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HOW PARTICIPATORY IS PARTICIPATION? THE CASE OF THE IDRC – NARO PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION INITIATIVE IN UGANDA; 2001 – 2007.

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Abstract

In participatory communication, the degree of participation lies on a continuum that is largely determined by the power holder. This paper points out key areas in the implementation process of a participatory development communication (PDC) initiative that took place between Uganda's national banana researchers, and banana farmers, with funding from IDRC. The paper aims at tasking readers to ascertain the degree of participation in the participatory communication initiative. PDC is a ten-step process that mobilizes communities to take part in their development by involving them in joint identification of an objective, and in implementing, monitoring and evaluating activities all aimed at achieving the identified objective. The banana researchers resorted to PDC after their dissatisfaction at the low rate of farmers' uptake and sustained utilization of researched banana information. IDRC facilitated NARO banana researchers to employ participatory development communication with the hope of improving farmers' natural resource and banana management. The objective of the initiative was to try out a participatory communication methodology that promised to result in small scale farmers' sustainable adoption of researched banana information and technologies. Researchers later reported that the PDC initiative had led to achievement of the initiative's objectives. In conclusion, the paper proposes that considering the kaleidoscopic nature of participatory communication, there is need for guidelines to be explicitly specified regarding its implementation, so as to prevent its manipulation.

Key words: Participatory Communication, researchers, banana farmers

Introduction

Participation is a continuing catchphrase in development jargon. There is need to examine what participation actually entails in a particular development context in order to ascertain its form, and the role and contribution of the different stakeholders that took part in the intervention. IDRC facilitated banana scientists from Uganda's National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) to pilot and implement participatory development communication (PDC) for sharing information on natural resource and banana management among small scale

farmers, researchers, extension workers and other stakeholders. Researchers resorted to PDC after dissatisfaction at the low rate of farmers' sustained utilization of researched agriculture information.

PDC is a process that aims at mobilizing communities to take part in their development by involving them in identifying an objective, and in implementing, monitoring and evaluating activities aimed at achieving the identified objective. Bessette (2020) indicates that PDC is a planned activity based on participatory processes, the media and interpersonal communication. Bessette further points out that PDC may be implemented through ten steps whose order of implementation depends on a local context. PDC emanated from Development Communication, a term which according to the Wikipedia, was first coined by Nora Quebral of the University of Philippines, Los Banos in the early 1970s. The Wikipedia indicates that Quebral defines Development Communication as "the art and science of human communication linked to a society's planned transformation from a state of poverty to one of dynamic socio-economic growth that makes for greater equity and the larger unfolding of individual potential."

Development communication is a diverse field that employs various communication techniques in order to address an identified problem. Some of the communication approaches in the Development Communication tool kit include information dissemination and education, behaviour change, social marketing and participatory development communication.

The Development Communication field has evolved in tandem with different schools of thought that have arisen to solve the different times' development problems. Following the two world wars, the immediate school of thought was the modernization approach to development. At that time, development agents believed that developed countries were the indicators of what development was, and that developing countries had to emulate the developed countries in order to achieve development. The modernization approach to development failed to produce desired impact, paving way for participatory approaches where participatory development communication lies. Similarly, failure of the one-way mode of agriculture information dissemination and extension that promoted 'successful' farming techniques, was blamed on lack of sensitivity to small scale farmers' local contexts.

Extension workers were, and many are still employing top-down one-way methods of information dissemination, which do not take into consideration the realities of small scale farmers' local contexts. In the case of Uganda, extension workers could tell farmers to use organic manure comprising of cow wastes, to replenish their gardens' soil fertility. The recommendation would be made with little consideration that most of the farmers did not own cows and that cow waste was too expensive to purchase for the majority of small scale farmers. Consequently, farmers often failed to implement the extension workers' advice. The

extension worker would interpret farmers' non implementation of the recommendation, as farmers' non adoption of approved recommended technical information, with little regard to the causes of the non-implementation.

Literature Review

Madukwe (2008) in Ganpat W.G, Ronald D and Wendy A (2017) states that failure of extension methodologies to effect sustainable agriculture growth is such a concern to stakeholders including donors that new initiatives are being mooted to enhance the generation, dissemination and use of agriculture information and technologies. Consequently, many initiatives have adopted the participatory approach aimed at actively involving communities in development as opposed to communities being mere recipients of already packaged information technologies. Question is, what should be the degree of community involvement in development?

Mefalopulos (2009) affirms that participatory communication is increasingly being considered a key component of development initiatives all over the world. White (1994) in Moka J (2021) How Participation Trophies contribute to White privilege, The Texas Horn, Dec. 2022, avers that participation is kaleidoscopic, seen from the eye of the holder and shaped by the hand of the power holder. White further highlights a new wave of skepticism pointing to the possibility that participation is actually a new form of manipulation in the hands of the power elite. Scoones (1994) contends that participatory methodologies mean different things to different people, while Mefalopulos (2003) claims that participation is a highly acclaimed principle, but which is very difficult to implement and that many times, it is ambiguously implemented. Question is why the ambiguous implementation? Is it intentional or it is unintentional? How could it be refined in order to iron out the participation ambiguity?

Whereas Bessette indicates that PDC may be implemented in ten steps depending on a local context, Servaes (2011) contends that participation is a process that should be allowed to naturally unfold in each unique situation, and that consequently, prescribing how it should unfold is counterproductive and may lead to pseudo participation. Bordenave in White (1994) cautions against what he calls 'participationitis', a condition where everybody takes part in decision making about everything leading to constant assemblies and meetings. Does everybody taking part in decision making mean that all participants are having active influence in the process? What of silent observers?

Proponents of participatory approaches are of the view that communities should participate in their development as opposed to being provided with already made products. Bessette (2004) indicates that this understanding of communication is central to ideas developed by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, whose writings and experiences became very instrumental in

participatory communication. Freire was of the view that development programmes had failed to improve small scale farmers' situation because they wanted to convince them about the benefits of certain innovations as opposed to involving them in dialogue and participation. Does dialogue mean equality in participation? Compare with Uganda's Ministry of Local Government Parish Development Model (2022)

Freire's dialogic communication has been accepted as one of the two normative regulating theories of participatory communication, the other being UNESCO's alternative communication media which allow ordinary citizens to bypass gatekeepers of traditional main stream media. Freire's theory was inspired by two theories: Sartre's existentialism, and a theology of otherness, demanding for respect of an individual as a full human being; and Marx's theory that points to the fact that life is more than the fulfillment of material needs and the need for collective solutions. Freire's dialogic communication theory is based on group dialogue rather than amplifying media such as radio, print and television. Freire does not pay attention to the language or form of communication. His focus is on the intentions of the communicative actions.

UNESCO's alternative communication is about access to the media, participation in communication systems and self management. Access to the media implies a possibility for the public to voice back its reactions and demands to production organizations. Participation in communication system indicates a higher level of involvement of the public in the planning, production and management of communication systems. Whereas participation may involve consultation and representation of the public in decision making, UNESCO considers self management to be the highest form of participation. The public then has the power of decision making within communication enterprises and is fully involved in making communication policies and plans.

Some critiques of participatory approaches assert that it is not clear what participation entails, and that participation in all stages does not have similar relevance. If decisions are made outside of the community and the latter is only assigned the role of implementing and evaluating results, some positions argue, participation is then limited to instances that depend on decisions previously made. They say such is not true participation since it maintains power inequalities.

From the above contentions, it would seem that the biggest test of a participatory initiative is for it to come up with the right blend of participation to merit being accepted as truly

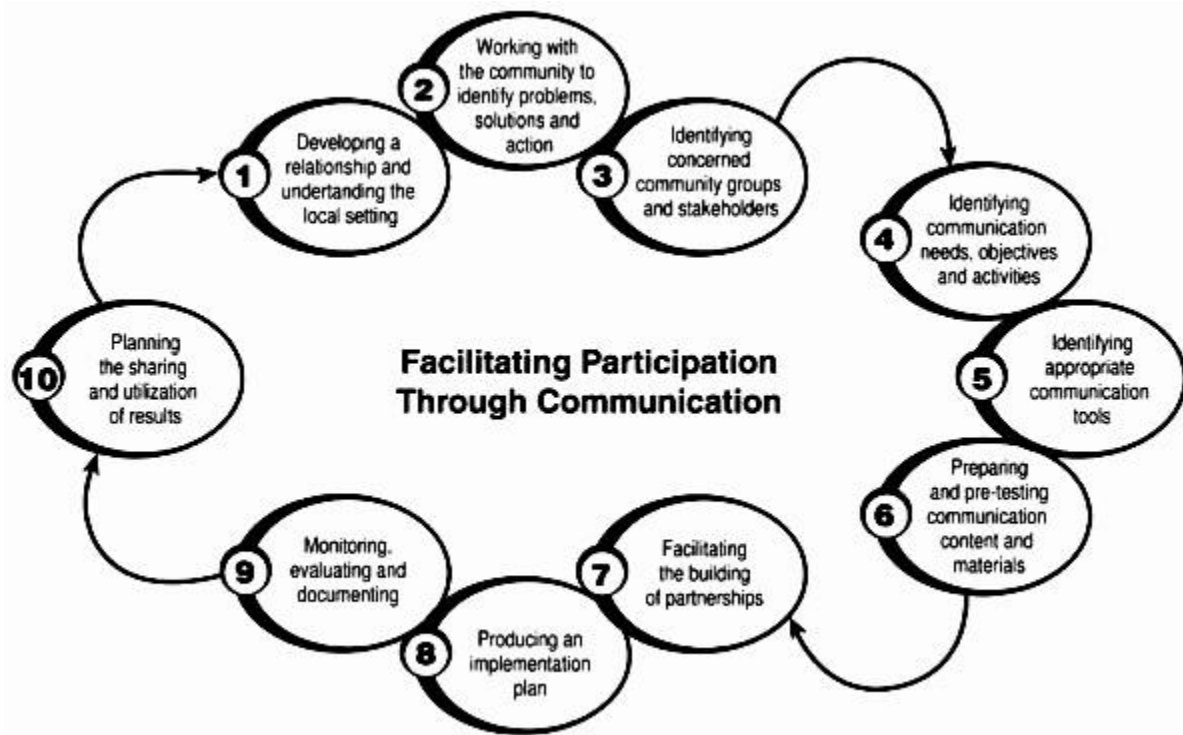
participatory. Mefalopulos (2003), quoting Pretty (1995) asserts that there is no consistent definition of the word participation, neither in theory, nor in practice. This allows the labeling of an initiative as participatory even with limited participation of end users. White (1994) quoting Deshler and Stock (1985) indicate that papers and journals on rural development are laced with rhetoric for popular participation but very few studies have undertaken rigorous analysis of the participation phenomenon. They conclude that concepts, measures, and indicators of rural development participation are lacking as are theories, definitions, and conceptual frameworks. This could have been then; the situation is currently clearer.

He asserts that there is need to unravel costs and benefits of participation Cleaver (1999) avers that participation has been taken to be positive for development but that its merit is yet to be ascertained for individuals especially the vulnerable publics like the poor and women.. Cleaver cautions participation proponents of the possibility of external influence on decision outcomes without physically participating in development initiatives, and that individuals sitting on committees or speaking up during meetings does not codify the rights of the vulnerable.

This paper presents excerpts from the implementation process of the IDRC – NARO Participatory Development Communication initiative, for the determination of the authenticity of the participation that occurred therein.

Methodology

The paper is based upon a review of related literature, and the implementation process of the NARO – IDRC PDC initiatives, whose implementation drew upon Guy Bessette's model of participatory development communication indicated below.



The participatory development communication model. Bessette (2004 : 35)

Overview of the initiative implementation

The model recommends the following ten stages of implementation whose order of implementation depends on a local context : Establishing a relationship with a local community and understanding the local setting; Involving the community in the identification of a problem, potential solutions, and in a decision to carry out a concrete initiative; Identifying the different community groups and other stakeholders concerned by the identified problem (or goal) and initiative; Identifying communication needs, objectives and activities; Identifying appropriate communication tools; Preparing and pre-testing communication content and materials; Facilitating the building of partnerships; Producing an implementation plan; Planning monitoring, documentation and evaluation; Planning the sharing and utilization of results.

During the implementation of the initiative, not much reflection was devoted to the degree of stakeholder participation, the main concern then was to facilitate relevant stakeholders to participate in solving the identified problem(s). Participating farmers formed the regular

constant core stakeholders who interacted with researchers during most of the implementation stages of the initiatives.

Identification of the pilot area for the PDC initiative

Uganda is divided into 80 districts across 4 administrative regions. Each district is further divided into counties, sub-counties, parishes and villages. Following a search among banana growing districts and assisted by relevant district authorities, NARO banana researchers identified Rakai and Mukono as appropriate districts for the initiatives. The researchers further worked with stakeholders in the districts to identify the area /sub county in the district for the pilot study. In Rakai district, Ddwaniro sub county was chosen, while in Mukono district, Kimenyedde sub county was chosen.

In both Ddwaniro and Kimenyedde, stakeholders who participated in the meetings were farmers, local authorities, researchers and development workers operating in the area. Researchers were the overall organisers of the meetings whose schedules were made in such a way that each category of invited stakeholders first held a discussion amongst themselves and later made a presentation to the rest of the stakeholders in a plenary session.

Ddwaniro sub county was chosen because the farmers there grow bananas and they were willing to work with the banana researchers to improve their banana yields. Kimenyedde sub county was chosen because it was the area that was most hit by Banana Bacterial Wilt (BBW) which was Mukono district's priority problem.

In Mukono, choosing the actual site for the PDC initiative was done in a series of steps. During the meeting at the district, stakeholders who included representatives from Mukono district's 28 sub counties chose Kimenyedde Sub County to be the area within which researchers would work with farmers. Later, in a meeting held at Kimenyedde Sub County, stakeholders who included representatives from the five parishes of Kimenyedde, discussed and agreed that Bukassa parish should host the initiative. Later still, Bukassa parish stakeholders who included representatives from the five villages that make up Bukassa parish discussed and agreed that Namakomo village should be the actual site for the try-out.

Identification of the community's priority problem or goal

How was the community problem identified? In Ddwaniro, researchers and farmers brainstormed with the aim of identifying the farmers' goal or what their priority problem was. They

employed pair wise ranking, village mapping, transect walks and show of hands, to arrive at the priority community problem. They discovered that farmers were experiencing decreasing banana yields due to poor soil and water management. Farmers and researchers agreed to jointly work in a bid to solve the soil and water management problems that were resulting into low banana yields and low incomes from bananas.

Identification of a priority problem was not as straight forward in Mukono. Researchers sought for permission to work in the district from the authorities. A district level stakeholders' meeting was held, to discuss the researchers' objectives in Mukono, and which areas in the district would benefit best from the researchers' objectives.

Before turning to Mukono, banana researchers had previously worked with farmers from another district called Luwero. In Luwero district, researchers and farmers tested and approved improved banana cultivars that showed potential to benefit small scale banana farmers in other areas of Uganda. The improved banana cultivars grew to a size that was much bigger than that of most of the banana cultivars that farmers then had. Moreover, the 'new' banana cultivars could be eaten as food, dessert and juice, unlike the conventional banana types that could only be eaten as food. Researchers together with farmers from Luwero wished to share their new findings concerning the attributes of the new banana cultivars, with farmers in other banana growing districts, one of which was Mukono. Consequently, researchers' initial objective in Mukono and Kimenyedde, was to provide small scale banana farmers with the new banana cultivars that researchers and Luwero farmers had previously tested and approved as having positive attributes including market trends.

However, Mukono stakeholders at village, Sub County and district levels, unanimously emphasised that their priority problem was to eradicate BBW disease from their banana gardens. This was the problem that researchers set out to solve together with the farmers and other stakeholders.

Identification of community representatives to participate in the PDC initiative

Did the entire community directly participate in the initiative with the banana researchers? How were the community representatives identified? How did the rest of the community get to know the results of the trial aimed at solving the identified banana related problem?

Community meetings were convened in both Ddwaniro and Kimenyedde, for the community to choose their representatives in the PDC Initiatives. These would work closely with the researchers and other banana stakeholders to test how to solve the identified problem using PDC. It was agreed that the farmer representatives would later share new information and knowledge with the rest of the community.

In Ddwaniro, researchers encouraged farmers to either form new groups, join existing groups or to declare existing farmer groups if any. A total of 12 farmer groups were thus formed. Each group chose five representatives making a total of 60 farmers who participated in the PDC initiative. In Kimenyedde, district, sub county stakeholders, and researchers agreed to pilot the initiative in Bukassa parish. The parish has five villages. Each village identified four representatives to work closely with the researchers. They all agreed upon Namakomo to be the actual trial village. The chosen farmer representatives worked with researchers. They put into practice researchers' recommendations in their farms. Other farmers from Namakomo village emulated what the farmer representatives were implementing in their farms.

Characterising groups that were concerned with the priority problem

What strategies were made to motivate the rest of the farming community to implement lessons obtained from the trial sessions? It was important to identify the specific groups of farmers that were concerned with the identified problem so as to provide them with relevant information in the right format.

In Ddwaniro, participating farmers agreed that they needed to rejuvenate their banana gardens' soil fertility, soil moisture retention, and that they needed to prevent soil erosion. Researchers previously anticipated that farmers would divide themselves according to gender, but farmers insisted that the problems they were facing could not be solved through gender segregation, but through working in groups according to the actual problems they were experiencing. And that is how they divided themselves up. They formed three groups. One group worked on how to rejuvenate soil fertility; another on how to prevent soil erosion while the third group worked on soil water retention.

Farmers in Kimenyedde reflected about the BBW problem and agreed that there were five concerned categories of farmers. These were owners of big plots of banana gardens who did not reside in the area where the gardens were located, they were often overpowered by the magnitude of the workload involved in fighting BBW. This was because their gardens were

very big. Since they were not residents in the area, they often discovered the BBW infection in their gardens when the BBW had already spread widely. Consequently, the owners of the big banana gardens had a tendency to abandon their gardens when the gardens got infected with BBW; Elderly farmers who owned big banana gardens was another concerned category. They were feeble and could not implement the recommended BBW control measures; Women whose husbands refused them to implement recommended BBW control measures was another category. The husbands often told the women that they could not implement BBW control measures on land that they (women) did not own. Such husbands and other men who did not participate in agriculture seminars and workshops also needed to be specifically targeted. Young men who abandoned their elderly parents with diseased gardens, to seek for quick money in towns were also identified as a category that needed to be targeted.

Implementing solutions to the identified problems

Whilst researchers implemented BBW control trials in Namakomo village with interested villagers, other interested farmers from other villages and parishes in Kimenyedde could also participate in the discussions and the practical sessions. Eventually, farmer representatives from the entire Kimenyedde Sub County were involved in implementing BBW control measures with the researchers. Farmers concurrently implemented what they were learning from the trial sessions in Namakomo, on their own banana gardens. The same happened in Ddwaniro where participating farmers shared new information in soil and water management with fellow farmers who were not working closely with the researchers.

Developing communication tools to support information sharing

How did farmers participate in the development of communication tools? Which tools were chosen? How were they chosen? Ddwaniro and Kimenyedde farmer representatives who participated in the PDC initiatives kept in mind the rest of the farmers who they represented. After learning and witnessing the benefits of using PDC for soil and water conservation and for BBW control, they wished to share the new information and knowledge with fellow farmers who had not taken part in the initiative.

Farmers in both Ddwaniro and Kimenyedde characterised the farmers who they intended to share information with. This they did by reflecting on their own composition. They divided themselves into corresponding groups. For example if one of the groups they identified as

needing information was that of women, a women only group was formed from among the participating farmers, if another identified group was of men, a men only group was formed from among the participating farmers. They brainstormed on the intended group's characteristics and made strategies on how to develop communication tools that would best deliver the new information and knowledge to them.

The farmers chose and developed informative communication tools in form of songs, poems, plays, dances, video, posters and leaflets.

Launching the communication tools

How did the rest of the community get to listen to the messages that were contained in the communication tools? Farmers in both sites launched the communication tools at a big community gathering which was attended by farmers, development workers in the area, donor representatives, and district officials. In both cases, farmers chose the location for the launch. Unlike in Ddwaniro where a district official officiated at the launching ceremony, it was the Minister of Agriculture who officiated at the Kimenyedde function.

Ddwaniro farmers experienced some conflict during the choice of venue for the launch of the communication tools. This was because the farmers came from different locations which were at varying distances from the two venues that were proposed for the launch. Conflict arose when farmers chose the venue for the launch depending on its proximity to their individual homes. Farmers wanted the function to be located in their home areas, because this would allow more people from their homes to witness the occasion.

Of the two proposed venues, one was the usual place for official functions of Ddwaniro Sub County. The other venue was a community centre where some of the previous PDC meetings had been held. After much debate with some people threatening to boycott the launching ceremony, farmers agreed to hold the launch in the usual place for official functions, which is Ddwaniro Sub County head quarters. Farmers agreed on one venue after researchers urged them to make a choice for the good of the entire community as opposed to individual sentiments.

Such dispute did not take place in Kimenyedde, where it seemed obvious for farmers to hold the launch at the usual place for official functions, which is Kimenyedde Sub County

headquarters. Some of the farmers live close to Kimenyedde Sub County, while others live far off. Nevertheless, they did not argue about the venue for the launching ceremony.

Information Sharing

Both women and men participated in sharing information with fellow farmers on how they had solved the identified problem. Participating farmers kept the other farmers informed about what was happening between them and the researchers. Consequently, some of the other farmers started implementing the new knowledge before the expiry of the trial period between the participating farmers and researchers.

In the case of Kimenyedde, by the time the experimentation trial period was over, farmers had a different priority problem. They wanted to establish where to get clean banana planting materials. The BBW disease had been contained, and now farmers needed to replant bananas the only crop the community cherishes as proper food.

Monitoring and evaluation

Who made and implemented the plan for monitoring and evaluating the trial's achievements? In Kimenyedde, farmers facilitated by researchers made a plan of action for implementing the BBW control measures. Initially the major focus was to control BBW spread and to eradicate it as soon as possible. Even before containing the BBW disease, farmers had a strong urge to replant bananas immediately. This is because banana is the staple food in the area. To be considered a man in Kimenyedde, one has to have a banana plantation. A man eats matooke (banana meal) which is the only crop considered as food in the area. Farmers were restrained from premature replanting of bananas by researchers who told them that it was vital to eradicate the disease before replanting, otherwise the farmers would be wasting both their time, energy and planting materials because the new plants would be infected by existing BBW in the area.

The alternative solution was to plant bananas in new virgin areas, which farmers did. They started replanting bananas in new areas as they fought to eradicate the BBW disease in the old gardens. Soon, there were some achievements. It was then that farmers realised that they needed to monitor their progress. They made a plan of action for monitoring the BBW control process. They were motivated to do this because it illustrated their achievements of implementing the recommended BBW control measures. Farmers soon realised that they were

getting some financial profits from the replanted bananas as opposed to the losses they incurred at the peak of the BBW infestation when farmers hardly got anything to eat from the infected banana gardens.

Knowledge generation

How did stakeholders participate in knowledge generation? How was the generated knowledge utilised? Who owned the jointly developed knowledge? In both Ddwaniro and Kimenyedde, new information and knowledge was generated. In the case of Ddwaniro, researchers probed farmers on how they usually managed the soil fertility and soil water problems. Researchers discovered that farmers had some knowledge of rejuvenating soil fertility and conserving soil moisture, but farmers' knowledge had some incorrect information that needed correction. Researchers advised the farmers on how to improve on their management practices and farmers incorporated the researchers' recommendations into their soil and water conservation practices.

In Kimenyedde, BBW disease was new to both farmers and researchers. They both wished to learn from each other regarding how to contain the BBW disease. This was especially evident during the trial period. Working together, researchers and farmers generated and perfected methods of BBW control. After the trial period, researchers wished to full fill their obligations of saving the banana crop from the rest of the affected areas in the country. Faced by the challenge of the BBW spread elsewhere, researchers were not keen to work through the rest of the PDC process that involved developing communication tools for information sharing with the rest of the farmers in Kimenyedde. Armed with the BBW control knowledge that they had validated while working with farmers in Kimenyedde, researchers shared BBW control information with farmers in other areas of Uganda. Nevertheless, researchers facilitated farmers to identify communication tools through which to share new information with farmers in the rest of Kimenyedde. Videos developed indicated that they had been developed by farmers in Ddwaniro and Kimenyedde.

Discussion

The paper highlights the implementation process of the NARO – IDRC participatory initiative to facilitate determination of what type of participation was implemented. The determination may be done by comparing how the initiative addressed some of the paradoxes in participation for example, the kaleidoscopic nature of participation which according to White

(1994) is shaped by the power holder, possible manipulation of the participatory process by power elites as White further avers, the type of communication exercised, the degree of self management, decision making and power sharing exercised by participants, whether and how participants participated in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the initiatives, how participants were chosen to ensure equitable representation of relevant categories of the community and to avoid continuance of social exclusion of certain categories of the community.

Participation is kaleidoscopic, shaped by the power holder.

Who was the power holder in the NARO – IDRC PDC initiative? Was it the researchers because they had the technical know how to solve farmers’ prioritised problems? Was it the facilitator, because she had some knowledge of the participatory process and the intended participatory pathway of the initiative? Was it the farmers because they were the actual implementers and without them there would be no initiative? Servaes (2011) cautions about the need for participatory processes to be left to unfold naturally. Consequently, despite the facilitator having some knowledge about participatory processes it was important that she did not dictate how the process in Ddwaniro or Kimenyedde actually took place. Consequently, in Ddwaniro, researchers listened to farmers’ reason that instead of them grouping along gender lines, they grouped themselves according to the soil and water problems they were experiencing. Likewise in Kimenyedde, much as researchers wished to promote cultivation of improved banana cultivars, they listened to stakeholders’ reason that their priority problem then, was to eradicate Banana Bacterial Wilt from their gardens.

Servaes (2011) indicates that the participatory process should be allowed to flow naturally. But unguided, there is a danger for the process to take unnecessary long time while it is being allowed to flow naturally. There is need for one to know when one stage has achieved its purpose and to guide the process to next point. For example, participants may not know when to supplement information sharing with communication tools. There is need for the facilitator to guide the team into the communication development stage at an opportune time, and it is up to the facilitator to determine when the communication tools have attained a level where they can be used for information sharing, otherwise the team can go on perfecting the communication tools for longer time than necessary.

The facilitator has a big influence on the level of participation achieved in a participatory initiative. She ensures that all participants are given chance to express their opinions in meetings. She should watch out for instances of externally agreed upon decisions that may impact on the decisions taken within the participatory initiative. An example is the implementation of BBW control measures in Kimenyedde where some husbands refused participating women to implement BBW control measures. The women knew the BBW control measures but they could not implement them because their husbands who did not participate in meetings, refused them to cut down diseased bananas from land that did not belong to them but belonged to the husbands. The husbands were later targeted to receive information regarding BBW through the communication tools that participants developed. It is the facilitator to balance the researchers and farmers information sharing. This is because whereas it is not right for researchers to be the only ones to inform other stakeholders about their scientific knowledge, it is equally not right that farmers are the only ones to share out their local and indigenous knowledge with researchers and other stakeholders. There should be an equitable sharing of information and knowledge.

Participation demands for communication. There is no participation with no communication. But not every type of communication facilitates genuine participation. In Ddwaniro and Kimenyedde initiatives, both researchers and farmers had to unlearn the top down mode of communication that they were previously used to. Researchers learned to listen to farmers' suggestions, while farmers learned to speak out their thoughts about the topic of discussion. This was especially evident in Kimenyedde when researchers looked for knowledge and information regarding how farmers were combating the BBW disease on their own, while the farmers were also keen to hear and learn researchers' scientific recommendations on how to combat the disease. In Ddwaniro, when researchers tried to guide farmers to divide up into women and men groups, the farmers convinced the researchers that it was important that they instead divide up into groups in relation to the soil and water management problems they were experiencing. Researchers listening and learning about farmers' views would have been impossible if top down mode of communication was used instead of bottom up and horizontal modes of communication.

Participation involves a redistribution of power.

This threatens those whose existence depends on their exercising this power over others. In the two initiatives, extension workers insinuated a fear that farmers getting the ability to share information amongst themselves could throw them out of their extension roles. Researchers had to reassure extension workers that PDC was there to ease their work as opposed to rendering them job less.

The NARO – IDRC PDC initiative had a narrow outlook that focused on its implementation process and overall outputs, These included the fact that farmers embraced the recommended information and technology and shared it with fellow farmers who had not taken direct part in the initiative. The initiative did not take into consideration factors that could have impacted on the outcome for example possible causes of conflict and preventive measures to them. This arose because the implementers were largely aiming at perfecting the participatory process. They did not take time to review the process vis a vis what else was being talked about in the participatory field.

Positioning the initiative among the participatory domain could have been achieved through a programme called Isang Bagsak which facilitated researchers to electronically discuss their experiences of PDC in the field together with other development teams who were implementing PDC. The problem is that the other participants of the Isang Bagsak programme were also practitioners most of who were only learning about participatory development communication. The ideal situation would have been if the Isang Bagsak programme had a component of theorists – that is, academicians who had time and interest in comparing what was happening in the field, with existing PDC theories. A recommendation is that development initiatives should have in them researchers/academicians to draw lessons from what is happening in the field.

Whereas it is true that pseudo participation happens, it is important to guard against partitionitis which may be the cause of some of the criticisms levelled against participatory initiatives for example alluding that they are slow. Partitionitis is a situation where all stakeholders take part in each and every stage in PDC. It is a true challenge to both novices and professionals of participation. In the NARO – IDRC initiative, researchers were the conveners of the meetings, but the dates of the meetings were agreed upon by both researchers and farmers. The district and local authorities took part in the decisions on where the initiatives were to take place, but it was farmers and researchers that participated in later

trials of the initiative. The local and district leaders participated when they had time. Researchers were the main players in the documentation of the implementation process. Participation is known to be positive but facilitator should be alert against conditions that are especially difficult for certain categories of participants. For example meeting times should be appropriate for women who have to do domestic chores. Meetings should not be held too far from participants' homes because this would impart transport constraints upon them. In general, facilitators should cater for the wellbeing of PDC participants. In the NARO – PDC initiatives, this was not given ample reflection time. Meeting times, frequency and location were agreed upon in plenary sessions.

Conclusion

That participatory initiatives should happen naturally is fine, but there should be a minimum guiding framework within which they should happen. Lack of a framework is more of a liability than a blessing to participatory initiatives because there can be deliberate manipulation which may sustain misconceptions about participatory initiatives.

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