Everybody Has a Story…
Encouraging the Exchange of International Agricultural Education and Extension Ideas

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Introduction
As the business of agricultural and extension education becomes more and more global, it is important to learn how to hear and understand stories in order to better serve your clientele. Whether your audience are students, agricultural producers or fellow colleagues, it is pertinent to learn how their “story” affects the information that you want to gather or deliver.

Why is it important to learn the stories of others? In Cultivating Inspired Leaders, Bruce Lansdale presents three categories of leader-managers: administrators, leader-managers, and inspired and inspiring leader-managers. Administrators manage, leader managers are capable of leading those whom they associate with, but inspired and inspiring leader managers have been inspired by others in their lives and can share inspiration with their customers. Storytelling is the universal method of sharing inspiration. Following this philosophy helps people to become inspired and inspiring educators!

Method
Each person has a story that affects how he or she will comprehend information presented. Through group discussion and role-playing, we will discover the way to tell your story as well as how to get the story from your audience. In addition, we will solicit ideas from AIAEE members on how their experiences have influenced how they conduct business.

Information to be shared
Cultural barriers and personal experiences can block effective communication. How do you get to know the background of the audience you want to communicate with? As a group we will determine:
- How to get the “story”
- How to tell your “story”
- How to be an effective communicator
- How life experiences and cultural differences affect the way your audience comprehends your presentation

Lessons Learned
From someone who is just beginning a career in international agriculture, to those who are experienced travelers, everyone has a story to tell. From work with audiences who grew up behind the Iron Curtain to working through language barriers in Africa, past experiences of the discussants and participants will help all to become effective communicators.

Educational Importance
Working in agricultural education and extension, especially on the international level can be a challenging experience. From country to country, cultural differences can challenge the learning process.

Learning to be the guide on the side, rather then being the sage on the stage is important in the ever-emerging field of international agriculture. It is important to be able to understand your audience, whether the setting is in the classroom or in the field. In order to become a facilitator to learning, an effective communicator should be able to use a person’s life and cultural experiences to enhance the learning and teaching experience.