Framework for Building Cultural Competency: An Essential Skill in International Agriculture and Extension Education

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Introduction
Someone’s ability to understand and adjust to different cultures is referred to as cultural competency. This competency is an important skill for someone to effectively communicate and work in diverse cultural environments without any barriers. If people are misunderstood, intercultural communication can create emotionally stressful situations (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994). Normally, we have to work with the culturally diverse people in international agricultural projects. “An obvious problem area when two people from different cultures communicate is language” (Gallois & Callan, 1997). Even if culturally diverse people speak international languages like English, French, or Spanish they can have different accent, dialects and or meaning attached to some of the words. For example, if an American expert working in Sri Lanka asks from his or her Sri Lankan counterpart “are you really excited about this project?” even if that person is really enthusiastic about the project, he or she might say “no I am not”. The word ‘excited’ in America means a positive experience. In Sri Lanka, it means ‘got upset or confused’. Language is only a part of culture. The most important aspect of any culture is cultural values. Understanding cultural values of any society is helpful to work with members of that cultural group without any rejection or misunderstanding. Therefore, it is very important to have a discussion about building cultural competency in international and agricultural extension education.

Purpose
The purpose of this poster is to review problems, and challenges in cross cultural communication and develop a framework for someone to build cultural competency. The poster will answer to the following research questions:
1. What do we mean by cultural competency?
2. Why is it important in international agricultural and extension education?
3. What are the common problems in cross cultural communication?
4. What are the major challenges in cross cultural communication?
5. What is the framework for building cultural competency?
Method and Procedure
This poster is a literature research study combined with the personal experience of the presenter.

Conclusion and Educational Importance
Even though, cultural competency is an important skill for international extension professionals, little emphasis has been given to explore this topic in international agricultural extension education. This poster reviews these problems and challenges, and presents a framework for building cultural competency. The extension educators preparing for international work will be much more likely to be successful by demonstrating cultural competency in diverse cultural environments. This poster is educationally significant for the professionals interested in international agricultural and extension education.