



SPARK newsletter



Promoting community-based approaches in natural resource management in South East Asia

Issue No. 13, June 2003 English Version

Produced by Voluntary Service Overseas Philippines and Environmental Science for Social Change

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Learning and Communicating about Livelihoods

We have been very busy these past months. Not only learning more about the SPARK theme for the year, sustainable livelihoods, but more importantly learning how to communicate more effectively about livelihoods and livelihoods analysis to the people we work with, whether these be donor agencies, partner organizations or farmers and fishers.

It turns out SPARK wasn't alone in wanting to learn about livelihoods analysis. We found willing partners in STREAM (Support to Regional Aquatic Resources Management) and through this partnership we began a workshop series on "Livelihoods and Languages". Before we can effectively analyze the livelihoods situations of the communities we work with, we need to first ask ourselves the question: do we actually understand livelihoods analysis? How can we begin to explain to our partners what we intend to do, if we are not clear on this ourselves?

This need for clarifying meanings and "establishing common ground" is something that we might take for granted. However, it is a necessary step in the process of development work, which usually involves many people from various backgrounds and contexts. Some of the articles in this issue will show this valuable learning process, and the progress we've made in clarifying a seemingly complicated framework.

Effective communication is not always easy to achieve. But through it, we can learn more about, and from our partners, whether these partners are marketing organizations, or members of a fisher folk's organization. Let us take the time to listen and learn from each other. We might find that we have more in common than we thought.

Please visit the STREAM website, at www.streaminitiative.org to read about the Livelihoods and Languages Workshop. The proceedings of the first workshop, held in Bangkok, can be found in the Virtual Library, under the Regional Theme.

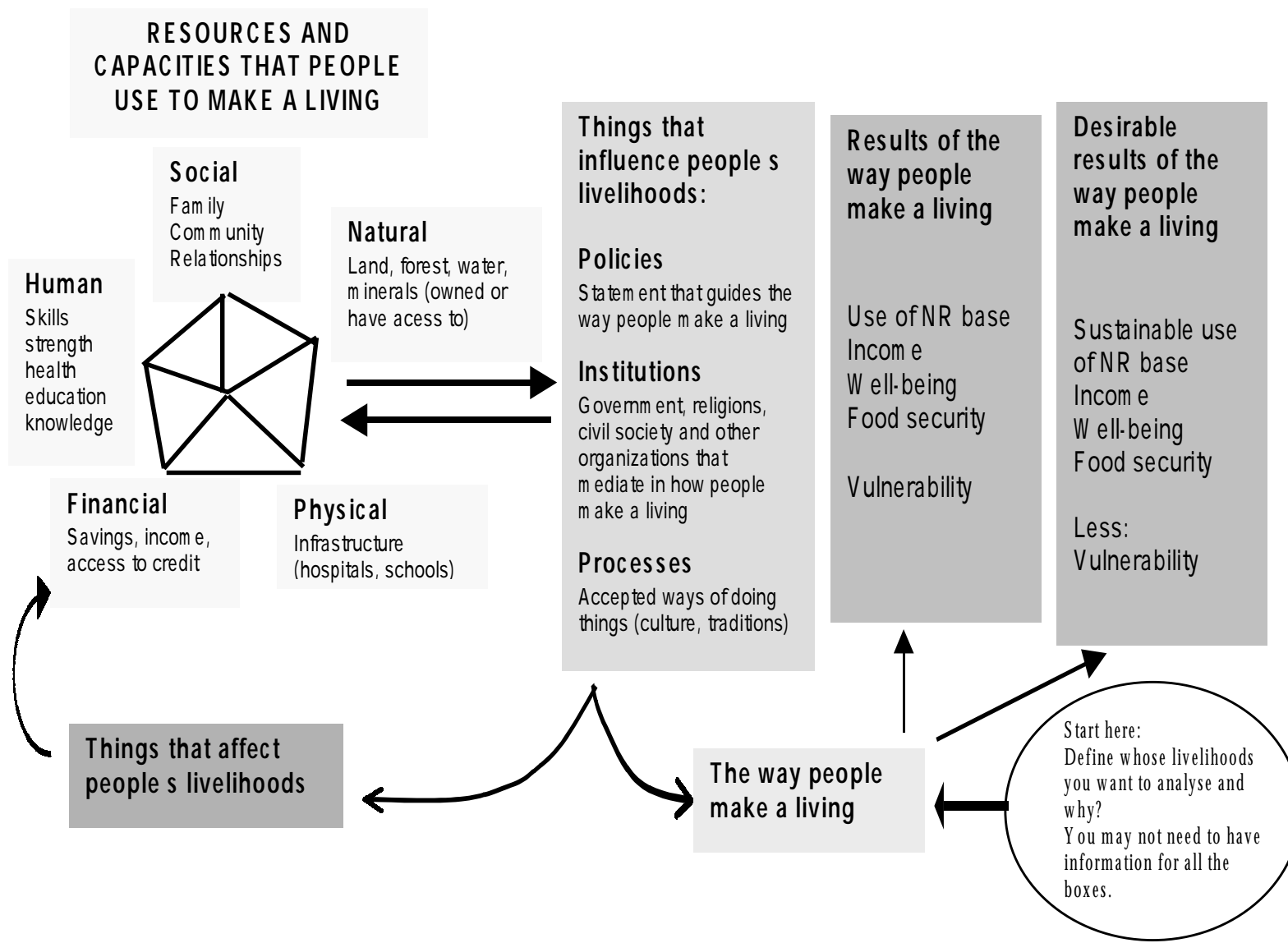
The SPARK newsletter is a quarterly publication produced in Thai, Bahasa Indonesia and English aimed at practitioners of community-based natural resource management in Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. It is received by about 900 organizations in these countries. The newsletter is intended to serve as a networking tool to encourage the sharing of knowledge, experiences, ideas and cooperation amongst different groups implementing CBNRM activities in the three programme countries.

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SPARK is funded by



A Sustainable Livelihoods Framework





The Sustainable Livelihoods Analysis Framework in Plain English

by Mariel de Jesus

SPARK, together with STREAM, conducted two workshops on "Livelihoods and Language". The main focus of these workshops was to come up with a process for sharing meanings and understanding, particularly for those of us involved in development work with different groups of people – communities, donor agencies, other non-government organizations, government offices and the academe. Experience shows that it is not always easy to communicate effectively with the people we work with. Certain concepts and ideas may remain unclear to our partners, simply because we took their understanding for granted, or because they felt uncomfortable airing their questions. Much time could be saved if at the very beginning of a project or intervention, we took the time to ensure that we have a common understanding.

In the case of working with the Sustainable Livelihoods Analysis Framework, as conceptualized by DFID, the challenge is how to make sense of a complex

looking illustration that can be quite intimidating for those who have never seen it before. Complicated phrases and countless feedback arrows may discourage people from applying what is actually a simple and useful tool for organizing information and analyzing situations.

To get past this roadblock in understanding, the participants at the 2nd Livelihoods and Languages Workshop, held in Tagaytay from June 12 – 14, 2003, came up with a "plain English" version of the framework. In our experience, it facilitated our understanding of sustainable livelihoods analysis and made it more "user-friendly", particularly for those of us who need to explain the framework to others in a simpler, and more direct way. This plain English version can be used alongside the original DFID Sustainable Livelihoods Analysis Framework.

For further information please contact
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Bia Kud Chum: The People's Bank

In Kud Chum District, Northeast Thailand, communities are coming up with innovative strategies for poverty alleviation. Villages in the district have formed active community organizations working to achieve self-reliance and freedom from debt. In 1999, community members identified local exchange as a way to improve their situation. A system was developed that would later be known as Bia Kud Chum. A working committee was formed to work on setting up a community exchange system in five villages.

The Bia Kud Chum aimed to lower dependence on markets and to set up sustainable livelihoods activities. Also, this was seen as a way to help save money. A coupon system was used because it was easy to understand. It was agreed that these coupons be called *bia*. In the local language, this means seedling, and it reflects the community's objective towards growth, in the same way that small seedlings grow into large trees.

Community members are given a credit limit of 500 *bia*, which can be withdrawn from the *bia* bank. *Bia* cannot be exchanged for baht. *Bia* or baht can be used in exchanging goods and services, depending on the buyer and seller. In order to support local exchange, a community market is held

by one of the five participating villages each Saturday.

The system began operating in March 2000. It attracted much attention from the media. Unfortunately, the system has been suspended, due to legal matters. The law says that no individual, other than commercial banks can use the word bank. Also, people are forbidden from making and using any material that replaces currency, unless granted permission by the Minister of Finance. As a result, the working committee changed the name from Bia Bank to the Community Self-Reliance Development Group. They also solicited the help of the Law Society of Thailand to support them in submitting a request to the Minister of Finance to review their case.

Bia Kud Chum is indeed a seedling that can help foster self-reliance for communities in Thailand. However, before seedlings can become great trees, and before these communities can achieve the self-reliance that they deserve, they will face many obstacles. If you would like to know more about the plight of Bia Kud Chum or the Thai Community Currency Project (T.C.C.S.), please contact:

Thai Community Currency Systems Project
Attention: Wanlop Pichpongsa
Email- tccs@loxinfo.co.th



On the same page

by Ronet Santos¹

How does one ensure that participants from different backgrounds are “on the same page²” when evaluating the results of a programme?

One approach for addressing this problem came out of the joint SPARK-STREAM workshop on Livelihoods and Languages. This workshop focused on exploring ways to share meanings and understandings of concepts related to livelihoods analysis. These “ways of sharing meaning” were tested during the second annual assessment of the TOSCADAR³ programme. The three-year programme has three objectives: a) building resilience through appropriate economic livelihood initiatives, b) providing opportunities for peace-building, and c) aiding individual emotional recovery. TOSCADAR covers five provinces in Mindanao that are affected by armed conflict.

The aim of the assessment was to evaluate the outcomes and impact of the programme’s activities on the lives of displaced and at risk peoples. The assessment also sought to determine the roles of different partners in achieving these outcomes and impact and looked at lessons learned from the process. The TOSCADAR

staff prepared a report on “outcomes and impact” based on documented reports and interviews with programme partners and people in the communities. The assessment used the concept of “significant changes” using the outline below:

- a) Description of the changes
- b) Evidence of the changes
- c) Significance of the change (to those who were affected by it)
- d) Role of different actors in achieving change (people affected by change themselves, partners, and VSO)
- e) Lessons learned from the processes that led to the achievement of the change
- f) How the change can be built on

There were 17 people in the assessment: 3 European volunteers, 2 British VSO staff (one based in the UK and the other in Bangkok), 3 Mindanao-based staff (one British and two Filipinos), two Filipino VSO staff and 7 local partners⁴. The VSO staff based in Bangkok and the author co-facilitated the three-day assessment meeting.

During the first day, the programme coordinator (a Filipina) expressed concern that certain terms might not be clear to local partners. Although VSO staff are comfortable with terms such as

activities, outcomes, impacts and lessons, this is not true for all. Even monitoring and evaluation might have been new for some of the local partners, but they may have been too polite to express their confusion over the terms. Concern over this resulted in a brief session on clarifying terms. There were two sessions-the first for all participants conducted in English and the second in Cebuano for local partners only.

In clarifying the terms, an illustration from a VSO document on M&E were used (see opposite page). In this illustration, there are four concentric circles⁵ representing VSO, partners, service providers, and end-users. Although the discussion was in Cebuano, many of the terms were not translated in Cebuano or do not have exact translations. Instead, concrete examples were used to illustrate the meaning of terms. The term outcome was clarified using an example from one of the TOSCADAR partners: a series of seminars attended by NGO workers on setting up marine sanctuaries with Muslims and Christians. The partner explained that the seminars led to the outcome of increased knowledge of the importance

¹ Regional Programme Coordinator, Sharing and Promotion of Awareness and Regional Knowledge (SPARK), a five year (2000 to 2004) programme on encouraging community-based natural resource management practitioners in the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand to learn from each other.

² “On the same page” is a phrase that SPARK partners got from a STREAM workshop; it means having the same level of understanding of what is being discussed.

³ Technical and Organisational Skills for Civil Society Action for the Displaced and at Risk in Mindanao, a special programme of VSO Philippines

⁴ One of the local partners joined SPARK activities in 2002. 5 are male, 2 female. 5 are Muslims, 2 Christians.

⁵ In the original illustration, only half circles were shown.



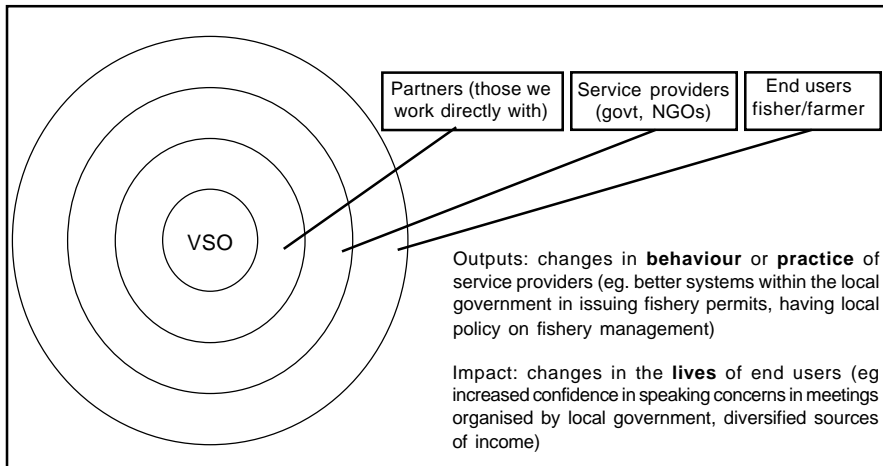
of sanctuaries and skills in setting up marine sanctuaries by NGO workers. This in turn led to the impact of increased fish catch after a few months, as observed by the fishers themselves.

increased confidence of fishers to attend and speak in FARMC⁶ meetings, an outcome or impact? It was agreed that this is an impact, for it is a change in the life of a person served by the

local partners, and helped to focus the discussion on what matters: outcomes, impacts and lessons, which help to inform future work. It also demystified the process of M & E, making people aware that this high sounding process is actually a simple and useful exercise.

The session was a kind of capacity building exercise, but not just for the local partners. I myself learned a lot. I realised that in discussions involving participants from “different discourse communities” (as in NGOs, or government workers, or fishers and farmers) and different “language communities” (as in Cebuano, English or Tagalog), a process of sharing understandings or clarifying meanings requires more than translation of terms. *(related story at page 6)*

For more information on TOSCADAR, please contact: vso_tosc@yahoo.com.



Source: Adapted from Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) notes on programme evaluation

This session clarified how to classify “changes in practice or behaviour of a farmer or a fisher himself or herself”. Are these changes in the life of an end user, an impact? For example, is the

programme, rather than a change in the behaviour and practice of a service provider.

The session lessened confusion during the ensuing discussions, encouraged more participation from the

Story Telling (Human Interest Story)

By: Neay B. Quiñonez

Center for Empowerment and Resource Development, Inc (CERD)

Rodillo Bolotaolo is a member of a fisher folk organization in Pangasinan Island, Portlamon, Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur. He came from Bohol, but has lived in Pangasinan Island for about 18 years, with his wife, Bernadita. They have seven children.

They never had their own home, living either with in-laws or relatives. The family depended on Rodillo’s income from fish trap and shell gathering, which was not enough to feed his family. His monthly income was about P1,280.00. Two of his children of high school age had to stop school because his income was used to meet the family’s daily needs.

His wife began drinking to forget their problems. Although his family was deep in debt, Rodillo continued to struggle despite the odds.

In 1996, he joined the PO in Pangasinan and encouraged Bernadita to join the women’s organization.

She did so, and even participated in the gender courses conducted during the project period.

CERD established fish sanctuary and mangrove planting projects in selected sites. They also supported group income-generating projects, one of which was seaweed farming. One group in Pangasinan Island tried seaweed farming. The group experienced management problems however, so CERD piloted individual projects for seaweed-farming. Credit assistance was provided for both individual members and group projects.

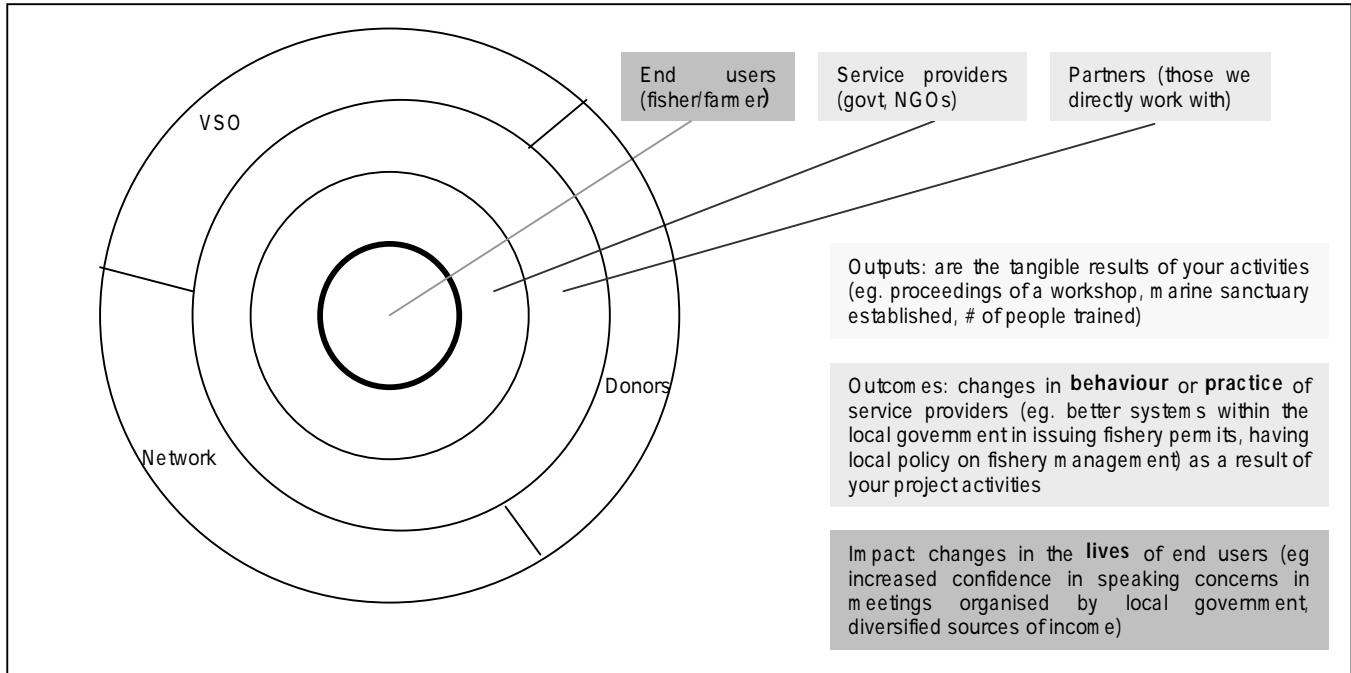
Rodillo availed of a P3,000.00 loan, which he used as capital for seaweed farming. It takes 45 days to harvest seaweeds. He got P4,500.00 from the first harvest. It was the first time in his life to receive such an amount. Immediately, he bought one sack of rice. Now he and Bernadita are involved in their seaweed farm and active in their organizations.

⁶ Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Management Councils.



Changing Perspective

by Mariel de Jesus



The illustration during the TOSCADAR assessment was turned on its head, or rather, turned inside out during the 2nd SPARK-STREAM Livelihoods and Languages Workshop. This exercise prompted the workshop participants to think about their role in development work, the role of their partners (i.e. donor agencies, service providers or organizations they work directly) and the communities they serve.

Initially, both STREAM and VSO had similar stakeholder diagrams: concentric circles showing the “end users”, i.e. the communities that their work serves, such as farmers or fishers, in the outermost circle and, STREAM and VSO at the centre of their respective diagrams. These diagrams spurred some questions, one being, where in the diagram are the donor agencies or funding agencies? Another, more pointed question, was whether we should really consider ourselves as the “centre of the universe” in development work. Where does development work really begin?

In the process of learning more about livelihoods analysis, participants experienced a shift in orientation. We started by asking: who are we working with? Whose livelihoods do we want to learn about and analyse? This is our starting point for livelihoods analysis. Therefore, we can look at development work as also having this starting point. For whom do we implement our activities, projects and programs? In effect, who is at the centre of our work?

The result of the reflection was to fine-tune the diagram to make it more representative. Discussions resulted in locating donors in the diagram. A significant change was to shift the diagram so that the end users are at the centre. It is good to be reminded of the people who are at the heart of our work.

By asking these somewhat difficult questions, and by reflecting on the nature of the work that we do, we are able to look at things in a new way. Hopefully, this gives us greater insight into our work and the people we work with and for.



To market, to market an IP traditional basket...

by Nola Andaya

Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Program

Aside from picking up survival phrases like *saya mau air* (I would like some water) or *saya mau ayam goreng* (I would like some fried chicken), and most importantly, *Di mana ada karaoke* (Where can I find a karaoke?) during my secondment to Jakarta and Pontianak, Indonesia, grâce à sponsorship of SPARK VSO, I also managed to pick up some strategies-in-progress in marketing handicrafts that can be instrumental in the survival of community based handicrafts enterprises that we're currently working with. Well, it better....or braving the SARS epidemic would have amounted to nothing!!

Common Ground

I have always believed that establishing common ground was the best way to start a good relationship going...And that's what I did with my Indonesian counterparts-, the staff of Dian Niaga, a company that has been successful in marketing handicrafts and other non-timber forest product of the Dayaks (IP Tribe) of West Kalimantan— After coming up with all the words common to both Bahasa Indonesia and Filipino that we could, (and you thought I was going to talk about crafts...well, okay, I'm getting there... we got into a discussion of the same issues that we, as marketers of handicrafts, encounter. Inconsistencies in design, sizes, quality, volume, exorbitant or even exploitative prices and delayed deliveries are some of the issues that we have to contend with.

We agreed that marketing IP products is different from marketing other crafts. In volume capacity, we have to consider the cultural aspect wherein although handicraft making is a part of the traditional life of our indigenous communities, it's just one component of their daily routine. They have to till their land, which their culture is bound to, they have to carry out social roles, they have to do other rituals and rites that they, and their ancestors, have been doing all their life. And as they already have set way of doing things, it generally takes time to inculcate new information and effect change for improved production capacity and designs... Dian Niaga should know...they've been on it for years. It took them at least 5 years to teach a community to apply their weaving skills to another material. Then we have to consider that production of these

communities is guided by the principles of environmental sustainability. Therefore, though volume capacity may be improved, output will still be limited.

As for price tags, producers put value on their crafts as they see fit. Sometimes it's too low and sometimes too much on the other end of the pole. Although it is also our role to provide training on wise business practice and expose them to the realities of the market and that includes the price that the market can absorb which is usually lower than what the producers expect, at the end of the day, we are still here to help them sell their craft. and considering production situation, we'll have to deal with the challenge of their generally uncompetitive(?) price.

We know that through training, production capacity, quality, designs, systems can be improved, better pricing techniques can be taught. As time goes on, younger weavers or artisans may develop more stable and longer working habits as they may start to see it as a regular income generating activity and not just a pastime. Through constant follow up and close co-ordination with the group, new information and skills can be absorbed faster — The mats that the community were able to produce after years (take note, I said years) of training and co-ordination of Dian Niaga were impressive! —But we also know that it takes time.

In the meantime, what do we, as marketers, do while the community adjusts to change and learn new skills?

WE BECOME CREATIVE. And Dian Niaga did just that.

To market, to market an IP traditional basket...

Dian Niaga has been using different formulas to find markets for the crafts of the communities they work with. Below are some strategies that have successfully addressed both the needs of the community and the market.

Core competence

One strategy they have employed is not to immediately introduce new techniques but to work on what the community's competence is. If the producers are experts in making a type of a weave but not really skillful in shaping them into different items such as bags, boxes, etc., then focus on the expertise and start from there. For example, instead



of ordering already finished bags, they order in mat form. These mats are then transformed into any shape of bag depending on the trend or the market requirement. Although, it gives a lower return to the communities compared to semi finished products, possibilities of rejects and useless outputs are lessened.

Then gradually, Dian Niaga developed new products, as well as the community's skill but still drawing from the traditional knowledge of the community. Using traditional weaves, they played with the size, the raw material and the shape, and came up with products that are fresh and more marketable.

On a side note, doing the same thing in NTFP-TF, we were able to generate steady supply of the hinabol, the abaca based textile of the Higaonon women. Ordering the product in rolls from the community, we develop them into functional items such as Conference materials (folders, note pads, tokens, etc.) in Manila. So if anyone out there need conference materials, you know where to ask..hint – hint..

Synergies

It is important to build on synergies when marketing handicrafts. As marketer, we should be creative and innovative in finding new uses for the crafts. Try out unconventional markets and develop them. Network and maximize ties. Tie up with private companies or organizations whose competencies can complement and supplement those of yours. Community enterprises do not have sophisticated technology and market know-how – these companies or groups can provide that.

Dian Niaga didn't have the know-how to make the mats into bags nor the market for it, so they tied up with an exporter of high-end bags, PT. Piluss Andini Exporindo. Then they initiated a partnership with PT Martina Berto, a well-known Indonesian company that specializes in cosmetics and herbal products. Aside from offering their baskets, for cosmetic and spa product packaging, they also explored with the company other potential products that can be developed from the raw materials available in the community. While Dian Niaga provides new product ideas for the companies, they in turn supply the technology and the market.

Dian Niaga also tied up with universities and design centers to help them generate winning designs for new and existing products, which is highly necessary, as although sympathy sells, it is not sustainable. Buyers still go for good designs and quality products. The partnership gives students the opportunity to practice their skills and earn extra money while it provides Dian Niaga professional designs but at more affordable costs.

Low volume + high value = \$

Another formula that they employ is that of low volume but high value items. If the community cannot produce in volume, they make up in quality and exclusive design. — Instead of producing mats in high volume to meet demand of mainstream market and compete with more advanced producers, Dian Niaga opted to focus on the very small niche of high-end market and produce very intricate and sophisticated designs. These exquisitely woven mats are then combined with equally very expensive materials such as snake skin, crocodile leather, etc. to come up with a very exclusive line of bags sold in very trendy and upscale boutiques abroad.

I think this is the best strategy for the kind of community we are working with. With this strategy, the community gets the income it needs but at lower production, therefore less impact on their lifestyle and their natural resources.

Combination with products with high perceived value

Another formula that they employ is that of low volume but high value items. If the community cannot produce in volume, they make up in quality and exclusive design. Instead of producing mats in high volume to meet demand of mainstream market and compete with more advanced producers, Dian Niaga opted to focus on the very small niche of high-end market and produce very intricate and sophisticated designs. These exquisitely woven mats are then combined with equally very expensive materials such as snake skin, crocodile leather, etc. to come up with a very exclusive line of bags sold in very trendy and upscale boutiques abroad.

If the product is not that marketable, then combine it with one that has very high market demand. Dian Niaga tied up the crafts to another already-very successful product. They used it as packaging for their palm sugar, which is very marketable, because aside from being associated with a good cause, the product is a staple.

Closing the deal...

Yes, the issues of production can be resolved in time as we closely work with the community. But in the meantime, we still need to make sure that the community sells their craft. And it is our job to be creative in finding markets for the crafts no matter what the cost or the volume. Maybe these strategies can help you generate demand for the products that the communities produce — if not at least, help you generate creative marketing ideas of your own.

For comments, email nola_andaya@yahoo.com



Change in behaviour and seaweed farming lead to improved lives

by Neay B. Quiñonez, Programme Officer,
Center for Empowerment and Resource Development, Inc. (CERD)
in Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur, Mindanao, Philippines

Olim and Aida are a married couple, living in a small island in the municipality of Hinatuan, Surigao del Sur, Mindanao, Philippines. Olim is 50 years old and Aida is 49. They have four male children. Although Olim grew up in Leyte, his search for a better life led him to Bislig, in Surigao del Sur. This is also where he met and married Aida. Their only source of income was fishing.

"Before, life was very difficult," relates Olim. "Fishing did not provide enough for my family. I also thought I had a right to indulge in my vices, and that my wife should be content with the income I take home." Olim even went so far as to physically abuse Aida, such that she even suffered a miscarriage.

Olim joined all the government projects implemented in their village. "I was interested because they promised seed money for projects. But they prioritized the leaders of the fishers association." In the end, the organisation fell apart, the projects failed, and the fishers were still poor.

One day they were told of a neighboring island, with better fishing. In 1999, they moved to the island village of Cabagan. A fisher's association, PUGAW (People Unite to Guard Aqua-Marine Wealth) was operating near there. PUGAW was organised by the Center for Empowerment and Resource Development, Inc. (CERD) in Hinatuan.

CERD helped PUGAW members analyze the problems of Cabagan, using PLA (participatory learning and action) methods. They also held BACMEA (Basic Coastal and Marine Ecology Awareness) seminars. Out of curiosity Olim attended all these. PUGAW then organized a chapter in Cabagan. The initial members were invited to attend seminars on fishery laws, organizational management and an orientation on fish sanctuary establishment. Unlike previous programmes, no initial seed capital was given. There were also gender seminars for those interested. The CERD community organiser almost became part of the local community.

Olim became a member of PUGAW in Cabagan. He says the gender seminar helped him better understand the relationships between men and women, and this improved the relationship between him and Aida. He admits though he has many weaknesses, he's now a better person.

"We guard the fish sanctuary because we are convinced that it improves fish catch. We plant mangrove trees, without government financial support. CERD taught us to rely on our own strength, like using our own money to increase income by establishing a cooperative store. We started with 1,200 pesos (23 US dollars) and after two years



From gathering their seaweed harvests, Olim and Aida have experienced improvement in their income and their lives with the help of PUGAW and CERD..

we now have 15,000 thousand pesos (286 US dollars) in the bank. Our cooperative also has a revolving capital of 15,000 pesos earning a net income of 3,000 pesos (57 US dollars) per month. The cooperative ensures the availability of cheap goods.

"CERD introduced seaweed farming. At first I wasn't interested because it was labor intensive. They did not impose, but told us about its benefits. I agreed to try it after more than a year, using only one roll of nylon rope (the seaweed clings to the nylon ropes). I was also trained in seaweed culture by CERD. One of our problems is protecting the seaweed from a disease called "ice-ice."

"Our lives changed since we joined PUGAW, especially after seaweed farming became my main livelihood. For the first time in my life, my family can eat three times a day, every day. I can even send my children to school. Seaweed farming also protects the fishery because no one catches fish in this area. From starting with a single roll of nylon rope, I now manage 15 rolls of nylon ropes of seaweeds. Aida and our children are helping me expand our primary source of livelihood."

"We are grateful to CERD for helping us believe that we can improve our lives, when I thought things would never change. I changed completely, in terms of my perspective in life and my beliefs," Olim ends.

CERD has been a longtime partner of VSO Philippines. They have employed VSO volunteer marine biologists since the early 1990s. CERD regularly joins SPARK activities. CERD can be reached by email through cerd@skyinet.net. This article was translated from Tagalog by Ronet Santos.



TRAINING COURSES

Field Alliance

The Field Alliance is a network of independent organizations that is dedicated to the empowerment of Asian farmers, through support for ecological learning, action research, advocacy and networking. They are organizing unique training courses in the last quarter of 2003. Participants will be immersed in rural communities for educational dialogue on issues related to agriculture, sustainable livelihoods and community development.

Yayasan FIELD Indonesia
Perumahan Tanjung Mas Raya,
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Mobile Phone: 62-8129977622
(Contact Person: Alifah Sri Lestari)
Or visit their website:

www.thefieldalliance.org

Governance, Ecology and Empowerment
Indonesia, 20 – 31 October
Partner: Field Indonesia

International Institute for Rural Reconstruction

International Course on Training Program
Development and Management, August 11 – 29, 2003,
IIRR, Y.C. James Yen Center, Silang, Cavite, Philippines
Course fee: \$2,500.00

International Course on Rural Development and
Management, October 13 – November 7, 2003

For more information contact: Course Coordinator
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Web site: <http://www.iirr.org/html/International.htm>

RESOURCES

Community-based Forest Resource Conflict Management

This is a two-volume training package, which examines
conflicts within forest resource use and community –
based forest management and offer strategies for
managing the conflict. The first volume contains an
introduction to conflict in community-based natural
resource management; conflict management strategies;
communication skills for facilitators in conflict
management, as well as case studies. The second
volume focuses on the training activities the design
and conduct of a participatory conflict management
training workshop. The first volume has 321 pages
while the second volume has 338 pages.

For more information kindly contact:
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