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WHAT IS EXTENSION?

However important extension is, it remains a concept that is not always understood well. Many think that it is something vague, as its impact, they believe, cannot be measured. Yet, the impact of extension can (and **should**) be measured, provided the programme has clear objectives and sufficient means for implementation.

Others are not very interested in understanding extension better because they feel that the impact of an extension programme is often not clearly visible within a short period of time, especially when it concerns income-generating activities, such as fisheries. But, they forget that this is exactly the challenge of extension, as extension often takes the starting point of helping people to help themselves – and this may require time.

To eliminate the vagueness that surrounds extension and its impact, it is necessary to discuss what extension exactly is, particularly, in this book, with reference to what fisheries extension is and what it can do.

A definition of extension

There are many definitions of extension. Here is one rather detailed definition:

Extension is the collective word to describe all organized communication efforts by which an individual or agency tries to bring about changes in the knowledge, attitudes, skills and/or behaviour of a client population, in order to

reach one or more objectives that have been established within the framework of an overall development policy.

At first this may seem a complicated definition, but it clearly specifies what the main action is and what the main features of extension are. The main action of extension is the communication effort and its main features are the following:

- It is an organized, collective effort;
- It works with, and for, a client population; and
- It serves a development policy.

Sometimes people give extension a very broad meaning, such as ‘informal adult education’. However, informal education cannot always be called extension, as, for instance, when it is not a collective or an organized effort, or when it does not focus on a specific client population, or when it does not operate within the framework of an overall development policy. Extension can also address children, *FOR EXAMPLE*, during a campaign to promote proper brushing of *teeth*. But, the main purpose of extension is to provide information.

Some authors suggest that extension focuses only on the rural population and for the purpose of rural development (e.g. Oakley and Garforth, 1985, Jacobsen, 1987). In fact, extension can be applied to any type of activity meant for any type of target group in any type of country. *FOR EXAMPLE*, a *country-wide health extension* programme whose objective is the eradication of rabies.

The information that the extension service communicates to its clients is called the **extension message**. The contents of the extension message are, in the ideal situation, adjusted to the needs and experiences of the clients. **But if the extension message is based entirely on the needs of the government that supports the extension service, extension becomes propaganda** (Freire, 1973).

Fisheries extension as an intervention instrument

Extension is often mistaken for community development. Community development usually aims to improve the living conditions, both economic and social, of the population or of a

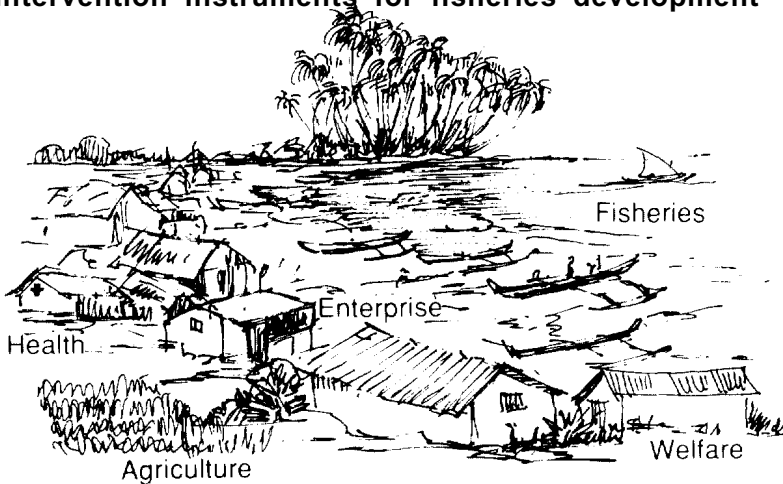
certain target group in a community. The activities initiated to improve living conditions can be very diverse, depending on the needs of the client population in a particular community and/or the wishes of the supporting organizations, if such organizations are involved. The activities may comprise various components, such as a health component, an agriculture or livestock component, an environmental component, a fisheries **component**, an **enterprise component**, a welfare component (such as the construction of houses and community centres) etc.

To support the development of one of these components within the **community**, **outside assistance is sometimes** deemed necessary. Such support can be in such fields as: **research, legislation, savings and credit** schemes, business advice, **marketing support, subsidy** schemes, formal education or training, and extension. When applied to a **specific programme**, these fields are called **intervention instruments**.

A successful programme usually incorporates more than one instrument and relies on a carefully thought out mix of intervention instruments. These instruments are then developed into subprogrammes that are integrated with **the other subprogrammes** within the programme, such as a research subprogramme or an extension subprogramme.

An **extension programme** is, in fact, often an extension subprogramme that is part of a larger programme. *FOR EXAMPLE, a programme that aims to introduce a new type of outrigger canoe incorporates a large mix of intervention instruments: a research instrument, to develop an appropriate boat; a training instrument to train carpenters to make the boat; an extension instrument to create awareness about the boat and inform interested persons about the various relevant aspects of the boat; a credit programme to facilitate fishermen or fisherwomen to buy the boat etc.*

Intervention instruments for fisheries development



- Support Programme for fisheries development: -
- * Fisheries legislation
 - * Fisheries research
 - * Savings and credit
 - * Marketing support for fish and fish products
 - * Subsidy
 - + Training
 - . **Fisheries extension**

Community development in relation to fisheries extension and other support services.

What becomes clear here is that

FIRSTLY, fisheries development is only one component of community development, although this may include fisheries and fisheries-related activities. A certain overlap between components can easily occur. *FOR EXAMPLE, to improve the hygienic conditions of a fish market, the Municipal Council, the health officer and the Fisheries Extension Agent (FEA) should be involved.*

SECONDLY, extension is only one of the many support services or intervention instruments that may be required for community or fisheries development, besides such instruments as, *FOR EXAMPLE, credit supply.*

These two boundaries mark the area of competence of the FEA.

However, in extension, there are various extension methods, and the choice of a certain extension method depends on such factors as

- The type of message to be conveyed;
- The number of people to be reached;
- The client population;
- The resources available to conduct the specific extension programme; and
- The individual initiative of the FEA.

Extension methods may include

- Mass media, such as the radio;
- Group methods, such as group discussions, demonstrations, workshops or excursions; and
- Individual extension, whereby the FEA communicates with one person only (Van der Ban and Hawkins, 1988).

The FEA can be directly involved in the group or with individual extension methods and can provide assistance in developing a mass media programme. He can also help explain in the field the message propagated in the mass media programme. These extension methods are discussed in Chapter 4.

Of course, it can be argued that fisheries development would be of little use if other components, such as health, are not attended to. That may be true in many cases, but that does not mean that the FEA should engage in health activities: that is the area of competence of the health agent. However, the different field level agents can provide valuable assistance to one another in their respective areas of competence.

In some countries in the region, for example Malaysia, Shri Lanka and, to some extent, Thailand, it is not necessary for the FEA to be directly involved in activities not related to fisheries. In these countries, when compared to such countries as the Maldives, and

certain parts of India, Bangladesh and Indonesia, many government organizations are represented at the village level and/or at the divisional level.

Many non-government and even private organizations are also active in the region and it might be possible to obtain their services as well. However, to obtain such assistance, there would have to be at least some coordination of the programmes engaged in community development at the community level.

Extension tries to bring about changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills and/or behaviour

Changes are necessary when

fishermen or fisherwomen are convinced that their present situation does not correspond with the desired situation, and/or

- when an outside organization, such as the **Fisheries Agency (FA)**, argues that the present situation should be changed.

FEAs often have to work with a variety of interests that may sometimes contradict. Fisherfolk within one community may have opposing interests. *FOR EXAMPLE*, some fishermen *would like to improve their ringnet operations, while those who do not use ringnets might oppose a more extensive use of ringnets in the area, especially in inshore waters.*

Furthermore, the interests of the Fisheries Agency and that of the fisherfolk do not always coincide. *FOR EXAMPLE*, a Fisheries Agency *might have adopted a policy to ban ringnets from the inshore waters, while fishermen might find it very convenient and rewarding to use ringnets in these waters.*

The FEA will always have to work with such contradictions, more so than even agricultural FEAs, because fishing usually means tapping a common, not entirely renewable resource' that, in itself,

The fish resource is usually a common property resource, but in certain cases fishermen and fisherwomen have obtained user rights to parts of the sea or lagoon for the purpose of fishing.

requires more coordination among fishermen and more regulation from the government. This is probably the biggest challenge that FEAs have to meet. The agent must always be aware that

changes in one situation might influence the situation of other fishermen, and

- changes in principle have to be in line with government policies.

Fisherfolk's situations that may require changes and, thus, perhaps, outside intervention, may be grouped as follows (after Van den Ban and Hawkins, 1988:10):

1. Inadequate insight to recognize the problem or to think of a possible solution.

In some cases the fisherfolk may have obtained incorrect information. Here, extension can assist in providing the required information or help the persons to identify the problem and find a possible solution. FOR EXAMPLE, a fisherwoman might

2. Inadequate incentive to improve the situation.

Often there are very clear reasons for this and these could be beyond the control of the persons concerned. FOR EXAMPLE, if one may be wondered why fishermen are often unconcerned with spoilage of fish during onboard fish handling.

Often the reason is that there is little price incentive to spend more time and money on better fish-handling; due to the high demand for fish, the fish can be sold anyway. Also, better fish-handling would mean increasing the price of the fish, and many consumers might not be able to pay the higher prices.

Another reason might be the relationship between the crew and the boat-owner, if the boat-owner does not go out fishing himself. If the relationship is not very **good**, the crew may not be concerned at all with the condition of the fish they bring ashore.

The FEA should be aware of the reasons and consequences of certain behaviour and, in that context, propose changes. One

change might be to ask the municipal council to look after better the daily cleaning of the fish market, if this is indeed required. Such a change would hardly affect the price that consumers will have to pay for the fish.

3. Inadequate resources, for instance, capital, to change the situation.

Extension might, in such cases, provide information on how the persons concerned could obtain credit or the required material. But a direct involvement of the FEA in obtaining or supervising the supply of credit or subsidies has nothing to do with extension.

4. Inadequate power to change the situation.

To try to solve this is, in general, an unfeasible extension activity, as it is unlikely that mere provision of information would change the situation. In some cases, the FEA might suggest a person or organization through whom the person concerned could better channel his or her interests. The agent might also be able to suggest and support the formation of certain interest groups. However, it is important that the FEA retains, as much as possible, his or her neutral position and does not become too involved with the local-level power centres, although this might not always be easy.

It should be noted that this situation concerns the political and economic organization in a fishing community. In case the lack of power can be overcome by increased knowledge, we have to refer to Situation 1, above.

It may be seen from the foregoing that fisheries extension, by its very nature, cannot solve all social problems in the fisheries sector. On the other hand, it is impossible for a FEA to have ALL the technical knowledge required to address ALL problems relevant to fisheries extension. Therefore, it is important that the agents know how to obtain such information, either through their Ministry or Department, research organizations or other organizations. In that

case, the FEA acts as an intermediary between his or her clients and other sources of knowledge. Here, it is equally important for the FEA to candidly admit that he or she does not have the appropriate knowledge, if that indeed be the case in a particular occasion. How information on various technical fields of fisheries extension can be obtained is described in Chapter 7.

Extension addresses the needs of a client population

A frequently heard statement among government officials is, “Yes, extension is important because we have to educate the fishermen”. Behind this statement is the implication that fisherfolk

- do not know what is good for them;
- are not aware of the opportunities to improve their situation; and
- have often developed bad habits (such as not fulfilling their social obligations), which reduce their motivation to improve their situation.

Such a statement normally does not tell you in what way the fisherfolk should actually be educated nor whether education is a part of the responsibility of the extension service.

In general, the statement often contains a number of prejudices. First, do fishermen and fisherwomen really not know what is good for them? How do we know that they do not know, and do we really know what it is to be a fisherman and what hardship the occupation entails? Are there not many among the fisherfolk who know very well what is needed to improve their situation? Are we, therefore, referring to ALL fishermen and fisherwomen or only to a certain segment of the fisheries community, namely the most deprived? Also, are there no influences beyond the control of the fisherfolk that have worsened their living conditions? *FOR EXAMPLE, there are the influences of those programmes which aim to introduce new fishing technologies and there are such non-fisheries influences as the increasing prices of consumer goods.*

To be able to answer such questions, the FEA needs to have a good understanding of the fisheries community he or she is working for. In general, to analyze the best way of providing help, the FEA should first learn and understand a fisherman's or fisherwoman's situation. In extension, the assistance provided is useful only when it really addresses the **needs** of the client population. This basic tenet of extension also determines the way communication efforts should ideally be pursued, namely in the listening mode and **NOT** in the teaching mode. This is the main difference between formal adult education, or training, and extension. As stated by UNDP (undated:2), "Extension education is different from the conventional education institution; it is informal, without regular classes, grades, degrees or diplomas".

Thus, while in formal education, the teacher, the school or the national education programmes decide what the students have to learn, in extension the extension message should be tailor-made for specific client groups of fisherfolk or for individuals. But for an extension programme to become tailor-made, it is important that fisherfolk or specific groups of fisherfolk are able to voice their **need** for certain information or assistance. This is called **the demand side of extension**. The way the fisheries extension service of the Fisheries Agency or other specialized organizations are able to **meet** this demand is called **the supply side of extension** (Jiggins and Roling: 1982). The demand side is discussed in Chapter 5 and the supply side in Chapter 3.

It is only recently that fisheries extension organizations in the region, as well as funding agencies, have realized that an efficient extension service requires the development of both the supply side and the demand side, and that specific groups of fisherfolk have different demands, thus requiring different support services. *FOR EXAMPLE*, in the case of fish processing, the management of a fish processing plant might like to obtain information on new fish products developed by a certain Institute of Post-harvest Technology, whereas a fisherwoman involved in small-scale fish processing might like to know how she can construct low-cost fish-drying racks. Different extension

methodologies may be required to meet the demands of these different client groups.

Extension objectives and the overall development policy

Often the overall development policy for the fisheries sector is outlined in a national fisheries plan that, usually, has a five- year duration. This is the context in which the fisheries extension service would try to implement its programmes. Yet each programme developed by the extension service would have its specific objectives. *FOR EXAMPLE, in the context of a government policy to increase safety at sea, the fisheries extension service might develop an extension programme with the objective that, at the end of the two-year extension programme, 80 per cent of all fishing boats in the country that sail offshore would be using a compass.*

In agriculture extension programmes, usually clear objectives or targets are set, such as, for instance, promoting certain crops on a regional basis. This is as yet not usual for fisheries extension. One reason is that it is not very easy to control fish resources, when compared to plant production, for instance. The development policies and the objectives for extension will be further discussed in the next chapter.