

Isang Bagsak
Planning phase 2 of the program

I - Introduction to Isang Bagsak

Increasing the impact of development research and development projects is not only a question of information dissemination through various channels for different stakeholders. It depends first and foremost on the abilities of the researchers and practitioners to use their research and development activities to strengthen the capacity of individuals and community groups to identify and analyse their problems, identify and experiment solutions, and improve their livelihoods and living conditions.

Participatory Development Communication is what make this happens. And although every community-based project, and more specifically those active in the field of natural resource management, have to deal with communication with the local communities and other stakeholders, few of them demonstrate an optimum utilization of communication strategies and technologies.

The Isang Bagsak program is a response to this issue. As a learning and networking program in Participatory Development Communication, it is intended to researchers, development practitioners, associated stakeholders and resource persons who work with the communities, particularly in the field of environment and natural resource management.

The program has the following objectives:

1. Improve CBNRM researchers's and development practitioners' capacities in communicating with local communities and other stakeholders
2. Enable researchers and development practitioners to plan a participatory development communication component in the context of their NRM research
3. Improve researchers's and development practitioners' capacities in making research results available and utilizable by end-users
4. Facilitate learning between and among researchers and development practitioners through the exchange of experiences and ideas
5. Build a mechanism for CBNRM researchers and practitioners to share learning experiences and materials

The program relies on a participatory capacity-building approach. It combines face to face activities with a distance learning strategy and web-based technology. Researchers and development practitioners in natural resource management come from different directions and have different approaches. This is why the program starts from the perspectives of each participant regarding his/her use of communication in his/her own research and his/her understanding of the difficulties encountered and progress from that material, using an inductive approach to link with participatory communication concepts and methodological elements.

The program has been developed through a pilot phase conducted with three projects teams from Uganda, Cambodia and Vietnam. The content, reference materials, and information on Isang Bagsak can be accessed at www.isangbagsak.org The discussions in the electronic forum are open exclusively to participants but observers are welcome to read the contributions of the participants by registering to the Lookout section of the forum.

Since September 2001, Isang Bagsak has been developing and running it's experimental capacity-building program in participatory development communication with three research teams from Cambodia, Vietnam and Uganda. Contents have been produced, modalities have been set up to facilitate the work and a strong dynamic has now developed . After a first introductory face to face session and five months of forum activities, the three participating teams met together in Hue, last March, for a two-weeks workshop.

It was made clear at that occasion that Isang Bagsak is useful in helping the teams using communication and participatory research skills to work in a more participatory way with communities. It was also outlined by the teams that the program plays a catalyst role in helping the teams to better organize themselves and clarify the different aspects of participatory research in which they are involved.

On the future of Isang Bagsak, after it's experimental phase, it was felt that:

- The program should be implemented in order to reach a larger number of researchers and practitioners in CBNRM, both in Asia and Africa.
- It should aim to develop some activities in national languages (specifically in Vietnam and Cambodia), because not enough people master the English language sufficiently to be able to really understand the issues and express their views.

The following note of information presents the actual follow-up scenario to the first phase of Isang Bagsak, terminating next september.

II. Planning phase 2 of Isang Bagsak

A second phase of Isang Bagsak is actually in preparation. It includes the 4 following components:

1. Evaluation and planning activities

- 1.1 Participating teams will be invited to evaluate the program and identify the changes that they were able to implement in working with the communities and other stakeholders. They will also be invited to identify how they would see the development of Isang Bagsak in their country-region and what follow-up modalities they would suggest.
- 1.2 After those initial team sessions, two representatives from each team will be invited to an evaluation and planning workshop where an external evaluation will complete the participatory evaluation of each team.
- 1.3 In a second part of the workshop, the participants will be invited to discuss the follow-up to the first experimental phase together with the IDRC Isang Bagsak team, the representatives from two regional institutions from Southern and East Africa and South-East Asia who will be involved in the implementation phase of the program, and a consultant in distance education responsible for curriculum development.

2. Development of a national language component

- 2.1 The experimental aspect of the program will continue with the development and experimentation of an Isang Bagsak program in national language. A proposal is under development with the Vietnamese team.

The content of the program will be translated into Vietnamese. A facilitator will also be trained to moderate the e-forum in Vietnamese. Participants from Vietnam would first participate to the discussions in their national language and would then join the international discussions in English. After completion and evaluation, we

may recommend the development of an Isang Bagsak program in other national languages.

- 2.2 This component would also help building capacity at Hue University to act as the focal point of the program for the Vietnamese network.

3. Development of learning and training materials and evaluation tools

- 3.1 Learning materials will be developed around the *Facilitator's Guide to PDC*, already available on the web site of the program and the exchanges and comments developed in the *PDC Forum* with the participants.
- 3.2 Training materials will also be developed in order to train facilitators in PDC. Some NGOs, NARS, and other NRM research or development institutions, even some of the participants to Isang Bagsak, could develop their own Isang Bagsak in their own network. The training materials would serve in developing capacity in those institutions to do so.
- 3.3 Evaluation tools will also be developed, in order to assess the impact of the program on the actual work done by the participants with the communities.
- 3.4 The learning and training materials and the evaluation tools will be developed by a specialist in distance education, in collaboration with two regional institutions who will be involved in the implementation of Isang Bagsak in Southern and Eastern Africa and in South-East Asia, and with the participants to the program.
- 3.5 We are exploring actually the possibility for this research and curriculum development component to be a joint collaboration between IDRC PlaW and CBNRM teams and the UNESCO division of Communication and Information. Agreement has been made with the deputy director general to pursue this collaboration in the following months. Another meeting with UNESCO on that topic is planned at the end of july.
- 3.6 This component also aims to complete the actual bibliography of the program and to produce a commented compendium. This compendium will extract the essential issues presented in the reference material and comment them. It will be an useful tool for participants who have difficulties mastering the English language.

4. Regional implementation of Isang Bagsak in Asia and Africa

- 4.1 Discussions are under way to identify two regional institutions in South-east Asia and Southern and Eastern Africa who will be able to play a role in the implementation of the program in those two regions. The choice of those two regions is linked to the geographical situation of the participating teams of the experimental phase (Vietnam, Cambodia and Uganda). We will begin by those two regions. After implementation, we may recommend to introduce Isang Bagsak to other regions.
- 4.2 Each institution will be responsible to house the web site and electronic forum, to introduce the program to institutions involved in NRM, implement the program in their region, and seek financial support from their own network of donors. It is thought that there will be more sustainability in linking the Isang Bagsak program to the mandate of already existing regional institutions than to create a punctual global structure. It is also thought that proceeding this way will enable to take into account cultural specificity of each region. This doesn't exclude collaborative activities between the two regional institutions.
- 4.3 Those institutions will also have a role to play in expending the content of Isang Bagsak. Since it's beginning, Isang Bagsak has been mostly focused on community-based work. Participatory development communication is a powerful tool to facilitate participation between researchers, practitioners and community members. But in the exchanges between teams, reaching and influencing policy-makers at various levels is also an important dimension of the work which emerged from the discussions. Thus, this dimension should be more integrated in the structure of the program. The interface between interpersonal communication and the media should also be the object of more curriculum development.
- 4.4 The South-east Asian institution will also have the mandate to monitor and support the development of the Vietnamese program.

This scenario is to be refined through discussions with regional institutions, IDRC PlaW and CBNRM teams, other donors, and with the participating teams to Isang Bagsak.

