

November, 2007

Newsletter 1



Launching of the portal “Communication for Development for the Near-East region” known as ComDev Near-East.



Newsletter 1 - ComDev Near-East Portal

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (hereinafter referred to as “FAO”), and The Environment and Sustainable Development Unit (ESDU) of the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences (FAFS) of the American University of Beirut (AUB) supported the follow-up process of the Technical consultation on Communication for Development in the Near East: experiences, needs and opportunities. This project stated the establishment of a regional portal on best practice sharing, which is also a place of virtual consultations and exchange of

experiences and knowledge among the practitioners.

Communication for Development (ComDev), according to FAO, is the systematic and participatory use of communication methods and tools to reach consensus and achieve common goals among the stakeholders of a given development initiative. It is the planned use of participatory communication strategies, activities and media to facilitate information sharing, training and participation of rural people in policy/program formulation, planning and implementation.

Background

In June 2006, FAO and the World Bank organized a regional consultation on Communication for Development in the Near East held in Cairo, Egypt – in preparation for the 1st World Congress on Communication for Development (WCCD 2006). Thematic studies conducted prior to the consultation revealed a critical deficiency in documentation coupled with a marked absence of skilled practitioners in the field. This was identified through the regional consultation and reiterated by the regional workshop on Reform of National Agricultural Extension Systems, held in Tunisia, in September 2006.

Evidently, there is a critical need for capacity development at all levels to realise the evidenced potential offered by ComDev in achieving sustainable development in the region.

In this view, one of **the main outputs** of the technical consultation held in Cairo 12-14 June 2006 was to establish a **community of practitioners** in the region that would focus on sharing of experiences that have had impact in the region.

This is from where the idea

The activities towards a Near-East Portal and Platform/community of practitioners are:

- Running a portal for sharing knowledge among practitioners on ComDev;
- Documenting and sharing of best practices and experiences in the region;
- Sharing the outcome of the trainings (3 workshops held in Cairo, Tunis and Amman) and informing about follow-up action;
- Informing about on-going ComDev initiatives in the region;
- Be catalyst for action and proposals in ComDev at the national and regional levels.

The Near-East platform is a virtual venue of community of practitioners to share experiences and knowledge on communication for development; the portal is a website where information is made available and updated regularly.



Growing of three vetiver under trees in Jurd Arsal - Site: Tim El-Rahweh - Date: 14/05/01
Yecia sativa # 715
Yecia cravilla # 2542
Yecia sativa # 1403

Goals of the Platform

- (i) to articulate a community of practitioners/partners in the NE Region to share knowledge about ComDev;
- (ii) to serve as an advocacy tool for visibility and mainstreaming of ComDev into agricultural and rural development policies and programmes and (iii) to foster cooperation and technical support among practitioners in the region.

Goals of the Portal

- (i) to make available knowledge about experiences and best practices and inform about on-going ComDev initiatives and
- (ii) to build knowledge on the applications of ComDev in the region.

In practical terms, it has been proposed to establish a regional portal on best practice sharing, which would also be a place of **virtual consultations and exchange of experiences and knowledge** among the practitioners.



Marka-Jordan, suburbs of Amman

The services delivered by the portal are :

1. On line repository of documents and materials (documents, references, links, materials, etc)
2. Documentation of best practices
3. Information exchange (eg. newsletter, events, etc.)
4. E-forum
5. D-groups: discussion groups on selected topics
6. Collect and select documents and materials
7. Build lists of ComDev practitioners, institutions and projects in the region.

We are inviting you to visit the ComDev portal and give us your feedback:

www.comdev-neareast.org

Your comments are welcomed. We invite you as well to subscribe and participate in the e-forum and d-groups on the following link:

www.communicationfordevelopment-neareast.org

Technical team

The working technical team formed to establish the regional portal is composed of :

- Dr. Shadi Hamadeh, ESDU Coordinator (project manager)
- Mr. Ziad Moussa, ESDU Officer in charge of Capacity Development and Outreach (project coordinator)
- Dr. Salwa Tohme Tawk, ESDU Knowledge Management Officer (Technical Expert)
- Mr. Yarob Marouf, Marouf & Partners (IT specialist)
- Ms. Diana Abi-Said, ESDU Administrative Officer (Assistant Technical Expert)
- Ms. Loyal Dandache, ESDU Executive Officer (additional backstopping)