Promoting Effective Behavior Change with Community-Based Social Marketing: The Case of IPM Farmer Field Schools

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Abstract

Changing the behavior of a target audience is a goal of extension efforts around the world (Erbaugh, Donnermeyer, Kyamanywa, & Kucel, 2007). Andreasen (2002) indicated social marketing is applicable to circumstances where behavior needs to be altered. The purpose of this poster is to increase extension educators’ awareness of community-based social marketing as a strategy for fostering behavior change in participants in Integrated Pest Management Farmer Field Schools (IPM FFS), a popular vehicle for agricultural education and extension in international communities. The purpose of FFS is to enable farmers to engage in decision-making processes on the ecology of their own fields by improving their analytical and decision-making skills (Braun, Thiele, & Fernandez, 2000), such that they may discontinue dependency on pesticides as the primary pest-control measure (Goff, 2008).

The advantage of community-based social marketing is that “it starts with people’s behavior and works backward to select a particular tactic suited for that behavior” (McKenzie-Mohr & Smith, 1999, p. 7). The poster will illustrate the steps of the community-based social marketing model in the context of IPM FFS: (a) identify barriers and benefits to an educational program, (b) develop a strategy that utilizes tools effective in behavior change, (c) pilot the strategy, and (d) evaluate the strategy after community implementation.

Special emphasis will be given to the application of six tools associated with developing a strategy to promote effective change in behavior. Attaining commitment from program participants, providing prompts to current and potential clientele, making agents aware of norms in their community, developing communications which are clear and aimed towards the target audience, providing non-monetary incentives for clientele participation, and removing external barriers prohibiting participation are all essential actions for community-based social marketing to be successful for extension systems worldwide (McKenzie-Mohr & Smith). Extension officers conduct IPM FFS programs in groups of about 15-20 farmers who commit to meet once weekly during a cropping cycle. The weekly meetings serve as prompts as the farmers apply agro-
ecological systems analysis (AESA), an effective experiential learning and communication approach. Farmers learn how pesticide use in AESA differs from the norms in their community and steps for removing external barriers to behavior change. Non-monetary incentives, such as the group-building exercises, special-study topics, and a graduation ceremony, encourage the farmers’ continued participation in the program. Finally, after each weekly meeting and at the end of the program, the farmers evaluate the program, thus ensuring higher satisfaction with the program and application of AESA as a normal farming practice.

Community-based social marketing will provide extension workers an innovative strategy for fostering effective behavior change in communities across the globe. The tools of community-based social marketing expand upon traditional extension strategies to offer additional assistance to extension workers as they work to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing agricultural landscape.