A Training Manual for Training of Trainers on Knowledge Management and Communication Volume 2 By Bedru Beshir (PhD)

Training Organized by Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Resources (MoALR), Participatory Small Scale Irrigation Development Program (PASIDP) and Ethiopian Institute of Agriculture Research,

Melkassa Agricultural Research Center

August 2018

Melkassa, Ethiopia





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Knowledge Management and Communication

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Communication

Communication is the **process** of successfully transferring information from one entity to another. It is exchange of thoughts, messages or information by speech, signals, writing or behavior. Communication is the **art and technique** of using verbal or nonverbal strategies **<u>effectively</u>** to impart information or ideas.

Nowadays, contact between different cultures is far more widespread than it used to be. New methods of communication bring societies throughout the world relatively easily into contact. On a more local scale, roads and railways have brought many changes to rural society. Travel has been made easier and more people can visit other places and deem different ways doing things. Traders establish shops. and the goods in them may act as incentives for farmers to produce more in order to buy them. Crops can be marketed more easily and farming inputs brought into rural areas more quickly for cheaper price.

Air and land travels have had important on communication effects by bringing communities living in remote areas. Regions across the world.

Newspapers, radio, television (recently Facebook, Imo etc) can also bring rural people in remote areas into contact with the outside world. People in rural communities who have radio sets or who read newspapers are usually influential and can spread their knowledge or new ideas to their neighbors. Education is another way of introducing people to the ideas, values and way of life of other societies.

Extension and communication

Communication - the sharing of ideas and information - forms a large part of the extension workers' job. By passing on ideas, advice and information, an extension agent hopes to influence the decisions of farmers. He may also wish to encourage farmers to communicate with one another; the sharing of problems and ideas is an important stage in planning group or village activities. The agent must also be able to communicate with superior officers and research workers about the situation faced by farmers in his/her area.

There are many ways in which extension agents and farmers communicate. In this booklet, some general principles of communication will be presented, and the use of mass media and audio-visual aids for communication in extension work will be discussed.

Elements of communication

Any act of communication, be it a speech at a public meeting, a written report, a radio broadcast or a question from a farmer, includes **FOUR** important elements:

- 1) the source, or where the information or idea comes from;
- 2) the message, which is the information or idea that is communicated;
- 3) the channel, which is the way the message is transmitted;
- 4) the receiver, who is the person for whom the message is intended.

Any communicator must consider all four elements carefully, as they all contribute to effectiveness. In considering each of these elements, the questions that follow provide a useful check-list.

Receiver/Audience

• What information does the receiver want or need?

- What information can he make use of?
- How much does the receiver already know about the particular topic?
- What attitudes does the receiver hold concerning the topic?
- Should these attitudes be reinforced, or should an attempt be made to change them?

Channel

Channel also known as medium.

- What will be the most effective way of sharing the information? (This will depend upon the considerations outlined below.)
- What are the characteristics of the message? Does it need a visual presentation, as when crop pests are being described?
- Is it necessary to show movement or detailed actions (in which case, film, video or a demonstration will be needed)? If a permanent, accurate record of detailed information is required, as in farm records or fertilizer recommendations, the information should be in written or printed form.
- What channels are available to the receivers? Do they see newspapers? Can they read? Do many of them have radios?
- What are the receiver's expectations? A senior government official, for example, is more likely to take notice of a written submission followed by a personal visit.

Message

- The message also calls messenger/speakers
- What should the content be? A balance must be achieved between what the receiver wants to know and what the source feels the receiver ought to know.

• What form should the message take? In other words, how can the message be put into the words, pictures or symbols that the receiver will understand and take notice of?

Source

- Where will the information come from?
- Where should the information be seen to come from? An account of a successful cooperative in a nearby village may have much more effect if it is given by the members, through a radio program or a visit, than by an extension agent at a public meeting.
- Has information from the source proved reliable in the past?
- How credible is the source in the eyes of the receiver?

Information often passes through several channels

Before it reaches a particular receiver, but it is rarely passed on in exactly the same words in which it was received. In particular, technical information is often distorted as it goes from one person to another. Extension agents should aim at being accurate sources and channels of information, and should make sure that farmers have heard and fully understood any information passed on to them. Leaflets and posters can be useful reminders of the spoken word.

In particular, technical information is often distorted as it goes from one person to another. Not all communication is deliberate. For example, people's behavior, the way they speak to each other or the clothes they wear reveal much about them and their attitudes. If an extension agent is always late for meetings with farmers' groups, the members may conclude that he does not take them seriously. If he wears casual clothes when addressing a formal village meeting, villagers may say that he has no respect for them. Even if this is not so, the fact that they think it is will affect their relationship with the agent and, therefore, his effectiveness. The message that is received is not always the one that the source intends to pass.

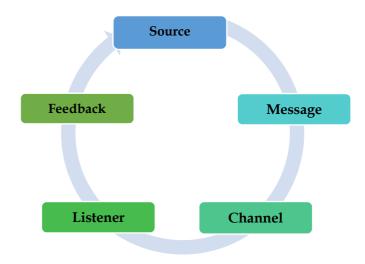
Listening

A good communicator listens more than he speaks. An extension agent who does not listen to farmers and engage in a dialogue with them is unlikely to be very effective. There are four main reasons why a twoway exchange or dialogue is more effective than a monologue.

Information needs can be assessed.

- Attitudes concerning the topic of the communication will emerge.
- Misunderstandings that occur during the exchange can quickly be identified and cleared up.
- Relationships of mutual respect can develop. If an agent listens, farmers will know that one agent is interested in them, and they will be more likely to pay attention to what the agent has to say.

The elements of communication



Shared meanings

Communication is only successful when the receiver can interpret the information that the source has put into the message. An extension agent may give what he feels is a clear and concise talk, or an artist may be satisfied that he has designed a poster that conveys over the desired message, but there is no guarantee that those for whom the talk and poster are intended will interpret the message correctly. For example, an extension worker presented a picture with the intension that crops should be rotated; however, many farmers may not understand the meaning of arrows, or the symbols that stand for the different crops.

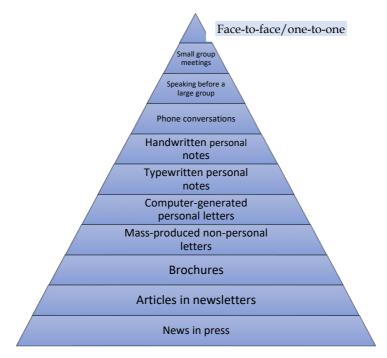
It is important that the same meanings for the words, pictures and symbols used in communication be used by the source and the receiver.

If this does not happen, various kinds of problems can arise.

Language. Even if source and receiver speak the same language, local variations or dialects may use similar words with different meanings.

Jargon. The technical language of specialists has to be translated into words that are familiar to the receiver. Extension agents need to learn what words and phrases farmers use when talking about their farming. activities.

Pictures and symbols. Attempts to communicate through pictures and visual symbols often fail because the receiver does not recognize what they represent. Interpreting pictures is a skill which, like reading, has to be learned.



Hierarchy of effective communication

Mass media in extension

Mass media are those channels of communication which can expose large numbers of people to the same information at the same time. They include media which convey information by sound (radio, audio cassettes); moving pictures (television, film, video); and print (posters, newspapers, leaflets). The attraction of mass media to extension services is the high speed and low cost with which information can be communicated to people over a wide area. Although the cost of producing and transmitting a radio program may seem high, when that cost is divided between the millions of people who may hear the program, it is in fact a very cheap way of providing information. The cost of an hour's radio broadcast per farmer who listens can be less than one-hundredth of the cost of an hour's contact with an extension agent.

However, mass media cannot do all the jobs of an extension agent. They cannot offer personal advice and support, teach practical skills, or answer questions immediately. Their low cost suggests that they should be used for the tasks to which they are well suited. These include the following

- i. spreading awareness of new ideas and creating interest in farming innovations.
- ii. Giving timely warnings about possible pest and disease outbreaks, and urgent advice on what action to take.
- iii. Multiplying the impact of extension activities. A demonstration will only be attended by a small number of farmers, but the results will reach many more if they are reported in newspapers and on the radio.
- Sharing experiences with other individuals and communities. The success of a village in establishing a successful irrigation scheme might stimulate other villages to do the same if it is broadcast over the radio. Farmers are also often interested in

hearing about the problems of other farmers and how they have overcome them.

- v. Answering questions, and advising on problems common to a large number of farmers.
- vi. Reinforcing or repeating information and advice. Information heard at a meeting or passed on by an extension agent can soon be forgotten.

It will be remembered more easily if it is reinforced by mass media.

Using a variety of sources that are credible to farmers. Instead of hearing advice from the extension agent only, through mass media farmers can be brought into contact with successful farmers from other areas, respected political figures and agricultural specialists.

Mass media communication requires specialist professional skills. Few extension agents will ever be required to produce radio program or to make films. However, extension agents can contribute to the successful use of mass media by providing material to media producers, in the form of newspaper stories, photographs, recorded interviews with farmers, items of information about extension activities or ideas for new extension films; and by using mass media in their extension work, for example, by distributing posters and leaflets or by encouraging farmers to listen to farm broadcasts.

Principles of media use

For extension through mass media to be effective, farmers must:

Mass media messages are short-lived and the audience may pay attention for only a short time, particularly where the content is educational or instructional. If too much information is included, much of it will soon be forgotten.

This means that information provided through mass media should be:

- Simple and short.
- Repeated, to increase understanding and help the audience to remember.
- Structured, in a way that aids memory.
- Coordinated with other media and with advice given by extension agents.

It is important that what the farmers hear and see via mass media matches what extension agents tell them. Dialogue is also an important part of communication. With mass media, however, there is little opportunity for a genuine dialogue between farmers and those who produce the material. Consequently, media producers are not in a good position to determine farmers' precise information needs, or to check whether their messages are understood correctly.

One solution to this problem is for the producers to carry out research into farmers' existing knowledge, attitudes. Practices, and problems concerning farming topics, and for mass media messages to be pretested. This means that a preliminary version of the message is given to a small number of farmers so that, if they have any difficulties interpreting it, revisions can be made before the final version is prepared.

Extension agents can help media producers by keeping them informed of farmers' concerns and information needs, and by reporting any failure to understand the content of the products of mass media. People who produce radio programs, posters and films are usually more educated than farmers and are not normally in regular daily contact with rural people. They cannot, therefore, easily anticipate how well farmers will interpret the material they produce.

Radio

Radio is a particularly useful mass medium for extension. Batteryoperated radios are common features in rural communities. Information can reach households directly and instantly throughout a region or country. Urgent reviews or warnings can be communicated far more quickly than through posters, extension agents or newspapers. Yet, despite radio's mass audience, a good presenter can make program seem very informal and personal, giving the impression that an individual listener is being spoken to directly. Radio is one of the best mediums for 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.

There are, however, a number of limitations to the use of radio in extension work. Batteries are expensive and there may be few repair facilities for radio sets that break down. From the listener's point of view, radio is an inflexible medium: a program is transmitted at a specific time of day and if a farmer does not switch on the radio in time, there is no further opportunity to hear it. There is no record of the message. A farmer cannot stop the program and go back to a point that was not quite understood or heard properly, and after the broadcast there is nothing to remind the farmer of the information heard.

A further limitation is the casual way in which people generally listen to the radio. They often listen while they are doing something else, such as eating, preparing food, or working in the field. For this reason, radio is not a good medium for putting over long, complex items of information. A popular format in many countries, therefore, is for short items of farming news and information to be presented between musical records. Radio drama, in which advice is given indirectly through story or play, is also popular. This can hold attention and interest for longer than asingle voice giving a formal talk. Finally, there is little feedback from the audience, except with a live broadcast where it is possible for listeners to telephone in their questions or points of view directly to the program presenter.

Where there is only one radio station, it may be difficult to design program that meet particular local needs. Moreover, it may not be possible to cater for variations in agricultural practices and recommendations in different areas. However, the growth in recent years of regional and local radio stations (including FM radios) does make it possible for locally relevant information to be broadcast, and for extension agents to become more closely involved in making radio program. Local radio stations may be willing to allow extension agents to have a regular weekly program; if so, they will usually offer some basic training in recording and broadcasting skills. Farm broadcasts will only be attractive to farmers if they are topical and relevant to their farming problems. Extension agent scan help to make them attractive by sending information and stories to the producers, and by inviting them to there are a to interview farmers who have successfully improved their farms, or to report on demonstrations, shows and other extension activities.

Ways by which extension agents can achieve a more effective use of radio include:

- *Recording* farming broadcasts on a cassette recorder for playing back to farmers later. This could greatly increase the number of farmers who hear the program.
- *Encouraging* farmers to listen to broadcasts, either in their own homes or in groups. Radio farm forums have been set up in a number of countries; a group meets regularly, often with an extension agent, to listen to farm broadcasts. After each program, they discuss the contents, answer each other's queries as best they can, and decide whether any action can be taken in response to the information they have heard.
- *Stimulating* the habit of listening to farming broadcasts, and the expectation of gaining useful information from the radio. This can

be done by the extension agent listening to the program and talking about the contents in his contacts with farmers.

Many extension agents will at some time have an opportunity to speak over the radio. They may be asked to interview farmers in their area or perhaps give a short talk themselves.

The following guidelines for radio talks and interviews may be useful.

Radio talks

Decide on the purpose of the talk; in other words, what you want people to know, learn or feel at the end of it.

Attract attention in the first few seconds.

Speak in everyday language, just as you would in a conversation, and not as though you are giving a lecture.

Repeat the main points carefully to help the listeners to understand and remember.

Give specific examples to illustrate our main points.

Limit your talk to three minutes; the listeners will not concentrate on one voice speaking on a single topic for much longer than that.

Make the talk practical by suggesting action that the listeners might take.

Include a variety of topics and styles if you are given more than three minutes. A short talk could be followed by an interview or some item of farming news

Interviews

- Discuss the topic, and the questions you intend to ask, with the interviewee beforehand.
- Relax the interviewee with a chat before beginning to record the interview.
- Avoid introducing questions or points that the interviewee is not expecting.

- Use a conversational style; the interview should sound like an informal discussion.
- Draw out the main points from the interviewee, and avoid speaking at length yourself; listeners are interested in the interviewee rather than you.
- Keep questions short; use questions beginning "Why"? "What?", "How?" to avoid simple one-word answers, such as "Yes" or "No".

Audio cassettes

Audio cassettes are more flexible to use than radio, but as a mass medium they have their limitations. Cassette recorders are less common in rural areas than radio and are thus less familiar to villagers as sources of information. The cassette also has to be distributed physically, in contrast to the broadcast signal which makes radio such an instant medium. However, agents involved in many projects have found audio cassettes to be a useful extension tool, particularly where information is too specific to one area for it to be broadcast by radio.

The advantages of cassettes over radio are:

(a) that the tape can be stopped and replayed;

(b) the listeners do not have to listen at a specific time of day; and

(c) the same tape can be used over and over again, with new information being recorded and unwanted information being removed.

Information can be recorded on cassettes in a studio, where many copies can then be made for distribution, or it can be recorded on a blank cassette in the field. Cassettes can also be used for:

Updating the extension agents' technical information. Pre-recorded cassettes, distributed by the extension organization, are a good way of keeping extension agents in touch with new technical developments in agriculture.

Sharing experiences between farmers' groups and between communities.

An extension agent can record interviews and statements in one village and play them back in others.

Providing a commentary to accompany filmstrips and slide sets. Stimulating discussion in farmers' groups or in training centers by presenting various points of view on a topic, or from a recorded drama. Cassette recorders are light and fairly robust. However, they should be kept as free from dust as possible and the recording heads kept clean by using a suitable cleaning fluid, such as white spirit.

Film

The main advantage of film as a mass medium for extension is that it is visual; the audience can see as well as hear the information it contains. It is easier to hold an audience's attention when they have something to look at. It also makes it possible to explain things that are difficult to describe in words, for example, the color and shape of an insect pest or the correct way to transplant seedlings. Moreover, by using close-up shots and slow motion, action can be shown in far greater detail than it is to see possible watching a live demonstration. Scenes from different places and times can be brought together in order to teach processes that cannot normally be seen directly. The causes of erosion, for example, can be demonstrated dramatically by showing how a hilltop stripped of trees no longer prevents rain-water running down the slope, creating gullies and removing topsoil. Similarly, the benefits of regular weeding can be shown by filming crops in two contrasting fields at different stages of growth. Once a film has been made, many copies can be produced with the result that thousands can then watch the film at the same time.

Television and video

Television, like film, combines vision with sound and like radio, it can also be an instant medium, transmitting information directly to a mass audience. Television signals can be broadcast from a land-based transmitter, by satellite or through cables. However, in many countries, television transmission and sets are still restricted to urban areas, and the potential of television for rural extension will remain low until sets become more widely available. Television sets are much more expensive to buy and repair than radios, and program production costs are also far higher. Where television has been used for rural extension communication, access and impact have been increased by group viewing followed by discussion.

Video combines most of the advantages of film and of audio cassettes. Using a video camera, picture and sound are recorded on a magnetic tape and are then immediately available for viewing on a monitor or television set. This enables the production team to re-record any material that is not satisfactory. As with audio cassettes, unwanted information can be removed and the tape reused.

As a mass medium, video has more to offer than film, since video programs can be made far more quickly in multiple copies, and the lightweight video cassettes are relatively easy to distribute. In these days, memory sticks can be used to store. As video equipment - television monitors and video cassette recorders - becomes more robust, it will be possible to use mobile units to show up to-date programs, made within the country and even within the area, to large numbers of rural families. The tape can be slowed down, wound back to repeat a particular action, or held on a particular frame while the extension agent explains a point. The same mobile units could carry portable video cameras to collect material for new program. The main limitation to viewing is that only 20 to 30 people can satisfactorily watch a video program on a normal television set, while several

hundred can see a film projected on to a large screen. Where video equipment is available -and it will become increasingly so over the next few years - extension agents should refer to the guidelines given above for using film and audio cassettes.

Printed media

Printed media can combine words, pictures and diagrams to convey accurate and clear information. 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.

Printed media used in extension include posters, leaflets, circular letters, newspapers and magazines

Posters are useful for publicizing forth coming events and for reinforcing messages that farmers receive through other media. They should be displayed in prominent places where a lot of people regularly pass by. The most effective posters carry a simple message, catch people's attention and are easy to interpret.

Leaflets can summarize the main points of a talk or demonstration, or provide detailed information that would not be remembered simply by hearing it, such as fertilizer application rates or names of crop varieties.

Circular letters are used to publicize local extension activities, to give timely information on local farm problems and to summarize results of demonstrations so that the many farmers who cannot attend them may still benefit

Newspapers are not widely available in rural areas. However, local leaders often read newspapers, and a regular Colum nonagricultural

topic is useful to create awareness of new ideas and to inform people of what other groups or communities are doing.

Printed media can be either very sophisticated, with color photographs and a variety of lettering styles, requiring expensive equipment that is only available in large cities, or produced simply and cheaply using equipment found in many local extension offices, such as a duplicator and a photocopier. This simpler technology makes it possible for extension agents to produce leaflets and circular letters that are relevant to their area and can be made available quickly to farmers. With the use of two duplicators - one with black and one with red ink - quite attractive leaflets can be produced. Modern photocopiers, however, can produce reasonable copies of black-and-white photographs.

Where the extension agent is using printed material that has been mass produced, he should make sure that it complements his extension activities. Posters may be used, for example, to draw attention to a topic related to a later demonstration, but printed material that the farmer does not see as relevant to what the extension agent does or says will have little impact.

Printed media are of little use if they are not distributed. Expensively produced posters, leaflets and magazines should not be allowed to gather dust on extension offices shelves: they should be made widely available and farmers should be encouraged to look at and discuss them. Posters should be replaced regularly with new ones. In addition, where printed material proves to be irrelevant or difficult for farmers to understand, those who produced them ought to be informed so that improvements can be made. Posters and leaflets that seem clear to the extension agent may not be fully understood by farmers. Whenever possible, the agent should help to explain their meaning. In time, farmers will become used to the ways in which pictures and words convey information and will find it increasingly easy to interpret printed media.

When the extension agent is preparing his own printed media, or material is being produced to his specifications, the following stages offer a very useful guide. They apply equally to posters, leaflets, circular letters and newspaper articles.

Define the context

The agent should be clear about the purpose of the

material. Is it intended to create awareness and stimulate people to seek more detailed information? Or to remind farmers of what they have learned? Or to provide detailed technical information and serve as a reference for future use? The agent also needs to know how the material will be used by the audience. Will it be seen casually as people pass by a noticeboard? Will it be studied individually in the home, or discussed at a group meeting?

Know the audience

Before planning the content, the agent needs information about the particular audience: their knowledge and attitudes concerning the subject-matter of the information, and their farming practices.

Decide on content

The information must be relevant to farmers' needs, and the content and amount of information should also suit the context in which the media will be used. A poster, for example, should contain one simple message in large, readable type that can be interpreted quickly by a passer-by.

Attract attention

The material must be attractive at first glance. Only if a person's attention is caught by a leaflet or a poster will he spend the necessary time to look at, read and absorb the information it contains. This can be helped by short, boldly printed headings, eye-catching pictures and sufficient empty space to prevent it from looking too dense or cluttered.

Structure the information

The extension agent can help farmers to understand and remember the information by dividing the contents into sections that lead logically from one to another, and by the use of headings and underlining to bring out the main points.

Pre-test

All locally produced material should be pre-tested before use. It can be shown to a few people from the target group, who should then be asked what information they have learned from it. This gives an opportunity to improve the material, if necessary, before beginning final production.

Exhibits and displays

Apart from being a useful way of sharing information, an attractive, neat display suggests to people that the extension agent and his organization are efficient and keen to communicate. Displays are suitable f or notice boards inside and outside extension offices, at demonstration plots (where the progress of the demonstration can be recorded in pictures), and at agricultural shows. Although a good display can take quite a long time to prepare, it will be seen by many people. With displays on permanent notice-boards, it is important that the material be changed regularly so that people develop the habit of looking therefor up-to-date information.

A display should stick to a single theme broken down into a small number of messages. It should include. several pictures (preferably photographs) and diagrams which must be clearly labelled. If there is a lot of printed text that is not broken up by pictures, the display will look dull and fail to attract attention. Displays can be made on events where life samples can be displayed (Fig 1).



Figure 1 Improved varieties of fruits displayed on exhibitions

Campaigns

In an extension campaign, several media are used in a coordinated way and over a limited period of time in order to achieve a particular extension objective. The advantage of campaigns is that the media can support and reinforce one another. The disadvantage is that campaigns can take a lot of time and effort to plan. Often the extension agent will be involved in campaigns planned by staff at national or regional level. An extension agent's role will be to make local arrangements for meetings, film shows, demonstrations advance publicity, accommodation for visiting staff and distribution of printed material.

An extension agent can also plan his own local campaigns. A campaign can be useful in situations where the farmers of an area face a common problem for which there is a solution which could readily be adopted. Campaigns require careful planning to make the best use of all extension methods and media available. Principles of extension planning and guidelines for the various methods and media should be used in planning campaigns.

Traditional media

Traditional forms of entertainment can also be used as extension media. Songs, stories, dances and plays can convey information in an interesting way. Even when they are prepared in advance, they can be adapted at the last minute to cater to local situations and response from the audience. No modern technology is required and these media are especially useful where literacy levels are low. By involving local people in preparing the plot of a play, extensionagents can stimulate the process of problem analysis, which is a fundamental part of the educational aspect of extension.

Audio-visual aids in extension

The term audio-visual aid refers to anything that an extension agent uses to help to convey the message when communicating with farmers. The spoken word is the agent's main communication tool, but, whether the agent is speaking to a large kebele/village meeting or discussing a problem in a field with a group of farmers, its impact and effectiveness can be greatly increased by the use of suitable audiovisual aids. When selected and used properly, audio-visual aids can help in several ways as below:

The interest of the audience can be maintained if the agent varies the mode of presentation. It is difficult to concentrate for long on what someone is saying; but if the agent refers to a wall chart, or illustrates a point with some slides, his audience's attention can be maintained.

When information is presented to more than one sense (sight and touch, for example, as well as hearing), more is taken in and it is better understood and remembered.

Processes and concepts that are difficult to express in words alone can be explained. The procedure for applying for a loan, for example, may sound confusing, but a simple chart or diagram can make the process clearer. Again, the life cycle of a crop pest can be explained by showing a series of slides or drawings.

Photographs of a cattle dip or a model of a cooperative store can give farmers a clear idea of just what it is they might be considering.

Pictures can have a more immediate impact on our emotions than words. Photographs of a heavy crop, for example, are likely to arouse interest more effectively than details of yields read out by an extension agent.

Adults, statistically retain:

- 10% of what they read
- 20% of what they hear
- 30% of what they see
- 50% of what they see and hear
- 70% of what they say or discuss with others
- 90% of what they say and do

Extension materials example from FRG project in Ethiopia

Posters in in English also translated into local languages Posters



Leaflets and other communication materials



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