LESSONS LEARNED:
Making Community Forestry Rights Real

The First Annual Public Outreach and Awareness Campaign

MARCH 2014

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

PROSPER[1] is a five-year program (2012-2017) that builds on USAID investments in the forestry and agricultural sectors to introduce, operationalize, and refine appropriate models for community management of forest resources in target areas of Liberia. The project aims to:

1) Expand educational awareness and institutional capacity to improve environmental awareness, natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, and environmental compliance;
2) Improve community-based forest management leading to more sustainable practices and reduced threats to biodiversity in target areas;
3) Enhance community-based livelihoods derived from sustainable forest-based and agriculture-based enterprises in target areas.

Working with project partners (including communities, educational institutions, government agencies, civil society organizations, private sector partners, community-based organizations, and other donor programs) at all levels of implementation, PROSPER is designed to improve environmental awareness and wise stewardship of natural resources, extending community-based forest management and agricultural enterprise development throughout Liberia.

Pursuant to these goals, PROSPER implemented the first year of an outreach and awareness campaign called "Make Community Forest Rights Real" in 2013. This report provides an overview of:

1. The process and approach used to design and implement the outreach and awareness the campaign;
2. Campaign goals, objectives, and activities; and
3. Community and project stakeholder reactions, responses, and feedback on Year 1 of the campaign gleaned from campaign "Lessons Learned Consultations".

The stakeholder feedback that was provided on Year 1 of the campaign will be used to improve and re-plan the campaign for Year 2.

OVERVIEW OF PROSPER COMMUNICATIONS APPROACH

To increase public education and awareness of community forestry issues, PROSPER utilizes a participatory social and behavior change communications (SBCC) approach in the design of outreach and awareness activities. This approach enables the project to collaborate closely with key stakeholders and target audiences to design, create and implement effective outreach and awareness activities, while also building the capacity of government and civil society organizations to design and conduct successful campaigns in the future. Working with key stakeholders, including the Community

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[1] People, Rules, and Organizations Supporting the Protection of Ecosystem Resources

Forest Working Group (CFWG),[2] PROSPER builds capacity to research, design, create, and implement communication strategies that will increase community and government understanding of community forest rights issues.

Participatory social and behavior change communication (SBCC) is the application of evidence-based communication interventions designed in collaboration with project stakeholders in pursuit of a development goal. SBCC can be applied to any development program that relies upon the behaviors, attitudes, choices, and actions of people to succeed.[3] Program implementers working in a variety of settings and across development themes have long turned to SBCC to create meaningful communications activities that will increase understanding of the development problem, build support for programs and policy reform, and shift knowledge, attitude and behaviors of target populations in support of program objectives. Participatory communication methods can be applied to programs working on issues relating to property rights, natural resources, agriculture, and community forestry. PROSPER embraced this participatory approach in the design and implementation of its outreach and awareness campaign, "*Make Community Forestry Rights Real*".

FIGURE 1: Approach to Participatory Behavior Change Communication

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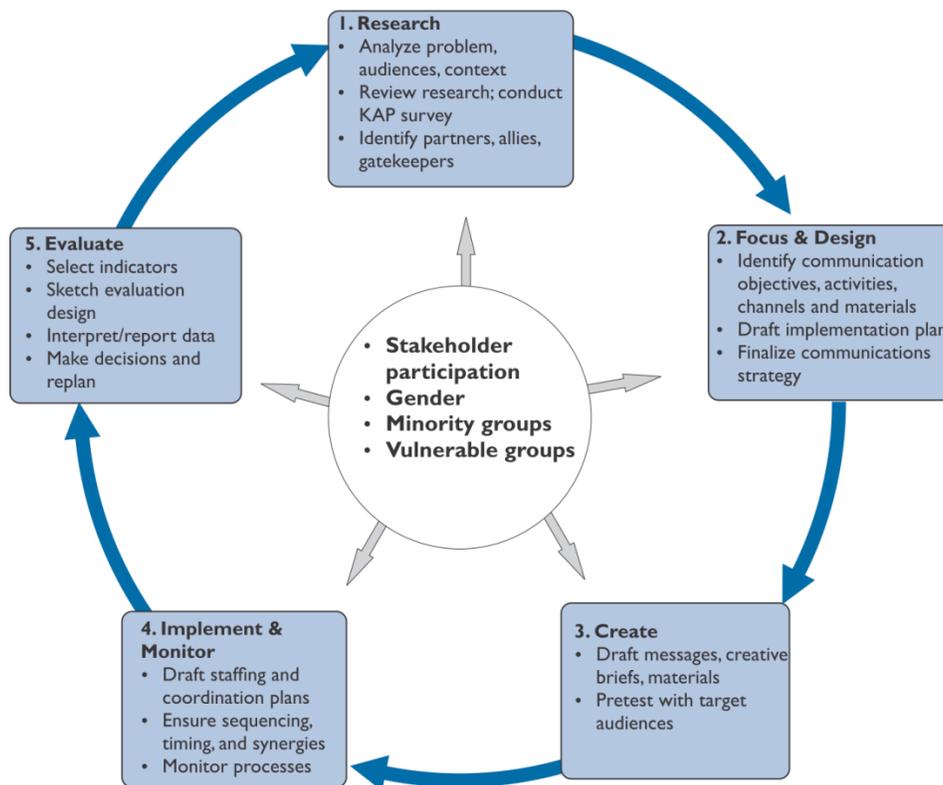
[2] The CFWG is a consortium of civil society groups, local organizations, and government institutions, including the FDA, working together on community forest rights issues.
[3] Anyaegbunam, C., Mefalopulos, P., Moetsabi, T. (2004). Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal: Starting with the People. FAO, Rome 2004.

During Year 1 of the campaign, the PROSPER communications team engaged key stakeholders, including the CFWG and communities, at each phase of the design process to build capacity of project partners, CSOs, and government institutions to implement similar campaigns, and to ensure that messages, materials, and activities being created will resonate with target audiences. The project followed a phased approach that represents best practice[4] in the design and implementation of behavior change communication campaigns. The five phases of this approach (as detailed in Figure 1) include:

1. **Understanding the Situation:** During this phase PROSPER worked closely with the CFWG to develop a 'situation analysis' that served as the starting point for the design of outreach and awareness activities. Project stakeholders met to discuss the development problem, conduct a people analysis, examine the environmental, social, and cultural context, review existing and plan for additional research, and identify partners, allies and gatekeepers who can assist with campaign implementation.

2. **Focusing and Designing:** PROSPER collaborated with stakeholders to identify, segment, and prioritize audiences, create a 'matrix for change' in which needed changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors were identified, draft communications objectives targeting these needed changes, and discussed appropriate methods and channels for disseminating information, messages, and materials. The communications strategy was solidified during this stage.

3. **Creating:** Drawing upon previous design phases, PROSPER worked with the CFWG to brainstorm, design, and create messages and materials aimed at changing knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of target audiences. Project stakeholders played an integral role in the development of campaign materials, suggesting tone, content, graphics, and messages to be used in various materials.

4. **Implementing and Monitoring**: Messages, materials, and activities were rolled out in PROSPER target areas, with the PROSPER communications team tracking activities and monitoring processes. Project stakeholders actively participated in the roll out of communication activities.

5. **Evaluating and Replanning:** During this final phase, PROSPER conducted "Lessons Learned Consultations" with project stakeholders, including communities, the CFWG, CSOs, and communications subcontractors to gain feedback and evaluated impact of outreach and awareness activities. The project is currently using this information to replan campaign objectives for Year 2.

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[4] This model and approach is taken from the C-Change Project, a USAID-funded project to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of social and behavior change communication (SBCC) across development sectors. USAID (2014). The C-Change Project. https://c-changeprogram.org/about-us.

MAKE RIGHTS REAL CAMPAIGN DESIGN AND OBJECTIVES

Using the above participatory process allowed the stakeholder working group to reach consensus around development challenges, communications objectives, and the project communications strategy. The CFWG agreed that the goal of Year 1 of the "Make Community Forest Rights Real" campaign was to address the overarching problem of high community forest degradation and depletion in Liberia due to:

1. Lack of knowledge of community forestry rights, which:
    i. Prevents communities from being able to effectively negotiate with concessionaires and outside investors who are able to lease and exploit large areas of community forest land, displacing communities and destroying community forest land.
    ii. Prevents communities from seeing the value of putting in place community forest management systems, without which there are no safeguards for preventing degradation.
    iii. Keeps communities in poverty and increases conflict between neighbors and within families.

2. Lack of knowledge about sustainable forest use practices among communities, and particularly among women who are primary users of the forest resources, which has harmful environmental effects.

3. Attitudes that lead community members to focus on personal gain and benefits of forest use, rather than the broader interest of the community and country.

4. Behavior of local authorities, who may pressure communities to engage in unfair transactions or may execute transactions without community input for personal gain.

5. Behavior of community members, who engage in unsustainable shifting cultivation and slash and burn farming. Farmers typically move agricultural activities to a new part of the forest every three years because soil fertility becomes depleted.

Ultimately, the stakeholder group determined that forest dependent communities are not informed about their rights, community forest laws, or the options that these laws afford them. They do not know the value of their forest resources, and are unable to value the benefits that will accrue from protection and conservation of these resources. Thus, Year 1 of the Make Rights Real campaign sought to teach community members their rights and encourage responsible forest management. Overarching themes for Year 1 included:

- Community resources are protected under the Community Rights Law; all must comply with this law.
- Communities have forest rights and must stand up for these rights.

- Community members have a role in forest management.
- Sustainably managing forest resources is vitally important.
- Community members must take action on community forest ownership and management.
- There are benefits of working together towards common community interests.

PROSPER and the CFWG used these themes as a framework from which to write key campaign messages. The messages designed by the CFWG included:

- "Lose Forest, Lose Everything. Know your rights."
- "We have rights: Our forests. Our decision. Our benefits."
- "Forest management: local communities can do it right!"
- "Those days are gone; we have our rights now."
- "Community Forestry: Good for families. Good for forests. Good for Liberia."
- "Our community forests are not for sale!"

Target audiences were identified, segmented, and prioritized to ensure the right messages were reaching the right people at the right time. Audiences were segmented into the following groups:

- Forest dependent communities and forest users
- Local authorities (town and paramount chiefs, commissioners, CFMBs)
- Local leaders and groups (elders, women, youth, teachers, cultural troupes, motorcyclist)

Working closely with the CFWG, PROSPER implemented outreach and awareness activities around the above mentioned themes in Grand Bassa County, Northern Nimba County, and Southern Nimba County for one year. Community-based communication channels, including cultural performances, dramas, videos, jingles, and print materials, were used to disseminate content. Upon conclusion of the campaign, the project conducted "Lessons Learned Consultations" to solicit feedback from project stakeholders and evaluate campaign impact. Feedback was used to modify the campaign and plan for Year 2.

MAKE RIGHTS REAL LESSONS LEARNED CONSULTATIONS

Upon completion of the Y1 of the campaign, the project engaged communities and relevant stakeholders in a series of "Lessons Learned Consultation Workshops" in the cities of in Buchanan, Sanniquellie, and Tappita. The consultations presented an opportunity for community members and project stakeholders to reflect on the "Make Community Forest Rights Real Campaign", including their interpretations of key messages, understanding of materials, thoughts on accessibility and appropriateness of communication channels used, and suggestions for improvement. The consultations sought to:

1. Gather information from project stakeholders (including communities, CFWG, FDA, PROSPER, IP staff, etc) that participated in the design of the Make Community Forestry Rights Real campaign.
2. Get feedback from project stakeholders and target audiences who were exposed to PROSPER messages and materials, and evaluate their effectiveness.
3. To make any needed revisions to campaign messages, materials, approaches, audiences and plan for year 2 of the Make Rights real campaign.
4. Assess and improve PROSPERs mode of engagement with vendors and subcontractors who provided support to the implementation of the Make Rights Real Campaign.

Advanced Participatory Methods (APM), survey questionnaires, and focus groups were used during workshops to engage stakeholders. To eliminate biases and literacy differences, participants worked in pairs and mixed groups which cut across all participating institutions. All surveys and instructions were interpreted into simple Liberia English and local languages as appropriate.

The following feedback was provided by project stakeholders – members of the CFWG, CSOs, and project Implementing Partners (IPs), and community members in Buchanan, Sanniquellie, and Tappita.

Table 1: Project stakeholder Feedback on Outreach and Awareness Activities and Materials

Communication Channel	Project Stakeholder Feedback
Drama	• Taught a strong lesson about elite capture - featured local chief and senator • Showed real life practical situations • Promotes community participation in forest business
Cultural Performance	• Live cultural performances are engaging for communities
Video	• Promoted peer learning by showcasing the successful community forestry initiatives and experiences of other communities to communities who are just beginning to do CF • Communities felt the video was successful because "seeing is believing" • The video successfully promoted community rights • Demonstrated real life characters and situations • Benefits of audio and visual as it reaches literate and illiterate audiences. • Participants easily identified with the context of communities • Shows timeline of resource availability • Video easily attracts and provide contextual information • Video was not widely screened

Music/Jingle	• Strong edutainment value • Jingle was clear, educative and entertaining • Jingle narratives attracts people to listen (infotainment) • Content was good, but dissemination and air time was limited; therefore access was limited
Messages	• Effective and complementary messages • Concise, forceful, & informative
T-shirts	• Attractive and conveyed messages effectively • Messages on T-shirts reach out easily • T-shirt is long lasting and carries the message over time • T-shirts are means of identity (recognition, attraction, ownership, dissemination of messages, etc.)
Print Materials (community rights law and regulations)	• Flyers made it easy to understand complicated steps • Posters are strong visual aids and convey messages easily • Were successful when publically posted (e.g. a chief photo copied the flyers and posted them in his office in a village/town in Cape Mount County, which is far outside PROSPER project areas, so community could easily understand the steps to attain Authorized Forest Community status) • While flyers were distributed in communities they were limited in supply • In the absence of the index cards explanations the poster might be misinterpreted • Posters are seen only when used and publically posted
Community Contests and Award	• Strong motivational factor. Prizes were awarded for answering CF questions therefore people want to know and answer correctly.
Community Speeches	• Provided clear information on NRM, forest management, Community Rights & Responsibilities
Awareness Creation Activities	• Effective pre-launched awareness creation: Radio talk shows on make CFRR; P.A system was used in the roll out; street parade distributing fliers; display of NTFP (finished products)

Table 2: Which campaign communication channels were the most effective for disseminating information on community forest rights?

Materials Ranking	Buchanan	Sanniquellie	Tappita
1	Video	T-Shirts	CRL print materials
2	CRL print materials	Video and CRL print materials	T-shirts
3	Radio jingle	Radio jingle	Video and CRL posters

Table 3: How do members of your community typically get information?

Channel	Buchanan	Sanniquellie	Tappita
Drama/CP	1st	1st	1st
Audio-visual media	2nd	2nd	2nd
Music	3rd	3rd	3rd
Radio	4th	3rd	2nd
Newspaper	5th	5th	4th

Table 4: What additional products would be effective for disseminating information to target audiences and increasing campaign visibility?

	Product
1	Production of additional videos for distribution
2	Video drama
3	Face caps
4	Exercise books
5	Calendar
6	Bumper stickers (cars, bikes and doors)

Table 5: Stakeholder and communications vendor feedback on campaign operations and logistics

Operations	Stakeholder Feedback
Planning	• Effective planning was the key to campaign success • Planning was well organized and participatory
Participation	• Broad-based participation of stakeholders, i.e. communities, CSOs, local gov't • Opportunity to express views about best practices in CF management
Training	• BCC workshop to prepare for campaign and MRR video documentary effective • Capacity building for planning the campaign and developing tools • Training of local theatre troupes
Launch	• Heightened awareness and enforced community motivation
Rollout	• Effective rollout of campaign in communities
Mobilization	• Effective mobilization: prelaunch awareness, invitation letters and cards, prelaunch radio announcement • Broad based and appropriate selection of participants

Table 6: What Information or messages were missing from the campaign?

Buchanan	Sanniquellie	Tappita
- Alternative livelihoods - Threats to forest health and resources - Small scale forest based enterprise and market development - Reforestation/restoration - Enrichment planting - Woodlot establishment for energy production - Animal husbandry	- Alternative livelihoods /marketing apprenticeship and skills - Regulation of cross-border harvesting of NTFPs and other forest resources - Regulation for pit/chain sawing - Sustainable and unsustainable practices - Technical capacity of communities to harvest and market timber	- Alternative Livelihoods - Highlight benefits and values of NTFPs - Communities intensify the use of the CRL - Increase access to the CRL

Table 7: How can PROSPER improve planning, operations, and logistics for Year 2 of the Make Rights Real Campaign?

Buchanan	Sanniquellie	Tappita
- Develop messages from/with communities - Consultative meeting with communities on BCC 2nd annual outreach campaign be launched in the communities and rollout in the cities - Meet with communities on campaign arrangements	- Increased participation of communities in the planning - Incorporate the local Superintendent. Offices (local gov't)	- Involve forest user groups in the planning process - Include women group and representatives of youth groups in the planning process - CFOC should be included in the planning as well as the local authority - All other processes used in the first process

Table 8: Which additional audiences should the campaign target?

Buchanan	Sanniquellie	Tappita
• Liberian chain sawyers Union • Charcoal producers • GoL(MOA, Law makers, LME) • Forest users • Miners/ Illicit miners	• Chain sawyers • Charcoal producers • Law makers • Hunters • Concessionaires • Farmers • Herbalists • Miners • Cross boarder harvesters/Encroachers • Religious community • Physically challenged people	• Chain sawyers • Charcoal producers • Law makers • Hunters • Logging concessionaires • Farmers/farmers' associations • Herbalists • Bush meat traders • NTFP traders • Religious leaders • All forest dependent communities

Table 9: What messages would you suggest for new audiences?

Suggested Audience	Key Messages
Ministry of Agriculture	• Unplanned farming is a threat to biodiversity • Improved agricultural practices are needed to save the forest
Law makers	• Respect and implement the law you created; don't impose concessions on communities • Join the community in making decision; let's protect the forest together legally
General gov't	• Do not sell our forest. The forest is our life, let us manage it together • We have rights to decisions on forest management and benefits
Local gov't	• Farming and hunting threaten forest biodiversity • Do not make decisions unilaterally, let it be consultative (bottom up)
Farmers	• No farming in designated community forest. Stop farming from place to place. • Swamp farming is more productive than shifting cultivation
Hunters	• Finish the animals today and finish your children's future • Do not kill protected animals or pregnant animals
Bush-meat Trader	• Don't support hunters with trapping/hunting materials • Stop supporting hunting in our community forest
Herbalists	• The forest is our hospital, don't spoil it. Protect your medicinal plants • Harvest your herbs in a sustainable manner/way
Miners/ Illicit Miners	• Mine the gold and diamonds and leave the trees! Save biodiversity • Dig hole cover hole • Comply with mining laws and regulation
Concessionaire	• Execute fair contract agreements; Manage the community forest with

(logging)	community
	• Forest is our life and future, negotiate with us first. Sign agreement with the community.
Chain Sawyers and the Union	• Stop illegal chain-sawing and sign contract agreement with community
	• The forest is not one person's treasure. The chain saw should benefit the community
	• Integrate your technical and financial capacity for organized chain saw operation
Religious community	• The forest is part of God's creation, let's take good care of it
	• Pray, pray, let us pray for our forest to benefit us
Physically challenged	• Let's work together, your decision is also important in managing the forest
	• Let all of us get involved in the management of the CF
Cross-border Harvesters	• Respect our laws, cross border harvesting without permit is illegal
CSOs/ NGOs	• Support communities to manage their forest
Charcoal Producers	• Charcoal is good, but the forest gives us more benefits, save our forests
	• Stop charcoal production in community forests
	• Mass charcoal production is dangerous to community
NTFP Traders	• Learn more about the wise use of the forest resources
	• NTFPs are valuable, don't destroy them

ANALYSIS

Message Effectiveness

During consultation workshops, participants were asked to discuss and reflect on the messages disseminated in Year 1 of the campaign (see page 8). Through group discussion, it became evident that project stakeholders and target audiences had various and sometimes differing interpretations of key campaign messages. Further probing revealed several possible reasons for diverging interpretations, including:

- ***Level of existing knowledge about the issues***. Audiences in some locations were more aware of community forestry issues than others. This base level of knowledge caused some to be able to more accurately digest and interpret messages than others.
- ***Local perceptions and experiences with the issue.*** Audiences tended to understand the issues differently depending on their relationship with the forest and their perceptions/beliefs about how the forest should be used.
- ***Varying education and literacy levels.*** Some audiences interpreted messages quite literally, while others thought more critically about what information the message was trying to convey.

Use of Media and Dissemination Channels

Project stakeholders and audiences across PROSPER largely preferred the following media and information dissemination channels:

1. Community dramas and cultural performances
2. Audio-visual media played locally (such as community video)
3. Music and jingles

These outlets were preferred for the following reasons:

- They entertain and educate in a way that is natural for the community
- Demonstrate community realities and experiences while modeling desired behavior. In essence, they tell "the real life story."
- Allow for follow-up question and answer sessions
- Are live, practical, accessible, and attractive to all ages
- Provide a powerful visual aid, and "seeing is believing."
- Teach the community about the issue more quickly with relatable characters discussing relatable experiences.

Other media outlets and dissemination channels—such as newspapers and print materials-were least desired by target audiences. Across PROSPER target areas, participants cited the following why newspaper and print media often fail:

- Low literacy rates
- Limited access to newspapers and print materials. Many uninterested/unwilling to purchase newspapers.
- Low reading interest and reading culture. Literate people in these areas tend to be 'headliners' rather than 'detail-oriented' readers, and have low interest in the types of stories newspapers typically carry.
- Communities prefer action-oriented media

Project Materials and Activities

Overall, participants noted that a combination of media was most effective for disseminating information on community forest rights in project target areas. Despite feedback that print media is not a preferred communication channel, participants asserted that PROSPER's illustrated print materials were straightforward, simple, and effective for communicating information about community forestry issues and the CRL. Community videos and jingles were also noted to be effective; however the accessibility of these materials was cited as an issue. Greater and wider dissemination of all of these materials is needed to reach communities at scale.

Target Audiences

Participants of the Lessons Learned Consultation Workshops were accurately able to identify the target audiences of the campaign; however it was widely agreed upon that the campaign should widen its net to target additional audiences who struggle with, or exacerbate, the challenges related to community forestry. Additional messages that can be used to target these audiences were suggested by workshop participants.

Campaign Design Process

Consultation workshop participants felt that the process used to design the Make Rights real campaign was participatory, but that there was room for improvement on community engagement. While project partners, CSOs, local NGOs, and government institutions and officials were engaged throughout the design and implementation of the Make Rights Real Campaign, greater collaboration with community members is needed moving forward. During consultations, community members and stakeholders suggested a more participatory process be used to ensure the full engagement of communities. Suggestions included:

- Work directly with communities to develop messages
- Hold community workshops to explain BCC, how it is used, and how it can be effective
- Put the launch of the campaign in the hands of the community to foster ownership
- Meet with communities more frequently for campaign planning and arrangements
- Ensure involvement of various forest user and community groups (women, youth, etc.)

NEXT STEPS

The information provided by community members and project stakeholders through the Lessons Learned Consultations will inform the design of Year 2 of the Make Rights Real Campaign. Target audiences and project stakeholders suggested the following to improve the campaign for the following year:

Revise messages to reduce diverging interpretations. Simple words and phrases should be written and spoken in typical Liberia English, or translated into local languages. Messages should be specific and detailed, and should not be open to philosophical interpretation. Messages that are actionable and provide specific details about the community rights law are preferred.

Expand campaign audience. In Year 2, the campaign should strive to reach additional target audiences (including chain saw operators, miners, NTFP harvesters; see Table 8) with more tailored and specific messages that speak to their experiences and relationship with the forest (see Table 9).

Reinforce messages through various forms of media. Messages should be consistent, persistent, and repetitive across multiple forms of media to ensure they resonate with target audiences.

Collaborate more directly with community members. While project stakeholders including the CFWG, CSOs, and local NGOS collaborated to develop and design key messages, greater emphasis must be placed on coordination and engagement of community members and target audiences. Messages should be developed with direct input from communities, with a greater emphasis on community ownership over campaign activities.

Channel more resources into message and materials pretesting. All forms of media and materials should be pretested with target audiences at the community level before roll-out takes place to ensure materials reflect the experiences of, and resonate with, target audiences.

Use field personnel and community members to disseminate messages. Town criers who are able to articulate messages in the local dialect, peer educators, school clubs, social mobilizers, and other field personnel should be more frequently employed to disseminate materials and messages to communities.

Continue to use drama and other community-based activities to disseminate messages. Dramas, community video, and community radio have all proven to be effective means for engaging communities on community forestry issues. These activities should be expanded to create wider awareness and continue to engage stakeholders in ways and formats they have requested.

Establish simple evaluation mechanism to measure the impact of the outreach campaign on the target audiences. Based on the situational analysis and resulting change factors that will inform the design of the proceeding campaign, a survey questionnaire will be designed to be administered before and after the campaign to measure the impact of the outreach messages. The questionnaire will be pretested among all stakeholders, including project communities, before refinement and finalization. A core enumeration team drawn from the CFWG, including FDA and CSOs, and PROSPER IPs and technical team will be trained in administering the questionnaires and interpreting subsequent data. Following the conduct of the endline survey, a lesson learned workshop will be conducted to evaluate the outreach campaign process.