

Resource, market development and poverty targeting issues associated with emerging peri-urban and urban aquaculture in Sub-Saharan Africa (DFID Project No. R8287)

This project was conceived against a backdrop of recognised poverty and food insecurity in urban (U) and peri-urban (PU) interfaces and concomitant decline in fish consumption in many African countries. These trends proceed against a backdrop of changing forces in food markets, and austere urban economic structural reforms causing significant proportions of U and PU poorer communities to engage in farming as a livelihood and household food security option.

To address these challenges this project on aquaculture and urbanisation in Africa seeks to generate new knowledge primarily to understand the conduciveness of the macro and microenvironments for promoting and developing sustainable aquaculture in the U and PU zones and interfaces. In addition, the project will generate baseline data to understand recourse use, and typology of emerging U and PU aquaculture activities in relation to urbanisation processes. Based on this knowledge, strategic opportunities for support will be identified to ensure that benefits from aquaculture will accrue to U and PU poor communities.

The project is a collaboration between the Institute of Aquaculture, WorldFish and other partners (e.g. Nigeria, Tanzania, South Africa, Cameroon, Malawi, and Uganda) in the region. See <http://www.dfid.stir.ac.uk/Afgrp/projects/r8287/r8287.htm> for project updates.



An example of the target group - youth for employment and enterprise development (K Rana).

A Tale of Two Countries

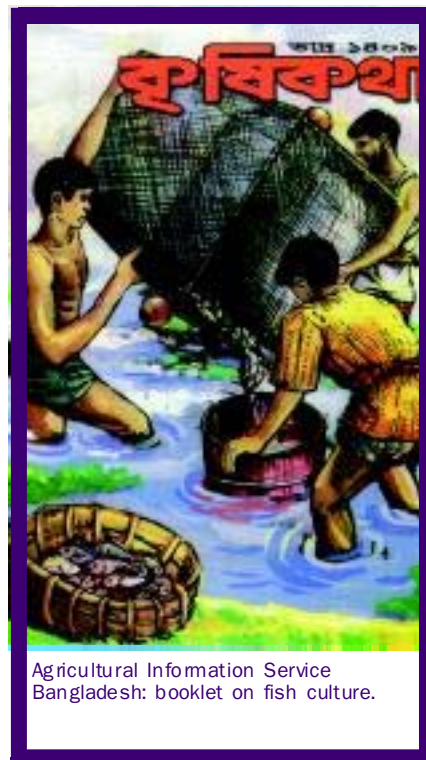
Sarah Reynolds, WRENmedia, reporting on work funded by DFID.

Disappointment in Bangladesh but delight and determination in Uganda. Two countries and two very different reactions to an exercise to try and find the best means of communicating applied research to poor, rural people. What were we doing and why? Let us take 'why' first.

We all know the concerns. Many millions are spent on research. The projects and programmes have huge potential to improve the lives and livelihoods of countless people in many different regions. Local people are brought into the process and all goes well while – and where - the work is actually taking place. But try to reach other people in other areas and now the problems start. Posters and pamphlets, field days and photographs, demos and drama; it all takes time and unfamiliar skills. Before long, the budget line for communication has a row of noughts along the bottom. You need to have been shut away in a workshop for a very long time to believe that the hoped-for, widespread take up will be achievable, let alone straightforward and affordable. But new programmes of work come on the scene. They show even greater promise and, furthermore, can use the skills for which the staff have been recruited. So once again we hear the shelf groaning with good ideas that just never seem to get away. Of course communication to end-users must be an integral part of research for development but how can it be done at reasonable cost and to maximum effect? This brings us to what we were doing in Bangladesh and Uganda.

Blue skies

The object of the exercise was to develop processes, both country-specific and generic, that could be used in future to improve the communication of research. The idea was to take two countries that would give us a good contrast and, by using before and after surveys, test which – if any – of a number of channels of communication would prove to be most effective in delivering a research message to potential users among the rural poor. An effective channel of



Agricultural Information Service Bangladesh: booklet on fish culture.

communication must not only reach the target audience but also provide understandable, useful information that can be acted upon.

Remembering that the purpose was to develop a process, rather than specific, one-off solutions, the choice of research message was largely immaterial. The choice was governed by four criteria: it must be appropriate for the target audience; it must be a proven technology; there must be technical advice and information available for those wishing to pursue it further; it must not have received extensive promotion in the recent past within the chosen region. For Bangladesh we chose DFID-funded work by CARE on raising fish in one metre cube cages. For Uganda, we chose the diagnosis and treatment of the tsetse fly vector diseases of sleeping sickness and trypanosomiasis, known locally as nagana. In each country we invited everyone we and our local partners could think of who might have an interest in the subject. There were representatives from government departments, from civil society groups, from NGOs both

local and international, and from the media. Enormous effort was put in by many people to make sure the right people were involved and that they all had a say. Interest grew and, to cut eighteen months down to a few words, meetings were held, questionnaires devised and messages developed. Baseline surveys were done in two rural areas in each of the countries and, after a relatively short, three-month period of communication activities of various kinds, surveys were done, in the same districts as before, to see if there had been any impact.

The cloud and the silver lining

The cloud – at least in Bangladesh – was that there was almost no difference between the before and after surveys. You can imagine the disappointment felt by those who had worked through radio, drama, print, poetry and other means to spread the message. The consensus was that three months was too short a time. It is, in any case, extremely difficult, by whatever means, to encourage poor, risk-averse people to try out new technologies and for those people do not remember what they consider at the time to be irrelevant. In contrast, in Uganda, about half of all those surveyed had heard, seen or read something about sleeping sickness and nagana in the previous four months. In one district 89% said they had seen some communication about sleeping sickness. Most could recall messages about the causes, symptoms and where to go for treatment. Radio, friends and family and service providers (veterinary and health) all scored highly as sources of information.

The silver lining in Uganda was not only the satisfying result of the survey. The scientists involved, the media, NGOs and government and other service providers had, by themselves and as a natural consequence of the process itself, developed greater understanding of their need for effective communication and how to achieve it together. Policy makers and planners were also very much part of the process. And for others wanting to replicate the success? As with any development equation, there are so many variables



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<http://www.stir.ac.uk/aquaculture>

that it is difficult to say for sure what will succeed and what will not. But our tale of two countries has shown that for the long term, it is best to work with local journalists and other communicators, providing them with a 'resource of information' rather than ready-made material. Make sure

journalists, scientists and others realise it is up to all parties to retain the links and make use of them for communicating in future. And, for that new programme of research, make sure the budget line for communication is realistic.