs and not broadcasting. ICTs with the exception of mobile phones are not yet appropriate technology for rural Islanders. Some countries like the Solomon Islands do not even have licensing regulations around radio broadcasting. Many countries have subsumed broadcasting under telecommunication policies, even though the two are quite different sectors. There is a need to recognise community media and differentiate community radio particularly with regards to licensing, fees and spectrum allocation.
- It is not enough to have policies in place but also special initiatives should be taken up by concerned authorities to facilitate rural communication with a long term goal of inculcating quality farming. In India, Agricultural Universities and Krishi Vigyan Kendras can apply for community radio license but so far only six or seven stations were established in agricultural institutions so far out of 170 CR stations in the country.
- Women farmers are responsible for 60% of the work in agriculture but policies, strategies and inclusion and even technology often evades them. A study on the use of SMS in family farming in the Philippines done by Ronan Zagado of PhilRice found the significant role that farmer's wife plays in SMS consumption and eventually household relations. Hence this complexity of household relations is very critical to look at while designing a development communication programme for the farmers.

5. ANNEXES

- List of participants – Annex 1
- List of resource persons – Annex 2

Annexure 1

List of Participants

The regional virtual consultation was open to development professionals, communication and community media practitioners, civil society organizations, rural development agencies, government representatives, scholars and private sector. The discussion group has seen participation from resource persons, academicians and media practitioners.

Aldo Lim, Philippines is from the College of Development Communication, University of the Philippines Los Baños

Archna Kumar, India is Associate Professor at the Department of Development Communication and Extension, Lady Irwin College in University of Delhi

Arti Jaiman, India is Director of community radio Gurgaon ki Awaaz and Treasurer of Community Radio Forum of India. Arti is an advocate for community media and a supporter of women rights. She works with The Restoring Force an NGO that has set up the community radio Gurgaon ki Awaz in India. She is a Member of Technical Committee of the Community Radio Support Scheme, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting; a Member of Screening Committee for Community Radio, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting; and a Member of Advisory Committee on Community Radio Policy, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, India

Ankuran Dutta, **India** works at Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), New Delhi, which is the regional office of Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver. He is associated with various community media activities since 2004 and set up the first community radio station in north eastern part of India in 2009. Currently he is looking after the community media activities in India and Bangladesh and other activities in the Commonwealth Asian countries at CEMCA

Cleofe Torres, Philippines is Professor at the College of Development Communication, University of the Philippines Los Banos. Aside from teaching, she is involved with field research and capacity building in Comdev mostly in the Asia-Pacific region.

Iman Abdurrahman, Indonesia is Coordinator of Advocacy and Networking of Indonesian Community Radio Networks JRKI

Jaime Manalo IV, Philippines is Head, Development Communication Division, and Team Lead of The Infomediary Campaign at the Philippine Rice Research Institute

Helen Hambly, Canada is from the University of Guelph

Linda Austin, Australia has completed her doctoral degree at The University of Queensland (Australia) where she investigated the interface of culture and development through community radio in the independent South Pacific Island countries. She grew up amid the agricultural abundance of California's Central Valley, where she began her journalism career. She has a strong interest in all matters pertaining to agriculture and food security, water resource management, rural development, and social justice, in particular around inclusive governance.

Madan Poudel, Nepal is a student of agriculture in Agriculture and Forestry University. He represents Young Professionals for Agriculture Development (YPARD), is President at AgriYouthNepal (agriculture students' platform to share and learn innovative ideas) and currently an event coordinator of YPARD Nepal national level Family Farming Photo Contest.

Nimmi Chauhan, India is the Representative of Women's International Network (WIN) at the AMARC Asia Pacific Regional Board of Directors

P. Thamizoli, India is an independent consultant

Pradeep Sharma, India is founder member and Coordinator of farmers' organization called Krishak Biradari (Farmer's Brotherhood) an organization of Farmer's, Intellectuals, Scientists, Journalists and Activists of central India. As a farmer himself, he is associated with rain fed farming since last 15 years. Climate change and various farm, off farm, non farm income generation models for small and marginal family farmers are his area of interest.

Ronan Zagado, Philippines is a development communication specialist at Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice)

Saravanan Raj, India is an Associate Professor (Extension Education and Rural Sociology), Leading the ICT for Rural Advisory Services (ICT4RAS) interest group of the Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services (GFRAS) and facilitator for the Agricultural Extension in South Asia (AESA), a sub-regional network of GFRAS

Shane Elson, Australia is an independent community radio broadcaster

Tom Whitty, Australia is the Media Manager at the Victorian Farmers Federation

Upakar, Nepal is associated with AgriYouthNepal, a group of energetic young students of agriculture aiming at promotion of Nepalese agriculture by means of ICTs.

Vasuki Belavadi, India is an Associate Professor at the Department of Communication, University of Hyderabad and a Faculty Fellow with the UNESCO Chair on Community Media, India. He has been associated with community media for over 15 years now, and is interested in knowing how audio/radio and video can be used as tools in a participatory mode to better the lives of small farmers, particularly those practising dry-land agriculture.

Annexure 2

List of Resource Persons

Ankuran Dutta, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, India

Aishatul Radziah Razali, National Farmers Organization (NAFAS) Malaysia

Archna Kumar, Development Communication & Extension Department, Lady Irwin College, University of Delhi, India

Azra Sayeed, People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty / Roots for Equity

Cleofe Torres, The College of Development Communication, University of the Philippines Los Baños, Philippines

Gerard Sylvester, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO Asia Pacific)

Jun Virola, Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development

K.V.S Prasad, AME Foundation, India

Linda Austin University of Queensland, Australia

Madan Poudel, AgriYouthNepal, Nepal

Madhu Acharya, Internews, Nepal

Mario Acunzo Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO ComDev)

Marzia Pafumi, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO ComDev)

Nguyen Huu Nhuan Vietnam National University of Agriculture and The University of Queensland

Nurul Hilmiati Assessment Institute for Agricultural Technology

Oleg Nicetic, The University of Queensland, Australia

Pradeep Sharma, SEWA and Krishak Biradari, India

P. Thamizoli, Independent consultant, India

Santosh Koirala, Young Professionals for Agricultural Development (YPARD) Nepal

Saravanan Raj, Associate Professor (Extension Education & Rural Sociology), College of Horticulture and Forestry, Central Agricultural University (CAU) Arunachal Pradesh, India

Suman Basnet World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) Asia Pacific, Nepal

Tom Whitty, Victorian Farmers Federation, Australia

Vasuki Belavadi, University of Hyderabad, India

Vira Ramelan, DFID UK Climate Change Unit

Yap Thoeurn, Cambodian Farmers Association Federation of Agricultural Producers (CFAP) Cambodia

Zahangir Alam Agriculture Information Service, Ministry of Agriculture Bangladesh

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