THE INFOMEDIARY TEAM

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HIGHLIGHTS
94% of the students reported they searched information for the farmers in their community.
43% of the students reported their parents and other farmers believed their recommendations.
Plenty of innovations in making access to rice farming innovation have been made possible by participating schools such as presentation of the campaign during Parents and Teachers Association Assembly meetings and publishing of rice production technologies in their school papers.
There is evidence of collaboration with local government units
School-led extension is evident in several sites: farmers from the community asked/bought certified seeds from the participating schools.
A case of an infomediary who was able to change the attitude of his father and uncle, both are farmers, in their use of pesticides
**COMPONENTS**

The Infomediary Campaign employs several strategies, online and offline, to optimize youth engagement in agriculture. The online strategies are the use of the PhilRice Text Center and the Pinoy Rice Knowledge Bank. Establishment of rice gardens, Infomediary quiz bee and face off, and training of teachers are the offline strategies.
ONLINE COMPONENTS
The Campaign introduces the students to the PhilRice Text Center, an SMS platform that caters to all queries on rice production developed by the Open Academy for Philippine Agriculture (OpAPA). The students are asked by their teachers to register to the PTC. All SMSs of the students go to a separate folder so they are ready for content analysis.
Another platform developed by OpAPA, the students are introduced to this information portal that contains most information one has to know about rice farming in the Philippines. If internet connection is an issue, the schools are given a copy of the offline version of the Pinoy Rice Knowledge Bank.
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If the campaign site has good internet connectivity, we offer video conferencing. The teacher in the area asks the students some good topics that can be discussed. It is then relayed to the team. The team looks for an expert who will sit down to answer queries during the video conferencing session. Some farmers, depending on the teacher, are also invited to attend.
The campaign provides reading materials to schools especially those with poor internet connectivity. This is to ensure that the students will have alternative access to information other than those sourced online.

**OFFLINE COMPONENTS**
The infomediary campaign 2013 annual report

PROVISION OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS TO SCHOOLS

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All participating schools are required to set up a rice garden showcasing the top three rice varieties suited for their rice environment. The purpose is to give the students a hands-on experience in growing rice so they are more confident in giving recommendations to farmers.
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Establishment of rice gardens

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INFOMEDIARY QUIZ BEE

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During the quiz bee, farmers are invited to ask questions to the students. The students then search for answers in the Pinoy Rice Knowledge Bank. After the quiz bee, a credibility index survey is being administered to farmers to gauge the credibility of the students in giving recommendations.
TEKNOKLINIK

This is another initiative to engage the parents. The success of the campaign rests heavily on the trust that the farmers will give to the students. Hence, there should be active engagement of the students.
The organization is half the methodology. The Team does random rounds of meetings with key school officials to ensure that all issues surrounding the campaign are well covered.
WHAT WE HAVE DOCUMENTED DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION
INNOVATIONS

How are the Infomediary Campaign-participating schools implementing the campaign? What are some of the ways by which rice farming information are being cascaded down to our intended recipients—the farmers in our remote rice farming communities? Below are some of their innovations.
Bond paper advertising in Samar and Bulacan. The teacher we trained in Samar asked his students to do bond paper size campaign materials promoting the PhilRice Text Center and post them in conspicuous areas in their community. This meant access to rice farming information to the many farmers in their community. Surely, this has made the PTC closer to all of them. In Bulacan, PTC and PRKB posters designed by the teachers were posted in conspicuous areas in the school.

Computer-based quiz bee in Cagayan. The teacher we trained in Claveria Rural Vocational School (CRVS) and the Internet and Computer Fundamentals (ICF) instructor tied up to implement the campaign in their school. The ICF teacher developed a computer-based quiz on Infomediary Campaign-related topics such as the integrated rice management system.

Rice production technologies on school newspapers. Our participating schools in Albay (Libon Agro-Industrial High School) and in Abra (Pilar Rural High School) published in their respective school newspapers about rice production technologies taught during the training of trainers on the Infomediary module.

This meant additional access to rice farming information among thousands of students and their farmer-parents—pretty much what we’d like to do in this campaign.

Reaching out to other schools. Our site in Sarangani (Malalag National High School) has reached out to its neighboring school, Maguling National High School (MNHS), to promote the Infomediary Campaign. In the recently concluded training on rice production, a representative from MNHS participated. This is creating ripples of impact!
Successful collaboration with local government units. Our sites in Albay (LAIHS) and Cagayan (CRVS) have shown that they can work well with their respective local government units in implementing this campaign. In Albay, LGU representatives attended the Parents and Teachers Association meeting, which included rice farmers in the area, to talk about some of the latest rice farming technologies. In Cagayan, a local executive lent the land for use in establishing the rice garden of the school. Strong LGU support was also noted in the Occidental Mindoro (San Jose National Agricultural and Industrial High School) and Pangasinan (Eastern Pangasinan Agricultural College).

Well-thought-out integration. Our site in Bulacan (Balagtas National High School) has a strategic way of integrating the campaign in their curriculum. For instance, essays in English and Filipino subjects were all aligned on rice production. Key school officials were also supportive of the campaign. Hence, it is among the very few schools that have shown evidence of utilization of the Pinoy Rice Knowledge Bank. Promotion of the campaign by way of putting up posters in strategic areas in the school is also well executed. They have also implemented an incentive scheme for the first 10 students who were able to register to the PhilRice Text Center.

Presentations during Parents and Teachers Association meetings. Our partners in Davao (Siquabo Agricultural Vocational High School) and Kalinga (Balbalan Agro Industrial School) have presented the campaign in their PTA meetings. They have well promoted some of the cost-reducing and yield-enhancing technologies on rice farming.
EVIDENCE OF SEARCHING INFORMATION

The campaign did the first round of national evaluation in February 2014. Seven schools were randomly selected for this purpose. They were: Libacao National Forestry Vocational High School (Aklan), Rogongon Agricultural High School (Iligan City), Claveria Rural Vocational School (Cagayan), Southern Samar National Comprehensive High School (Eastern Samar), Libon Agro-Industrial High School (Albay), and Ilocos Norte Agricultural College (Ilocos Norte).

A range of methods were used to evaluate the campaign: survey (N=300), focus group discussion (FGD), and content analyses of PTC SMSs.
Information Searching and Sharing

In general, there is a good response from the students on the need for them to search information for the farmers in their community.
By searching information, this means they either surfed in the Internet particularly in the Pinoy Rice Knowledge Bank, sent SMS to the PTC, or read the publications we placed in the school libraries. It was noted that 94% of the infomediaries searched information for other farmers in their community, not just for their parents. Across sites the searching of information for farmer-parents (54%) and other farmers in the community was a common thing.

There are mixed results as far as the usage of PTC and the PRKB. The use of PTC was hugely appreciated with over 90% of the respondents reported having sent SMS to it. The PTC received more than 2,000 SMSs from the infomediaries. Questions on varieties, integrated pest management, and weather topped the list of frequently asked questions. Infomediaries from Nueva Ecija, Aurora, and Bulacan are the top texters. These provinces are top rice producers.

The case for PRKB is not very favourable, however. Among the 7 schools, only 2 (our schools in Albay, Iligan City, and Aklan) reported having fairly used the platform. This is not favourable as schools were given offline versions of the PinoyRKB should internet be an issue. The absence of electricity also hinders students from using the PRKB.

During site visits, it was also found that some schools did not even install the CD given to them. A good reflection on this finding is that not all things that are given free of charge will be optimized. Second, simple innovations result in huge appreciation and wider utilization (as in the case of the PTC) as opposed to one that is a bit more complicated (such as the case of PRKB where the students still have to read and download). This has its pluses and minuses as the PTC does have its limitations as well such as understanding more complex instructions on rice farming.
CREDIBILITY OF INFOMEDIARIES AND SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL-LED EXTENSION
Across sites, the students reported that their parents believed them. This is a very interesting result considering that there was much apprehension during the start of the project as regards the credibility of the students. The question: would farmers who have been farming all their lives believe the students who may have inadequate experience on rice farming? Yet, the results are favourable. Additionally, 41% of the students reported their parents followed their recommendations. The Team did some field validation of this finding, and there seems some truth to it. An infomediary in Bulacan (a video testimony is available at www.infomediary4d.com; also in our CD of videos) was able to convince her father and uncle to minimize use of insecticides in their fields after she explained the concept of harmful and helpful organisms.

Likewise, success of school-led extension is evident. Farmers from nearby areas of the Infomediary Campaign-participating schools asked for seeds from the participating schools. This means that the use of certified seeds have increased owing to the campaign as schools were given registered seeds according to seed classes, registered seeds are a notch higher than certified seeds. Most participating schools do not have access to seed centers. Certified seeds have 10% yield advantage over the regular seeds being used by farmers. From our monitoring reports, we noticed this happening in our sites in Cagayan, Davao Oriental, and Sarangani. The chance is high that this also happened in other sites we were not able to visit.

Teachers sharing the modules and other resources on rice to other teachers in other schools are also common. In the case of Malalag National High School in Sarangani, the teacher we trained shared the communication resources and the whole campaign to three other schools: Wali Integrated School, Salakit National High School, and Maguiling National High School. Teachers from these schools reproduced the modules from Malalag National High School. Absence of updated materials (some materials being used to teach rice production were rather old, about 2 decades ago) was noted in the evaluations in non-participating schools. In Claveria Rural Vocational School, two more schools received the materials from the campaign. All this are happening at no cost to PhilRice.
The Infomediary Campaign was initially thought of as a platform to address information poverty in remote rice farming communities. During the evaluations, however, it was found that the campaign can very well serve as a platform to promote agriculture as an option for college among high school students.
In the survey following the first year of national implementation of the Campaign, it was found that 54% of the students in all sites wanted to pursue agriculture in college. Additionally, 76% of those who expressed interest to take agriculture noted their participation to the campaign has something to do it. In hindsight, it can be said that promotion of agriculture as a course in college is one thing that is missing. Nationwide, one can see giant billboards promoting nursing, information technology, and seafaring—none for agriculture.

The Team first observed this phenomenon during the piloting in Aurora during the focus group discussions with parents. One of the parents said that he wanted her daughter to take accountancy in Saint Louis University in Baguio. After having been exposed to the Science City of Munoz, her daughter insisted on taking agriculture in Central Luzon State University (Manalo et al, 2012). The Team followed through on this and indeed the girl is now in CLSU along with a few more from the same school in Aurora.

There is a massive decrease in enrollment in agriculture courses, in UPLB for instance. If we are to prevent this from happening a concerted, serious, and innovative effort must be pursued. Interest, however, is just one thing. Helping these students pursue agriculture and ensuring that they will be getting quality education in host institutions are some of the formidable issues that must be addressed.
RECOGNITIONS
International


One of the 10 outstanding papers during the Communication Policy Research South 7/ICTafrica2012 in Mauritius. Outstanding papers were published in the journal info

One of the 8 outstanding papers during the Communication Policy Research South 9/ICTafrica2014 in Maropeng, South Africa.

Local
Best Paper for the Extension Category of the Crop Science Societies of the Philippines, Palawan, 16-20 April 2012.

Presentations
International (All three presentations passed the scrutiny of international reviewers. Likewise, no fund from the government was used for the travels except for the APAEAAN Conference in Naga City. The Conference organizers funded all expenses related to conference participation)


Local


Published papers
Manalo, J.A. IV, Balmeo, K.P., Berto, J.C., Domingo, O.C., and Saludez, F.M. (Forthcoming). The Incomediary Campaign as a strategy for poverty reduction. IGI Global: USA.

