J.S. Datuama Cammue from Liberia

**Hi Mr. Moderator thank you for the opportunity given us to take part in this interesting exercise:**

Communication and education in all its forms are vehicles that make a concept whether environment, climate change or biodiversity and its importance to humanity understandable because it gives stakeholders the ability to act in an informed manner. Meaning communication can only be effective if the desired results anticipated account for the concerns of the stakeholders targeted in the process….

Effective not only about having clear objective but the messages, messengers, the choice of media and the tone of voice. But traditional public awareness and education messages are not only full of jargons but negative, abstract and filled with doom….. Instead of changing attitudes and behavior, it rather switched off stakeholders.

It must be strategic, positive and tailored to different circumstances with a mission for a desire change, understanding mental model and culture, respecting needs, context, engaging in conversation with stakeholders’ and as well building relationships and making knowledge accessible…..

One can only reach that stage if proper identification and profiling of audiences become priority given that such background information is essential in choosing the most effective ways to communicate with the audience(s).

**Message development**

The next essential to consider are messages developed should not only be closely tied to goal and objectives but be one to deliver important information about the issue and compel the targeted audience to thinks, feel or act. The message must show the importance, urgency or magnitude of the issue; the relevance, put human a face on the issue and tie to the audience’s values, beliefs, or interest.

**MESSAGE CONSTRUCTION**

The next critical level for success is the message design/construction sums up the success expected to be scored in the process. The channel and the purpose of communicating influence the message design. One needs to know that for persuasion to work, stakeholders must first receive information, understand it, believe it and act upon it. Factors which the experts say influence public acceptances of messages are numerous here are few:

* Clarity- the messages should convey information to assure understanding and limit misunderstanding. Clear messages contain few technical/bureaucratic terms and limit information the audience does not need to make decision.
* Consistency- We needs to try as hard as possible to maintain one level of interpreting the issues instead of variation which the expert community would like to go does making it difficult to build consensus. Everybody knows the issue of biosafety is the home of such disagreement…..
* Tone and appeal- a message of this nature should be re-assuring, challenging and in certain case alarming to create a sense of urgency for action for the targeted audience…
* Credibility – This is the central thesis of communication- credibility; for a message to be believed and acted upon, the source of the information should be believable and trustworthy..
* Public need- is a serious asset for success. For a message to impact change it must be based on what the target audience perceives as most important to them, what they want to know and not what most importance to those who sending it…….

In Liberia where we have been able to prepare a communication and public awareness strategies during the implementation of our National Biosafety Framework Project (2012-2016), our experience show that public awareness and information is challenging given that every stakeholder organization/group has a need. The policy-makers, farmers/ organizations, the civil society organizations and the mass media, have very little/limited knowledge/education and information on biosafety. The scientific community divided on the issue and so is the media who support the various groupings…

For us our priority target groups include policy-makers who are responsible for allocation in the National Budget& rubber- stamp public policy, the mass media who have long arm to educate and inform stakeholders, farmers the end users of the technology and civil society task to carry out policy-advocacy…….

The conduct of dialogical forums bringing policy-makers, the scientific community and regulatory Agencies to debate the issues, topical current affairs radio calling in education and information programme on national and community radio stations across the country(English/local languages, talk shows) TV in urban centers, stakeholder workshops, community education forum, theatre performances, policy briefs are among the line of media, awareness and education contents constituting our programmes activities.

In term of what we have done-(mainstreamed biosafety in the curricula of the Colleges of Agriculture/Forestry & Biological Sciences- state university, Stella Maris Polytechnic environment programme, College of Rural Development-

Cuttington University, biosafety clubs in community colleges and secondary schools around the country)……