ABSOLUTELY NO QUICK FIXES

Effective Communication in Community-based Conservation and Management

Inez Ponce de Leon, PhD
Assistant Professor
Department of Communication
Ateneo de Manila University

THE NEED FOR CONSERVATION

- Wide variety of natural flora and fauna
- High biodiversity BUT also a good number of threatened species
- Great, but often damaging, reliance on natural resources
- Diverse cultures with close ties to the land and sea



THE INITIAL (MIS)CONCEPTIONS

- Knowing about biodiversity = motivation to protect it
- Knowing the science = immediate action
- A lot of information, education, and communication materials = immediate action
- "simple language" = acceptance of science = action

HOWEVER

None of these assumptions are supported by GOOD empirical research

OUR CHALLENGES

- Knowledge does not always lead to action
 - People can KNOW that something is wrong but they will still do it
 - If they are in a hurry
 - If they can get away with it
 - CONVERSELY: People can do the right thing but not know why
 - EX: evacuating during floods because barangay captain says so
- We have at least 200 living languages and diverse cultures
 - Every language group will have different worldviews and knowledge
- Effective Action can be defined in different ways depending on success indicators

HOW DO WE DEFINE EFFECTIVE ACTION?

(i.e. how do we define a "successful project"?)

(i.e. what are our objectives?)

WHY DO WE ASK THESE QUESTIONS?

- There are different ways of doing community-based work
- We need carefully crafted plans
- Carefully crafted plans come from good social sciences research
- Good social sciences research is driven by:
 - a strong theoretical base
 - methods that answer the research questions



AIM: INFORM PEOPLE

WORLDVIEW

Post-Positivist:

Scientist is the expert
Scientists have the knowledge
because of their tools and
formal education

COMM METHOD

Information, education, and communication materials

Lectures by scientists for nonexperts

Imparts: knowledge

APPROPRIATE TEST: An exam

INAPPROPRIATE TEST: Action

+/-

Inexpensive

Largely one-way (no need for consultation)

BUT: feedback is limited

AND: Community is not always engaged

AIM: GRASSROOTS PARTICIPATION

WORLDVIEW

Critical:

People who are affected by the phenomenon are the experts

Knowledge comes from actual experience of the phenomenon, not education on it alone

COMM METHOD

Community engagement:

People identify their problem

People cooperate AND solve their problem on their own

People choose how to solve their problem

APPROPRIATE TEST: Community action

+/-

Incorporates feedback and complete participation of community

BUT: will not work if people want to simply be "fed" info

AND: Can take a lot of time

AIM: SCIENTIST/STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIP

WORLDVIEW

Constructivist:

We all contribute to the knowledge through our education AND experience We are all EQUAL

We contribute expertise EQUALLY

COMM METHOD

Iterative consultation:

Scientists and Community members cooperate

All information and knowledge is held in equal regard

Everyone works together toward a solution

+/-

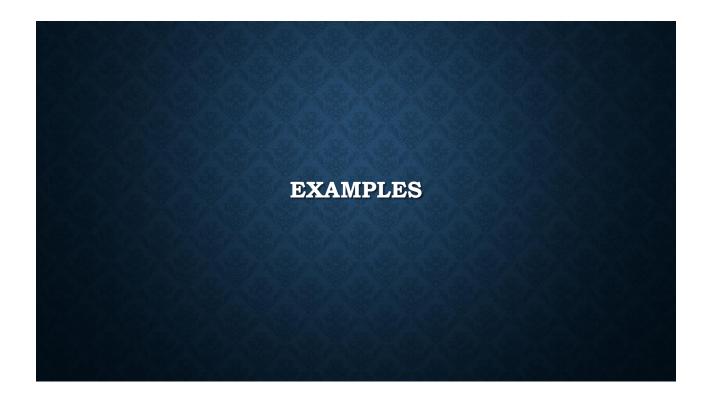
Involves community

BUT: not those who want to work on their own

AND: Takes a lot of time

WHAT DO THE APPROACHES HAVE IN COMMON?

- All of them need careful planning
- All of them need very good communication research as backup



INTEGRATED COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN DISASTER RISK AREAS IN THE CITIES OF CEBU, TAGBILARAN AND ILO-ILO

- Local partner: Pagtambayayong- A Foundation for Mutual Aid, Inc. (PFI)
- Promoted development and livelihood activities, including composting and gardening
- Carried out capability building programs
- Coordinated with different government agencies (including bench scientists, social scientists, etc) plus international agencies

IMPROVING NATURAL PRODUCTIVITY AND ENHANCING CAPACITIES OF RURAL FARMING HOUSEHOLDS WITHIN TAGUIBO WATERSHED

- Local Partner: Luntiaw Mindanao, Inc
- Aim: reduce local upland farmers' vulnerabilities, as well as pressure on natural resources
- Passing on the Gift: practice of sharing local resources among communities, community cooperation

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF FOREST MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION IN REGION 8 (LEYTE, SAMAR & BILIRAN ISLANDS)

- Tsunami "groundworking":
 - three level consultation-meeting prior to any major activity: surface concerns, agree on how to manage conflicts in succeeding meetings
 - Processing of inputs and outputs after
 - Can encourage people to actively participate in collective actions on common issues/needs and in searching for beneficial positions on the issues

MARIKINA STUDY (2015-2016)

- FGDs in Barangay Malanday
- Interviews with LGU and DRR personnel
- Discussions on:
 - Understanding of extreme flooding events
 - Warning messages, including color vs. signals
 - Scientific concepts related to extreme flooding
 - Trusted messages and persons



MARIKINA STUDY (2015-2016)

- LGU and DRR want people to be "capacitated" and "know the science" so that they listen to warnings
- HOWEVER: people evacuate because they are used to doing so
- People confuse signal warnings with color warnings
- People do not want to know more science they just want to be told exactly what to do
- BUT: People do not like evacuating because of badly designed evacuation centers

SO WHAT?

- We need to understand our many different audiences better
- We need to define our boundaries and success indicators
- There is no shortcut to effective communication for community-based work

