

# **Farmer-to-Farmer Extension**

## **Lessons from the Field**

by

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with

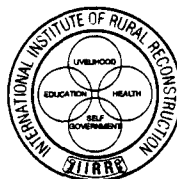
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# PART I

## **Description and analysis of the components of the "farmer-to-farmer extension" methodology**

# 1

## Introduction

The International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) has implemented several rural development programs which have used the farmer-to-farmer methodology, with the active participation of rural promoters. The farmer-to-farmer extension methodology was already implemented in Ding Xian, China, by IIRR's founder Dr. Y.C. James Yen during the 1920s, using community development strategies, including the development and sharing of knowledge among communities, with farmer promoters playing a key role in the process.

Since the 1950s, farmer promoters have assumed different roles within IIRR's development programs in various countries around the world. For example, the Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement (PRRM) used farmer promoters as part of their "Farmers' Schools" (1954-1958). Through the years, IIRR and PRRM continued implementing projects in the Philippines using a farmer-to-farmer approach: "Mobile Agriculture Schools" (1959-1968); "Integrated Economic Development" (1969-1972); "Farmer Scholar Program" (1972-1975); "People's School Program" (1976-1980) and in successive years to the present, IIRR continues applying the farmer-to-farmer methodology.

Given the continued interest to promote farmer-to-farmer extension methodologies, IIRR conducted a 'systematization' process in Latin America to document and analyze several field experiences which have used this methodology.

This document is the result of two workshops, one held in Honduras and another held in Ecuador, that were undertaken to systematize (describe and analyze) personal experiences of farmer promoters who provide extension services for community development. This methodology is commonly known as "farmer-to-farmer extension".

Eighteen farmer promoters participated in the first workshop in Honduras; the second workshop in Ecuador brought together twenty-eight farmer promoters. Also, a few extension workers participated in both events. Therefore, most of the information contained in this publication is centered within this context and was then enriched with the authors' own experiences in field projects using the farmer-to-farmer methodology.

Although the farmer promoters in the two workshops worked in agricultural projects, much of the content of this book can also be applied to community health and nutrition, community organizing, social forestry, adult education and literacy, among others.

The book addresses important aspects related to the design, organization, implementation and coordination of projects led by farmer promoters. It's important to note that the themes which are presented in each chapter were selected by the promoters themselves in the Honduras workshop, considering them to be the most important to gain a comprehensive understanding of the practical application of the farmer-to-farmer methodology. These same themes were later used as the starting point for the Ecuador workshop.

**PART I** of the publication (Chapters 1-13) presents the information which was 'systematized' during the two workshops. Chapters 2-4 describe what the promoters think of themselves, and the what? and how? of their work. Chapters 5-13 are more analytical, focusing on the factors that the promoters themselves consider most important.

Mini-cases are used to illustrate some of the issues presented in the different chapters. Each chapter includes the analytical results of the farmer promoters who participated in the workshops. The results are presented in comparative tables which summarize the principal ideas which were discussed. Some concepts which are included in the tables are not necessarily exclusive to only one theme, but they have been included under the theme to which they are most closely related..

The description and analysis presented is not intended to provide the last word in rural development approaches with the participation of farmer promoters. Rather it offers a broad set of experiences and information from various viewpoints. The information should be carefully analyzed and adapted to each organization, based on their philosophy, and material, human and economic resources available.

This document includes practical information from many years of experiences of farmer promoters from four Latin American countries (Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico, and Nicaragua). The lessons which have been shared may be appropriate to other countries, when analyzed and adapted to different local contexts.

Recommendations are presented by the farmer promoters and the authors with the intention of optimizing the work of farmer promoters, extension workers and other staff from development organizations using the farmer-to-farmer methodology. Although the prevalent gender used in the text of the book is masculine, it also includes all of the women who assume the roles of rural development facilitators.

As much as possible, the concepts, phrases and terms which were used during the two workshops have been kept in this book in order to preserve the original messages of the participants. Therefore, it's important to emphasize that the concepts shared in this book are derived from many years of practical field experiences of the farmer promoters. In no way does the book pretend to be an academic text, but rather a useful aid to be applied in practical work situations in the field.

In **PART II** (Chapters 14-18) five case studies from Ecuador, Mexico and Nicaragua are presented. These cases provide valid evidence of the variety of contexts and ways in which the farmer-to-farmer methodology has been used.

We would like to thank the different institutions that collaborated and actively participated in the 'systematization' workshops and this publication.

### **IN HONDURAS:**

CIIFAD-University of Cornell (Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture and Development), Programa de Reconstrucción Rural (PRR), COSECHA, World Neighbors, Project LUPE, Proyecto Comayagua Educación para el Trabajo (POCET), International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), GTZ, the Rural Development Department (DDR) of the Panamerican Agriculture School (Zamorano), and PROCONDEMA.

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We would especially like to thank the participants of the two workshops who are the intellectual authors of this document, and who allowed us to share their field experiences for the benefit of other development organizations.

The participants in the Honduras workshop (15-20 May 1994) were:

### **FARMER PROMOTERS**

Pío Camey	Valle de Angeles, COSECHA
Lázaro Canás	Zacapa, PRR
Gilberto Canizales	Zacapa, PRR
Ramón Castillo	Buena Vista, DDR
Elán Cruz	Zacapa, PRR
Alfonso Hernández	Zacapa, PRR
Gabino López	Valle de Angeles, COSECHA
Juan López	La Troja, DDR
Martín Martínez	El Chaguite, DDR
Sendi David Matamoros	Hoya Grande, DDR
Pablo Mejía	Zacapa, PRR
Profirio Mejía	Zacapa, PRR
Juan Ramón Morales	Comayagua, POCET
Javier Ordóñez	Comayagua, POCET
Santiago Pineda	Zacapa, PRR
Hugo Leonel Rivera	Comayagua, POCET
Apolonio Rodríguez	La Lima, DDR
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### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKERS**

Roland Bunch	Valle de Angeles, COSECHA
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The participants in the Ecuador workshop (27-29 June 1995) were:

### **FARMER PROMOTERS**

Luis Achilla	Vecinos Mundiales
Luis María Banshuy	JATUN AYLLU
José Bueno	CEDEIN
Angel Calba	FUPOCPS
Policarpio Camino	CESA
Juan José Carguachi	JATUN AYLLU
Joaquín Carguachi	JATUN AYLLU
José Cepeda	JATUN AYLLU
María Delia Correa	JATUN AYLLU
Espíritu Cocha	JATUN AYLLU
Silverio Cocha	JATUN AYLLU
Manuel Coro	JATUN AYLLU
José Vicente Cumbicos	FUPOCPS
Medardo Chafla	DFC
César Chimborazo	COCAP
Dolores Guamán	DFC (COCIF)
José Gregorio Guamán	JATUN AYLLU
Ricardo Marcelo Guamán	INEFAN/DFC
Rosalino Lojano	JATUN AYLLU
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Pascual Punina	COCAP
José Quinlle	DFC
Delfin Quispe	JATUN AYLLU
Luis Tixilema	COCAP
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Paúl Maldonado	ADRAI
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# 2

## Characteristics of farmer promoters



A diverse range of development organizations use farmer promoters. Among the institutions that most commonly use promoters are non-governmental organizations (NGOs), governmental organizations (GOs), farmers' associations (FAs), and community-level organizations (COs). For practical reasons, this publication will refer to all of these organizations as Development Organizations, or simply DOs.

Farmer promoters are also known by other names, including paraprofessionals, community educators, rural promoters, farmer extension workers, local facilitators, community promoters, and indigenous facilitators, among others.

Farmer promoters are usually individuals with little or no formal education who, through a process of training, experimentation, learning and practice, increase their knowledge and become capable of sharing it with others, functioning as extension workers.

The role of the promoter in rural communities is that of a change agent promoting rural development processes.

The scope of work of promoters is broad and may involve interaction at local, national, regional and international levels, although in most cases they work primarily at the community level. Promoters can work full-time, part-time or as volunteers.

### WHO ARE FARMER PROMOTERS?

- They are farmers, both men and women
- They are people from the grassroots, some of them are local leaders
- They are exemplary farmers - "teachers"
- They are serious, active people, dedicated to hard work
- They are honest and sociable
- They are accepted by, and committed to, the community
- They are trained individuals who have practical experience
- They are interested in learning, as well as interested to share their knowledge and experience

## Who are farmer promoters and what is their level of formal education?

### *"The pencil versus the hoe..."*

*María remained quiet during the first few minutes of the morning, alert and absorbed by the words of the promoter who was giving a talk. After a sheet of paper had passed from hand to hand among her friends in the course, it came to her. She nervously looked at it and passed it on without trying to write anything. Antonio, who was by her side, wondered why María had not written anything on the paper since they were questions that María could answer, because they referred to soil conservation practices which she herself and all of the other participants had used on their farms.*

*Antonio, surprised, asked her:*

*"How can it be that you can't write the answers to these questions, when you've been using these practices in your farm for many years, and all of us believe that you have the best examples in the community?"*

*María, still quiet, did not realize that this was what he had wanted her to write on the paper. Upon hearing this, her eyes lit up. She knew very well that although she didn't know how to write with a pencil, she had good results using her own agricultural tools on her land, whose soil felt grateful for the work she had done to open each row with the hoe and to plant the seeds... But, she still felt embarrassed for not being able to put down on paper the things that were asked of her.*

*Several months later, when an adult literacy program began, María decided to learn to read and write...*

Normally, promoters turn their work into a profession, passing through a gradual, evolutionary process. A typical process begins with the promoter as a farmer leader or contact farmer and the work is voluntary.

They are usually innovative farmers and their farms are better than those of their neighbors. In fact, the farmers are often recognized and respected by other community members for having the best farms. At this point, the farmers assume the function of voluntary promoters primarily in their own communities.

With time, they move on to become part-time promoters and are responsible for a work area including several communities or a specific task in a project. This type of promoter may supervise the work of a group of voluntary promoters and may coordinate activities of several communities within a farmer association, acting as a representative of the organization.

With more experience, they move on to become full-time paid promoters. They often become employees of a development organization (DO), the same as professional extension workers, and become responsible for projects or programs. They also coordinate work of the DO jointly with other extension workers and promoters at local, regional or national levels. They are generally excellent trainers.

Promoters can often reach very high professional levels, becoming coordinators of agricultural programs, regional or national leaders, consultants or specialists, and managers of DOs.

**TYPICAL EVOLUTION OF A FARMER PROMOTER**

Amount of time employed	Scope of work
Voluntary	Own community
↓	↓
Part-time	Other communities
↓	↓
Full-time	Trainers, project coordinators, directors of DOs, consultants, local and national leaders

Almost without exception promoters are or have been farmers, which allows them to easily identify with the community as they share the same culture and speak the same language. This helps to facilitate good communication and mutual understanding. Promoters are usually resource-poor farmers whose primary income comes from their own farms. In fact, many DOs require that they continue to work their own land while undertaking their promoter responsibilities.

Some of them are associated with agricultural cooperatives and others are independent farmers. They come from diverse work experiences in different social, political and religious contexts. Many promoters have previous experience in social development, having worked as contact farmers in their communities; or they have been farmer leaders or have worked for DOs before having finally worked as farmer promoters.

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### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

"Formal education" is not a necessary requirement for being a farmer promoter. More important attributes are credibility, community acceptance, and a positive attitude to take on the challenges of a farmer promoter.

Farmer promoters are not born but are made, step-by-step; therefore, to yield effective results, the necessary time must be given to allow an evolutionary formation process to take place.

# 3

## What is the work of farmer promoters?

Farmer promoters assume many roles and may participate in many activities. Their principal functions are to promote community self-reliance and organization, as well as to conduct research, experimentation, validation and dissemination of agricultural technologies which aim to improve the quality of life of rural communities. Usually, they perform diverse functions at the same time.

The participation of promoters is best suited to those DOs which have a philosophy based on sustainable community development. This philosophy is characterized by striving for community self-reliance through genuine community participation in the diagnosis, design, implementation, and evaluation of their development activities, the optimal use of local resources, and the development and dissemination of sustainable agriculture or agroecological technologies.

Among the areas in which promoters commonly work are: general agricultural development, agricultural micro-enterprises, health and nutrition, improved housing, literacy, community organization, credit management, and family planning, etc.

The promoters serve as an active link between the community and the DO (Johnson, 1987). They provide a two-way service: from community members to the development program, and from the development program to the community. They act as channels for the services offered by the development program, on the one hand, and for community demands for services, on the other. The three basic roles that farmer promoters perform are as: 1) educators, 2) community organizers, and 3) service providers (Puerta, 1992). They bring to these functions the skills for facilitating development processes which promote reflection and analysis about community problems and possible solutions.

Because the promoters live within their work area, they have relatively better access to a larger number of households at a lower cost (Johnson, 1987). Some concrete advantages of the use of promoters are (Esman, 1983):

- a) more rural families can be served as compared to other models which use professional extension workers,
- b) promoters possess a greater ability to understand the problems of farmers and to be able to respond to them,
- c) greater possibilities exist for catalyzing processes to bring about self-reliance.

## WHAT DO FARMER PROMOTERS DO?

### **Educators**

- Perform the roles of extension workers
- Share new knowledge
- Motivate and provide examples to rural communities
- Collect and transmit experiences from other communities
- Recover local knowledge
- Motivate other community members to seek training

### **Organizers**

- Participate in planning, follow-up and evaluation
- Coordinate activities between the community and the development organization
- Support the work of local community leaders and professional extension workers
- Search for information and assistance for the community

### **Researchers**

- Experiment and validate agricultural technologies
- Participate in diagnostic and research activities

### **Service providers**

- Propose solutions to problems
- Provide maintenance of equipment and infrastructure
- Produce information materials, including technical pamphlets and radio programs
- Improve livelihood & agricultural production

According to Puerta (1992), promoters have the following basic functions: to provide services, to educate, to organize, to procure, to refer, to document, to research, to monitor activities, and to serve as an example. All of this is carried out within the context of the rural development programs that they are implementing in the communities with which they work. Puerta underlines, however, that 'educating' is the most important function.

A very common effect that results from the leadership exercised by a promoter is to become a human resource for communities searching beyond agricultural and

organizational tasks. For instance, for assistance in the organization of sporting, religious or purely festive events of the community.

### **ROLES OF THE PROMOTER WITHIN THE COMMUNITY**

#### **Organizational roles**

- Léad activities
- Participate in community meetings
- Coordinate organizing activities with the community leadership or other community groups
- Search for contacts with or resources from external organizations
- Elicit felt needs of the community and, when necessary, articulate them to external institutions
- Suggest possible solutions to internal problems of the community

#### **Training and extension roles**

- Provide theoretical and practical training to community members and leaders
- Motivate the community
- Participate in the diagnosis, planning, follow-up and evaluation of community projects
- Experiment, validate and share agricultural technologies
- Jointly prepare educational materials with the community
- Promote in other areas, experiences that have been successful within the community

### **RECOMMENDATION**

The variety of functions that the promoters can perform demonstrates the importance of their role in rural development work. However, in order that all of these functions can be satisfactorily implemented, farmer promoters must receive effective, practical training. Although promoters may assume many roles, DOs must ensure that promoters are not burdened with too many tasks to perform simultaneously.



## **ROLES OF A PROMOTER IN A DEVELOPMENT AND/OR FARMERS' ORGANIZATION**

### **Organizational roles**

- Help to identify, analyze and resolve community problems
- Participate in planning with members of the organization
- Coordinate activities between the community and the institutions
- Interpret the perspectives of the community and the DO and serve as a linking mechanism between them
- Systematize community experiences
- Provide support and information to community leaders and agricultural extension workers
- Promote the objectives of the DO
- Assist the professional extension workers in project implementation and administration
- Participate in the preparation of reports, activity planning, and project evaluations
- Document information

### **Training and extension roles**

- Is an important resource in the promotion of activities.
- Adapt and disseminate knowledge
- Provide technical assistance to communities
- Facilitate courses and workshops
- Provide training in demonstration plots
- Is part of technical work teams
- Participate as a facilitator in different phases of FA or DO projects
- Provide information about activities implemented in the community
- Participate in meetings and workshops
- Understand the local wisdom and local resources as inputs to development activities
- Facilitate communication between local languages or dialects of the community and the national language



## How do farmer promoters do their work?

As members of the community, farmer promoters have a special "feeling" for the work that they do. The work philosophy of the DO partly determines the style in which the promoters operate and can affect whether the work they accomplish is a success or a failure.

Participatory approaches are the cornerstone of success and sustainability of development activities. Increasingly, development organizations are moving towards policies, philosophies and strategies in which community participation is key in the functioning and success of their projects. In the farmer-to-farmer methodology, the concept of "farmer promoters" itself is intrinsic to the participation of community members as leaders of their own development efforts.

Based on these points, organizations which have a participatory work philosophy tend to ensure that the work done by the promoters is more solid and sustainable. On the other hand, organizations that are working within a classic top-down, transfer of technology framework are less able to ensure that the work of the promoters has a sustainable impact and the promoters can easily lose credibility. Later, we will explain in detail the concept of credibility and its importance in the work of farmer promoters.

Within the Latin American context, a full-time promoter usually covers an area of 5-8 communities with approximately 10-12 active families in each community. This, of course, depends on the geography of the area, the ease of access to the communities, and the distance between them. It is easy to find cases in which the work schedule of the promoter is overloaded, translating into a lack of efficiency, and physical exhaustion of the promoter.

The work methods of the promoters vary greatly and depend upon the philosophy and the resources of the DOs with which they work. The most common activities carried out are: field visits to share knowledge, community visits every week or two, training courses, motivational films/videos and slide showings, and field days.

The work approach usually includes constant consultation with the whole community or with smaller groups from within the community, team planning, coordination with a central office, and periodic meetings in which plans and progress reports are made.

It is common practice among DOs adopting a paternalistic approach to offer material incentives, before work begins in the community, which may become like "candy" as their use becomes exaggerated in order to entice community collaboration.

It is better to work with community members whose will to work is motivated by their interest in improving their lives, rather than being convinced through offers of material incentives, or "candies." In the long run, this modality of work is more sustainable as it is not based upon false expectations.

#### **HOW DO FARMER PROMOTERS DO THEIR WORK?**

- Visit farm families
- Undertake theoretical and practical activities
- Facilitate courses at the community level
- Are aware of and coordinate different activities with community organizations and their leadership, as well as with the DO and their extension workers
- Respect the local culture
- Communicate in an appropriate and simple manner
- Work as equals, treating others with respect and tolerance
- Work with farmers' groups or with individual farmers
- Work with a flexible schedule

Promoters have to invest enough time to know the new communities in which they work and to gain the community's confidence. Ideally, the first step that promoters should take when they enter a community is to identify potential leaders, and to organize groups with various levels of formality which will serve as the basis for participatory research and future decision-making. It's also important to work towards being accepted within the community, a task which requires more time if the promoter is from outside of the community.

Sometimes, the initiation of development activities within a specific community begins with a community presenting a funding proposal to a DO. The promoter can usually facilitate discussion and the identification of priority problems in the development of this proposal. A potential problem with this process is that many times communities seek funding for a project which they know will be funded by the DO (because of the nature of the funding), distracting themselves from their true priorities, to address those of the organizations and their donors.

In many cases, the final decisions related to the development activities to be implemented are taken by the project management, and not by the community members

## **Lack of attention to the needs of the community**

*"What we really want is water..."*

*The entire community was organized for a meeting. Men, women, and children happily cleaned the old, poorly maintained gathering place in preparation for the meeting with the promoter.*

*The meeting began:*

*"My name is Eusebio López. I thank all of you who have come this evening, and I think it will be useful to you. I represent an organization called "Integrated Sustainable Development" or ISD, and I want to share with you the work that we have done in some neighboring communities to see if you would also like to work with us".*

*The slide presentation began. As the pictures were projected onto the wall the children scooted closer to get a better look. The men and women remained silent as a magnificent show of colors unfolded before their eyes, with pictures which presented soil conservation, minimum tillage and reforestation activities of communities known to them.*

*As the session finished, an old man rose to ask a question:*

*"Do you work with potable water projects? In this community there's no running water and during the summer many of us have to walk many kilometers to get the water that we need. Could your organization help us build wells?"*

*The bewildered promoter replied:*

*"No sir; this organization does not work with water wells. However, we do work with..."*

Sometimes, there are organizations which openly work with a predetermined development agenda. The type of project which will be undertaken in the community is already decided, and the role of the community as local counterpart, is to establish linkages to a farmer, or group of farmers, that will test and disseminate their technologies. These specialized programs offer a "menu" of technologies with which they work, as opposed to integrated programs which present a variety of services to the community (agriculture, health, education, livelihood).

The role of the promoters is to be farmer-researchers and extension workers which makes them active change agents. A farmer appreciates the work as a promoter, as was mentioned by one of them: "Taking on additional work on the side does not mean that I stop being a farmer".

Puerta (1992) mentions that the growing demand for services combined with budget limitations and the lack of adequate personnel to undertake the tasks of agricultural development have increasingly stimulated the hiring of farmer promoters. He notes that there is a refreshing trend toward de-professionalization which originally began in the areas of health and education. Many development programs in Latin America accomplish their work more efficiently through the use of farmer promoters than through professional extension workers.

¿Does this mean that there is no longer room for extension workers in rural development work? No. What has been learned as a result of many years of experience is that professional extension workers can become more effective as trainers-of-trainers and project coordinators, than as direct transmitters of knowledge.

## **FORMS OF WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES**

Farmer promoters work with individual farmers or with farmer groups. These two different options can have a tremendous impact on the work of the promoter, just as it has an impact on the development of the community.

There are many opinions about which of these two forms -work with individuals or groups- is better. The following sections discuss these two strategies in more detail, presenting tables comparing pros and cons of each of the models. According to the analysis of the tables conducted by the farmer promoters themselves, working with groups presents a number of advantages over working with individuals.

## EXTENSION THROUGH FARMERS' GROUPS

Training and extension activities of the promoter are commonly carried out through organized groups within the community. Working with groups uses resources more efficiently, especially human resources, and is more effective for disseminating information. Also, group work encourages collaborative activities within the community and promotes the exchange of experiences among farmers. However, it is not always easy to organize and work with groups, as there are often problems forming them, scheduling meetings, and implementing collaborative activities.

When a community is not well organized, the promoter may assist in the formation of a group or committee of local farmers selected by the community. This can facilitate the planning of, and training for, development activities. However, sometimes these committees can be turned into "local power elites" which can have negative effects upon the community.

EXTENSION THROUGH FARMERS' GROUPS	
Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotes the spirit of group work (esprit de corps)</li> <li>• Able to serve more farmers, making better use of the promoter's time</li> <li>• Greater capacity for sharing knowledge</li> <li>• Promotes the exchange of experiences among farmers</li> <li>• Can generate participatory processes for problem identification, analysis and the search for solutions</li> <li>• Promotes mutual help</li> <li>• The difficulties which can accompany group work (disputes, failures, etc.) can become opportunities for "growth" of the group and its members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's possible that groups are formed through "coercion" and are artificial</li> <li>• There may not be a good understanding among group members, thus creating obstacles for the promoter and the project</li> <li>• If there are interpersonal problems in the group formation process, this can create jealousies and divisions within the community</li> </ul>

One of the negative issues when working with groups is that they do not always assume responsibility for the work to be done, as the power may be centralized in a small number of people, making it difficult to accomplish established goals. Many projects are narrowly focused on the achievement of their own goals, under severe time and resource limitations.

However, working with farmers' groups requires a lot of time and energy to make progress in a substantive and participatory manner. Working with groups "builds" communities, and therefore promotes collective, not individual development.

### **EXTENSION THROUGH INDIVIDUAL FARMERS**

On the other hand, work with individuals does not necessarily mean that it is "individualistic" work. Trained individuals in a particular skill may form a group which can develop bonds and relationships with community groups and extension workers.

When working with individuals, there may be the benefit of establishing better communication between the promoter and the farmer. This helps to ensure the adaptation of technologies to the specific set of conditions within a single farm and allows for a more personalized, intensive type of technical assistance. On the other hand, working with individuals has the following disadvantages:

- a) requires a greater intensity of work
- b) reduces the program's capacity for wider replication
- c) can reduce the adoption of certain technologies which have a high demand for labor at the beginning of adoption and require the effort of small, mutual-help work groups in the community. An example of this is the construction of soil conservation structures, such as terraces or contour canals, or access roads to the community.
- d) the promoter can lose legitimacy because the rest of the community can become "jealous": for not receiving the same level of attention from the promoter.

<b>EXTENSION THROUGH INDIVIDUAL FARMERS</b>	
<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personalized, intensive attention</li> <li>• Can adapt the technology to the specific situation and concrete needs of the individual farmer</li> <li>• Can establish better communication between the farmer and the promoter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can promote individualism</li> <li>• Takes more time</li> <li>• Lose the benefits of farmers sharing knowledge and experiences among themselves</li> </ul>

## ***"Learning through experience..."***

*Excerpts of an interview with a technical consultant working in a rural development organization*

**Q:** *Why have you now adopted the methodology of working with farmer promoters?*

**A:** *"Due to the positive experience that we have had in the first three years of working with the program as well as previous experiences of other programs".*

**Q:** *In what practical ways did you see the need to begin to work with farmer promoters?*

**A:** *"Well, in each of our field offices we used to have four professional extension workers, or agronomists. But these staff were extremely expensive to maintain and we were concerned about project sustainability: How many more years could we keep expensive personnel to provide simple, basic training to farmers in the field? Additionally, all of these extension workers had their own lives in different parts of the country away from the communities in which they were working, and every weekend they had to return to their homes which represented additional per diem costs to the project. Since we had a number of farmers who had been trained in the basic technologies we promote, and we were planning to terminate the project in three years, we believed that the local people should be able to take more responsibility. Thus we came upon the idea of working with farmer promoters".*

**Q:** *What have been the concrete results in the field?*

**A:** *"Well, there are many. On top of having more staff to train farmers, we have reduced our costs considerably. We have also noted that the farmers prefer to work with the promoters because they are people from the community, they are farmers themselves, the community has more confidence in them, and they speak the same "language." All of this is great progress".*

**Q:** *How have the professional extension workers responded to this change?*

**A:** *"Well, their work is easier now, as they don't have to travel to so many communities. Now, they accompany and support the promoters in the field as well as in training. Instead of training 30 farmers, they train 3-6 promoters who in turn each train 30 farmers. The extension workers accomplish the program objectives in a shorter period.*



## RECOMMENDATIONS

A combination of working with farmers groups and with individual farmers can be adopted in a project, thus benefitting from the advantages of each strategy, while diminishing their weaknesses.

Working with farmer promoters should strengthen the community's local capacities to promote self-reliance, to develop skills for analysis, planning and evaluation, and to strengthen the capacity to solve problems using both local and external resources. Promoters should not simply become "transmitters of technologies" but should also become change agents.

Whenever possible a program should work with experienced promoters who can then train other farmers to become promoters. In this way, the training tends to be more realistic and effective: from farmer to farmer, based on community's real needs and using promoters' experiences. Also, the cultural gap which exists between farmers and professional extension workers is reduced.

Promoters should be encouraged to share acquired knowledge in order to achieve a multiplier effect so that more farmers can benefit from the knowledge. Work should be clearly planned, identifying objectives and how to accomplish them. This should be a participatory process between the community and the DO. Development organizations, promoters and the community should agree on their respective roles, objectives and philosophy, expectations and available resources. The extension worker and the farmer promoter should participate in decision-making about the use of institutional resources.

When possible, development activities should begin on a small scale so that they can serve as an example. These small-scale experiences can create interest among community members to learn new technologies and to receive the promoter's services. Thus, the promoters become excellent motivators for others.

Whenever possible, local resources should be used in order to lower costs and reduce dependence upon external inputs.

Each DO or project should analyze its objectives and capacities in order to choose the most appropriate way of serving farmers; whether with individual farmers or with farmer groups, or a combination of both.

# 5

## Selection of farmer promoters

Promoter selection is not an easy task for either the development organization or the community. An appropriate mechanism for selecting the farmer promoter can make the difference between a project success or failure.

There are three principal ways in which a promoter may be selected: a) selection by the development organization, b) selection by the community, and c) selection through a gradual process in which both the DO and the community participate in the decision. In the first two instances (by the DO and the community), the selection and election is generally formal; the latter does not involve a formal election, but rather depends upon a process of "natural selection."

### SELECTION BY THE DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

The selection by the development organization is quick and convenient for the DO, but not always for the community. If the selection is made by the DO, the person may not be accepted by the community. However, sometimes it's more convenient if the DO chooses the promoter because this helps to break "local power elites" (based on kinship, political leadership, wealthy families) and allows new leadership to rise.

**Selection criteria of the DO:** Generally, development organizations have established selection criteria to select promoters which are: level of literacy or education, previous experience, acceptance by the community. The promoter must also be an outstanding farmer who demonstrates by his/her example. A very important criterion to take into account, but which is often overlooked by DOs (maybe because it is a difficult quality to identify) is the work and ethical spirit (i.e., solidarity, altruism, responsibility) that potential promoters must possess to do a good job, whether they receive payment for their work or not.

Establishing such requirements helps to ensure a fair competition in which the promoter is selected upon the basis of demonstrated abilities, and not arbitrarily chosen. For example, requirements related to previous experience as a promoter or having an excellent farm help to ensure a fair competition among the candidates for the position. This can also optimize continuity and sustainability.

This selection method is good when the necessary precautions are taken to choose the most qualified farmer to be a promoter. It's not advisable to select promoters based on first impressions, without considering their skills and experience. In this regard, a DO should possess a certain professionalism. At the same time, the DO should be flexible enough to detect the promoter's potential positive attributes and not ignore criteria put forward by the community based on characteristics which would make the promoters' work more difficult (e.g., religious differences, political affiliations, or social and economic status).

For example, having formal education as a selection requirement may prevent the selection of a very competent, but illiterate farmer as a promoter. In this case the situation should be carefully evaluated to determine to what degree not being able to read and write would prevent the individual from fulfilling the requirements of the job.

To optimize the selection process by the DO, the community should be consulted regarding which farmer has the best farm, who likes experimenting or trying new things and who is the best in sharing knowledge and experiences. It's also good to seek the opinion of neighbors about the work and personal attributes of a farmer being considered as a promoter. To avoid the risk of having the promoters be identified as "DO staff," thus distancing themselves from the grassroots, it is necessary to get community approval of the selection.

When an organization chooses promoters that have previously worked in other organizations, the DO benefits from the knowledge and experience that they've already gained. In some cases, however, promoters who have worked under a paternalistic philosophy may have problems adapting to the participatory approaches followed by many DOs. In that case, it is better that a new promoter be trained from the beginning according to the organization's objectives. The organization in which the promoter previously worked must be carefully analyzed so that any necessary re-orientation by the new organization can be undertaken. Moreover, if a promoter leaves one organization to work for another, this can create possible conflicts between the organizations.

Generally, in this type of selection, promoters will be paid for their work, running the risk that the salary becomes the principal reason the farmer accepts the promoter position. However, previous experience of having worked as a volunteer is a good indication of their commitment to work with communities.

In addition to the "economic dependence" that can develop, there is also an "operative dependence" on the part of the promoter to the DO and the development model that is being promoted. The promoter can become dependent upon the

instructions and orders of the DO, and it can reach a point in which when the DO leaves the area, the promoter is not able to assume continued responsibility for the activities.

Moreover, the "authority" the promoters have to disseminate information sometimes depends exclusively upon the presence of the DO, which chose the promoters and supports their work.

## **Promoter selection criteria of a development organization promoted by the Catholic Church in Central America**

*"What the organization wants; what the community wants..."*

*The organization considers its promoters to be "pioneer farmers with a new message of life and hope, in whom their social commitment and the protection of the environment are so important they have become authentic forces for an ecological farmer movement".*

*The selection criteria of the DO are:*

- *To have transformed their own farms with soil conservation technologies.*
- *To have voluntarily shared the technologies and the appropriate use of local resources based on their own experiences.*
- *Based on productive results and a high level of personal commitment, to have motivated a significant number of farmers to undertake voluntary work to transform their ecological environment.*
- *To have promoted farmer participation, communication and exchange of experiences through the Celebration of the Word of God in local meetings and other social events.*
- *To have undertaken activities to spread soil conservation practices and the defense of natural resources with wider audiences and in other regions, such as committees for the defense of nature and other local and community organizations.*
- *To have demonstrated perseverance in his/her work, and the capacity for generating enthusiasm and the development of social and technical skills, for a period of at least three consecutive years.*
- *To have passed in a satisfactory manner the different levels of theoretical-practical training in the areas of soil conservation, agroforestry, post-harvest processing and methodologies for community participation.*

## SELECTION BY THE DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION

Positive	Negative
<p><b>Professionalism of the DO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOs have experience in selecting promoters using more objective criteria</li> <li>• They select more experienced individuals</li> <li>• They're able to make the selection process according to their institutional goals, making the process faster and cheaper</li> <li>• It works well when they know the outstanding farmers who have already demonstrated their capabilities</li> </ul> <p><b>Level of commitment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The promoter that is selected by the institution can exercise a greater degree of responsibility over his functions, given the "pressure" of complying with his employer: the DO</li> <li>• The promoter instills confidence and serves as a link between the organization and the community.</li> </ul> <p><b>The DO-community relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The selection process can be very valid if:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) there is good coordination between the DO and the community and</li> <li>b) if the DOs demonstrate respect towards the policies and priorities of the farmer organization and the community</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p><b>Personal progress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a greater possibility that the promoter receives good training given the opportunities usually provided by DOs</li> </ul>	<p><b>Appearances can be deceiving</b> <i>"Blind" selection...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally the DOs do not know the members of the community well enough to be able to make a good selection</li> <li>• DOs do not always allow community participation in the selection process</li> <li>• Selection is sometimes made on the basis of the criteria of the DO, and not those of the community</li> <li>• Some of the candidates that are chosen are not ethical and may not be truthful about their experiences</li> <li>• Sometimes candidates can be chosen on the basis of "influence."</li> </ul> <p><b>Distancing from the grassroots</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A selection can create institutional friction between the DO and the farmers' associations, and jealousy among community members</li> <li>• Only a few promoters are selected and other interested individuals can be marginalized</li> <li>• Promoters can feel that they are part of the DO and distance themselves from the grassroots</li> <li>• Sometimes activities are not coordinated with other community promoters</li> </ul> <p><b>Dependence on the DO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoters can follow exclusively the policies and objectives of the DO</li> <li>• When the project is finished the promoters usually stop working as promoters</li> </ul>

## SELECTION BY THE COMMUNITY

Community selection of promoters offers the advantage that the promoter starts the project activities with community support. Also, it promotes democratic development processes within the community that can catalyze self-reliance approaches in other areas of community development and allow the community to undertake other participatory projects.

This selection process exhibits a more participatory development vision in which the community members make democratic decisions about who should be promoters. In well-organized communities, the selection process is likely to produce successful results.

However, community selection does not necessarily guarantee a good choice. Sometimes a community may not act responsibly in selecting a promoter, or the promoter may be chosen by a small group of community members that does not represent the majority. As a result, the promoters do not have community support, and are unable to respond adequately to the needs of the entire community.

There are cases when a promoter is selected due to sympathy, economic status or influence. Consequently, the person may not necessarily have a legitimate interest in fulfilling the role of a promoter, but may only be interested in the social status or the economic benefits which will come with the position.

In other cases, the DO requires the community election of a local promoter so that the community can quickly receive funds which have been allocated for a particular project. Under these circumstances, the community may make a quick selection in order to get the money, knowing that the individual may not be the best candidate.

## SELECTION BY THE COMMUNITY

Positive	Negative
<p><b>Level of commitment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The tasks of being a promoter are accepted by the individual chosen</li> <li>• The promoters can acquire greater determination and commitment for their work to improve the functioning of the farmers' association and the well-being of the community</li> <li>• The community has the right to "demand," monitor and evaluate the work of promoters</li> <li>• Promotes the capacities of community members to choose their own leaders</li> </ul> <p><b>Integration/unity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a greater probability of community acceptance, trust and support</li> <li>• Reduces possible internal divisions of the community when the community is able to reach a consensus about the selection of a promoter</li> </ul> <p><b>Appropriateness of the selection</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nobody knows better than the community itself the individuals who can best be entrusted to work as promoters, based on their own proven commitment and capacity</li> <li>• Given that the promoters live in and are from the community, they understand the community needs and respect their customs and values</li> </ul>	<p><b>Integration/unity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community can make a quick selection, especially when they are asked to do so in order to receive external funds</li> <li>• The selection can be biased due to internal conflicts, thus further dividing the community</li> <li>• Abuses such as paternalism, nepotism, influence and other "power" forces can occur</li> <li>• A community may make a mistake and choose someone who has no interest, capability or leadership to be a promoter</li> <li>• Initially, the individual may not have the experience or training to be a promoter</li> <li>• The community may continually choose the same persons without providing opportunities to others</li> <li>• The selection process may take more time</li> </ul> <p><b>Promoter-community relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A person may wish to serve the community but may not have the support of the community and not be selected</li> <li>• The selection of the promoter may be done without a majority of the community involved in the selection process</li> </ul>

## SELECTION THROUGH A GRADUAL PROCESS

To the extent possible it's advisable to wait before "formally" selecting an individual who will work as a part-time or full-time promoter. The ideal is to gradually train and teach an individual "on-the-job." Selection through a gradual process seems to be the most sustainable of the approaches, given that:

- a) the individual first demonstrates his/her interest and capacity to serve the community,
- b) both the community and the DO have the opportunity to evaluate the individual,
- c) the individual is selected on the basis of his/her demonstrated effectiveness in the field.

The fact that a formal selection process of the promoter is not undertaken gives a larger number of farmers the opportunity to voluntarily participate in the extension and development activities. Then, based on their interest to learn, to experiment with new technologies and to share knowledge and experiences with other farmers, new farmer leaders emerge, from among whom a future promoter can be formally chosen.

This type of selection takes longer and requires more effort in training and providing technical assistance to potential farmer promoters, but this approach will be the most effective and sustainable in the long run. Nevertheless, the process should not take too long, because there is a risk that the "candidates" will lose interest as they wait for potential compensation (i.e. formal appointment, new status, eventual salary, etc.).

According to Puerta (1992) "community participation in the selection process is determined by the type of project." He argues that "the more open the program is and the more program areas there are, the more the community should have a say in the selection, as very specific programs are not of much interest to the majority." This may be true especially in large communities and communities close to cities where there is greater diversity.

Organizational, religious, political or other values of the DO may influence community participation in the selection process. In many countries, religious factors seriously limit community participation, not only in selection processes, but also in the implementation of concrete activities by the organization and the community. Differences in values can also cause strong divisions and conflicts. Certainly, the achievement of genuine community participation in the selection of promoters remains a challenge.



## SELECTION THROUGH A GRADUAL PROCESS

Positive	Negative
<p><b>Certainty of the selection</b> <i>"slow, but sure"</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During the "trial" period, the project and the community are able to learn more about the "candidates" as they perform the tasks</li> <li>• Gradually, the good promoters become known</li> <li>• The process works like a "filter" to select the best among a group</li> <li>• The promoters become more aware of the work responsibilities</li> <li>• An individual's commitment is more apparent as there is little economic incentive</li> <li>• The selection process is more participatory for the community and the DO</li> <li>• Results in a more objective selection</li> </ul> <p><b>Professional development</b> <i>"a leader is not born, but is made"</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows the promoter to acquire greater knowledge and training</li> <li>• Offers an opportunity to gradually develop specialized skills</li> <li>• More individuals initially participate and develop themselves to later be selected as promoters</li> </ul>	<p><b>Level of commitment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For personal reasons, a large number of promoters quit in the "testing phase"</li> <li>• The person can become "burned-out" or become tired of voluntary work before being formally selected as a promoter</li> </ul> <p><b>Effect on efficiency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does not produce immediate results</li> <li>• Requires more time and resources for the development organization to identify good promoters</li> </ul>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In summary, it is important to select innovative, creative farmers with leadership skills. Both the community and the DO should participate in the selection. Obviously, it doesn't make sense to impose the work of a promoter upon a farmer. Candidates who are being considered by the community and/or the DO should be chosen from among the farmers who have demonstrated the greatest interest and motivation to be promoters (Johnson, 1987).

Whichever selection mode is used, the candidates should meet certain minimum requirements, such as availability of time, demonstrated experience (if possible), ability to serve, social commitment, leadership qualities, skills and motivation to disseminate acquired knowledge, willingness to be a good example and to have an excellent farm.

The promoters should be from the same socio-economic group and their farms should be characteristic of a similar production system (farm size, production and market conditions, labor availability, etc.) as that of the farmers they intend to serve. In cases where promoters have had previous experience, the DO visit the communities where they previously worked to assess the results of their work.

When the community chooses the promoter, it's necessary to train and make the community aware so that they can make a good decision. It's important to clearly explain the objectives and activities that are to be fulfilled by the promoter. A poorly selected promoter can create more problems than benefits for the community. It's important to ensure that all of the social sectors of the community are taken into account in the selection process.

It is usually more effective to select a promoter through a gradual process. When this process cannot be used, promoters should be selected based on criteria jointly established by the DO and the community reflecting the needs, possibilities and requirements of both parties.





## Generalist and specialist farmer promoters

Some DOs work through integrated programs attempting to meet various community needs at the same time (eg. health, agriculture, literacy). Others carry out more specialized programs working only in a single area (eg. agricultural technologies for soil conservation). Based on these two different development approaches, promoters can either work as generalists or specialists. There are distinct advantages and disadvantages to each approach.

### **GENERALIST FARMER PROMOTERS**

Since there are many problems in a community which are complex and interrelated, the generalist promoter can better understand the situation in a more holistic way, which can help the community engage in long term, sustainable development.

Many communities will prefer to work with a single generalist promoter that provides the knowledge that they may need in several areas. This allows them to develop more confidence in the promoter. Moreover, working with a generalist promoter is more economical for the development organization, as only one person attends to several community needs at the same time.

The fact that a generalist responds to a variety of problems ensures that the promoter is able to gain credibility and thus the community's confidence. A generalist promoter comes to know the problems of the community with a more holistic perspective. However, if the responses to the community's needs offered by the promoter are superficial due to a lack of specialized knowledge, the promoter loses credibility, leading to little improvement in the community's situation.

When a promoter works with several activities at the same time, the impact of the work is diluted, whereas by concentrating on a few activities the work is more focussed and the outcome of one or two concrete results will be more effective: "He who tries to cover too much, does little." But, there are different ways to work as a generalist within an integrated development approach. Working as a generalist promoter does not mean that all of the information has to be passed on to the community all at once. Technologies can be gradually introduced based on concrete needs which have been jointly identified with the community through a participatory needs assessment and planning process.

It's recommended to begin working with priority problems with the greatest possibility for success in the shortest time. After a while, the promoter is then able to deal with more significant problems. The fact that the generalist promoters manage different technical areas based on their experience and training, helps to ensure that when new problems surface in the community, the promoters have the ability to respond quickly. This may help people to have more confidence in the promoter and lead community members to consult the promoter about possible responses to community problems. Additionally, the presence of a generalist promoter, capable of participating in various training activities, makes the farmers' or community organization less dependent upon external institutions in the search for solutions to their problems. On the other hand, promoters who may try to always provide responses or solutions to community problems can inhibit the community's motivation to search for its own solutions.

<b>GENERALIST PROMOTER</b>	
<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<p><b>Holistic perspective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has training in several areas and can assist in many subjects</li> <li>• Has been trained in some aspects of organizational development</li> <li>• Can prepare different types of project proposals to present for funding</li> <li>• Has a broader worldview which can have a positive impact in the community</li> <li>• Takes advantage of opportunities to improve knowledge through training</li> <li>• A holistic perspective is a desirable characteristic for a future leader</li> </ul> <p><b>Practical aspects of the work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saves time and money as a single promoter attends to the work of several technical areas</li> <li>• The community can decide to work on its most important problem</li> <li>• Takes a long-term perspective on the community development as the promoter can work on several areas over time</li> <li>• It's necessary to work with a generalist when there are few people who want to work as promoters</li> </ul>	<p><b>Superficial knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoters are not able to know in detail several themes, thus are only able to give superficial information, potentially diminishing the quality of their work</li> <li>• Cannot solve complex or specific problems</li> <li>• Cannot be competent in all technical areas for which they are responsible</li> <li>• Can become knowledgeable "in theory"</li> </ul> <p><b><i>"Neither this, nor that..."</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given that they try to cover various areas of work, promoters have to undertake many activities, which do not allow them to do the work well</li> </ul> <p><b>Attitude of the promoter</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoters become proud and talk too much</li> <li>• Promoters can become "opportunists" because they can: 1) offer services without having much practical knowledge and 2) "take advantage" of all training opportunities to get out of work, to the exclusion of others in the community</li> </ul>

## SPECIALIST FARMER PROMOTERS

Generally, specialist promoters resolve specific problems in a more efficient manner within their areas of specialization. But, as the needs of the community are multiple, several specialists may be needed to attend to different technical areas, thus representing a greater cost to development organizations.

The specialist promoter has basically been trained in only one discipline, and can therefore provide solutions to identified problems in a reasonably short time. This instills community confidence in the work of the promoter.

<b>SPECIALIST PROMOTER</b>	
<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<p><b>Specialized training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's good to specialize in a specific area because the promoters can better solve specific problems</li> <li>• Have the capacity to discuss and share their knowledge with others in any venue</li> <li>• Specialists can develop and/or easily learn science and technology</li> <li>• Know the specific technical areas in which they were trained and work "from head to toe."</li> <li>• They are more confident in themselves, and in their relations with professional extension workers</li> </ul> <p><b>Practical aspects of the work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The organization can improve "technically"</li> <li>• Contribute with greater efficiency to improve the community's standard of living</li> <li>• Allows for the assignment of a promoter to each technical area of the project</li> <li>• Because the promoters have "titles" (have attended several courses), community members have more confidence in them</li> </ul>	<p><b>Limited knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possess limited understanding of other areas outside of their specialization</li> </ul> <p><b>Practical aspects of the work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community organizations do not always have sufficient resources to pay a "specialist," thus making them dependent upon the support of external DOs</li> </ul> <p><b>Attitude of the promoter</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "Titled" farmer promoters can become proud and arrogant, and believe themselves to be professional extension workers</li> </ul>

However, specialist promoters run the risk of turning into "professional" extension worker and losing their role as promoters from within the community. This also limits their ability to become leaders of communities or farmer organizations. Usually, the specialist focuses on acquiring very specific technical knowledge without worrying about the community as a whole. Therefore, there is a need for good coordination and information exchange with other promoters working in other technical areas.

Specialist promoters may focus their efforts on problems that are not priorities to the community. This can happen especially if the promoter has not been selected by the community, and works without its support and approval. Promoters should also be sensitive to the fact that their specialized knowledge may not always be the priority of the community and they should be cautious about "imposing" their knowledge and interests. The community and the promoter should always try to jointly discuss and agree upon the priority problems to address.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

There is no need to try to solve all of the community problems at once, but rather to address them gradually, according to the priority needs of the community. The promoter should facilitate the use of appropriate methodological tools which can be used by the community to identify problems and find solutions. If no local solutions for the community's problems exist, the promoter and the community should jointly search for assistance and information from other sources, ensuring that the potential solutions have been tested on a small-scale before they are disseminated widely.

New technologies should be introduced gradually, beginning with the basic problems and then moving on to larger, more difficult problems. The DO should limit itself to introducing a few technologies which can be easily adopted and disseminated in the community.

To avoid creating confusion about the work of the promoter, the work philosophy of the DO should be clear to the promoter and the community, clarifying from the beginning the areas in which it plans to work and how it plans to carry out the work, including resources (economic, knowledge, labor, etc.) which will be shared by both the DO and the community.

Both types of promoters described in this chapter are legitimate as each can be useful under different circumstances. The decision about which type of promoter to use mainly depends upon the problems which the community wishes to address, the project strategy, and the resources which both the DO and the community bring to the task.

# 7

## Work location: in their community or in other communities

Promoters work in their own communities or in communities other than their own. Generally, promoters who work in their own communities are volunteers and do not receive a salary, although they might receive some "perks" for the work they do. Those who work in a number of communities usually receive some form of compensation when they work part-time, and a salary when they work full-time.

When promoters serve other communities they may continue to serve their own community. They always maintain some bonds with their community, and the work demonstrated on their own farms always serves as an example to their neighbors.

The promoters who work in their own community have the advantage of staying at home, and at the same time providing an example to their neighbors through the work on their own farms. There are no additional transportation costs, as they work only within their community.

One problem for promoters working in their own community, however, is that neighbors can continually seek out the promoter, even during their free time. This can be very tiring for the promoter. Another possible disadvantage is that the promoter may not have credibility with their neighboring farmers as "prophets are without honor in their own country" If the problem of credibility is serious it can mean that the promoter ends up having to work only in other communities.

Promoters who work in other communities have the advantage of receiving greater acceptance because:

- a) they bring new experiences that can motivate the community to innovate,
- b) they are not identified as part of any conflicting groups with political, religious, or other interests, and can more easily act neutrally to serve the entire community,
- c) their personal life is not known and thus does not represent an opportunity to be "judged," and
- d) they have the advantage of learning successful experiences from one community and sharing them with others.

Initially, this allows them to be able to convince others with their words and ideas,



but eventually the community will judge the promoters' work on the basis of concrete results.

Visiting other communities requires an investment in time and resources to be able to move from place to place. If the promoter has to walk to reach the communities, the actual time spent working in each community is less, reducing the quality of the work. Also, the promoter tends to become more quickly exhausted.

Some DOs maintain that the transportation costs for promoters can be high. This cost should be calculated as part of the project and should be included in the design and formulation phase of a project proposal. Additionally, the DO must take into consideration the difference in costs between getting the job done by a promoter as opposed to having the job done by a professional extension worker. In the case of the latter, the costs are usually higher because of their greater demands for vehicles, salaries and per diem.

Another problem involves creating dependency on the project. When the DO leaves it's not very likely that the promoter will continue voluntarily working with communities. Of course, when the project ends and the DO leaves, the services provided by the extension worker will also be lost, as the professional extension worker will also not continue to work without remuneration. At least when farmer promoters are used, at the end of the project a capable human resource remains within the community.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

When promoters work in their own community, there should be an agreement that the members of the community respect the promoter's privacy and personal time. The promoter should identify and train other local leaders who can jointly support the community work in the future.

When promoters work in several communities, they should be located close to each other to reduce the amount of time spent travelling. The DO should provide promoters with transportation or cover the costs of transportation so that the promoter won't spend a lot of time or their own money in getting around to do their job. Having the promoters walk is not necessarily more economical than other means of transportation for the DO, especially when the distances are great or when the promoters spend a lot of time getting from one community to another. This can reduce the motivation of the promoters, reducing the quality of their work.

## PROMOTERS WHO WORK IN THEIR OWN COMMUNITY

Positive	Negative
<p><b>Personal aspects</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoters can spend more time with their family, and feel better</li> <li>• Promoters feel they are benefitting personally, as well as helping their communities</li> </ul> <p><b>Relationship between the promoter and the community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The promoter is known by everyone in the community and is better able to communicate with the community members</li> <li>• The community cooperates with the promoter in peoject implementation and by participating in training</li> <li>• Knowing the history of the community, the promoter can work based on the community's real needs</li> <li>• Participates in community activities</li> <li>• Given that promoters do not travel to other communities, they are able to dedicate more time to their work, optimizing their knowledge and experience</li> </ul> <p><b>Practical aspects of the work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their farms serve as examples</li> <li>• Promoters can more easily coordinate activities with local leaders</li> <li>• Saves time and money because the promoter does not have to go to other communities</li> <li>• Enables better follow-up of activities within the community</li> <li>• The promoter is better able to explain the community needs to the DOs</li> <li>• Promoters have a flexible work schedule and can adapt it to the availability of the community members to conduct activities together</li> </ul>	<p><b>Limited experience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are fewer opportunities to learn about projects and experiences in other communities</li> <li>• Working every day in the same community can become routine, and both the promoter and the community can get tired of each other</li> <li>• The promoter can pursue other livelihood activities and the community has no right to question them.</li> </ul> <p><b>Internal aspects</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May prefer to provide service to their own family and friends</li> <li>• The promoter may not coordinate activites with local leaders</li> <li>• Some community members may be envious and criticize the promoter when they see a fellow community member receiving some kind of payment for their service</li> <li>• The promoter can become involved in internal conflicts</li> <li>• The promoter's personal privacy diminishes</li> </ul> <p><b>"No one is a prophet in their own land"</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community may not value the knowledge of "one of their own"</li> <li>• The community may consider the promoter as a "servant" responsible for conductig all project activities</li> <li>• Some people may criticize the promoter "just to bother" them</li> <li>• The promoter's personal life is subject to community judgment, negatively affecting his/her work</li> <li>• Promoters may lose their enthusiasm if they are unable to get the community's support</li> </ul>

## PROMOTERS WHO WORK IN OTHER COMMUNITIES

Positive	Negative
<p><b>Personal aspects</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The promoter becomes more open in the interaction with people from other communities or projects, and acquires more experience</li> <li>• Promoters will work harder and with greater responsibility to accomplish tasks, so as not to lose their credibility</li> <li>• Promoters express their ideas better, without worry of being prejudged</li> <li>• Promoters have greater privacy</li> </ul> <p><b>Relationship between the promoters and the community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because they are from outside of the community, they can have a greater degree of acceptance and respect</li> <li>• The community itself may feel more important because it is receiving services from an outsider</li> <li>• Initially, the promoters can convince others with their words, without demonstrating concrete examples</li> <li>• Promoters can ask the community to conduct certain activities</li> <li>• Little egoism or envy is awakened</li> <li>• Promoters participate in social events so as "not to miss a party."</li> </ul> <p><b>Practical aspects of the work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given that promoters know several communities, they are better able to learn and share new experiences.</li> <li>• The promoters serve as links between communities, helping them to know each other and to exchange experiences.</li> <li>• A team of promoters can serve several communities</li> <li>• Promoters can support the work of farmers' organizations by being a link among several communities</li> <li>• Promoters have access and capability to dialogue with DOs and local authorities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Transportation problems</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If they don't receive per diem, they have problems getting around to do their work</li> <li>• May encounter difficulty getting from one community to another, due to a lack of roads or public transportation</li> <li>• Travelling long distances takes time away from working in the communities; thus, the promoter can lose the confidence of the community</li> <li>• Too much travel or walking tires promoters and reduces their enthusiasm for their work</li> <li>• Sometimes there is nowhere to eat</li> </ul> <p><b>Work overload</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working with several communities at the same time can be very difficult</li> <li>• Little time is available to spend with the family</li> <li>• Promoters may become "isolated" from their own community, as they may not be able to spend time on their own community activities</li> </ul> <p><b>Dependency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DOs invest more money than when promoters work in their own communities</li> <li>• The work of promoters in other communities lasts until the project ends</li> </ul> <p><b>Ignorance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initially, promoters from outside may not fully understand the real needs of the communities</li> <li>• Because they are "outsiders," suspicions may arise</li> <li>• Because promoters do not know the community well, they can be manipulated by members of the local "power elite"</li> </ul>



# Volunteer, part-time, and full-time farmer promoters

According to the time dedicated to the extension work, a promoter may serve as a volunteer, or may work either part-time or full-time.

## **VOLUNTEER PROMOTERS**

Generally, volunteer promoters do not receive monetary compensation for their work. Instead, they benefit from the first-hand knowledge from trainings that they may attend, and the appreciation from the community. In some cases they receive a small compensation from the DO or the community. This shows motivation and commitment to the community and can serve as a "filter;" those that persevere even though they receive no remuneration demonstrate that they are committed promoters, evidencing leadership skills. Volunteer promoters provide a low-cost service for the development organization. But, because they are volunteers, the DO cannot "demand" that they do a lot of work; thus, the promoter is more autonomous.

For the organization, this can imply an investment of additional time and effort to accomplish project goals. For the community, this can cause a delay in receiving information which they can apply in practice. The volunteer promoters may not be available when the community needs them; or they may devote less time to the work and not serve adequately the community's interests or priorities.

Volunteer promoters tend to serve one community only, generally their own, concentrating their efforts but covering a smaller area. However, there are also volunteer promoters that serve several communities. Given the voluntary nature of the work, it is necessary to plan realistic goals with the promoters according to their time availability, experience and travel distances.

In some cases the volunteer promoters do not share what they have learned through training sponsored by the DO, because of lack of time on the part of the neighbors, or the promoters.

Sometimes, when good promoters do not receive salaries, other DOs offer compensation and take them away to work in other projects, leaving work uncompleted. Of course, this also has a negative effect on the DO that originally trained the promoter.

## **"The filter effect"**

After the project work plan was presented, farmer promoters were selected in each of the communities. Originally, there were 17 promoters in 4 communities.

The people of the communities suggested calling the promoters by the name "pushac" - a Quechua word which means "the one who leads, guides or directs." The promoter's function was to participate in training courses on several subjects, and then to share this information with community members through training and technical assistance.

The project did not offer any remuneration, but rather wanted the community to provide a counterpart in return for the training and technical assistance that they were receiving. To serve as a volunteer is a sacrifice. The project intended to work with the youth because of their openness and dynamism. In the end, they were the first ones to resign. One of the communities was even left without a promoter. What were the reasons?

- They had to focus on their studies rather than perform the tasks of the promoter,
- some of the young promoters were newlyweds and the responsibilities of establishing and maintaining their new households were a priority,
- because they were young, they felt that many of the farmers did not listen to their advice.

During the first 8 months of work the number of promoters went from 17 to 10, then to 6, 5 and finally only 3 remained. But these three were the most efficient of the 17 that began working because they demonstrated qualities that allowed them to overcome the "frustration" of not being paid.

Of the three promoters that remain, one is a very innovative farmer who is always interested in learning new techniques and introducing them to the community. The second, an older gentleman, possesses a true community spirit; he is a man who knows everyone and is known by them in turn. Even though he doesn't know how to read and write, he knows how to teach others in a way that others listen to him. Though the third promoter is ambitious, he is willing to begin working as a volunteer promoter. He's willing to make this initial sacrifice because he knows that this will allow him to gain experience, and perhaps one day he may be hired as a full-time, salaried promoter.

## VOLUNTEER PROMOTERS

Positive	Negative
<p><b>Commitment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has the will to work for the benefit of the community</li> <li>• Wants to improve the situation of his/her family and community</li> <li>• Serve as examples to the community because they work hard even without receiving a salary</li> <li>• Are willing to share with others without receiving anything in return</li> <li>• Are leaders and can assume other responsibilities for the benefit of the community</li> <li>• Can work in other communities without having to ask permission from their own community</li> <li>• There is no economic obligation on the part of the community to pay the promoters, thus the community is not pressured to get money to pay them</li> </ul> <p><b>Personal development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continually learn and acquire new experiences</li> <li>• In the future, can become paid promoters or leaders of farmers associations</li> </ul> <p><b>Efficiency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community and the project save money</li> <li>• By working in only one community, the work is more focussed and less dispersed</li> <li>• Promoters depend upon their own will, and are therefore more autonomous</li> <li>• Promoters teach by providing practical examples from their own</li> </ul>	<p><b>Lack of solidarity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are very few people who are willing to work as volunteers</li> <li>• The promoters may share very little information with the community, resulting in slower dissemination of technologies</li> <li>• Work more for their own personal development rather than for the community or the DO</li> </ul> <p><b>Not respected</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because the promoters are volunteers the community does not consider them 'official' and may not fully support them</li> <li>• The community may regard the promoters as "lazy" when results of the promoter's work are not seen</li> <li>• They have problems with their families because they work and receive no salary</li> </ul> <p><b>Level of commitment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community assigns most responsibilities to the promoters but does not assist them with their own time, labor or money</li> <li>• The promoters quickly "burn out" and may abandon their function</li> <li>• The community and the DO have less "right" to demand the achievement of certain tasks from the promoters, or ask them to be accountable if the work fails</li> <li>• Since they have no "obligation," they can easily migrate to the cities and stop working with the community</li> <li>• After being trained, the promoters may be hired by another DO</li> </ul> <p><b>Lack of efficiency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The promoters may lack sufficient time to work in their own farms</li> <li>• It is difficult to achieve the project goals</li> <li>• In the beginning, the promoter may lack training to perform the job</li> <li>• There is little coverage of the project since a volunteer promoter usually works in a single community</li> </ul>

## **FULL-TIME PROMOTERS**

Promoters who work full-time receive a salary. Thus, their work as promoters become their main source of income. Since they promoters receive a salary, certain responsibilities are placed upon promoters by the organization and the community. Since promoters can do more work, the DO can easily plan, establish and demand the accomplishment of certain project goals. Moreover, the roles and responsibilities of the promoters are better defined.

Paid promoters spend most of their time serving many communities, thus dedicating less time to their own farm activities. To complete the necessary work in their own farm, full-time promoters usually hire laborers incurring additional family expenses. The salary that they receive is vital to ensure the support of their families and maintain their farms.

In the long run, there is a risk that the promoters will come to depend entirely on the salary and it can become the main source of motivation, thus reducing their social commitment to work for the community's benefit.

The almost exclusive dependence on the salary can mean that promoters may abandon farming as their main livelihood, thus, lessening their ability to provide examples through their own farm, and possibly reducing their credibility. Also, they disengage themselves from the activities of their own communities, and tend to be considered "employees of the project".

Furthermore, the dependence upon the salary places the sustainability of the project in peril; in other words the promoter only works as long as there is money from the project. The same situation will occur with professional extension workers, as no extension worker will continue to work after the project has ended.

Flores (1994) strongly supports this view, arguing that in the field of development the paid promoter is presented as someone not very legitimate, without taking into consideration how many people within the DO work for, and depend upon, a salary. Flores says "if we professionals [receive a salary], sometimes without really believing in what we do, why is it fair that farmer promoters should not receive a salary, to compensate for their time and service which is of greater benefit to the farmers than working in an office?"

## FULL-TIME PROMOTERS

Positive	Negative
<p><b>Greater efficiency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because they have well defined roles and responsibilities, they are better able to organize, coordinate, and provide follow-up on their activities</li> <li>• They spend more time with the communities they serve</li> <li>• If promoters work in a project aimed at agricultural production, they are able to give assistance and support to other volunteer promoters in the form of seeds, information, educational materials, field visits, etc.</li> <li>• The DO has more credibility because communities see more concrete results</li> <li>• The promoter is better able to accomplish the project goals, objectives and work schedule; this allows the DO to establish clear goals and objectives</li> <li>• When compared to using professional extension workers, it entails less cost to the DO</li> </ul> <p><b>Level of commitment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The promoter feels obligated to fulfill responsibilities and to achieve project goals</li> <li>• The promoter becomes a permanent employee of the DO</li> </ul> <p><b>Personal progress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater economic security for the promoters</li> <li>• Greater opportunities for self-improvement through training</li> <li>• Improves the quality of life of the promoters and their families</li> </ul>	<p><b>Dependency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community probably does not have the capacity to pay the promoter after the project ends</li> <li>• The promoter can become accustomed to working only for money</li> <li>• Generally, the salaries are low</li> <li>• The promoter will work only as long as the project continues</li> <li>• The promoter has to follow the mandate of the DO and the farmers' association: "he who pays the piper calls the tune!"</li> <li>• More expensive for the DO than working with volunteers or part-time promoters</li> </ul> <p><b>Availability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unable to participate in activities within their own community</li> <li>• They have little time to share with their family</li> </ul> <p><b>Level of commitment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The promoters may respond more to the needs of the project than those identified by the community</li> <li>• Given that they are paid by the DO, they become an employee of the DO and they are considered to be "external" actors</li> </ul> <p><b>Loss of image</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They spend little time taking care of their own farms, thus losing their capability to serve as examples to other farmers, and also reducing their income from the farm</li> </ul>



## **PART-TIME PROMOTERS**

Working with part-time promoters appears to include several of the advantages of the two previous modes (volunteer and full-time), as it allows farmers to work as promoters while still "teaching" by the example of the work on their own farms. Also, more individuals can have the opportunity to be trained as promoters.

By contracting part-time promoters, the DO and the community have the opportunity to evaluate the competence of the promoters, before contracting them on a full-time basis, making the selection process more efficient. Also, part-time promoters have the advantage that they can identify themselves both with the community and the institution.

Part-time promoters contribute to overcome one of the key weaknesses of volunteer promoters, i.e., not being able to achieve project objectives due to lack of time. Part-time promoters are better able to achieve established objectives, especially if the objectives are planned to fit the amount of time that the promoter can dedicate to the project.

However, part-time promoters may be less effective than full-time promoter in some respects. Working on a part-time basis makes it more difficult for them to define a specific schedule, including time spent working on their own farms. Therefore, there might be a tendency -even though unconscious- to reduce the time dedicated to the project. Or, on the contrary, an overload of tasks can result in unjust exploitation with the promoters working almost full-time, even though they are paid to work part-time only.

In the case of both full-time and part-time promoters, the duration of the project and its funding, can influence the motivation and quality of work and can affect the long-term sustainability of the project. For example, if the terms of the promoters employment is uncertain, it can be difficult to get their commitment for the period that is required to establish certain technologies (eg. improvement of soil fertility). Promoters may decide that it is not worthwhile to introduce certain types of technologies, if the employment situation is unstable.

Also, the fact that they receive a salary can create jealousies within their own community, resulting in the loss of credibility and support for their work. However, salaries do not appear to affect promoters' credibility when they work in other communities.

## PART-TIME PROMOTERS

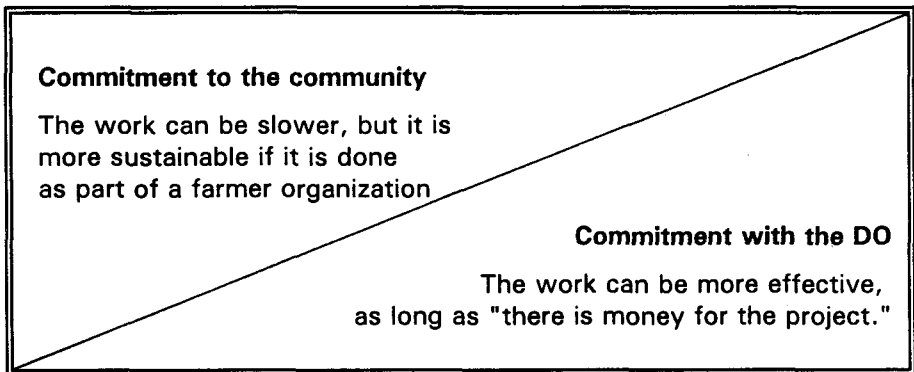
Positive	Negative
<p><b>Greater efficiency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better able to organize their time as they can combine their promoter functions with their farming activities</li> <li>• Allows time for promoters to work on their own farms, thus continuing to teach through their own example</li> <li>• Lower salary costs for the DO, than for full-time promoters</li> <li>• More promoters are trained, as the time dedicated by one promoter is not sufficient to complete the work in the community</li> </ul> <p><b>Level of commitment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have more specific responsibilities of time and activities than volunteer promoters</li> <li>• Serve as initial contacts with the DO as a person responsible for work in the community</li> <li>• Are able to identify with the DO and the community at the same time</li> <li>• The DO and the community can assign specific work tasks</li> <li>• The community and the DO can demand certain accomplishments and follow-up to activities</li> <li>• The DO and the community are better able to assess the promoters performance in case they (DO and/or community) are considering offering them full-time employment</li> </ul> <p><b>Personal progress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If promoters perform their jobs responsibly they receive recognition from their family and community</li> <li>• Promoters are trained slowly, but thoroughly</li> </ul>	<p><b>"Neither this, nor that..."</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Part-time promoters may be busy with their own farming activities, as well as those of the project, and not able to properly and fully accomplish either</li> </ul> <p><b>Level of commitment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because they are employed under part-time contracts, they may have little interest or time for their work as promoters, and may not continue; this interferes with the continuity of the project</li> <li>• When the promoters are paid, they are paid very little, and may become demoralized</li> </ul> <p><b>Promoter-community relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fact that the promoters receive compensation may create some jealousy in the community, resulting in less support for the promoter.</li> </ul>

**LEVEL OF COMMITMENT OF THE PROMOTER TO THE COMMUNITY AND THE DO, IN RELATION TO THE TIME EMPLOYED IN THEIR WORK**

Volunteer promoters tend to be closer to the interests of the community. Part-time promoters are "in the middle" between the community and the DO's interests; a situation which can create problems because promoters aren't sure to whom they are accountable.

When promoters work full-time they are paid employees of the DO. They tend to become more accountable to the DO than to the community and try to meet the objectives of the DO. But, the dependency on the DO which has been created (in the form of a salary) does not guarantee promoter stability, nor the sustainability of the project activities. Full-time promoters have more defined responsibilities and are obligated to totally assume their roles as promoters, being supervised by the community, their leaders, and the professional extension workers.

Volunteer promoters have greater autonomy in their relationship with the community and the DO because their work depends completely upon their goodwill to work. As a result, the volunteer promoter is not always available when needed. They can go to work in other communities without asking permission and they can even migrate for long periods of time, as they only have a "moral commitment" to the community.



**VOLUNTEER**

Does not receive salary

**PART-TIME**

Receives travel expenses, food, and a small compensation

**FULL-TIME**

Salaried

When promoters are volunteers, the community and the DO have little "power" to demand concrete results, and the diffusion and replication of knowledge may be much slower. If the project fails, the community and the DO cannot hold them accountable. However, the work tends to be more sustainable, if the promoter is effective.

Part-time promoters have more of a concrete commitment than volunteers, and therefore, the community and/or the DO can assign specific tasks according to their time availability. The community and/or the DO can expect a certain level of accomplishment and follow-up. The promoters are free to combine their functions as promoters with their personal interests, particularly working on their own farms.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Experience has shown that the part-time promoter can be the best alternative in terms of project sustainability, as there is less dependence upon a salary. However, the application of each of these approaches needs to be planned and defined between the community, the DO and the promoter according to the project objectives. In the case of the volunteers and part-time promoters, it is necessary to organize the activities according to time availability, experience, and travel distance.

In summary, volunteer, part-time, or full-time promoters work well under different circumstances. The amount of time that the promoter should dedicate to his/her work depends on the type of project and the needs of the DO and the community.



# 9

## Salaries and job incentives for farmer promoters

Salaries and other appropriate job incentives for promoters are an inalienable right and are indispensable as motivating factors in any type of institution. In DOs, however, the commitment with the community can be confused with the commitment to the goals of the institution and it's common that DOs achieve their project goals without paying fair salaries or providing other incentives to farmer promoters.

### SALARIES

In some instances, the DO's take unfair advantage of the promoters good will to undertake development activities. The salaries they pay are low and are often not increased for a long time. Other compensation (eg. transportation, food, insurance, etc.) are very limited, or are not given, and promoters are not offered much training.

Generally, farmer promoters feel that they do not receive fair job compensation and incentives. But, they continue performing the job because of their commitment to help their "neighbors," the respect and prestige they have in the communities in which they work, and the training they receive.

The DOs may not consider the work of the promoters to be equivalent to that of professional extension workers. and normally continue to treat the promoters as "farmers," without recognizing their effectiveness as educators and trainers, and above all as advocates of the institutional goals of the DO.

Based on practical experiences, some people believe that it is unethical and exploitative not to pay some type of salary to promoters. To treat promoters as equals and to recognize the value of their effort, they should be paid for their work.

However others believe there is a risk that paid promoters will respond more to their "employer" (the DO) who pays their salary, than to the community (their "clients"). Others believe that one of the reasons projects where promoters work are not sustainable is because they pay salaries to promoters for their work, and when the project money ends, they quit.

However, it is not necessary to go to either of these extremes on the point of paying or not paying a salary to promoters. This issue should be treated according to the particular characteristics of the community, the DO, the promoter, and the project.

## PAYING A SALARY TO FARMER PROMOTERS

Positive	Negative
<p><b>Personal progress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmer promoters have more possibilities to participate in training events, since they do not have to worry about the time not spent working on the farm to earn a living</li> <li>• Promoters can fund their own technical training through the purchase of books and other educational materials</li> <li>• Promoters learn how to manage their salaries and personal expenses better</li> </ul> <p><b>Economic well-being</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a stable and secure income source improves the quality of life and economic situation of the family</li> <li>• Has money to seek medical treatment when a family member is ill</li> <li>• Able to purchase animals to raise and sell</li> <li>• The promoters (and their children) are not forced to migrate to the cities in search of work</li> <li>• To earn a salary is fair because they are compensated for the time given in service to the community, rather than in pursuit of other income</li> </ul> <p><b>Better service to the community</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The community can demand specific accomplishments and progress in the work</li> <li>• Promoters have a greater commitment to complete tasks and to show results</li> <li>• Allows the DO to establish measurable project objectives and results</li> </ul>	<p><b>Attitude</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The promoters can lose their cultural identity, awakening an "arrogance;" the promoter can become individualistic</li> <li>• The promoters may be motivated more by the money they earn than by the desire to benefit the community</li> <li>• The promoters have less time to work on their own farms</li> </ul> <p><b>Promoter-DO relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally, development institutions do not fairly value the work of the promoters, thus the salary is low</li> <li>• Different criteria exist about the "value" of the promoters' work and this can cause discrimination and resentment; while a DO believes that promoters should earn approximately what they could earn if they sought migrant work, promoters hope for a salary equal to that of the professional extension workers when they do equal work</li> <li>• The promoters receive a salary from the DO that the community can not assume after the project ends, thus the work of the promoters ends with project completion</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When salary payments are late, there are problems</li> </ul> <p><b>Community-promoter relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The salary can "distance" the promoters from their communities</li> <li>• People can be envious of the promoters because they earn a salary</li> </ul>

Johnson (1987) comments that it is positive and effective when promoters work because they are motivated by an altruistic ideal to serve their "neighbors." But, given that the majority of promoters depend almost exclusively upon farm production to maintain their families, if they do not receive a salary the amount of time that they can work as a promoter is limited. Thus working as a promoter becomes secondary as they must give priority to the work on the family farm. Also, when promoters do not receive salaries, their motivation become lower over time.

However, Johnson also points out that when promoters receive a salary, this may become their principal motivation to provide services to the communities. Also, the DO can exercise a certain amount of power and paternalism toward the promoters since they pay their salary. This can hinder creating a more equal relationship. Moreover, as the salary is paid by the DO, the promoters tend to respond more to their employer than to the community.

## **JOB INCENTIVES**

One important job incentive for farmer promoters is promotion. Promotion is a gradual process that allows for the recognition and evaluation of the promoters' efforts, and also places the promoters on the road to professionalism. Once they are promoted, the promoters make attempts to improve their abilities and thus prepare themselves to assume even greater responsibilities. Promotion also increases a promoter's self-esteem. In some DOs, one way to achieve project sustainability is to gradually reduce the "external" personnel and pass on the project activities to the community and their promoters, converting the development process from external to local.

The rise of a promoter should be accompanied by training. This can require an investment of time and money for the institution, but will result in higher quality work from the promoter.

Stagnation of a promoter in the same position in the organization can be the result of a lack of vision of the promoter for a better future and by a certain degree of conformity to remain in the same position for a long period without promotion. Moreover, DOs generally lack concrete plans for professional improvement and promotion of their promoters.

In summary, there are characteristics of the promoter as well as elements of the DO which influence the rise or stagnation of a promoter, among which the more important are the personal motivation of the promoter to take on more responsibilities, and the formal policies which are established by the DO.



## ***"Taking development into our own hands..."***

*In 1983, I was in charge of training for an NGO. The directors of the NGO, both foreigners, had taken an interest in me, a local agricultural engineer, to continue coordinating the project. But, at that time my interests were different; I didn't accept the responsibilities and left the project.*

*This put them in a very difficult situation. There wasn't any professional staff who knew the project well enough for them to take over from one day to the next. However, there were other staff who had worked with the project since the beginning. They didn't have university degrees, but they were very capable extension workers with good social and technical skills, especially the members of the coordinating team that had been involved in decision-making since the beginning of the project four years ago.*

*And that was the way they proceeded, with one of the farmer promoters assuming the leadership, supported by a team of three other promoters. Each one had specific responsibilities: one was in charge of logistical aspects, as well as being the IPM expert. Another was responsible for the methodological aspects, like planning of activities, follow-up with the promoters and extension workers, and preparation of reports. The third was responsible for the organizational aspects, follow-up with the community committees, and administrative aspects of the small projects, and community facilitator. The fourth was the general coordinator for all activities.*

*I visited them a year later and was amazed. The number of community committees had grown, and the number of improved farms and promoters had increased. More communities had been incorporated into the process. People were enthusiastic about their work. You could also see that it had not been easy to reach that point. Some members of the NGO team had been forced to leave their communities and go to the city. Some took their families, others left them behind, but would visit them on the weekends. The project donors did not have much confidence in them and were constantly placing strict rules of control. At times, there had been serious disagreements among them and it had taken time to heal the wounds and to be able to return to the work with enthusiasm.*

*I was content and impressed, and I admired what they had done; but at the same time, I felt left out. But, I must admit that they are capable and that they have done very well as the project coordinators.*

Johnson (1987) based on Mosher (1975) and his own experience, provides a series of recommendations of how to maintain the motivation of promoters:

- a) The roles and responsibilities of the promoters should be clearly defined and manageable. As their professional capabilities improve, their responsibilities can also be increased. Efforts should also be made to adapt the work to the capabilities and preferences of the promoters.
- b) Concrete economic and material incentives should be given.
- c) Promoters should feel that they are active members of the DO. Their participation in planning and evaluation meetings is very important. Also, opportunities should be created for their feedback, respecting and incorporating their points of view. The DO should be sure to let the promoters know that their work is highly valued.
- d) The DO should provide efficient support for the work of the promoters, ensuring, for example, that decisions are taken jointly and that resources arrive on time.
- e) DO managers should avoid favoritism among promoters.
- f) Provide certificates of participation each time promoters attend a training course. When possible, try to have the certificates "recognized" by government offices or by the agency that gave the course.
- g) Give awards to recognize for good participation in training courses and end workshops with a party or social event.
- h) In each training, emphasize the importance of altruism as a part of the project efforts and reinforce the idea with group dynamics and role-plays.
- i) Give continuous training based on expressed needs of the promoters, and provide information and materials.
- j) Try to get promoters to support each other.
- k) Provide constant supervision in a positive, competent and professional manner, always recognizing the quality of their work.

There are steps which can be taken by the DO and the promoters to ensure that appropriate promotions are given. For example, the DO should include a promotion strategy for the promoters among its institutional plans. At the same time, efforts can be made to improve the work environment according to the resources of the institution. Also, the promoters themselves can help to bring about their own promotions, by doing their work better, by clearly communicating work accomplishments to supervisors, and discussing the need for promotions.

## MOTIVATIONAL ASPECTS

Aspects that motivate	Aspects that reduce motivation
<p><b>Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To receive training and acquire experience</li> <li>• To receive certificates for having participated in training courses or for the work done</li> <li>• To receive educational materials and technical books</li> <li>• When the professional extension workers experiment with new technologies on the promoters' farms</li> <li>• To be able to provide practical examples which have been successfully tested</li> <li>• To travel to learn from the work of farmers and promoters in other communities</li> <li>• To conduct small-scale research</li> </ul> <p><b>Human relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To make many friends and meet other people</li> <li>• The promoter is motivated when there is moral support and interest from the <u>community</u>: they listen to what the promoter says, they have confidence in the promoter, the promoter is accepted, they recommend the promoter to undertake other tasks</li> <li>• The promoter is motivated when there is moral support and interest from the <u>professional extension workers</u>: respect and punctuality on the part of the extension worker, when the extension worker speaks the same language as the promoter and values the promoter's knowledge, continuous follow-up and frequent visits during which recognition is given for the quality of the work done, when the promoter gains the friendship of the extension worker</li> </ul>	<p><b>Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To not receive training materials or a certificate</li> <li>• When the extension worker does not train well, and then demands good work from the promoters in an area in which they were poorly trained</li> </ul> <p><b>Human relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Community:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- when there are divisions within a community</li> <li>- when there are changes in community leadership or authorities</li> <li>- when criticism or jealousies arise, or when continuous and unjust claims are made about the promoter</li> <li>- when there is a lack of follow-up by the community, because they do not feel that the project is important</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Institution/extension worker:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- when the promoter remains in the same position for a long time</li> <li>- lack of respect from the extension workers</li> <li>- inappropriate forms of letting the promoter know when they make a mistake</li> <li>- promoters do not feel comfortable when the extension workers do not have confidence in them</li> <li>- when the extension workers do not listen to or share the ideas of the promoters</li> <li>- when people do not pay attention to the promoter in the project office</li> <li>- lack of coordination</li> <li>- when the promoters are not included in decision-making</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## **Logistical support**

### *From the community:*

- gifts of food from community members
- their own community gives them permission to miss community work activities when necessary
- the community they serve actively participate in development activities
- part of the harvest is shared with the promoter (**see #1 below**)

### *From the DO/extension worker:*

- transportation (**see #2 below**)
- per diem, food (**see #3 below**)
- permanent follow-up and technical back-stopping from the extensionists
- benefits such as medical or accident insurance
- small quantities of seeds, vegetative material, and other inputs to be used in small-scale experimentation

## **Impact of their own work**

- To see positive results of their work in the community
- When there is replication of the promoters work in the communities
- To be able to present and share their work with others (eg. in courses or workshops) through the use of photographs, slides, videos

## **Participation**

- Participation of the promoter in the process of planning, organization, evaluation and decision-making within the DO or in the community
- To be able to participate in participatory analysis of problems with the community

## **Logistical support**

- When no support or follow-up is given
- When there is no transportation or per diem for food or transportation
- In some cases, these other incentives cannot substitute for receiving a salary, especially when the promoter works part-time or full-time

<b>INCENTIVES</b>	
<b>1. COMMUNITIES SHARE MATERIAL BENEFITS (MONEY OR PRODUCTS) WITH THE PROMOTERS</b>	
<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoters are motivated by the desire to share information which will enable community members to increase production</li> <li>• Helps to improve the economic situation of the promoters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It requires farmers to have a somewhat large scale production</li> <li>• If many of the benefits go to the promoter, there could be a lack of community support</li> </ul>
<b>2. TRANSPORTATION</b>	
<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows the promoter to move quickly between communities and within a community</li> <li>• Reducing the time spent travelling allows the promoter to dedicate more time to field work</li> <li>• Promoters suffer less if they have their own transportation</li> <li>• Some means of transportation (horses &amp; motorcycles are quite economical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abuses in the use of vehicles is quite common</li> <li>• A high risk of accidents, especially in the use of motorcycles</li> <li>• High maintenance costs</li> <li>• The use of a vehicle can "distance" the promoter from the community</li> </ul>
<b>3. PER DIEMS</b>	
<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an incentive to the promoter</li> <li>• Make the working conditions more acceptable</li> <li>• Allow the promoters to put more effort into their work and to do it more efficiently</li> <li>• Allow for more efficient travel between communities</li> <li>• Are fair, as they compensate the promoters when they have to pay for transportation between communities, or when they have to pay for food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Runs the risk of creating dependency, thus reducing the mobility of the promoter when there is no per diem</li> <li>• Represents an additional cost for the organization</li> <li>• In order to receive per diem, the promoter can "create the need" to cover a larger geographical area and visit a greater number of communities</li> </ul>

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation is an incentive and an important need which directly influences the level of motivation and the quantity of work that can be expected from a promoter.

The DO should provide the necessary transportation within the available resources of the institution, to enable promoters to do their job effectively. Several local transportation alternatives may exist (eg. public transportation, horses, mules, bicycles).

If the transportation includes motorized vehicles, there should be strict rules for controlling their use, as well as measures to avoid accidents.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

DOs should include salaries or other just compensation for their promoters in project proposals. They should also consider alternative incentives for promoters, such as access to a collective plot of land, or days off (Saturday, for example) so that promoters can attend to their own farms.

Promoters should learn to communicate their expectations and requests for promotion to the DO management, specifically proposing alternative ways in which their needs could be met. The institutions can also seek assistance from other DOs to design appropriate promotion plans and include these plans in the project proposals submitted to potential donors.

If the economic resources of the institution are limited such as not to be able to pay good salaries, the DO can plan certain activities directed to ensure that promoters have extra income from their own farm which helps improve their standard of living.

Promotion should be considered a mutual responsibility. The promoters should seek personal and professional growth and avoid a conformist attitude of not asking for a raise or a promotion. Promoters should have a positive view of their career as a way of professionalizing themselves.

DOs should consider promotions for their promoters in their general plans and specific projects. Promoters should be adequately compensated for their work, as they directly seek solutions to community problems and aim to achieve project objectives.

## **INCENTIVES FOR THE COMMUNITY: MOTIVATORS VS. "CANDIES"**

Incentives provided by the DO to the community are an important aspect to consider in the work undertaken by farmer promoters. This should be carefully managed because it has a direct influence in the success and sustainability of a project, or it can mean that a project fails and creates paternalism.

Organizations use different community incentives. These can be of two types: "motivating" incentives, which are positive, and "candy" which are considered counterproductive.

The work philosophy of the project to a great extent determines how incentives are managed. Paternalistic project strategies in which the DO comes and "gives everything" and the community is interested "to receive everything from above" are not sustainable. On the other hand, DOs which work with genuinely participatory and grassroots strategies may achieve sustainable development.

### **"Motivating" incentives**

"Motivating" incentives tend to be more positive, as they promote capacities for self-reliance, sustainability and the use of local resources within the community. "Motivating" incentives are used before work with the community begins and stimulate interest, so that community members experiment with new ideas. When "motivating" incentives are used after having obtained certain results, they act as a recognition of the quality of the work. "Motivating" incentives are not extravagant material incentives but rather are usually in the form of "information" about the experiences of other farmers. The rationale for the use of "motivating" incentives lies in the fact that farmers are motivated to try certain technologies based on their own conviction that the technology will be beneficial.

Although development institutions can provide incentives such as training and technical assistance to communities, it is important that the community contributes a counterpart of their own local resources, such as time, labor, economic resources, and willingness to work.

It should also be noted that if the use of "motivating" incentives (eg. several visits to a single farm, excessive trainings) is abused, this can result in problems for the community, by demanding undue time and additional resources from farmers.

<b>"MOTIVATIONAL" INCENTIVES (POSITIVE)</b>	
<b>Before</b>	<b>After</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training</li> <li>• Conduct farmer "cross-visits"</li> <li>• Give practical examples which have demonstrated success</li> <li>• Be punctual</li> <li>• Give value to community indigenous knowledge</li> <li>• Analyze problems with the community and consider their point of view</li> <li>• Use local, low-cost resources</li> <li>• Small-scale experimentation</li> <li>• Provide small quantities of seeds, vegetative material, and other inputs to be used in small experiments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make visits to innovative farmers to express recognition of the good work done</li> <li>• Good results of the work</li> <li>• The gratitude of the community</li> <li>• Personal satisfaction of having achieved certain benefits</li> <li>• To be able to present and share their work with others (eg. in courses or workshops) through the use of photographs, slides, videos</li> </ul>

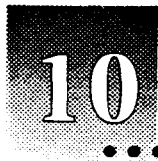
### **"Candy" incentives**

"Candy" incentives tend to be counterproductive because they induce farmers to become involved in a development activity, not because of their own conviction, but rather because of their interest to receive external material incentives. This promotes paternalism and external dependence, inhibits self-reliant development within the community, and the results tend not to be sustainable: "It's better to teach someone to fish, than to give them a fish."

<b>"CANDY" INCENTIVES (NEGATIVE)</b>
<b>Before and after the activity</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payment for the farmers to work on their own farms to test new technologies</li> <li>• Giving indiscriminate gifts (donations) to the community in the form of food, seeds, tools or agro-chemicals</li> <li>• Free labor</li> </ul>







## Training and technical assistance for farmer promoters

Development organizations generally have many informational needs. Like other extension workers, farmer promoters require constant access to technical and methodological information to work at their best. Lack of training is probably the greatest weakness in projects led by farmer promoters.

The most common sources of information for farmer promoters include professional extension workers, courses and seminars (local, national and international), community "cross-visits," educational field trips, and written materials.

Training periods for promoters' formation can vary considerably; from one week to many years. Courses can be short and intensive, or carried out over many months. Another method commonly used to increase promoter's knowledge are in-service trainings. Although development programs which use promoters often have good initial training programs, they typically do not conduct regular follow-up trainings to update promoters' knowledge.

Another problem often seen is the quality of the training, especially since often the training may fail to meet the promoter's practical needs. Organizations or people who may have high quality information, may have problems sharing their knowledge because of their lack of communications skills or experience to share it adequately.

Generally, promoters are not supported with a continuous training program which allows them to keep themselves updated about different technological and methodological aspects of rural development.

As a complement to "formal" training, it's also important for promoters to receive technical assistance and to exchange information and experiences with other development institutions. This helps to provide promoters with new information necessary for their professional growth. However, professional jealousies between DOs can sometimes make inter-institutional exchanges of information difficult and often hinder communication between promoters working for different DOs in the same region.

In practice, the promoter has more interest in technical information than information about methodologies. Many organizations do not place sufficient emphasis on the

methodological aspects of the work, resulting in promoters who may have satisfactory technical knowledge, but possess inadequate capacity to transmit it. There is a need for training in group formation and organization, human development, how to set objectives and develop plans, conflict resolution, facilitation of meetings, and motivational techniques, among others.

Special attention should be given to the quantity of information and the rate with which the information is shared with promoters. In many cases, the quantity of information shared is excessive and unmanageable, surpassing the promoters' capacity to retain and apply the knowledge in their field activities.

The use of appropriate communication methods (e.g. easily understandable written materials, radio, etc.) is important to support the promoters' work, and to update their own knowledge.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Given that neighboring farmers or those that are served in other communities are aware of the limited formal education of the promoter, self-esteem, credibility and effectiveness of the promoters depend a great deal on the access that they have to training and skill acquisition in the use of technologies which are unknown and useful to the community (Esman, 1983).

Pre-service training on methodological and technical aspects of development work should be provided to promoters, including courses on leadership and human relations. At the same time, a joint analysis of the information needs of the community with the promoters and members of the community should be done. The DO management should create opportunities and establish clear mechanisms for feedback about training needs of the promoters to solve community problems and to improve their performance.

It is important to continuously provide training opportunities to the promoters, so that they can gain and use new knowledge to provide better services to the community. Also, plans should be developed for farmers to validate the acquired information, to put the new ideas into practice through small-scale experimentation and wider sharing.

Promoters should have the opportunity to visit other development projects periodically to see and learn about other technologies or approaches. This method of gaining new insights has been known to give very good results. Establishing contacts with DOs which have small documentation centers or libraries help promoters to gain access to alternative sources of information.

<b>SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR THE PROMOTER</b>			
<b>Internal sources</b>		<b>External sources</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Educational field trips and exchanges among neighboring communities</li> <li>• Farmers' demonstrations</li> <li>• Local indigenous knowledge</li> <li>• Local experimentation</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing of knowledge from extension workers to promoters</li> <li>• Technical assistance from the DO</li> <li>• Courses, seminars, workshops</li> <li>• Written materials</li> <li>• Educational field visits, or field days to other locations</li> </ul>	
<b>POSITIVE</b>	<b>NEGATIVE</b>	<b>POSITIVE</b>	<b>NEGATIVE</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally, the information better reflects the actual conditions within the community</li> <li>• The information is already validated within the local context</li> <li>• Is more accessible</li> <li>• Uses local knowledge and resources</li> <li>• Promotes community awareness of local resources</li> <li>• It's low cost</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not be innovative</li> <li>• May not be appreciated or valued by the community</li> <li>• Can be obsolete and may not respond to the present reality, especially some indigenous knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally awakens greater interest and appreciation by the community, because it is different and "innovative"</li> <li>• Can bring new solutions to community problems</li> <li>• Can be accompanied by more effective teaching and communication methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be inappropriate</li> <li>• May not be accessible</li> <li>• Can be monopolized by a few</li> <li>• Can inhibit the process of recovering and/or generating local technologies</li> <li>• Is generally more expensive to obtain and use</li> </ul>



# 11

## Relationship between extension workers and farmer promoters

Typically, DOs have both extension workers and farmer promoters working in a project at the same time. The extension workers provide technical support and supervise the farmer promoters. Their participation is important, but not indispensable. The extension workers and promoters should work in a climate of mutual support. Competition between them and "control" of the promoters by the extension workers must be avoided.

Puerta (1987) notes that supervision is one of the weakest components of farmer-to-farmer programs, and that it is one of the factors which most affect program effectiveness. With support and supervision, promoters are more motivated and do a better job for the community. The support and supervision given by the DO's technical personnel to the promoters can consist of the following (Esman et al, 1980):

- a) promote the credibility and acceptance of the promoter by the community;
- b) help the promoter to have a clear understanding of his/her role and responsibilities with both the community and the DO;
- c) help the promoter to maintain a high level of motivation;
- d) provide on-going technical assistance, including conducting joint planning and evaluation of activities;
- e) serve as a link with other organizations to acquire external resources and information;
- f) monitor and follow-up the work of the promoter.

Although extension workers should accompany and strengthen the work of the promoters, on many occasions they compete with them, thus reducing the promoters' credibility. There are some cases in which the presence of the extension worker overshadows the work and knowledge of the promoter, creating confusion in the community. Nevertheless, promoters consider the technical assistance and support of the extension worker to be very important. This is the most common way for them to keep updated about new technical knowledge and to solve complex production problems in the field.

The role of the extension workers and the promoters within the organization should be clear in order to avoid duplication of efforts, unnecessary competition, and the subsequent loss of promoters' credibility. To facilitate this process, planning and evaluation of the work should be done jointly by the promoters and extension workers. This facilitates mutual support and sharing of information.

Also, extension workers and promoters should agree about the type of information that will be disseminated to communities. Sometimes extension workers and promoters working for the same DO and serving the same communities have given contradictory information on how to solve a problem, creating much confusion. At the same time, if extension workers from another organization visit the community, efforts should be made to ensure that they do not say or do things that will reduce the promoter's credibility.

### ***"Theory and practice: Freddy and Juan"***

*"We have tried to communicate with them," said Freddy, the extension worker, "but, it seems that they do not feel comfortable to work with us..."*

*Freddy had worked in the community of Linaca for three years. As the extension worker of the government soil conservation training program, he was knowledgeable about all of the technologies and the necessary theoretical specifications. He had made several attempts to communicate with the promoters of a local project (known as "United Farmers") that was working with the same technologies as his program, but apparently without effective results.*

*"We have tried to teach what we do to the farmer promoters of "United Farmers." They are using some practices, but they have not yet seen positive results in their region. They are stubborn; I believe that they feel inferior to us because we have degrees and they don't".*

*"We had several meetings," argued Juan, a farmer promoter from "United Farmers," "but, they always wanted to be our 'teachers' and they saw us as illiterate, ignorant farmers. We have been here in this area for the last seven years. Do you see that hill? That is my community; I was born there and I work there. I am willing to learn from someone else; not from information written on the blackboard, but from practical experiences in the field. Last month I was working with a woman to mark out a plot of land for vegetable production and the government extension workers passed by. I invited them to help us to measure, but they told me that this was the work of farmers. I bet you that they have never held a hoe..."*

***"The farmer promoter can do it too,  
even better and faster..."***

*When several families are in search of a solution, it's important that they are able to organize themselves. In these cases, a farmer promoter can help to organize the community. Planning is an important organizational aspect: discuss, select and plan activities to be jointly implemented.*

*A group of farmer promoters were participating in a general training course covering a number of topics, not just focused on agriculture. One day, the project had to conduct a participatory community planning. The date was fixed for a Saturday, and the extension workers arrived with a pre-prepared seminar presentation about how to develop a plan. Group dynamics exercises, small group work, plenary discussions and other activities were outlined for the entire day.*

*However, it turned out that the community had other community activities to do that day and could only dedicate two hours to the project planning workshop.*

*A few moments before starting, the project extension workers spoke with the farmer promoter from the community who was in charge of facilitating the workshop. The extension workers explained to him the outline of the workshop presentation that they had prepared.*

*What the extension workers had feared would happen, did happen. The promoter facilitated the activity but without following the steps included in the outline which the extension workers had carefully and professionally prepared.*

*The farmer promoter spoke in his own words and in his own way, and was able to finish the workshop in less than 2 hours. The community had understood and assimilated everything, and were able to complete a useful plan.*



## **CREDIBILITY**

Credibility is a mixture of personal attributes which allows others to trust one's words and actions. This mix contains such attributes as honesty, sincerity, and professionalism. Normally, credibility is forged over time based on a person's attitude and actions.

The promoters' credibility facilitate their work and is fundamental to success in the communities. It is influenced by the results obtained by promoters on their own farms and by the quality of the information shared with the rest of the community. Among the factors which promote the credibility of the promoter within the community are:

- to jointly make decisions with the community,
- to act with caution and respect in inter-personal relationships,
- to respect farmers' ideas and knowledge,
- to involve the community in the planning, implementation and evaluation of activities,
- to be exemplary farmers, showing success on their own farms.

Sometimes when promoters have gained credibility within the community there is a risk that the promoters may abuse this trust. For example, during planning phases the promoters may not take into consideration ideas given by others from the community. This can negatively affect the process by which the community develops it's own self-reliance, and may bring about a loss of credibility. If the promoters are able to notice these errors, they can act to control themselves and correct their attitudes.

Sometimes, when professional extension workers are present, they can act in a way which may lessen the credibility of the promoters. In many instances, extension workers have devalued the knowledge of the promoters in front of the community, resulting in a loss of their credibility. This can result in a perceived competition between extension workers and promoters. This is particularly true in the case of promoters' practical knowledge. The extension worker may not fully appreciate that the promoters' knowledge has been gained through practical "trial and error" which has allowed the adaptation of certain technologies to the promoters' local context. In some cases the devaluing of the promoters' knowledge by extension workers can be attributed to social and racial prejudices.

## ***"The power of vehicles..."***

*"It's true that Pedro had a tremendous impact in the community of Santa Teresa, but the people do not want to work with me," said Carlos, after several weeks of having begun work as a promoter in that community.*

*His friends listened to him; maybe they were thinking that Carlos was not as good a promoter as Pedro, and that the community had probably lost interest.*

*"Why do you think that the community does not want to work with you?", his colleagues asked Carlos.*

*"Well," said Carlos, "I have invited them several times to meetings, but they never come. Sometimes they ask me when Pedro will return because they need to transport some materials to town, and they want me to lend them the vehicle. But I don't know how to drive, and at this moment there are no vehicles available. So, it seems to me that the community liked to have a vehicle available for their use, and not necessarily to do the work."*

*But are you sure about that?...*

*"That's what it seems to me," said Carlos, "because before, when I arrived in the vehicle, everybody would greet me, but now they act as if they don't even know me..."*

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Promoters should maintain a positive image in the community. They should not promise "magic solutions" by raising false expectations which cannot be fulfilled, thus losing credibility.

The DO extension workers should value the capabilities of promoters, recognizing the importance of both practical knowledge and scientific knowledge, by promoting dialogue, training, and experimentation between the extension worker and the promoter.

The extension worker and the promoter should strive for a cordial work atmosphere in which they jointly plan their activities so that they can complement each other. It's important that they both have clearly defined roles and understand their responsibilities, thus avoiding confusion and problems.

## FARMER PROMOTERS AND CREDIT

Many rural families lack the necessary economic resources required for farming. Therefore, many DOs provide credit to farmers with the objective of financing the adoption of new technologies. Thus, credit can serve as an important tool to motivate communities to join a project.

However, in some instances, farmer promoters also function as credit promoters and collectors, which can interfere with their extension work in the communities. Farmers who are behind in their loan payments, may avoid and ignore the promoter, and sometimes even becoming hostile toward the promoter. Sometimes, when many community members have not repaid their loans, the DO may have to stop working in that community.

It is difficult for promoters to face problems of unpaid loans in communities and they may begin to have conflicts between their extension duties and their responsibilities to collect overdue loans. Some communities interested in agricultural projects are rejected by DOs because a history of unpaid, overdue loans.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Credit projects should be planned so that they do not interfere with the work of the promoters. For example, assign the task of loan collection to someone other than the farmer promoters; require that loans are managed from the central office, with legal documents which give legitimacy to the process and reduce the number of unpaid/overdue loans; and define procedures for the management of credit schemes within the organization. In summary, **do not mix the extension work of promoters with credit promotion and collection!!!**

# 12

## Women farmer promoters



Discussing the situation of women farmer promoters in DOs is not an easy task. Little information is available which would allow us to generalize about their situation in this area.

*"To be a woman extension worker is interesting to me for many reasons. First, professional women working in agriculture in my country represent a very small percentage as compared to men. Society views that it is not "feminine" to see a woman doing work that is generally done by men. Although I have observed that in the rural areas things are different and that women are always engaged in agricultural activities in the field, they hardly ever take an active role, and I say this because their participation in decision-making is small.*

*I could be wrong or there may be large variations from place to place. I myself recognize that in different areas where I have worked, there are differences. But I want to present to you some experiences that I have lived in the five years that I have been working in the field of development; experiences which come from a woman who because of her position can describe this admirable group of tireless women promoters, but also may paint a picture a level of participation which does not exist.*

*What draws my attention is that I have heard others, as well as myself, who have admired the quality of the work that these women promoters are able to accomplish, not just as farmers, but working as agricultural promoters in different rural development programs."*

In recent years efforts have been made to promote the active participation of women in rural development programs. Much research has been done to better understand the role that women play in agriculture in different countries. Phrases such as "if it is good for women, it is good for the community," have been popularized in the search for appropriate technologies.

<b>Women promoters</b>	
<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
<p><b>Personal qualities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have the same capacity as men to work as promoters</li> <li>• Assume their tasks with greater responsibility and patience than men</li> <li>• Are very creative and self-motivated</li> <li>• Inspire greater confidence and respect among other women, and serve as an example to them</li> <li>• Improved self-esteem</li> </ul> <p><b>Relationship with the community and others</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain and defend cultural identity</li> <li>• Help and assist families in the community</li> <li>• Actively involve women in community activities</li> <li>• Have a wider vision of the problems at hand: family, farm, community</li> <li>• Receive greater attention from local authorities</li> <li>• It's easier for the husband to accept that she works if she is paid</li> </ul> <p><b>Can work in any type of project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can work as a promoter in various types of projects, and not solely on "women's projects"</li> <li>• Communities tend to give greater priority to projects "for women"</li> </ul>	<p><b>Work overload</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assume a triple burden: family, production, extension</li> <li>• Have difficulties working in communities far from their own</li> <li>• May partially neglect their families</li> <li>• Lack of sufficient time to complete all home, farm, community organization, and extension work duties</li> </ul> <p><b>Low respect for their work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are susceptible to being mistreated by community members, and a lack of confidence by their husbands</li> <li>• Some communities and leaders do not value the work of women promoters</li> <li>• Are easily demoralized and may be easily affected by criticism</li> <li>• Some women promoters do not value or underestimate their own work</li> <li>• When they marry, they may suddenly resign</li> </ul>

There are many women working as promoters in different kinds of development projects. They are known for having positive qualities such as greater patience and responsibility and the virtue of being able to inspire confidence, especially if the extension activities are directed toward women. Often they have a wider and more

complete perception of the situation, as they see it from the viewpoint of being a mother, and in a large part are responsible for agricultural production, marketing, and managing the household economy.

Being women does not mean that they have to work exclusively in projects which focus on "gender issues," but rather they can work in any area. Nevertheless, the proportion of women promoters in development organizations is typically low.

There are many reasons for this low representation. One of the reasons is the limited time that women have available to dedicate to activities outside of their own households. In most rural communities, the basic work of the household is performed by women. Additionally, the role of being a mother requires her to be closer to the home for childcare and other household chores, compared to men. Also, there may be cultural norms which require women to spend more time in the household.

Most development activities, especially those undertaken outside of the promoters' community, are conducted during the day, a time during which women are preparing food or performing other household tasks. Few organizations take into consideration in their own scheduling of work activities the hours which are convenient for women to work.

In the rural areas of Latin America, there are various cultural reasons why DOs work less with women promoters. Many rural women marry at an early age; often husbands are jealous of men promoters who work with their wives. Also, husbands may not allow women to leave the house for training or other activities, as they claim that the household tasks and children would be neglected. In group meetings women often discuss strategies to convince their spouses to allow them to participate. These factors make it difficult to include more women as promoters.

Generally, women promoters conduct training activities related to health, nutrition, home improvement, home gardens, soil conservation, and reforestation, among others. In their community work, they face similar situations and challenges as men promoters, with the additional need to take care of their children and complete household tasks, in addition to the tasks related to their work with the DO. Salaried women promoters provide a source of additional income for the household, which can help to convince their husbands of the value of their work.

The contributions of women promoters are increasing every day and should be considered equally important as that of their male counterparts.

## ***"We're working for a living....."***

*"My name is Carmen and I am a farmer promoter. I promote family nutrition, natural medicine, and how to improve hygiene in the household, among many other things.*

*I began receiving training from DCI, a rural development organization, but I have worked more with Rural Action. Rural Action has given me a salary for 11 days of work each month, and I work part-time. I work with three communities - two neighboring communities as well as my own - and I visit around 40 women. However, in my community most women do not want to participate in the project, and it's not just the women. The other promoter, Juan, who works with the men, has very few men working with him in agricultural activities.*

*Since my children are already grown, I can leave them in charge of the house when I make my community visits. Sometimes I give trainings right here in my house.*

*Since I have planted cassava and tomato in my farm, last week I made a preparation of starch with one of the women's groups. We use starch for cooking or we can sell it in the market.*

*Having a salary helps a lot because life is expensive and working without earning any income is not easy for anyone. "*

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Programs which call for the participation of women into their activities as a program objective should consider the women promoters' schedule of activities when planning meetings, trainings, and other tasks.

They should also consider the additional responsibilities of women promoters within the specific socio-cultural context (eg. care for children, household chores, etc.) in assigning activities which are relevant and manageable. There is a need to search for work approaches for women promoters which justly recognize their role in the development of the community, for example a fair salary which is equal to that of their male counterparts.

# 13

## Some final considerations

There is no way to "conclude" this work, given that the acquisition of knowledge and experience about the farmer-to-farmer methodology is a continuous process which has been carried out by many development organizations in Latin America for years and is increasingly practiced in other countries of the world. However, certain guidelines can be shared to assist development practitioners to make informed decisions in their work.

The general lesson presented in this book is that **there is no formula** for determining which is the best alternative to follow in each of the components for the successful implementation of the farmer-to-farmer methodology.

The farmer-to-farmer methodology is being used in diverse contexts with satisfactory results because the methodology is flexible. It encompasses different alternatives within each component which can be adapted to different projects' needs according to the context and the particular circumstances in which they are developed and implemented. As we have presented in the previous chapters, there are various alternatives which can be considered in the design, implementation and evaluation of farmer-to-farmer programs.

### **FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE THE SELECTION AND APPLICATION OF THE DIFFERENT ALTERNATIVES FOR EACH COMPONENT OF THE FARMER-TO-FARMER METHODOLOGY**

The selection of each alternative described in this book is influenced by key factors. The following table presents the different components of the farmer-to-farmer methodology and the principal factors which influence the selection and application of different alternatives for each component. The decision to be made for each of these alternatives should be made on the basis of the following factors:

- 1) work philosophy and style of the development organization,
- 2) the level at which the promoters work, and their role in the extension program,
- 3) to whom are the farmer promoters accountable, and
- 4) the type of project implemented.



COMPONENTS OF THE FARMER-TO-FARMER METHODOLOGY	FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE THE CHOICE OF ALTERNATIVES PER COMPONENT
1) Characteristics of farmer promoters	1. <b>Work philosophy and style of the organization.</b>
2) What is the work of farmer promoters?	2. <b>Level at which the promoter works and role performed in the extension program:</b>
3) How do farmer promoters do their work?	. Own community: farmer promoter.
4) Selection of farmer promoters	. Other communities: farmer promoter, coordinator, trainer, organizer.
5) Generalist and specialist farmer promoters	. Management: leadership, general coordination, DO management, consultant.
6) Work location: in their own community or in other communities	3. <b>To whom is the promoter accountable?</b>
7) Volunteer, part-time and full-time farmer promoters	. Community
8) Salaries and job incentives for farmer promoters	. NGO
9) Training and technical assistance for farmer promoters	. Farmer association or community organization
10) Relationship between extension workers and farmer promoters	. Government
11) Women farmer promoters	4. <b>Characteristics of the project:</b>
	. Type
	. Objectives
	. Financing
	. Personnel
	. Geographic coverage
	. Transportation
	. Duration

## 1. Philosophy and work style of the development organization

The work philosophy and style of development organizations differ according to their objectives and mission. Government and private development organizations have a variety of orientations including religious, humanitarian assistance, environmentalists, developmental and indigenous, among others.

It is important to consider the organizational philosophy of the development organization when deciding which type of promoter is required and the work that is expected of them, based on the needs and characteristics of each project. The

philosophy and purpose of the organization determines to a great degree the objectives of the project and the work strategies which influence the work of the promoter.

Many DOs aim to ensure that relationships among the diverse actors who implement and participate in development projects be horizontal and participatory. Within this context, farmer promoters play a key role; their knowledge of the area, the culture and the people facilitate the accomplishment of the objectives of the institution as well as those of the community. Ideally, the objectives of both the community and the DO should be combined in the project strategies.

## **2. Level at which promoters work according to their role in the extension program**

Farmer promoters can work at the community level, within farmers' associations, or with development organizations, both public and private, depending upon their level of training and experience.

As previously described, promoters can play various roles: catalysts for implementing different development activities, including practical activities with farmers. They can be trainers, organizers or leaders. The promoters can coordinate work with other promoters, with extension workers and community leaders at the regional and even the national level. Therefore, the selection of alternatives for the components of the farmer-to-farmer methodology will depend on the role of the promoters and the level at which they work within the structure of the DO.

## **3. To whom are farmer promoters accountable?**

The selection of an appropriate alternative among the components presented must take into account who "demands" the services of the promoter, who are the recipients of those services and what are the power relationships between the DO, the community and the promoter. Therefore, the selection of alternatives in each component will be strongly influenced by one critical aspect: the power relationships.

Even though a DO from outside of the community "pays" the promoter, the community's priorities concerning the type, quantity and quality of the expected work should be seriously considered. The following guidelines should be applied to insure effective cooperation:

- 1) ideally, the promoter should be jointly selected by the community and the DO;

- 2) the roles and responsibilities of the promoter should be clear to the promoter, to the DO and to the community;
- 3) the objectives and expected results of the project should be clear to all parties;
- 4) project activities should be appropriately coordinated between the DO and the community.

#### **4. Project characteristics**

Even though development projects may have similar objectives, they all have differences as well. Diverse factors and components within a given project require adaptation of the farmer-to-farmer methodology. Projects differ in their policies, emphasis and strategies, and include diverse types of activities which determines whether promoters should be specialists or generalists; should work in their own community or in other communities; or should be remunerated or not.

Other important aspects that should be taken into account are the geographic coverage of the project and its duration. These aspects will determine the number of contracted or volunteer promoters needed, the cost of logistics and transportation, and overall, the type and level of the training and experience required by the promoters. In summary, the project characteristics are key factors in determining the best alternatives within each component of the farmer-to-farmer methodology.

**How to organize a sustainable movement instead of a short-lived organization**  
*extracted from "Paisajes Cambiados" by Felipe Teller*

*Sixty years ago, in the highlands of San Marcos, Guatemala, a group of committed farmers began a movement that still exists: "Unión Progreso".*

*This farmers' movement has achieved the transformation of small plots of unproductive land cultivated with traditional methods into hectares of land protected against erosion and cultivated with an intensive, diversified agriculture. Also, through their efforts, the community now has basic services.*

*Although the project began as a small, cooperative effort, it has become so successful that its members no longer migrate to the coast to earn seasonal wages. How were they able to achieve such a change? It was their values and tenacity in the face of changing realities which have made this community a place where all enjoy life. These values can be described using their own words...*

*"... It is the community's sons and daughters who must work to improve their own people..."*

*Following this philosophy, the community accepts outside help only when approved by the majority of the community. Most community service positions are held by people born from within the movement -community members over whom the community may also exercise authority because they have come from their own wombs: teachers, agricultural extension workers, nurses, and cooperative managers, among others.*

*"What is received as a gift does not work; everything worthwhile has a price..."*

*This philosophy challenges the paternalistic tendency of many development organizations which make their living from poverty and think that authentic development can be attained through money and donations. This philosophy, similar to the attitude of, "he who pays gives the orders..." held by some development organizations, has discouraged the farmers of San Pablo Toaca from accepting the "title" of promoters that gives credit to people who have only contributed a small part of the community's work. Without ignoring the significance of DOs efforts, they know that these are not equal to the years of intense work of the local population. Therefore, the people control their own movement, make their own decisions and decide with whom they want to work.*



# PART II

## **Case studies**



# 14

## The Experience of Consultores del Campo

by Robin Marsh (\*)

The non-governmental project, Consultores del Campo (CC), is used as an example of the community-based rural development approach to participatory technology generation and diffusion, and employs certain elements from the farming systems research approach as well. The project began in 1977 with the initiative of two individuals: a North American farmer, who had worked in rural Michoacan for extended periods since 1964, and a Mexican teacher and ex-Jesuit. Their objective was to help small farm families to escape the cycle of poverty, malnourishment, and ignorance by providing practical advice on agricultural problems that would lead to concrete income and nutritional benefits. From this simple beginning the project has grown to include over 40 agricultural communities in central Michoacan with a staff of four coordinators and 16 village-level advisors or promoters.

Consultores del Campo adopted the strategy of identifying local problems from direct contact with farmers: group meetings, discussions with community leaders, and random informal talks. The project believed that if farmers were involved in setting priorities from the start, it would ensure widespread interest in the outcomes of research and extension focused on those priorities.

The first problem that was tackled, for which CC became well known in the region, was the ubiquitous gopher, or "tuza". Farmers estimated that the rodent caused losses of between 20 to 30 percent, on average, in "andosol" maize fields. Their traditional methods of control, sticks and rifles, were uncertain and largely ineffective. CC devised an alternative low cost method that proved to be very effective: colored strychnine-poisoned corn kernels for "tuza" bait, placed at burrow intersections before planting. Farmers were gradually convinced of its effectiveness after numerous well-publicized hands-on demonstrations. Communities were encouraged to organize "tuza" control campaigns since adequate control depended on group adoption by farmers with contiguous fields. The project distributed "tuza" bait at cost.

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(\*) **Source:** Marsh, Robin (1991). Technology generation and diffusion in an uncertain environment: Alternative approaches to maize production in Mexico. Ph.D. Dissertation. Stanford University. Stanford, California. Chapter 3.



The tuza success was instrumental for gaining entry into the communities to identify new problems and obtain cooperation for researching solutions. Again, CC looked for low cost, risk-reducing solutions to common problems. One such problem was the heavy loss of home-stored grain to insects, rats, and mice (5 to 50 percent). CC helped farmers, in group demonstrations and with individual home visits, to safely spray attics with insecticides, and mix and apply rodent poison in discarded oil cans. Between 1978 and 1981, the project estimated that farmers saved 103,000 tons of maize with these low cost control methods.

In the early 1980s, the project began to expand geographically and in its range of activities and services. This period also coincided with the beginning of the debt crisis in Mexico, and the deterioration in economic conditions for maize production. Thus, CC saw the need to pursue activities that would broaden the income-earning potential of rural households, and increase productivity in traditional farming. New programs with potential income and nutritional benefits included: fruit tree cultivation, beekeeping, vegetable gardening, silo construction for storing corn stalks to use as livestock feed during the dry season, and maize/bean intercropping made possible with new insecticide control methods.

Risk-increasing technology (the increased use of purchased inputs) would be mitigated somewhat by the overall risk-reducing diversification of income sources. Furthermore, Consultores del Campo complemented field-level technical assistance with input and equipment supply that facilitated the adoption of new practices.

In 1985, Consultores del Campo underwent a thorough internal evaluation under the guidance of the international adult education center, CREFAL, in Pátzcuaro. Over two hundred farmers from local communities participated in the evaluation, voicing their praise and complaints about past activities, and suggestions regarding the future course that the project should take. Following this evaluation, CC broadened its activities to work toward the overall goal of promoting community-based self-reliant rural development. During this stage community organization has become the strategic component of the project, while technical assistance continues to play an important but secondary role.

## **RESEARCH AND EXTENSION**

Financial and technical constraints have limited the pure research activities of the Consultores del Campo project. Their work has concentrated on adapting the technologies generated by government and private research institutions to the farming systems characteristics and community resources that prevail in the project's area of influence.

For example, INIA recommendations for plant density and fertilization have been modified by CC to incorporate the results of independent soil samples, farmer managed trials and demonstrations, and farmer perceptions about the relative risks and benefits associated with alternative techniques. Since these risks and benefits vary considerably from region to region, and even within single communities, the project has avoided the use of standardized technical packages by adopting a flexible approach that allows farmers to select among various options. Thus, instead of recommending a specific fertilizer formula, CC recommends changes in nutrient proportions to meet specific fertilizer formula, CC recommends changes in nutrient proportions to meet specific field-level soil needs, chemical and manure mixes, and increased fertilizer levels up to a reasonable maximum.

Agronomic and economic risk are at the forefront of Consultores del Campo research efforts because of their close contact with small farmers, for whom these issues are paramount. Their basic method for reducing risk associated with technical change is to organize farmer managed trials of new methods under a variety of agronomic conditions over several crop seasons. Ultimately, the farmers decide to what degree they are willing to accept greater yield uncertainty in exchange for higher expected benefits.

Although CC research efforts have led to significant adaptations of existing technologies, and some original innovations, the project's more important contribution has been its unique farmer-to-farmer extension methodology. From the start, the project identified the need to overcome local resistance to change and negative attitudes toward any sort of outside intervention by communicating with farmers in their own language and affording them the respect they deserve as agricultural experts. The best way to accomplish this gap-bridging challenge was to bring respected, open-minded farmers into the project as informants, communicators, teachers, and technical experts.

These farmer extension agents, known as "farmer agricultural promoters", are recruited from the CC project area, to work in and around their own communities. The farmer agricultural promoters divide their time between the communities they serve and frequent project meetings for instruction, planning, and evaluation. These meetings have been an important source of motivation where the farmer agricultural promoters report on their experiences in the fields and villages, and debate problems, frustrations, and possible solutions. The project coordinators try to place specific program objectives in the context of promoting social change and self-reliant development, and to instill for themselves and the farmer agricultural promoters a sense of "mission" (mística) about their role as social change agents.

The farmer agricultural promoters are paid slightly above the minimum rural wage plus travel expenses, in addition to their normal earnings from farming. The project recognizes that this low pay is insufficient compensation, but believes that additional rewards are reaped from serving as change agents in poor communities. Farmer agricultural promoters not interested in these non-monetary rewards become discouraged more easily, and have dropped out of the project on occasion.

Employing farmers as extension agents resolves many problems that tend to undermine more typical extension efforts:

1. Most important, the outsider barrier is attenuated when agents speak the same language as the clients; this "horizontal communication" encourages client farmer participation rather than passive acceptance or rejection.
2. Local farmers bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to a technology generation and diffusion project that is only partially attainable by outside experts; committed farmer agricultural promoters can provide this information in much more reliable and useful ways than farmers interviewed randomly for background surveys.
3. Farmer extension agents are up-to-date on the agricultural calendar and current production problems.
4. They do not need to comply with regular office hours; as a result they can provide technical assistance in a timely manner.
5. Traditional extension agents often blame small farmers for their backward ways and reluctance to innovate; farmer agents, however, are more likely to comprehend the complex reasons behind this reluctance, which is an important first step for promoting change.

At the same time, farmer-to-farmer extension present certain obstacles that are not confronted in more traditional technology generation and diffusion programs:

1. Consultores del Campo has recruited farmer agricultural promoters based on their leadership qualities and farming abilities, irrespective of their level of formal education. Consequently, the project has had to allocate considerable time for basic education, in addition to direct training for project programs. Special pedagogical skills are needed to reach new concepts to poorly educated farmers, and to overcome their hesitation to become teachers themselves.

2. Farmers who become promoters may confront initial skepticism about their newly acquired information and skills. Client farmers may trust the good intentions of CC farmer agricultural promoters, but they need to be convinced that farmers like themselves can offer useful advice and support. Much of this convincing takes place in the field demonstrating alternative farming methods over and over again..

### **PATERNALISM VERSUS SELF-RELIANCE:**

The CC project's acceptance by rural communities has been helped a great deal by its non-governmental status. Government agencies are almost uniformly distrusted in the region; their presence is tolerated in expectation of some financial gain but rarely penetrates beyond surface cooperation. Although many small farmers rely on the government for credit, inputs, markets, and basic services and infrastructure, they complain bitterly about broken promises, humiliations, and incompetence. This paternalistic relationship is common throughout rural Mexico and makes it very difficult for any government-affiliated project to gain entry into the "hearts and minds" of peasant communities.

The principal goal of Consultores del Campo, in its second stage, is to help communities reduce their dependence on government by promoting community-based alternatives. At the same time, CC assists farmers to obtain government services as efficiently as possible, and with a minimum of frustration (filling out forms, reviewing obligations, preparing petitions, meeting with officials, etc). The project also pursues working relationships with government agencies when it is mutually beneficial, for instance, with SARH/INIA for sharing technical information, and with FIRA as a source of funding for the project's technical assistance services.

Since the mid-1980s, CC has helped to promote community-based savings funds as an alternative to BANRURAL credit. These savings allow farmers the opportunity to earn interest on their money, lend and borrow as needed, and reduce production costs with the timely, collective purchase of fertilizer and other inputs. Equally important, the Cajas have served as an organizational stepping stone toward other forms of group action: direct marketing of maize, consumer cooperatives, solicitation of basic community services (potable water, electricity), and the formation of inter-community savings to pool resources and influence.

An important part of the project's strategy to promote community self-reliance is to actively involve rural women in production activities and organizational efforts. Consultores del Campo employs four women promoters to work with village women on a variety of income-earning projects, and to build their confidence and skill for

carrying out administrative functions and to represent their communities before government officials. Current projects include: vegetable gardening, beekeeping, raising and marketing of chickens, fruit and vegetable processing, sewing and marketing of clothes, and women's savings funds. Helping women to become full participants in community life is an effective way to diffuse some of the economic and background risks associated with rural poverty.

Consultores del Campo recently adopted a plan aimed at minimizing dependence on the project and its services. The plan involves a strategy for gradual withdrawal after peasant communities have successfully "appropriated" the technical and organizational skills needed to carry on independently. The plan calls for four distinct stages of project involvement: intensive, continuous, discontinuous, and occasional, taking on average, four years to complete the cycle. Its success will depend on whether local leaders and designated farmer committees are willing and able to assume responsibility for overseeing CC-initiated programs, and for promoting continuing cooperation and innovation.

### **SUMMING UP CONSULTORES DEL CAMPO**

Consultores del Campo is an innovative community-based rural development project that has gained the acceptance and cooperation of a large number of agricultural communities in the Lake Pátzcuaro region. The project promotes simple, low cost solutions to common agricultural problems. Its farmer-to-farmer extension methodology has reached and convinced farmers that rejected more traditional extension programs. In response to deteriorating economic conditions the project has provided training in diverse income-earning activities and promoted community-based alternatives for meeting financial, commercial, and basic service needs.

Still, important problems remain which will undermine the long-term viability of the project if they are not resolved: 1) unreliable financial support; 2) inconsistencies in personnel skills and motivation; 3) internal project division; and 4) intra-community and inter-community conflicts that impede collective action.

# Methodological Experiences of the Farmer-to-Farmer Program UNAG

*by Marcial López and Abelardo Rivas (\*)*

## INTRODUCTION

The Farmer-to-Farmer Program (FFP) in Nicaragua, established by the National Union of Farmers and Livestock Producers (UNAG), works on the premise that farmers can transform their environment for its benefit or its destruction. This is a good starting point to analyze the reality and to begin to seek new forms of interaction and understanding in rural development.

Starting in 1989, over a seven year period, a model of sustainable agriculture was designed on the basis of a farmers' movement which recognized and valued its own practices and advanced toward the socio-economic transformation of the rural sector.

Extension activities among farmers is not a totally new idea in Latin America. In Guatemala it was carried out between small, resource-poor farmers with good results. However, it was brutally repressed by political intolerance. Therefore, farmers' organizations and grassroots groups have realized that even though the possibilities for development depend on the work of small scale farmers in each country, the economic viability and the strengthening of the sector depend on the ability to capitalize these efforts from a Central American perspective.

Thus the "farmer-to-farmer movement" has extended beyond borders in an effort to strengthen a network of Central American farmers. By addressing their agricultural problems the farmers are reactivating their weakened economies and participating in fora in which the present and the future course of the region are being decided.

This chapter shares a methodological experience that contributes to a collective reflection about these farmers' vision of development work and the ideological effort that it implies.

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## **BACKGROUND**

In 1987, UNAG established contact with SEDEPAC (Development and Peace Service), a Mexican NGO, to promote the exchange of agricultural technologies and methodological experiences between Mexican and Nicaraguan farmers, to strengthen the links of solidarity between farmers of both countries.

As a result of the enthusiasm generated by this exchange between farmers and the commitments made by participants in Nicaragua to put into practice and share with others what they had learned, a soil conservation project was established in Teustepe and Santa Lucía (Boaco), and in Pochocuape (Managua), arid zones in which small scale farmers cultivate on steep slopes. In a continuous process of communication and exchange, small-scale farmers in Nicaragua began to value farmers' own knowledge through the use of technologies learned from other farmers, with good results.

This began a process of recognizing farmers' potential and the role they were asked to play in development. This has brought about an increased coverage, as well as the improvement of the technological content, pedagogy, productive capacity, ecological awareness and organization of the program.

The process began with the recovery of the historical memory of the relationship between the farmer and the land as a resource. The messages of the "Green Revolution" were analyzed from the perspective of small subsistence farmers who have low levels of formal education, small amounts of poor quality land, little or no capital, and who were engaged in food production for self-consumption or for local markets. From this analysis, farmers began to question the anti-ecological and anti-farmer technological model of the "Green Revolution" which had been promoted for many years in Nicaragua.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF THE EXPERIENCE**

In Nicaragua the initial idea of the FFP focused on "promoting a soil conservation program oriented to small-scale farmers cultivating on steep slopes" and the development of farmers by means of a sustained training process which would transform them into volunteer promoters capable of initiating and leading a sustainable process for the transformation of the agricultural sector in Nicaragua.

With this purpose, they have been gradually developing a strategy which considers people as active subjects of their own development, trying to respond to the factors that limit production by using local resources from an ecological perspective, and change the traditional vertical relationship between extension workers and farmers.

The key of the FFP is good communication among farmers. This is a relationship among equals which reduces the lack of confidence to participate, minimizes the fear of expressing themselves, and improves communication through the use of clear and simple language. Sharing of experiences is done in a practical way by directly involving the farmer in the learning process, beginning with people and their farms, their experiments, and the concrete results they have obtained.

## **THE METHODOLOGY**

The objectives of this and other programs that work in the rural sector is to strengthen the innovative spirit of farmers and their ability to communicate knowledge with other farmers. This goal becomes more difficult to achieve if the technology offered endangers the survival capacity of farm families.

For the purpose of understanding what facilitates the innovation and multiplication of technologies among farmers, the approach proposed by Roland Bunch in his book "Two Ears of Corn" has been applied by the FFP with good results. Among the factors that have to be considered are:

1. Who is trained and at what levels?
2. Farmer-to-farmer extension and farmer experimentation
3. Farmers' own perspective and knowledge
4. The role of the extension worker

### **1. WHO IS TRAINED AND AT WHAT LEVELS?**

Before introducing a technology, the following questions should be asked:

- Does it address a felt need?
- Does it offer economic advantages?
- Can it be adapted to the local system?
- Does it utilize local resources available to the farmers?
- Can it be efficiently communicated ?
- Is it low risk and simple?
- What ecological impact will it have?

Training activities begin by observing the factors which are dependent and independent of people. To encourage participation, simple questions are asked. Exercises are prepared to compare and demonstrate on a small scale, and lessons based on the farmers' own personal experiences are included. Finally, all participants arrive at conclusions.



The next step is to undertake a practical demonstration. Learning by doing enables the program to:

- overcome the problem of lack of understanding of theoretical aspects by applying practical and simple solutions with the participants,
- provide opportunity for farmers to participate,
- train farmers in technologies and methodologies.

Thus, the theoretical-practical workshops are organized not as a series of classes but as the implementation of a series of practical exercises or experiences. Training materials are prepared by the farmers themselves and are supported by teaching with illustrated pamphlets.

### **The farmer promoter**

In the training process, the promoter uses the following tools:

- Technical training: 20% theory and 80% practice
- Their own farms are used as examples
- Group work
- Exchange and sharing of experiences

The FFP provides the promoter methodologies which improves their work, including:

- Teaching methodologies
- Communication and motivation techniques
- Farmer experimentation
- Analysis of factors that limit production
- Group work

FFP methodological support helps the promoter to plan, organize, implement, and evaluate results and to identify new promoters. This assistance is carried out through courses and methodological workshops, meetings of promoter teams, production of teaching materials for farmers and follow up of farmers during the training workshops. Groups of promoters and farmers are assisted to respond to the requests of new communities, to provide methodological tools to farmer promoters to analyze which factors limit production, to host participatory meetings to arrive at alternative solutions to socio-economic problems, and to select training topics to respond to local needs. The purpose is to motivate the farmer promoters to share the technical knowledge and skills needed to teach other farmers. In addition to the changes that the farmer promoter introduces on his own farm, the farmer is motivated by:

- desire to experiment and develop innovative practices,
- desire to exchange information and teach others,
- work in teams,
- the prestige they gain,
- the desire to improve their standard of living,
- solidarity with other farmers.

## **Farmers**

The direct beneficiaries of the FFP are men and women farmers, members of cooperatives or individuals, who make their living from the land and are interested to find production alternatives. These farmers are directly trained by other farmer promoters in soil and water conservation, minimum tillage, cover crops and green manure fertilization, integrated pest management, bio-intensive gardening, reforestation, organic fertilizers, seed production and post harvest storage, among others.

The main types of training activities at this level are theoretical-practical workshops, field days and farmer meetings. The objectives of these courses are:

- to undertake small-scale experimentation
- to strengthen farmer leadership
- to improve production levels
- to strengthen farmers' confidence and motivation

The methodology of the FFP limits the risk of wide dissemination of inadequate technologies. Wide dissemination will not occur if the farmer promoters have not previously adopted the technology in their own farm. It's important for the farmer promoter to use caution and work slowly. The need to convince their neighbors without resorting to material incentives prevents the dissemination of inappropriate technologies.

## **2. FARMER-TO-FARMER EXTENSION AND FARMER EXPERIMENTATION**

### **Farmer-to-farmer extension**

Extension begins with, and has as its basic principle, in small-scale experimentation conducted by farmer promoters on their own farms. Their success is what motivates other farmers who are also interested to find solutions to production problems. Without success in the experimentation, there is no extension.

The farmer's motivation, desire to help and a sense of solidarity play important roles as these encourage other farmers to learn from new experiences and results. Field trips allow farmers to learn from innovations and see concrete solutions that solve felt needs such as soil erosion. In this way the factors that limit production are explained and enthusiasm is generated with simple ideas appropriate to farmers. The farmer promoter conducts these field trips as opportunities to respond to the participants' concerns, explaining the process, the advantages and disadvantages, comparing the past with the present, facilitating questions and answers and, finally, inviting the participants to take training courses during which a commitment is made to implement what they have learned.

The promoters' visits to neighboring communities are very important to provide follow up to the work and to allow exchanges between communities. In this way, not only do people share knowledge to improve production, but they also strengthen fraternal and social bonds. Also, extension activities are carried out when the promoter talks with their friends, sharing experiences of the exchange visits, discussing points of view and contrasting situations, thus promoting joint problem-solving.

Members of the community, including women and children, participate in the extension activities, including the use of poetry, drawings, cooking and socio-dramas. The FFP has more than 50 songs composed by people themselves and poetry and theater groups that help to create interest and disseminate experiences.

### **EVALUATION OF THE EXTENSION AND TRAINING METHODOLOGIES USED BY THE FFP PROMOTERS**

An evaluation conducted in 1994 with 86 farmers (18 women and 68 men) showed the aspects of a training process which participants identified as being important. This evaluation of the training methodology was important because the promoters could review and evaluate activities which they facilitated or participated in.

The farmer-to-farmer methodology serves four primary purposes: exchange, planning, education and organization:

EXCHANGE	PLANNING	EDUCATION	ORGANIZATION
<p>This means sharing experiences among equals by proposing and sharing ideas, which strengthens dialogue and clarifies doubts.</p> <p>Also, this entails exchanging seeds, visiting each others' farms and families and actively participating. The visits motivate the farmer and serve to validate farmers' work, exchange information, put into practice new experiences and teach others.</p>	<p>This means planning and organizing activities in a group, setting goals, implementing and evaluating the work completed, reaching agreements and making concrete commitments</p>	<p>Workshops strengthen knowledge and/or teach new methods and serve as fora to exchange theoretical and practical information.</p> <p>Small-scale experimentation facilitates observations, measuring and calculations; and knowledge is developed and shared.</p>	<p>Gradually, the capacity for self management by groups of farmers is strengthened and abilities and skills are developed for improved group interaction. In cooperation with the people, organizational structures are progressively developed to facilitate the solution to local needs. Participants develop a sense of self-esteem.</p>

The following table summarizes the results of an evaluation of a variety of extension methods used:

ACTIVITY	PURPOSE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<b>Promotional visits to the community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain program objectives</li> <li>• Explore conditions for program development</li> <li>• Motivate exchange of experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To know the people and the community</li> <li>• Motivates people through visits to the promoter's farm to see experiments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires time to identify and contact authentic community leaders who will facilitate the meeting</li> </ul>
<b>Technical workshop</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn new alternative ideas and technologies</li> <li>• Reflect about destructive agricultural practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoter is key to the activity</li> <li>• Allows farmers to increase and share knowledge</li> <li>• Extension agent is able to detect knowledge gaps and participants' expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If group is too large, work is dispersed</li> <li>• Poorly designed workshop discourages participants</li> <li>• Runs the risk of "mechanically" exchanging experiences</li> </ul>
<b>Visit of technical team to the community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To motivate, to see successes and problems and to plan</li> <li>• See farms, evaluate experiments and meet families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivate farmers and the community</li> <li>• Improve communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have to allocate time required for each farmer</li> <li>• If visit is unplanned, affects farmer's activities</li> </ul>
<b>Field day and horizontal exchange</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn practical experiences from other farmers</li> <li>• Exchange ideas, seeds, plants, etc</li> <li>• Broaden friendships and relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn and teach</li> <li>• Practical and demonstrative</li> <li>• Can help to resolve problems</li> <li>• Motivates the visiting farmer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning requires time</li> <li>• Large groups are a waste of time</li> <li>• If too many farms are visited, there is no time to exchange ideas</li> </ul>
<b>Methodologic al workshop</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train new promoters</li> <li>• Clarify difficult concepts</li> <li>• Update knowledge</li> <li>• Combine theory and practice</li> <li>• Refine tools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outstanding farmers learn to teach others</li> <li>• Improve technical knowledge and management of group dynamics</li> <li>• Allows deeper understanding of themes of interest</li> <li>• Helps identify qualities of farmer participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires good preparation, which implies time preparing promoters who give courses</li> </ul>

ACTIVITY	PURPOSE	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
<b>Trips abroad</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exchange experiences</li> <li>• Know other peoples and cultures</li> <li>• Increase motivation and enthusiasm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthens farmer social and political movements, and the promotion of networks</li> <li>• Establish contacts, especially for marketing</li> <li>• Exchange of technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trips may demand too much of farmers' time, especially in peak production season</li> <li>• Limited time cuts short sharing of experiences</li> <li>• If the area visited is too different from the farmers' own reality, the visit may not be convincing</li> </ul>
<b>Promoters' meetings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enables periodic and continuous experience exchanges</li> <li>• Facilitates study and analysis of the communities and its critical production factors</li> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Evaluate progress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improves organization of tasks</li> <li>• Recognizes promoters' work</li> <li>• Improves communication between promoters and extension workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers are unhappy when not taken into account</li> <li>• Avoid giving too much attention to one person or family as it limits the sharing of other experiences</li> <li>• Requires maturity by extension workers to facilitate the growth of promoter groups</li> </ul>
<b>Talks with producers (face to face)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare situations</li> <li>• Motivate</li> <li>• Invite new persons to participate</li> <li>• Share experiences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use different opportunities to promote the program (such as the church and other celebrations)</li> <li>• Opens the possibility of community's growth</li> <li>• Flexible</li> <li>• Can happen in non-work hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No credibility, words only</li> <li>• Farmer is mistrustful when promoter is not skilled and respected</li> <li>• Follow up difficult when communities are dispersed</li> </ul>
<b>Farmer meetings or exchanges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exchange new knowledge</li> <li>• Motivate groups</li> <li>• Evaluate and set new goals</li> <li>• Learn of the progress of the program activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn more</li> <li>• Conduct participatory evaluation</li> <li>• Exchange experiences</li> <li>• Includes participation of new persons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor selection of the participants makes activity unproductive</li> </ul>

Farmer exchange is the most important learning method for farmers. It allows them to see another farm and its production system, learn new ideas, exchange seeds, meet families and establish new social and economic ties. Farmer promoters emphasize that being able to show the results of their work on their farm through individual or group visits and getting suggestions and recommendations, is very rewarding. Farmers stress the importance of follow up by the farmer promoters and extension workers after the training, especially in those communities where the work has been recently started.

### **Farmer participatory research**

Farmer research and experimentation is a key component which complements the process of extension and communication in a continuous manner, without being a separate or exclusive activity. Groups of farmer promoters who participate in the FFP do not function exclusively as research groups. But rather, they have a broader role which combines education, extension and research. Each farmer who participates in a FFP workshop is encouraged to conduct various kinds of experiments in their farm. Farmers are free to conduct research, thus in a process of trial and error, they test various technologies to solve production problems. It has been observed that farmers experiment for different reasons:

***To learn:*** farmers who test a new technology for the first time, eg. learn how green manures work.

***To compare one technology with another:*** eg. corn with organic fertilizer vs. corn with chemical fertilizer.

***To compare one system with another:*** eg. mono-cropping of corn vs. corn associated with legumes of three, four and nine month vegetative cycles.

***To develop a new production system:*** introducing soil conservation, legumes, silage management, use of natural insecticides, rotational livestock grazing, forestry and agriculture, etc.

Farmers that experiment accomplish the following:

- generate knowledge and information,
- increase knowledge on the introduction of technologies in different agroecological zones,
- increase knowledge of the technologies that are promoted by FPP, their applicability, performance and ability to be adapted and managed within existing production systems,
- improved use of methodologies and communication among farmers.

For farmers, learning is not only exchanging and receiving knowledge but putting into practice what they have learned. It is also reflecting on and analyzing the process of research, observation, comparison, interpretation and sharing the results of field trials. This process is the basis for training and extension, thus becoming a powerful tool for development and innovation. In addition to being promoters, the farmers are agricultural researchers and can propose concrete questions for research.

### **3. FARMERS' OWN PERSPECTIVE AND KNOWLEDGE**

More than providing recipes and recommendations, the methodology builds upon a basic premise: the importance of the farmers' perspective and knowledge. In general, farmers have good reasons for doing what they do, therefore, it can be argued that their actions are rational. The production system that each farmer uses is appropriate for the conditions under which they produce. The communication that is established in the exchanges, training and field trips enables the farmers to understand an alternative experience and incorporate into their production system elements of what other farmers have done.

This responds to the diverse social factors and agroecological characteristics facing each farmer which may be difficult to understand at first. For example, for each farmer or group of farmers there are different farm conditions with varied availability of resources, land ownership, market conditions and population density, among others.

In the FFP we have learned that the processes of technology transfer cannot be seen as linear or mechanical, but as open, dynamic processes which are permanently adapting themselves to the characteristics of the area and each particular farmer. Therefore, farmers can select from experiences they encounter, those elements that are most appropriate and best respond to their needs or production problems without risking their security.

The FFP emphasizes enabling farmers to understand and manage practical, simple concepts and basic practices for addressing problems. Instead of learning about different types of fertilizers, the key point is to understand the importance and dynamic of organic matter, always applying techniques that use local resources and directly involving the farmers and their family. In this process of communication and exchange of knowledge, the farmers themselves are in charge of enriching and diversifying the production strategies, adapting them to their own reality and setting goals for addressing general agriculture problems with a combination of appropriate alternatives.



For example, in an area in which the fundamental problem is weeds, the farmers experiment with cover crops, manual control of flowering and mechanical control of weeds using animal traction. However, if the soils are low in organic matter, and water is a limiting factor, the farmers, in addition to building ditches to collect water, may use chicken manure and test legumes as a green manure.

In an arid area in which the principal activity is cattle raising and there is extensive deforestation, the farmer promoters begin experiments on the use of animal manure and silvo-pastoral practices. The use of animal manure is an old, well know method of fertilization which in Nicaragua was displaced by chemical fertilizers in Nicaragua. Currently, the FFP has revitalized its use in approximately twelve different ways.

Participating in the FFP the farmer begins to introduce new technologies and activities. This demonstrates the enormous capacity of farmers to innovate with technologies, but also, to modify different components of the system together with alternatives that do not risk the family's food security because they do not replace the traditional practices.

#### **4. THE ROLE OF THE EXTENSION WORKER**

As mentioned before, the recognition by extension agents of farmers' knowledge is the basic starting point of the FFP. This allows to permanently seek a better understanding of the farmers' production systems before promoting practices which could be inappropriate. The initial attitude of respect for farmers' knowledge is necessary for a good working relationship between the promoter and the extension worker. This allows the extension worker to value the farmers' role to resolve problems and to support communities in their development processes.

To understand the farmers' perspective, the extension worker should be interested to learn the agricultural history of the area; the type and use of soils; rainfall data for the area; the true agricultural calendar of the producers; the principal crops for consumption and for sale; the management of production systems; the typology of farmers; identification of farmers that have the most prestige and the composition and movements of the local work force. This information can be obtained through personal visits, by working on a farm, in conversations with men and women of the community or through a participatory rural appraisal.

The FFP aspires that the extension workers who provide technical assistance are able to:

- facilitate the flow of information among different farmers groups,
- assist in planning and coordinating exchanges, workshops, etc,

- assist groups to adapt technologies from one area to another,
- identify gaps in farmers' knowledge, experimentation and innovation processes,
- serve as links between the sources of information and farmers' groups,
- identify bottlenecks and farmers' needs in order to accelerate the adoption process in new farms,
- promote grassroots development through the implementation of the farmer-to-farmer methodology.

In an effort to strengthen the capacity of farmers' groups and to find collaborators to help improve the work of the program, the extension agents' teams have collaborated with other institutions and NGOs such as the National Agrarian University to conduct a systematization of the impact of the legumes in two provinces in the country; with ZAMORANO on integrated pest management; with PRIAG to strengthen the capacity of farmers' research groups; with PASOLAC in the training and validation of hillside farming, and with ENLACE-SIMAS to produce technical materials and disseminate information.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZING FARMER PROMOTERS GROUPS**

Organizing groups of farmer promoters within the FFP has served to:

- a) Ensure active farmer participation in the development and dissemination of technologies,
- b) encourage the dissemination of technologies within the farmer promoters' groups and among other farmers,
- c) support contacts and communication among farmers,
- d) change the traditional top-down relationship into a more participatory working relationship between farmers and external agencies,
- e) facilitate understanding of situations from different viewpoints and improve the ability to accept new ideas,
- f) strengthen positive attitudes in the face of uncertainty,
- g) increase the capacity to develop technologies for solving production problems,
- h) enable farmers to face diverse and complex situations,
- i) develop alternatives adapted to diverse situations, and complement research results,
- j) accelerate the process of local innovation by farmers,
- k) support local development processes.

Some examples of the benefits of the FFP mentioned above can be given, as perceived both by extension workers and farmer promoters.

EXAMPLES	VIEWS OF EXTENSION WORKERS	VIEWS OF FARMER PROMOTERS
<p><b>A)</b> In recent years, soil conservation practices and fertility management practices initiated by farmers have been disseminated in Nicaragua. These technologies allow for a better use of local resources and optimized the use of labor. Soil and water conservation, the use of compost, legumes, crop residue management and organic insecticides, among others, are widely disseminated.</p>	<p>Farmers actively participate in technology dissemination. Promoters develop and share their own innovations through workshops, farmer meetings, field trips, fairs, etc.</p>	<p>We have achieved a change in the relationship with external organizations and extension workers.</p> <p>They place more value on farmers' knowledge.</p>
<p><b>B y C)</b> Promoters conduct meetings with farmers to identify and analyze problems and alternative solutions.</p> <p>In Masaya farmers are controlling fungus in cassava by applying lime, practice developed by a farmer through experimentation. It is being disseminated among farmers.</p>	<p>Farmers demand more information from extension workers.</p> <p>Farmers' innovation has increased</p>	<p>Extension workers do not provide much help.</p> <p>The government does not support farmers' development</p>
<p><b>D)</b> Planning is bottom-up.</p> <p>Promoters determine their experiments and plan their activities.</p> <p>Organizations seek promoters as agents for knowledge dissemination.</p> <p>Experiments conducted by promoters on their own farms gives them prestige in the eyes of extension workers and organizations.</p>	<p>This has enabled experiments to respond to the solution of local problems.</p> <p>Training is done in response to demand.</p> <p>Organizations do not coordinate activities properly, and are a negative influence as they compete for clients with diverse focuses and methods.</p>	<p>We receive more and more visits from different organizations. Each has its own style of convincing us.</p> <p>We have more opportunities and organizational capacity to negotiate and work with development organizations.</p>
<p><b>E y F)</b> Martin Aguirre, a promoter in the community of Mateare, after initiating soil conservation practices, tried a hydraulic pump powered by animal traction and installed a solar panel.</p> <p>Promoters allow their wives to participate in workshops and exchange visits within and outside the country.</p>	<p>The relationship established with outside agents is determined by the experience and needs of the promoter. The promoter influences the focus and methodology of projects in the area.</p> <p>There are more than 300 women participating in activities of the FFP.</p>	<p>"I feel like an active participant in local development."</p> <p>"I am taken into account in a relationship in which the extension worker does not have the last word."</p> <p>"We also have a right to participate and help to change the reality in which we live."</p>

EXAMPLES	EXTENSION WORKERS VIEWS	FARMER PROMOTERS VIEWS
<p><b>G - i - J)</b> Promoters do not promote single solutions to confront problems in the area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Juan Jose García, a promoter in the Department of Boaco, tried a legume to control a weed in his farm. Now he is trying two new species as possible options.</li> <li>• In the Department of Diriamba, a member of a cooperative tried a combination of dry land rice with a legume as a cover crop in the summer after harvesting the rice. Other neighboring promoters of the cooperative tried two other species associated with crops other than rice.</li> </ul>	<p>Experimentation allows the promoters to help each other and facilitates a quicker and more efficient adoption of technologies.</p> <p>Promoters are trying legumes in different forms and under different agroecological conditions. Farmers want to know which legumes function as cover crops, if they protect the soil, if they increase biological activity, and which nutrients can be added to the soil under annual crop rotation.</p> <p>More research is required on the potential of legumes under different management systems.</p>	<p>Legumes help us because in addition to adding fertility they provide food.</p> <p>We do not know what to do with all the seed we produce.</p> <p>We need more information on legumes to use them to their maximum.</p>
<p><b>H)</b> In Tecuaname, La Paz Centro, farmers could not produce beans (<i>Phaseolus</i> spp.) due to the drought. But when they found other <i>Vigna</i> species, such as cowpea and mung bean, they tried them in the spring as cover crops and produced food for themselves and their animals</p>	<p>Promoters have within their reach more information and experiences to confront changing and complex situations</p>	<p>These techniques can "kill two birds with one stone". We are controlling a weed and producing food at the same time. These ideas are arrived at after exchanges with farmer promoters in Diriamba.</p>
<p><b>K)</b> In Masaya, Boaco, Diriamba and Matagalpa farmers have their own credit fund to promote activities and they are gaining skills and experience in administering financial resources.</p>	<p>The group of promoters is strengthened since as an organization they are seeking ways to generate alternatives to sustain the process.</p>	<p>We want to increase our fund with more savings and improve the storage and commercialization of our products to get better prices.</p>

## RESULTS OF THE PROCESS

The implementation of the farmer-to-farmer methodology has permitted the continuous adjustment and adaptation of the initial program objectives to the diverse agroecological conditions in the country. In seven years, 250 farmer promoters (men and women) have been trained and organized into 15 work groups which are active in 280 communities in the country. The promoters have enriched the initial idea of the FFP through an on-going learning process.

The FFP no longer views reality in a segmented manner nor considers the farmer as the only actor. It now understands the role of women and the need to work with the family as an integrated unit. Currently, we are within a dynamic process in which we have several alternatives to continue building our strategy with a focus on sustainable natural resource management. For example:

- In the flatlands of the Pacific coast, the program is promoting the use of legumes as cover crops to prevent erosion, retain humidity, increase soil fertility, and produce animal concentrated feeds. Also, the use of live barriers, wind breaks, animal power, the incorporation of crop residues and the planting of fruit crops and gardens are encouraged.
- In the Central zone, training is provided in the construction of contour ditches and bunds, minimum and zero tillage, live and dead barriers for soil conservation, animal traction using horses, drought resistant plant varieties, cover crop systems, organic fertilizers, green manures, alternative livestock management, small animals, reforestation, natural medicine and home gardening.
- On the Atlantic coast, the program is promoting the use of legumes as cover crops for soil recuperation, management practices for humid tropical forests, fallow management, medicinal plants and small animal husbandry.

The FFP has experienced many levels of communication within its program activities. Especially noteworthy is the communication among promoters of the same group, between farmers, and with extension agents; with research institutions; with institutional and political authorities; with the media and with the general public.

As shown earlier, implicit in the program is a process of communication at the grassroots level which needs to be considered as a component of the authentic transformation of the people involved. This must be sustained through daily practice and should generate dynamism and self-management which contributes to the sustainability of the process.

For those who work in rural development, this means that what farmers seek is "follow-up" which, as a friend, enables them to acquire information they lack. This requires someone with whom they can discuss knowledge that is generated through practical experiences. The FFP experience demonstrates the potential of participatory processes. Outside agents, from both the private sector and the government, have the responsibility to insure that these processes are taken into account when national policy decisions are made.



# Participatory Forestry Extension with Farmer Promoters

by *Miguel Andrade* (\*)

## BACKGROUND

In October 1993, the "Farmer Forestry Development in the Ecuadorean Andes" (FFD) project was begun. It is a social forestry project jointly implemented by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the Ecuadorean National Forestry and Natural Areas Institute (INEFAN) with support from the Government of The Netherlands.

The purpose of the project is to assist farmers' organizations in the Ecuadorian Andes to implement sustainable development activities aimed at the conservation of natural resources. The main focus of the FFD project is to incorporate trees into farming and animal husbandry with a special emphasis on the recovery and use of native tree species.

The FFD is a participatory forestry extension project which follows an approach aimed at strengthening the capacity of farmers' organizations to conduct participatory rural appraisals, to formulate their own community plans, and to implement and evaluate their community forestry activities.

Participatory forestry extension has two main elements: extension and training, which operate around similar themes: farmers' organizational capacity, production of trees by the community, the establishment of agrosilvopastoral systems, the management of tree plantations, the management of native forests, soil conservation, and the development of small-scale handicraft.

The participatory forestry extension approach focuses on three areas: gender, financial viability and the environment. It is supported by a combination of participatory methodological tools and by a set of technologies based on farmers' practices, complemented by outside technologies. Both types of technologies are subject to continuous adjustment and adaptation to meet farmers' needs.

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(\*) Planner for the Farmer Forestry Development Program of FAO-INEFAN, Ecuador .



## **FARMER-TO-FARMER EXTENSION IN THE PROJECT**

An important strategy is to work with farmers' or indigenous associations (FA), who have agreed to conduct participatory forestry extension activities in their communities, with the support and follow-up of the project extension workers.

The implementation of this strategy requires the presence of an important actor: the farmer association promoter (FAP), who plays the role of extension worker for the FA and works in coordination with its leaders.

However, upon the implementation of the above strategy, we learned that it was not always successful and could not always be replicated in other project areas. In the province of Loja, for example, in the parish of Chuquiribamba community-based organizations were very interested to participate in the project, but were not part of any FA. So, we had to modify the initial strategy. The option which was selected allowed forestry extension workers to be placed in the area where they would directly work with four or five community-based organizations. However, the extension workers needed to work with a contact person from the community who could permanently serve as a link with the families in the community and, more important, act as multiplier of the project. Therefore, a new actor appeared in the project: the community promoter (CP). A similar strategy was adopted in some areas in the province of Azuay.

The FFD project works in approximately 200 communities, which are part of 9 farmer associations. These are served by 49 farmer association promoters (29 men and 20 women). Also, there are 173 community promoters (118 men and 55 women), some of whom work in communities that do not belong to any farmer association. In addition, there are 74 community-based forestry committees or groups.

## **PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE**

During project implementation, important characteristics of the different actors involved with the FFD have been identified. For example, the FA leaders were individuals who had been actively involved in activities in their communities. In most cases, they began as volunteer community promoters and went on to assume positions in the community councils or in other local groups, such as the parents' committee for the local school. Later, perhaps, they became president of the community councils, and then they became community representatives to the farmer associations. In Ecuador many leaders have followed similar paths and have become leaders or managers of higher level organizations such as provincial federations, or regional or national organizations.

## Farmer association promoters

The most important characteristics of farmer association promoters are the following:

- They are young persons with some level of education; some have completed high school and others have graduated from technical schools, especially agricultural schools;
- They are motivated by the desire to learn and to become farmers' association leaders. This was apparent in some FAs such as the Farmers' Union of Cotacachi (UNORCAC) in which most of the FAPs who worked with the FFD project have become leaders.

In this situation, the conflict of dual functions has arisen: being a leader and a promoter at the same time. This issue was discussed with them and it was agreed to have a short trial period. They soon realized that it was not possible to efficiently fulfill the obligations of these two positions and decided to continue as leaders, with only one exception.

## Community promoters

The experiences of community promoters is varied. In certain communities these are young persons with characteristics similar to those in the farmer associations; however, they appear to be unreliable, especially during certain periods of the year "*when they migrate to the cities*". In Quito City, Ecuador, we recently met a promoter from Loja.

After greeting him, we asked, "*What are you doing here, Vidalito?*" He responded, "*I've come to work in Quito for about three months*"... Then we asked him, "...*And what about your work with the communities?*" He replied, "*Don't worry, my sister will take care of things until I return*".

Based on these experiences, we decided that a community should select two or three volunteer community promoters to implement the FFD activities in a more sustainable way. Thus, forestry committees or groups are being organized by local families participating in the project, which function as a special group within the community. It seems that the project is moving toward a model in which all members of these groups become community promoters and, some day, farmer association promoters.

An important difference between the farmer association promoter and the community promoter is that the latter is a volunteer who works only in their community, which

implies that they cover a small geographic area without a strong need to travel and be away from home for long periods of time.

A colleague in the project told us that some communities in his work area had selected community promoters who were over 50 years old. The first reaction of project staff was negative because one objective of the project was to motivate young people to participate actively in the project. However, there was a rationale for this approach: *"young persons migrate, and only women and the elderly remain in the community"*

### **Sources of motivation**

One might ask, why someone would want to be a volunteer promoter? In the case of the community promoters, communities recognize them for their work in various ways. For example, their work is accepted as a substitute for work in *mingas* (communal labor groups) organized by the community; thus they are not obliged to participate in these and other communal activities. In some cases, recognition is in the form of giving them more plants from the communal nursery. In other cases, perhaps the only incentive for a community promoter is the training that is received and the opportunity to take the first step on the road to community leadership and, maybe later, to the leadership of a farmer organization.

### **Extension workers**

When farmers were asked what should be the characteristics of an extension worker, they responded that they should be honest, punctual and have a good sense of humor. It did not matter if they lived in the community or if they spoke their indigenous language. These characteristics, added to the credibility and true commitment to the project's purpose, help extension workers maintain a relationship of mutual respect with community leaders, promoters and farmers. This also aims to achieve project sustainability, the formation of new leaders, and the empowerment of the indigenous and farmer associations.

In the case of the FFD project one important strategy was to have extension workers capable of establishing a relationship of mutual respect with the farmers. We needed persons that would be open to learn more than they taught, to share their ideas, their joys and their limitations with others, and to integrate themselves into the community.

We think that the project has formed a team of young persons who have embraced participatory development approaches without prejudices and who have integrated themselves well with the team of farmer promoters. Also, there is a

multidisciplinary team of young professionals including forestry engineers and economists, who complement each other. In two of the project areas, young indigenous farmer promoters have become professional extension workers.

The extension workers know that although their farmer colleagues have not attended the university, they have added new knowledge and skills to their traditional practices which makes them capable in many areas. It is true that there are not many cases like this and it is also true that there is the possibility of some problems, especially, the danger that farmer promoters distance themselves from their own indigenous culture. To date, this has not occurred; possibly because these processes have been carried out so openly that they have not raised suspicions, mistrust or envy. This has motivated the farmer associations and communities as they perceive that their own people have been treated with the same dignity and respect as the professional extension workers of the project.

## **PROMOTER SELECTION**

When the FFD attempted to select FAPs, the leadership proposed their own candidates, so we had to negotiate. The project proposed a profile of the FAP and the leaders proposed candidates based on our criteria. Through open dialogue certain conditions were established. One condition the FA leadership proposed was that the promoter be provided with some means of transportation and receive a stipend to cover food expenses. One condition of the FFD project was that the promoter work full-time, serving three or four communities.

Sometimes FAPs who were selected were relatives of a leader. However, this was not an obstacle for the project if the promoters were well liked by the communities and if they agreed to fulfill the functions that both parties had agreed to.

In the cases in which there was no FA, a similar process was followed; it was the community that selected their promoters. The difference was that, while in the FA the leadership decided, in the community it was the assembly that decided and the participation of community members was direct.

## **WOMEN PROMOTERS**

The experience with women promoters must be seen from two different perspectives: from the indigenous world view and from the world of the "mestizo", non-indigenous farmer. In both cases the project has women farmer association promoters and women community promoters. Both have had to overcome a series of barriers put up by their own families and communities. However, it appears that these barriers have been stronger with the indigenous women farmer promoters.

In one indigenous farmer association in the province of Imbabura, a woman was selected as a FAP and, although she was going to work in her own community, she was rejected by the community. Some of the community members said: *"We know each other here. So, how can we accept that someone who knows the same things as we know, teach us? Worse if she is a woman...!"*.

It was not acceptable that an indigenous woman could undertake non-traditional activities. A good strategy was not to allow her to work in her own community, but rather in other communities. When families in her community saw the good results of her work in neighboring communities, they decided to request that she also help in their community. The promoter, Luz María, has improved so much that she has been incorporated into the project at the same level as the professional extension workers. Today she "rubs elbows" with her extension worker colleagues, most of whom have university degrees.

In the provinces of Azuay and Loja, women promoters did not have as much trouble, probably because the rate of male migration is so high that women are obligated to assume other roles. Also, it may be that in rural communities in these provinces women have always had more active participation. This is the conclusion reached after having observed initial meetings in those communities in which women discussed and spoke on the same level as men.

## **TRAINING IN THE FFD PROJECT**

There are two types of training: one very practical and another is conducted through follow-up activities. In the first case, for example, in the course held to establish tree nurseries, all the participants -farmers, extension workers, and promoters- learned together. Everyone participated in the construction of the seed beds, and listened to the extension workers explain the different technologies. Everyone asked questions and gave feedback.

Technical assistance is provided as follow-up in several opportunities: in the group work (mingas), in the evaluation of community forestry plans, in the community nurseries, in the implementation of soil conservation with cover crops, and in the management of native forests. The key elements of follow-up activities are the dialogue and the exchange of knowledge in which the extension workers also learn.

There are two basic elements that characterize the training process: 1) "learning by doing" and 2) using community nurseries as the best place for training, and for sharing feelings, concerns and joys. The nursery has become a place that unites the participant families and also unites the families with the FFD staff.

An important element is the type of training materials used and jointly produced. Staff prepare drafts which are later validated with community members. Another important aspect is the information system of the participants. They record information in their community notebook, and that information is then jointly transferred into a set of project management forms prepared for the FA, community promoters and the extension workers.

Lastly, the differing intensities of training and following by the extension workers the community should be noted. The extension workers have a follow-up plan which includes a combination of indicators that allows them to determine when they are in a phase of intense contact, gradual withdrawal or final withdrawal. In the first phase their presence is greater, while in the second, it is the farmer promoters who begin to act more independently, with occasional visits of the extension workers. Finally, when the project is pulling out, it is the promoters who take ownership of the project and replicate it within their communities.

### **OTHER EXTENSION ALTERNATIVES**

The farmer-to-farmer methodology is implemented through farmer promoters but, also, through the best farmers who train other farmers in short courses but do not assume the long-term role of promoters.

For example, the FFD project invited a Peruvian farmer who was an expert in weaving baskets of *cucharillo*, a local bush. He went to one of the communities in the parish of Molleturo in Azuay and taught his skills to farmers in this community. Today, they are good weavers of *cucharillo* baskets. In the same way, another Peruvian farmer, an expert in producing simple chairs from eucalyptus, was invited to train a group of farmers from the province of Bolívar.

Similar exchanges have been carried out between farmers from different villages. An older farmer from the community of Nono was almost the only person who could still weave baskets from *suro*, a local cane. He was invited to the community of Alaspungo and taught his weaving skills to a group of men and women who have begun to produce baskets with *suro*. In the province of Imbabura and in other areas, training activities have been conducted in medicinal plants and flowers such as orchids to encourage alternative uses of native forests without destroying the forest resources.

Another interesting mechanism to promote the exchange of experiences among farmers has been field visits. Groups of farmers from one community visit other communities to learn technologies for natural resource conservation. This has helped to motivate those who, for the first time, will participate in the project.

The most significant aspect of these experiences is the direct communication among the farmers, within the framework of their own culture, interests and aspirations. Direct interaction has much more credibility and, probably, explains the existence of a group of communities which the project has named, "of secondary effect." These are communities which are not directly involved in the project, but which have successfully adopted the projects' strategies and technologies.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

In general terms, the experience has been successful. The process has taught the staff a great deal and in three years has worked with about 4,000 families, thanks to the active participation of the 120 farmer promoters. It is they who have facilitated the participation of the families in project activities. Today, men, women and children can be seen preparing seed beds, transplanting seedlings to bags and producing native species. They serve as "advisors" to fellow farmers when the trees are planted or when alternatives are sought to preserve the remaining native forests in the Andes.

However, there are some limitations. For example, FAPs receive support from the project because they work full-time. But, when the project ends, the majority of farmer associations will not be able to continue paying a salary. Therefore, it seems that the project sustainability will depend on the presence of volunteer community promoters and the community-based forestry committees or groups.

There is one example in Ecuador, however, of a farmer organization, FUNORSAL, which has established enough income-generating projects that it has sufficient resources available to pay promoters' salaries, including all legal social benefits.

It could be argued that to allow the FAPs to continue their activities, the FA must have some income generating activity which would support the costs of maintaining the farmer promoters.

Many people are opposed to paying a salary to the farmer association promoters. However, it must be considered that a farmer association can be like an NGO. So we can raise the question: Why is it that, when an NGO negotiates a project proposal and includes equipment, vehicles and salaries for extension workers, it is called "institutional strengthening"? But, when a farmer organization tries to do the same the funding agencies may consider it "paternalism"?

The issue is "income". Thus, if during the first phase of a project the farmer association depends on project funds, this does not mean that the strategy is bad, as long as the organization establishes mechanisms to generate income for the future.

However, for this model to work, it is important that the farmer association leadership strengthen its organizational capacity. Also, they should establish mechanisms to assure continuity of their programs and projects. Periodic leadership changes currently practiced threaten such continuity. Some farmer associations have begun to correct this problem by partially changing the leadership or through the designation of former leaders as permanent members of the board. It is possible that the establishment of new indigenous and farmer NGOs in Ecuador is a means to address this limitation.

In the case of the community promoters there is also the risk of not being able to sustain their actions due to temporary migration or to changes in community leadership. In many cases, this has resulted in the designation of inexperienced community promoters. For extension workers, this means starting over again. Therefore, the FFD project is betting on sustainability through the formation of two or more volunteer community promoters or through the establishment of forestry committees or groups.

Another alternative to support the continuity of the farmer promoters is to give them formal recognition of the professionalism that they have achieved while working in the project. It is important that promoters receive certificates or diplomas that certify them as "farmer extension workers or indigenous technicians". Without a doubt, their self esteem will be significantly raised, and material needs that require the payment of salaries will become secondary concerns.

In the province of Azuay we talked with one man who proudly told us that he was a "volunteer forestry guard" of INEFAN and showed his identification card. But, the most important thing he said was... "Since I've become a forestry guard, no one has burned the grass as they did before." This local leader was a volunteer trained with little effort, requiring only two or three training events. However, he considered his job to be very important and was highly motivated thanks to that small diploma which had been given to him by a government institution.

We have shared some aspects of the farmer-to-farmer extension experience in the FFD project. Given the diverse situations and conditions in which the project operates, it is clear that there are no formulas or recipes, but only working principles. Project activities should be planned with the farmer promoters' participation. This means accepting new challenges, but...together.







*by Rutgerd Boelens (\*)*

## INTRODUCTION

In Ecuador, as in other Latin American countries, farmer promoters conduct extension and training activities in different rural development projects.

There are various reasons why development organizations work with farmer promoters. These reasons are influenced by the ideology, objectives, focus and methodology of the project. Among the most common are.

- Farmer promoters speak the language of the community (e.g. Quichua) while the large majority of the institutions' extension agents do not.
- Farmer promoters know the local culture, customs and the "internal codes" which community members "communicate" among themselves.
- Farmer promoters facilitate self-reliant processes and project sustainability because they receive technical and organizational training.
- They are respected persons in the area and they are already leaders, or they become leaders in the future.
- Farmer promoters receive "farmers' wages", therefore they are less expensive than NGO extension workers.
- Farmer promoters are known in the area and, therefore, can more easily "*convince*" other farmers to participate in the project.
- Promoters function as "filters" in the process of technology dissemination because they teach those technologies that are the most appropriate for the farmers, optimizing adoption by sharing the most appropriate knowledge.

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(\*) Irrigation advisor to CESA-SNV, Ecuador. The author acknowledges the contribution of the team of CESA-Licto in this case study.

## **SOME LESSONS LEARNED**

In the process of implementing the farmer-to-farmer methodology, important lessons have been learned; both successes and failures. According to de Zutter (1988), many obstacles were encountered with the farmer-to-farmer methodology, regardless of the ideology or type of project. These include the following:

- In many cases promoters, instead of being the community "representatives" to the project, rapidly become "agents" of the project in the community. In other words, their psychological, ideological and economic reference is with the project and not with the community which they serve. They prioritize the institutional or project agenda, before those of the community.
- The criteria to select farmer promoters contributed to that. In spite of the effort made to encourage "selection" by the community, it is implicitly (or explicitly) required that the promoter read and write, and be young. In other words, a person is sought who already has a favorable attitude toward the project or who is more receptive and more easily influenced. This shows our voluntary or involuntary intention to get "agents" rather than intermediaries or facilitators.
- Project sustainability is rarely achieved by means of the farmer promoters. Farmer promoters, because of their attitude as "project agents" begin to "distance" themselves from the community. Other farmers begin to mistrust them.
- Seldom does the community assume the costs of supporting the promoters, either through the payment of transportation or other expenses, or by helping them to manage their farm to earn a living, while they dedicate time to extension activities.
- Thus, in some cases, promoters begin to try to "compensate" their efforts by seeking economic payment from the project or from other farmers; and even if they don't, they are suspected of doing so. Thus, farmer promoters quickly request and receive payment or other institutional remuneration. The result is that promoters end up being and considering themselves to be project employees. Many farmer promoters, when the project and their salaries end, have sought employment in development organizations, trying to get a fair compensation according to their experience and training.
- Those who remain in the community stop performing their role as promoters and generally forget, intentionally or for lack of the proper environment, the knowledge acquired. They try to go back to their old lives, or use the prestige of their "skills" to seize positions, power or resources.

## INFLUENCE OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ON THE FARMER-TO-FARMER METHODOLOGY

The negative effects of development projects on the farmer-to-farmer methodology and the promoters themselves is due in part to the implementation philosophy of projects by external agencies. The projects do not seek a truly participatory methodology, not only because of a lack of confidence in the capacity of the farmers but because of a rationale based on the "need for efficiency."

This is due to strong and constant pressure to accomplish the established goals, often influenced by the funding agencies. The tendency is to implement more activities or concrete objectives in less time and at a lower cost. Frequently, there is not enough flexibility to jointly set completion dates with the community.

Therefore, NGOs try to become more efficient in their role as "project implementors", and less of a "community partner" supporting processes of joint decision-making and community ownership of the project. In training, the NGOs try to fulfill the "hard goals" (eg, number of farmers trained) by methods supposedly more efficient which, in the end, become less effective and efficient. For example, experimentation by farmers is replaced by the transfer of technological packages. In this way, the "slow cooperation" by the community through the discourse of "participation" is avoided and farmers' knowledge is pushed aside to use outside recipes.

"Efforts are made to increase the efficiency of training through the "convincing method." The farmer promoters are invited to train other farmers with the extension workers. As the project "agents," many promoters assume a "convincing" attitude in their relationship with the community and try to convince community members of the project's benefits. In some tasks and responsibilities, the promoter even tends to substitute instead of strengthening the role of the farmer organization itself.

It would be advisable that the promoter uses "questioning methods" about the project instead of methods of "convincing the community." This does not imply that the promoter discourages the community regarding the project. In this case it is the task of the farmer organization leaders and the community members to convince the promoter to include aspects that are not contemplated by the project but which would be important to include for the community's benefit.

In this case, the farmer promoter can contribute to the community's reflection process to identify its real needs and the advantages and disadvantages of the project. This is a better way to strengthen the farmer organization." (Hendriks, in SNV/University of Loja, 1994).

## **PARTICIPATION**

Currently, many development organizations talk about community participation as if it was a magic concept. The concept of "participation" can be interpreted in different ways.

In many cases "participation" is used to achieve the purposes, goals and objectives of the development organizations. Community members and the farmer promoters, should "participate" in the development organizations' projects, ideas, goals, ideology, and interests. Seldom is "participation" understood as the participation of the external development organizations in projects identified by the community.

This leads to a critical issue regarding work with farmer promoters. A common assumption held by development practitioners is that development projects are based only on common interests shared by the different actors like NGOs, funding agencies, the government, and the beneficiary population, including both men and women.

However, in spite of the good intentions to promote self-reliance through "participatory management," management is power, it is the control of money and resources, institutional sustainability and employment, and it implies "project ownership" and credit for its achievements. Therefore, leaving the control and the benefits in the hands of the community could go against the interests of the external development organizations.

If it is known that the development organization and the community have different goals, the work of the promoters, who often defend the interests of the "project" instead of the community, has a different connotation. There should be an awareness of the danger of causing social and communal disintegration when promoters are "used" to impose the project's interests without respecting the interests of the community.

Based on the experiences of an irrigation project in the parish of Licto, Ecuador, some alternatives which could avoid conflicts of interest are presented below.

## **RURAL PROMOTION IN LICTO**

In the parish of Licto in the province of Chimborazo, the NGO CESA (Ecuadorean Center for Agricultural Services), and the farmer organization CODOCAL (Corporation of Farmer Organizations of Licto), jointly implemented an integrated rural development project. They formed part of an interinstitutional committee which also includes the funding agency COTESU (Technical Cooperation of the Swiss Government), and the government irrigation agency CORSICEN (Regional

Corporation of the Central Highlands). Through diagnostics, the committee identified irrigation as a priority for this arid zone; which is also a priority need felt by the local population.

In irrigation projects there is the risk of replacing existing community and farmer associations with new forms of organization based on the need to use and manage the irrigation system. Water and land are the two most important resources in most communities in the Ecuadorean highlands. Therefore, a significant change such as the introduction of water, automatically means an organizational change in the entire region, possibly accompanied by a change in the power relations. This can be an integrative or a disintegrative process.

Therefore, it was decided to form and strengthen an Irrigation Board, an irrigation committee formed by several communities within the indigenous farmer organization CODOCAL. This board represents twenty communities which are organized into 16 Communal Irrigation Committees (CCR). Each sector or community has one representative on the Irrigation Board.

A long delay in the construction of the irrigation infrastructure by INERHI (former government irrigation agency) caused mistrust and low levels of participation by the potential beneficiaries. In the first phase, the project left the beneficiaries with few responsibilities related to the construction of their future irrigation system. However, only the handing over of specific responsibilities can strengthen an organization capable of managing an irrigation system in a sustainable manner. Ultimately, thanks to the promotion process, the sharing of responsibilities and the work of the Irrigation Board, motivation is being revitalized.

Although construction of the irrigation canal has not yet been completed, it can already be observed that the Board is becoming stronger. CODOCAL, the Board and CESA are preparing themselves four years prior to the arrival of water so that the water users will know how to manage their own system in a sustainable manner. The transfer of management is not just simply giving an irrigation system to the farmers, and handing them the infrastructure and the papers, but is a process of the farmers acquiring ownership of the system. This institutional capacity building process should not begin when the infrastructure has been finished, but from the moment the project is formulated and activities are being planned to conduct the needs assessment, and the preparation, design and implementation of the project.

The project includes, to the extent possible, farmer-to-farmer training by means of exchanges with other projects and irrigation systems, visits of farmer leaders to other irrigation organizations, training for leaders of the same area and exchanges among the communities of Licto. An intensive training program facilitated by

farmers from outside the project area who are specialists in small-farm irrigation is being planned.

The following table includes the number, level and positions of the farmer promoters in the different components:

LEVEL	IRRIGATION AND SOIL CONSERVATION	FORESTRY	LIVESTOCK	LITERACY	HEALTH
Coordination of promotion in different communities (salaried)	3 promoter coordinators of irrigation and soil conservation (women)	2 nursery technicians (men)		1 promoter coordinator (women)	
Community promotion (salaried)				20 literacy coordinators (women)	
Community promotion (volunteers)	35 promoters of irrigation and soil conservation (50% women & 50% men)	10 forestry promoters (3 women & 7 men)	10 livestock promoters (men)		
TOTAL	38	12	10	21	10

Currently, extension work is conducted by two volunteer farmer irrigation promoters per community. The irrigation and soil conservation promoters work together. Due to the strong relation between irrigation, canal protection and forestry, half of the forestry promoters also are promoters of irrigation and soil conservation.

The extension work will focus on the most important aspects for the community. This avoids the implementation of a number of "loose" activities. If the project works on those problems which the community has identified as priorities, these become the project objectives. This reduces the risk that farmer promoters work for the benefit of the NGO, disregarding the communities' objectives and transferring inadequate technology packages. In Licto, irrigation is the most important felt need of farmers.

It is very important that a participatory rural appraisal be conducted in order to identify community priorities, and avoid falling into the trap of focusing on superficial needs.

## IRRIGATION FARMER PROMOTERS

Most communities have elected two or three irrigation and soil conservation promoters who receive training and replicate knowledge in their communities. Three women irrigation promoters coordinators organize and coordinate extension activities in the communities.

In Licto, as in many community irrigation systems in the Andes, the water users are mainly women, since men generally migrate to the cities seeking alternative income. Generally, women farmers have an excessive work load: domestic chore; production and marketing of crops, and participation in community work and meetings. It is anticipated that women will have problems both during the implementation of the project and in the later phases of operation and maintenance of the irrigation system. These problems can be overwork, low levels of participation in community organizations and in decision-making, little recognition of their work, danger during night irrigation, and minimal project benefits.

One way to address gender issues was to have women as farmer promoters, especially for leadership and coordination roles. Currently, all the coordinator promoters for irrigation elected by the water users are women. Among the community irrigation promoters, half are women. It is worth mentioning that in the project's experience women promoters, in general, are more responsible and stable than men.

The promotion of irrigation through training should result in an "irrigation users association" capable of managing the different components of the Guargualla Canal irrigation system in a sustainable way. This capability implies various key areas related to administration of the project and the irrigation system; construction skills; operation of the system; water distribution; maintenance and sustainable irrigation technologies for small farms. With a good organizational capacity, the sustainable management of the irrigation system can be institutionalized.

Training in irrigation is very practical and based on real needs identified in each specific phase of the project, and the activities to be conducted in the next phases. The content, location and the methodology of training in irrigation are directly linked to project planning, performance, and work dynamics of both the water users and the NGO. This assures a good follow up, avoids sharing topics that are too theoretical, and optimizes the practical application of what is shared.

The farmer promoters irrigation training is oriented to the community-level, water user organization, within the farmer association, and not to individual farmers. The process of organizational strengthening is directed at two levels:



1. Inter-community level: CODOCAL, Irrigation Board, and their general assemblies.
2. Community level: the Community Irrigation Committees (CCR), formed by the community leadership, or at least, operating in coordination with them.

The women coordinator promoters work within the farmer organization and are paid by the organization. The remuneration in the current phase is with project funds which are gradually reduced while counterpart funds are increased until a level of self-financing is reached.

Basically, the irrigation and soil conservation promoters find themselves between the farmer organization and the communities, serving the farmers' real needs. There is good communication as well as social control. Each month the promoter coordinators report their activities and accomplishments to the farmer organization in the monthly meeting of the Irrigation Board, where activities are planned.

For irrigation extension efforts to be sustainable after the project ends, promotion should be conducted within each irrigation organization, based on their concrete needs. If not, there is the risk of making the farmer promoters work for the interests of the external development organization.

### **FARMER PROMOTERS: TRAINERS OR ORGANIZERS?**

The project has learned that not enough opportunities have been provided to the irrigation and soil conservation farmer promoters to share what they know about irrigation. The farmer promoters, especially, the promoter coordinators, participate in planning, implementation and training activities. Also they assist and advise the community leaders, jointly organizing with them the communal work activities (*mingas*), participating in the extension activities and coordinating community and intercommunity meetings.

Therefore, farmer promoters work more as "organizers" and "farmer coordinators" rather than as "trainers," responsible for extension activities. In most development projects, training events such as courses, exchange visits and workshops begun by a development project rarely survive. Usually, the training events and the farmer promoters "trainers" who started with the project disappear. Sustainable training activities are those which the farmer organization itself decides to hold, such as an assembly of water users. The work of promoters who have been trained on the basis of the community's decision and who are supported by the community is also sustainable.

In contrast to the farmer promoter "trainers," the farmer promoter "organizers" such as the promoter irrigation coordinators, have many more possibilities of carrying out sustainable work within the organization and the project. This does not mean that a rural development project should have only promoter "organizers." In each project there are problems which can be resolved with a short technical training by farmer promoters which can produce quick results. In this case, promoters have the specific function of training farmers as needed, and this can be more easily sustained by the farmer organization or the community.

For example, in Licto, five local "farmer masons" train communities in the construction of tanks and irrigation canals. At the same time, they assist in the construction of these infrastructures in all the communities. The moment that the construction ends, the need for these "farmer masons" will disappear. The result is the construction of a tertiary irrigation system, and learning construction techniques among the future irrigation users.

The current function of the "farmer masons" in the tertiary channel may not be needed at that point, and these farmer promoters should not necessarily continue their function after they have shared information with the community, and the community has successfully adopted it. They may only assist maintaining the system in the future, as needed.

In general, the work of the farmer promoter "trainers" is justified in the project to share techniques and knowledge which the farmers can adopt and improve upon in the short term, without the need for much follow-up after the project ends.

There are also cases in which the function of the promoter "trainers" ends and they become promoter "organizers". For example, in Licto there is a bilingual literacy program with a gender focus. The purpose is to teach women irrigation users to read and write while sharing irrigation information, thus raising their self-esteem and forming a group of women irrigation leaders within the irrigation organization. Women literacy promoters will train women irrigation users for two years. The promoters themselves will not always have to teach literacy forever. The moment the program ends they will have achieved the expected result: women with basic literacy skills and some women trained to lead the organization. Many of them will also have received training that enables them to participate in the irrigation boards at the community level, as well as the intercommunity level, not just as "trainers", but as leaders. Thus, sustainability will be guaranteed by the fact that these women will be trained in irrigation.

The farmer-to-farmer methodology is more sustainable when the promoters work from within the farmer organization as "organizers" and not as "trainers". For

example, the health program in Licto is not sustainable. This program is based on the work of farmer health promoters who are paid salaries by the project. They have to do their work according to the requirements of the NGO, without a direct commitment or accountability to the farmer organization. They are employees of the project, not of the farmer organization. Although the NGOs try to make the health program sustainable, the promoters will disappear the moment their salaries end. Neither promoters, nor organizational structures, nor much knowledge will remain: only the sick will remain.

Thus, the health program is being reviewed, seeking the integration of the promoters into the farmer organizations and working on those health aspects which the community considers most necessary.

## CONCLUSIONS

In many projects, the farmer promoter disappears the moment the project ends. It is an error to think that "Andean solidarity" guarantees the continuation of the work of farmer promoters. The trainer promoter does not continue for solidarity reasons. It would be better to speak of traditional Andean reciprocity. Such a concept recognizes that the promoter requests - if he wants to continue - that there be a mutual commitment between himself and the community. This reciprocity requires a counterpart incentive by the community after the project ends, such as a salary paid by the farmer organization, or community respect, among others.

Many types of projects use the farmer-to-farmer methodology. Even within the same project one can use different alternatives of the methodology. But it is always important to know to whom the promoter is accountable: to their own farmer organization or to the external agency? In some projects with a strong commitment and mutual respect between the NGO and the community which follow participatory strategies focused on farmers' control of the developmental processes, farmer promoters can serve both interests -the NGO and the farmer organization.

Based on experience of our project, the farmer-to-farmer methodology is more sustainable when the promoters work to **coordinate and organize** activities that benefit the community, but only when they are located **within the farmer organization**. Therefore, an important task of the promoters is to **develop and strengthen the organizational capacity of the organization, the leaders and its members**.

The farmer organization will be much more interested in "keeping" the farmer promoters, especially, when they work on priority needs identified by community members of the farmer organizations. This will optimize sustainability.

When promoters serve only the interests of the outside NGO, the possibility for achieving sustainability is reduced. The work of farmer promoter "trainers" can be justified in a project which requires or allows for short term accomplishments and which requires very specific information or short-time services.

There are four aspects which determine if a farmer promoter will continue working for the benefit of their organization after the project ends: 1) **knowledge**, 2) **organizational capacity**, 3) **motivation** and 4) **power**.

1. ¿Does the farmer organization know the problem and solutions well? Is the problem a felt need of the community and, therefore, does the farmer organization have the commitment to solve it?
2. ¿Does the organization have the structure, stability, means and motivation to keep the farmer promoters?
3. ¿Do the farmer promoters **know** the area and the organization well, and do they adequately handle the theme they are promoting? Do the promoters have the **desire** to work for the benefit of the community?
4. ¿Are the farmer promoters **capable** of dedicating their time and effort to carry out the work?



# 18

## Pay farmer promoters for their work? A contribution to the discussion (\*)

by Luis Felipe Ulloa (\*\*)

### INTRODUCTION

Before you read this chapter, ask yourself the following questions:

- a) Under what conditions and for what reasons would you work as a volunteer?
- b) Once you had begun to work as a volunteer for which you expect no payment, what would your attitude be if suddenly, you were offered payment for your work?
- c) If after some time no one pays for your volunteer work, would you continue doing it? Would you do similar work for free?

This reflection focuses on the analysis of "compensation" to farmer promoters, one of the most critical aspects in the relationship between development organizations and promoters, and of the farmer-to-farmer methodology itself. Our main assumptions in discussing this issue are:

- No one does something for nothing.
- Cultural and individual differences cause volunteers to prefer different types of compensation for their work: both material and non-material benefits.
- The poorer the farmer promoter is, the higher is the expectation to receive material benefits for the promoter's work. If there is no money, they may expect food, clothes or other types of compensation.

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## **YES, PAY PROMOTERS**

Payment to the promoters tends to be either in cash or in-kind. For the latter category, "smoother" words are used by those who still fear market mechanisms. So, they speak of "material recognition" or "incentives" to refer to giving tools, equipment, seeds or agricultural inputs, food or clothes. There are at least four options regarding who pays promoters for their work:

1. An organization external to the community pays promoters for the work they do.
2. The community pays or provides other type of material recognition or incentive.
3. Members of the community who need or use the promoter's services provide payment or material recognition.
4. The outside organization begins to pay the promoter and later, the community assumes the responsibility for payment or recognition.

Each option directly influences the promoters' work and their relationship with the community and the development organization.

### **EXTERNAL ORGANIZATION PAY (OPTIONS 1 AND 4)**

The promoter is like an employee of the external organization. Experience shows that community members tend to view it this way and that this fact noticeably differentiates promoters from their neighbors. However, there is a big difference as compared to extension workers of development organizations. The promoters generally do not receive social benefits and the remuneration is noticeably less than that of a salaried, professional extension worker.

### **COMMUNITY PAYS (OPTION 2)**

The promoter is paid for a job completed, or on a periodic basis. In the first case, the community supervises the quality of the work on the basis that the person is paid for the work done. In the second case, the promoter is a community employee, at least for a limited period of time.

### **USERS PAY (OPTION 3)**

This results in the creation of independent positions within the community. The promoter provides services to his/her neighbors and receives in-kind payment, cash or "exchange labor" (I help you, you help me). The traditional midwives, many natural medicine practitioners, local masons, soil conservation promoters, etc, are examples of how this option works.

In addition to helping improve economic situations of individuals and in training people to earn a living, this option contributes to making the community more self-reliant by reducing the dependence on outsiders to perform certain jobs and services, as individuals from the community know how to do them. Also, the time, knowledge and effort of the promoters are recognized.

Without a doubt, as you read the four options you made a list in your mind of the potential disadvantages for each. It is worthwhile to consider each option thinking not only in the "here and now", but also, in the moment when the project and outsiders leave the community: **is that so bad?**

## **THE MOST FREQUENT DOUBTS**

Several issues concerning the payment of a salary to farmer promoters are commonly raised:

### **1. The values of community volunteerism and solidarity are "broken"**

It is assumed that paying promoters for their work can discourage volunteer service and solidarity. But, is this always true?

When there is a possibility that a salary may be paid, persons who are interested in just earning a salary will show up. These persons consider their neighbors as "clients" and may treat the external agency as their "boss".

Other people will show up because of a commitment to help the community, and that may consider the external agency as a resource that can be positively used for the community's benefit.

It is true that a lot of criticism is heard about "food for work" programs when they are considered long term components of development projects. However, it is known that midwives, many natural medicine practitioners and traditional community healers, work without payment when the person requesting the service cannot pay. But they may be paid with in-kind contributions, like a chicken or some vegetables. How could this type of attitude be replicated to other community members who become promoters? More work should be done to identify what type of person should be a farmer promoter using promoters' own criteria and values.



## **2. The moment which the promoter is no longer paid, they will not want to continue working with the community**

When the promoter is paid by an external development organization, it is expected that the promoter will do the work as long as the "boss" pays the "employee" (i.e. the promoter). In other words, "no pay, no work".

But we should note that people do not always work just for money. For the readers that believe this truism, we recommend that you read the section of this article entitled "Not to pay promoters".

When the work of a promoter is a "business" transaction between two persons (option 3), it could reach the point that the promoter will say, "if my neighbor does not pay me for the work, I won't do it." This is a typical client-service provider relationship. But we have already shown that the cases of midwives and traditional healers are examples of most positive behavior. Also, there are systems of "labor exchange" or the debt of favors (I owe you a favor...) and other special support mechanisms within communities.

## **3. The community can run out of money to pay promoters**

This can be an argument against options 1, 2 and 4, and is an issue for project planners to consider. The question to ask is whether the project began with an evaluation of the initial organizational level of the community, and then developed a plan that would improve the organization so that members could administrate, make good decisions and manage the finances.

When an external agency conceives a project and then seeks and finds a community with which to implement, we should ask if that community had a minimal level of organizational capabilities to enable them to carry out the planned activities. If not, considerations should be made to prepare and develop a plan to strengthen their organizational and administrative capacity.

## **4. Dependency is created concerning the issue of who pays the promoter**

There is also the argument of subordination, especially when an external organization pays (options 1 and 4).

There is a certain level of dependency which is created between the promoters and the external agency which hires them. But even so, **what is the problem?** The example could be yourself, the reader:

- How dependent are you, reader, on who pays for your services?
- But, you may respond, "I'm not a promoter"
- Are you sure you're not one? How would you define a promoter?

Today there is a global trend of more people being unemployed. It is accepted that most people no longer have "permanent jobs". Now its common that a person has work today, but may lose their job next month. Governments are shrinking. The principle of "loyalty" (so common in the past) toward a business or organization which pays a person's salary, has lost significance. The search has begun for forms other than a "steady job" to insure one's income; independent professional services are one, temporary work another. A farmer promoter who learns something new could do both. Why should a farmer who learns specialized knowledge and gains certain skills which are unique from most farmers not be allowed to earn a living sharing that knowledge and being paid to do so?

If the danger is subordination to the person who pays, there is a need to reflect on values and to review the promoter-community relationship. Community promoters should be advised on the management of the relationship between who pays and who is paid. Thus, the education of promoters would also be education on "life issues," which includes the renovation or reaffirmation of values by promoters and leaders. Among these values is loyalty, not to organizations external to the community, but to the people; a loyalty stronger than that which exists toward someone who pays or provides a service.

### **5. Strengthening or establishing hierarchical relationships**

Salaried promoters can view the development organization who pays them as "owners" of the project. Moreover, some promoters may feel that they are imposing the project on the community.

This situation is not associated only with the presence of remuneration. Many projects have experiences in which this type of negative hierarchical relationship is introduced. But this is not just a result from the payment of promoters.

Whether or not promoters are paid, development organizations which implement the project in the community should use a communication strategy which favors relationships based on equality and shared leadership. In each phase of the project, participation of community members and the external agents should be defined in a way that ensures that the community contributes to achieving the projects' objectives.

## **6. Mistrust among members of the community**

When volunteer work is proposed, many people will "disappear." But if there is pay or other material recognition, the situation changes. The phrase, "Why him/her and not me?" is widespread and rumors and divisions appear in the community.

In any of these four options, a logical path to prevent this situation is to establish clear rules from the beginning. Procedures should be established to select and elect persons who, in one way or another, represent and defend the community's interests. These procedures should be based on clearly defined criteria which are understood and accepted by the community. The mechanism should be very transparent so that extension responsibilities are assigned to suitable persons.

## **7. Pay reduces the willingness of promoters to criticize**

If the reader has been in situations in which they could lose a significant stable income, then surely they have felt pressure not to speak up about certain things. It is not unusual, and, even more so, when jobs are scarce. It is clear that this can also happen to a salaried promoter.

Sometimes censorship is real, but other times self-censorship occurs for fear of worsening things or simply as a personal decision not to contribute. The answers could be many: review the selection criteria; articulate the basic values expected of a typical leader; create conditions within the project that encourage open criticism, creativity and initiative; or develop a system that promotes the use of all acquired skills with proper mechanisms to compensate those who perform well.

## **8. Negative reactions to the competition**

Even though it is part of the task of the promoter, to what extent will a person teach their job to someone else, knowing that the "trainee" could take their job sometime in the future.

The conflict could be real but not that serious. On the one hand, if the community is viewed in a holistic manner, it could be argued that there is room for "specialization" of skills. On the other hand, the principle of equal opportunity should apply in development work. That implies a certain level of competition for learning, for the application of knowledge, etc., but without excluding collaboration.

Over time, quality and price start to be commodities, and promoters who make an effort to gain knowledge have advantages in terms of making themselves more "marketable." But knowledge should not be monopolized, and should be continuously enriched based on collaborative actions.

This implies that the way to avoid conflicts due to competition is to appeal to values, training and selection criteria. It is possible to promote teamwork and stimulate, and even compensate for collaboration, thus encouraging the recognition of and respect for certain norms of behavior and ethics in cases of competition and conflict.

## **9. "Cannibalism" among development organizations**

If payment is involved, will organizations use remuneration as a mechanism to compete for the best promoters? This can also occur when salaries are not paid. In fact, NGOs and governmental organizations currently use various mechanisms to compete or "fight" for the best farmer promoters. There are farmers, men and women, who are presented by five, six and more organizations as "their" promoters. Also several organizations may present the same activities of the farmer promoters as the results of "their" projects. Sometimes a person who is referred to as a promoter of sustainable agriculture is also the promoter of potable water systems and may also be responsible for the farmers' store for alternative marketing.

A question to consider is, why don't these organizations see communities as a potential source of many people who could become farmer promoters in many different topics? Why can't development organizations carry out the entire process from the beginning, establishing criteria with the community, proposing and pursuing processes of selection and defining a plan for developing these potential community promoters? This process would take into account the dynamics of the entire social group instead of limiting and concentrating knowledge and power in the hands of a few?

Another question to be considered is if an NGO or governmental organization should consider itself to be the "owner" of the decisions of one person from the community and oblige them to remain only under their control? Would it not be better to ask, why do they want to leave our project rather than stay?

### **NOT TO PAY PROMOTERS**

This is "the other side of the coin". When money is not involved, volunteer assistance by the promoter is sustained by solidarity and a willingness to support their neighbors.

### **LIMITATIONS**

Not paying salaries to farmer promoters has its limitations. Some of these are described below:

### **1. Time available for volunteer work**

If volunteerism is understood as not receiving remuneration or material compensation for their work, no one can be a community volunteer 100% of the time. No one can do it because people need to generate an income to feed themselves and their family, for recreation, to educate their children, etc. This is one limitation which is also characteristic of projects in which community promoters are compensated for their work in an erratic manner, insufficiently or with poor incentives.

When volunteer promoters are not paid or are given a low pay, there must be a clear arrangement of the time expected of volunteers to assist the project, and the time they have available. Both parties should reach an agreement that leaves no doubt about the specific commitment.

### **2. Use of available time**

Under difficult economic conditions, it's unreasonable to expect people to sacrifice time that they use to earn an income, to work for free (or for uncertain or insufficient compensation) in a project that may not address their immediate survival needs. The time that promoters can dedicate to extension activities is their EXTRA time in which they are not involved in other productive activities.

The negotiation mentioned earlier also applies here. Organizations which base their actions on volunteer promoters should have the ability to properly manage the time contribution of the promoters based on their time availability and other limitations.

### **3. Quality of the services provided**

Little work can be demanded of someone who receives no pay for his/her work and is willingly contributing to the project. Some promoters take advantage of their role to accomplish two tasks at the same time. For example, some promoters use project vehicles to sell clothes or disseminate religious or political information while doing their extension work. Sometimes, extension workers who coordinate activities with promoters may not be aware of this, and sometimes they are aware but other project staff are not. Is this good or bad? This is just a little side job. The important thing is to determine whether or not the promoter's work and activities ultimately supports the project objectives.

#### **4. Project continuity**

Most projects select or ask the community to select a promoter, who then begins a training plan to develop the required knowledge, skills and attitudes. Suppose, the promoter begins working and two months later leaves the project to migrate to the city to work as a house maid because she needs money. What was the cost of this loss? Consider the time involved, the materials given to the promoter, the training, the inputs for the entire process, the time lost by the organization and the community, and other costs involved. How much did it cost the promoter in frustrations? And what might happen if there are two desertions per year, or three, four or more?

#### **THE PROMOTER'S POINT OF VIEW**

Why would someone agree to work for no pay? Moreover, why would they agree to do it under difficult economic conditions? The answer is because they do gain something!

For the volunteers getting some kind of compensation is an incentive. Do we know why some community members collaborate with a project? Some reasons could be altruistic but perhaps that's not all, and these may not necessarily be negative. It would be helpful to better understand them.

The following list are benefits to promoters which could be considered to be more important than money:

- Gain or increase social recognition.
- Gain political recognition or power.
- Open possibilities for future employment.
- Open options for a change of work: "I don't want to be a farmer any more; I want to be a mechanic".
- Gain knowledge and skills.
- Travel.
- Spiritual or religious compensation (a better after life, conscience salving, pay a penitence, etc.).
- Repay a favor or other obligation.
- Open possibilities for a family member (scholarship for a child, medical treatment for a member of the family, etc.).

## **THE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY'S POINT OF VIEW**

On the other hand, why would an organization look for promoters without offering material recognition or payment? Although the list of reasons could include a wide range of possibilities, only three will be mentioned here:

- The desire to promote values that the external development organization considers as "good" for the community (solidarity, altruism, fellowship, leadership)
- The fear of promoting values that the development organization considers "bad", i.e. work for pay
- To reduce personnel costs for the project. This is one way to have field personnel without paying salaries or having contractual obligations.

In each case, the above assumptions have to be closely analyzed and reconsidered based on the local context and the values espoused.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In development efforts, the diversity of situations is so great and the interests involved so complex that it is impossible to recommend a formula that applies to all situations. However, in regard to compensation for promoters' working in development projects, it is important to consider the following issues:

1. Community participation should be considered a pre-condition for development. But it is "participation for development" only under the following conditions: that it is understood as a progressive empowerment of community members in decision-making and implementation of a project (taking ownership of the methodologies); that they develop the knowledge, capacities and attitudes needed to sustain the project, and that they formulate (or reformulate) values.
2. The characteristics of each project will determine the type of community participation required to achieve the proposed objectives.
3. In one form or another, the project should always compensate promoters. Whether it is material compensation or not depends on the situation, the long term objectives of the project and the levels at which the promoter works.
4. Compensation for the work of community promoters should be included in a working plan based on a well designed strategy. The compensation plan should be related to what kind of work and commitment is expected from the promoter. If not there is a risk that results will be negative.

5. It is expected that the main compensation for the promoter be psychological and personal, that is, their most important satisfaction should come from accomplishing the established objectives.
6. Expectations of the promoters work include accomplishing results above the community's average, spontaneous behavior (initiative and creativity) and cooperative behavior (horizontal relationship and participatory leadership).
7. Whether or not the promoters are paid, the project should consider them as human resources who could and should be transformed. Each one is an important resource who can contribute toward the sustainability of the project's objectives and to other activities that benefit the community. Considering promoters as resources implies knowing their ideal characteristics, deciding on the most appropriate selection strategy, defining selection criteria, making training plans for developing promoters' capacities, establishing compensation systems, defining work approaches and agreeing on methods and indicators for evaluation of performance.
8. Items 2 to 7 are the most productive in terms of community development, if work is done in a participatory way with the communities, that is, if reflection on community representation, perception of community promoters, expected performance, compensation, training and development plans for the promoters is conducted with community participation.
9. Without minimizing the affinity with specific project contents, the most important aspects in reference to the promoters are their personal values. The selection criteria and training programs should emphasize this.
10. A project cannot ignore the true intentions of the funding agency. To be able to count on promoters within the community who will facilitate many things, we must recognize that farmer promoters can be "used" by external development organizations to pursue their own development agenda. Thus, a clear position should be taken to benefit the communities and our countries.



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