Farmers’ Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the Agricultural Rehabilitation Project (ARP) Information Campaign, East Timor

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ABSTRACT

Administered by World Bank, as trustees, with funding from the Trust Fund of East Timor (TFET), the Agricultural Rehabilitation Project (ARP) was a two-and-a-half-year project with a grant of US $6.8 million dollars for Phase I and US $8.0 million dollars for Phase II. The projects were designed with the overall goal of restoring productive assets and significantly enhancing agricultural productivity to the levels before the 1999 struggle for independence. In order to disseminate information about ARP to the farmers, CESVI, an Italian NGO, was contracted with in March 2001 to carry out the information campaign for a period of one year. This information campaign was to be conducted in all thirteen districts in East Timor. To measure the impact of the strategies developed by CESVI, a survey was conducted during March 7–18, 2002. A questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were gathered through personal interviews with farmers. Generally, respondents strongly agreed that the materials and methods used to disseminate information on the three components of the project were beneficial, although some of the information about national vaccination campaigns got to them late.
Introduction

For farmers to fully participate in a project and reap the benefits, they need information about what the project objectives, strategies and outputs are. Recognising this fact, the designers of ARP included the information campaign as one of the activities to be carried out by Project Management Unit (PMU) under Component I. Because of PMU’s limited human resources it could not carry out the implementation of this activity itself. It therefore decided to contract a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) to implement the activity. CESVI, an Italian non-governmental organization (NGO), was contracted in March 2001 to provide a one-year-long information campaign for the ARP. This information campaign was to be conducted in all thirteen districts in East Timor. The following strategies were developed to disseminate ARP information to the farmers:

1. Use of local NGO’s and village leaders (chef de suco) as sources of dissemination of the information;
2. Conduct of workshops in each district to which village heads and other village representatives were invited; and
3. Promotion of ARP activities through
   a) Posters
   b) Brochures/leaflets
   c) Flip charts

As agreed, CESVI was to conduct a survey at the end of its information campaign activity to assess the extent to which rural communities’ awareness of ARP had been increased. The purpose of the information campaign survey was to give the project management units (PMU) staff and World Bank Project Management Team some insights about the effectiveness/impact of CESVI information dissemination strategy. The specific objective was focused on ascertaining farmers’ perceptions of the effectiveness of different sources of information used by CESVI to disseminate information to the farmers and for planning and management purposes.

Project Background

The ARP was an emergency recovery project, which was aimed at benefiting 20,000 poor households. An information campaign was used as the strategy of the project to disseminate information to the target population. The project consisted of the following three components:

Component 1. Priority Productive Asset Restoration:

Major outputs

National vaccination campaigns to immunize livestock against infectious diseases and provide emergency clinical services;
Provision of five six-week old chicks and chicken feed to about 20,000 poor rural families;
Procurement of up to 1,000 head of buffalo and 1,000 head of Bali cattle to replace animals lost during the violence; Replacement of simple hand tools needed by poor rural people to undertake farming, household and communal work; and

**Component 2. Irrigation/Rural Infrastructure Rehabilitation and Maintenance:**

Major outputs

- Pre-feasibility design, hydrological and engineering studies;
- Reconstruction, rehabilitation and maintenance of irrigation schemes covering up to 7,000 ha; and
- The rehabilitation and maintenance, through community participation, of a minimum of 100 kms of agricultural access roads.

**Component 3. Pilot Agriculture Services Centres:**

Major outputs

- The establishment of up to eight commercially operating Pilot Agriculture Services Centres (PASC) for the purpose of providing farming communities with demand-driven agricultural services;
- Short and long-term training of East Timorese research, extension and PASC staff;
- Design of an agriculture research laboratory and experiment stations for the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of East Timor;
- Establishment of Community Radio Extension/Stations and the procurement of radios to provide isolated rural communities and farmers with information and technical advice; and.

**Description of Data-Collection Methods and Analysis**

The purpose of the information campaign survey was to give the project management units (PMU) staff and World Bank Project Management Team some insights about the effectiveness/impact of the CESVI information dissemination strategy. Specifically, the objective of the survey was focused on ascertaining farmers' perceptions of the effectiveness of different sources of information used by CESVI to disseminate information to the farmers and for planning and management purposes. The design and methods used in the survey are explained below.

**Design**

The study methodology is a survey. The purpose of a survey is to obtain a statistical profile of the study population (Babbie, 1983). The study was concerned with existing conditions or relationships; practices that prevailed; and beliefs, attitudes, and points of view held by farmers about ARP sources of information. The instrument used to collect information from the farmers was field tested for validity and reliability.
The Population

According to Rossi (1983), there are two types of populations: target population and survey population. The target population is the collection of elements that a researcher would like to study, whereas the survey population is the one that is actually sampled and from whom data may be obtained. The target population of this study comprised 20,000 farmers from the ARP. Because of the difficulties of gaining access to the total farmer population, CESVI surveyed only those farmers who were assisting the information campaign activities. The ARP consists of thirteen districts: Aileu, Ainaro, Suai, Liquica, Lospalos, Manatuto, Manufahi, Bobonaro, Baucau, Dili, Maliana, Ocusí, and Viqueque. The survey population consisted of the ARP beneficiaries in those districts.

The Study Sample

Babbie (1983) defined sampling as the selection of a number of subjects from a defined population. The size of the sample depends on the details of the analysis. A basic principle is that a sample will represent the population from which it is selected if all members of the population have an equal chance of being selected for the sample. The sample of this study was drawn from a list of farmers who attended to the information campaign activities in the thirteen districts in East Timor. Only those farmers who were on the attendance list of the information campaign activities were surveyed. A sample size of 425 beneficiaries was determined and questionnaires were administered. The selected individuals constituted the sample.

Development of the Instrument

A questionnaire was developed and used in gathering information from the respondents. Questions were based on the members of the team who conducted this study’s own insights and on input provided by a focus group consisting of CESVI staff, PMU and World Bank staff in East Timor. Such input ensured the validity of the instrument. The survey was administered from 7 – 18 March 2000 in all 13 districts of the country. The district agricultural officers monitored the survey process in their districts. ARP monitoring and evaluation team crosschecked the data collection process.

Data-Collection Procedures

In developing countries, specifically East Timor, where mass communication is not available to the entire rural and urban population, it is difficult to use communication media such as mail or telephone to obtain information for a survey. In such instances, interpersonal communication, such as face-to-face interviews, is the best way to gather data. The interviewer can use clues other than the content of responses to assess their validity (Borg & Gall, 1983). Data were gathered during March 2000. Enumerators were trained on how to administer the questionnaires and the data that were to be obtained through individual questions. Data were collected through personal interviews with the farmers who assisted in the information campaign activities. In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from selected farmers in the thirteen districts.
Data-Analysis Procedures

This study was conducted to describe a given state of affairs; therefore, descriptive statistics were used in analyzing farmers’ perception of the effectiveness of the information campaign. Data collected from the respondents was entered into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) a computer software program. For the open-ended questions, a qualitative analysis was performed. Whenever incomplete or non-response information was found, it was coded as missing and in some cases where the result could be influenced it was counted, and in some cases where it was insignificant it was not included in the analysis. Additionally, recoding of data e.g. age range of respondents etc. was carried out. Comparative analysis of means had to be used in some cases. Results of the data analyses are present below.

Results

The results are presented in the following order:

SECTION 1, identification of the respondents (demographic information)
SECTION 2, conduct and impact of workshops
SECTION 3, promotion of ARP through, t-shirts, posters/leaflets and radio/TV programs
SECTION 4, dissemination of information about ARP using NGO’s and Village heads

Like many other surveys, this is an on-going work and the objective is to give PMU staff and the World Bank Project Management Team some information about the effectiveness/impact of CESVI information dissemination strategy, and also to provide information for planning and management purposes.

SECTION 1. Demographic information of respondents

Of those participating in the survey, a majority were male farmers while less than 10% were female farmers. The age of the target population ranged between 19 to 80 years old. The data indicate that a majority of the respondents were middle aged. More than 60% of the respondents were farmers while less than 15% were either chefe de suco who may be farmers or doing some other business, self-employed, NGO or other occupation.

SECTION 2. Conduct and impact of workshops

Twenty six workshops (two per district) were organized in the thirteen districts. According to CESVI, the rationale behind the organization of the workshops was to enlist support of local power structures for the information campaign before dissemination of activities could begin at the village level. In addition, considering the fact that participants of the workshops were in constant contact with farmers such as village leaders who may not necessarily be farmers could be used as one of the “sources” for information dissemination. The majority of the respondents, 89% stated that they did not receive information about the three components of the project on time.

During workshops, the main informative technique used was flipcharts covering the
different activities and services offered by ARP. Through the flipchart, the contents of the ARP were systematically explained to the participants and after the workshop, materials such as leaflets, brochures etc. were distributed to workshop attendees. Participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions or clarification about the presentations. Furthermore, participants were asked to provide feedback at the end of each workshop. T-shirts with the logo of ARP information campaign were distributed to the participants. An overwhelming majority (95%) of the respondents rated the organization and activities of the workshops as being very informative. Eighty percent of the respondents rated the length of the workshop negatively.

Fifty three percent of the respondents considered District Agricultural Officers as the main source of agricultural information, while 25% indicated Chefe de Suco. On the other hand, 22% indicated CESVI staff. It was found that 45% of the respondents had very good knowledge of ARP, before the information campaign was delivered.

Respondents were asked to indicate whether presentations at the workshop were all in Tetum language. More than 80% of the respondents agreed that the presentations were conducted in one of the local languages (Tetum).

SECTION 3. Promotion of ARP through printed materials (posters, brochures, t-shirts, leaflets)

Respondents were evenly divided; 43% found the materials very useful or useful. More than 80% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the materials and methods used to disseminate the information were beneficial. The significance of this data is that ARP staff should disseminate information on vaccination ahead of time so that farmers can prepare their animals for vaccination. Besides the printed materials used to disseminate information about vaccination, they were also used to disseminate information about other ARP activities.

For the information campaign on irrigation and road repair, more than 60% of the respondents indicated having seen the printed materials (posters and leaflets). More than 80% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the quality, messages conveyed by the drawings and overall understanding of irrigation activities increased as a result of the tools used. Respondents were also asked if they saw the leaflets on Pilot Agricultural Service Centers (PASCs). Nearly 70% of the respondents indicated having seen the leaflets while less than a third indicated that they did not. The interpretation of these data is that the respondents who did not see the leaflet might be those who did not have PASC’s established in their districts, therefore were not targets for the information. More than 80% of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the quality, messages conveyed by the drawings, and overall understanding of PASC’s activities increased as a result of the tools used.

For promotion purposes, CESVI produced 2,000 T-shirts, which had ARP logo on them. The T-shirts were distributed to beneficiaries. Respondents were asked if they received the T-shirt and to rate the impact of the t-shirt as an information campaign tool for ARP project. More than 60% received t-shirts and indicated that the logo message was clear, and was a good idea for information campaign.
SECTION 4. Dissemination of information about ARP using Local NGO’s and Village leaders

Local NGO’s were used by CESVI to disseminate information of ARP to farmers. This strategy was used by CESVI since local NGO’s could use the local language in communicating with the target population. Respondents found local NGO’s, 80%, very useful in the dissemination of information of the three ARP components. In terms of village leaders, DAO was the leading source for farmers receiving information on the components. Twenty percent of the participants found chefe de suco as a very useful source of information.

Conclusion

One may pose the question at this time: What do all these findings about the strategy on information campaign have to do with the success of the implementation of a project? The information campaign presents outcomes that could have positive effects on the success of projects. Based on this approach, the information campaign can lead to a higher level of diffusion of information and farmer participation in project activities. By using the right printed material and workshops, the outcomes of the information campaign can be greater if those printed materials and workshops are suitable to the target population. Several issues perceived by the PMU were also identified by the farmers. However, the level of importance appears to differ between the entities. Both groups recognized the delay in the delivery of information. This report is an assessment of the information campaign strategy adopted by CESVI in promoting ARP activities among communities in East Timor. Based on the objective and purpose of this study, the following recommendations are advanced to address some of issues.

1. There were some delays in the implementation of information campaign activities. It is recommended to invest early on project management capacity building at all levels, so that interventions are planned in accordance with a more programmatic approach and strengthened coordination between national and district staff.

2. A liaison officer besides the agricultural officer should be recruited in each district whose responsibility is to monitor all activities related to information dissemination. The individual recruited will manage the distribution of any posters, organize meetings with village leaders, monitor surveys and report back to headquarters. Information campaign cannot be managed completely at the central level, but should be decentralized. The organization should coordinate the activities with liaison officers in the field but the liaison officers and the agricultural officers in the field should do the implementation.

3. The collection of data for the survey was done in a hurry due to delays in the questionnaire design. The reason for the delay was the adjustment of the questionnaire to measure the type of impact PMU was looking for. Because of the delay, there was no close monitoring of the data collection process due to time.
constraints. It is recommended to plan ahead so that collection of data can be accomplished.

4. Finally, no distinct source of information delivery to communities emerged as the preferred method of communication from the survey. This means that several channels should be employed when disseminating information to the communities.

5. Radio was not taken into consideration in the implementation of the information campaign because it was assumed that a majority of the population lost their radios during the struggle for independence. However it was found that a majority of farmers owned radios. It is important for any implementation of information campaign to use radios as a means of targeting more beneficiaries. Radio is a well used mass media of communication in developing countries.

**Educational/Practical Importance**

The findings can be used for better planning in mobilization of target rural population in developing countries. Also, this study is a useful tool for non governmental organizations and government agencies who might be planning to design information campaign that can better improve the level of beneficiary participation or understanding of project benefits. The process of information campaign depends on the strategy used, encourages interactions and sharing of information, and experiences that tend to increase farmers’ knowledge, skills, attitudes, and aspirations. Finally, the adaptation of focus groups and personal interview techniques for this study can be useful in gathering information with similar target populations in developing countries.

**References**

