

Reaching the last mile through the Mobile VSAT Videoconferencing Van

The Mobile VSAT Video Conferencing Van at MANAGE liberates the Video Conferencing Services from the fixed conference halls in cities and towns to the rural communities- the farmers in their own environment.

The mobile VSAT Van is a mobile satellite terminal which can be used for voice, fax, data, video and Internet application. Constructed on a DCM Toyota Qualis vehicle it is equipped with air-conditioning equipment, and uninterrupted power supply. The data is up-linked to satellite through a motorized antenna. The frequency band of operation is extended C-Band, which can be upgraded to Ku band.

The VSAT Van provides 384 kbps dedicated bandwidth for videoconferencing and upto 512 kbps for voice and data communication using Satellite Communication between the Mobile VSAT Van and the Fixed Video Conferencing system at MANAGE.

MANAGE has been using this van for videoconferencing with stakeholders in the Watershed territories and NATP Districts. Over the last three months around 70 programmes have been organized covering around 9000 people in different districts in Andhra Pradesh. Farmers and farming communities are having a direct two way video communication with the District Officials, technical resource persons and the agricultural experts. A team of technical persons from information and communication technology and social resource persons from extension are facilitating the communication and learning in these sessions. The interactions included the following:



Interaction with MACTCS functionalities of Ranga Reddy district

MANAGE identified the needs and problems of farmers of the concerned Mutually Aided Cooperative Thrift and Credit Societies (MACTCS) and Rythu club members of different mandals in Ranga Reddy district. Scientists from different research institutions and officials from the Agriculture and Rural Development departments were invited to the hub at MANAGE, from where they interacted with the farmers and farm women leaders, field officials viz. Mandal Agriculture Officer, Village Agriculture Officer, Gram Sevika etc. Most of their queries related to procurement of good quality seeds, fertilizers and other inputs; access to market related information and marketing of their products; value addition of their produce; frequent interactions with the scientists through mobile van for crop cultivation practices, and problems and issues. They also brought the original samples from the field to the mobile van to solve some of their problems for eg. problem of stem borer in grapes, pest attack in tomato, paddy crop etc.

Total transparency was observed in the interactions between the farmers and the officials of the Agriculture Department through the videoconferencing.

Interaction with APRLP functionalities on follow up action for preparation of Action Plan

MANAGE conducted training for functionalities of the Andhra Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Support Project (APRLP) on Watershed plus activities regarding preparation of the Action plan. The mobile videoconferencing facility was used to interact with APRLP functionalities in five districts of Andhra Pradesh on follow up action for preparation of an Action Plan. The districts covered were Nalgonda, Mahboobnagar, Kurnool, Anantapur, and Prakasam. The objectives were to develop a common understanding among different stakeholders; review the overall progress under the project as per the project cycle; share successful experiences of innovators to motivate the participants; identify location specific constraints and issues which are adversely affecting the progress and also to evolve mechanisms through which these problems could be addressed.

The interactions over a period of three months covered participants at all levels including Project Directors, Project Implementing Agencies, Watershed Associations, Watershed Committees, and Livelihood groups. In each of the districts the programme over a five-days period reviewed the overall progress under APRLP (physical, financial and processes) as per the project cycle, along with the issues, constraints, opportunities. The follow up action was also proposed. This was followed by sharing of success stories on Community Organisations, capacity building of different stakeholders, sustainable development and management of water resources, perennial vegetation in common land, improvement of land based livelihoods and non-land based livelihoods.

Linking Institutions through the Mobile VSAT van

Faculty at MANAGE had an interaction with faculty in 13 agricultural research, extension and training institutions in Hyderabad through the mobile VSAT van. The institutions include: Acharya NG Ranga Agricultural University (ANGRAU); Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture (CRIDA); Directorate of Oilseeds Research (DOR); Directorate of Rice Research (DRR); Extension Education Institute (EEI); International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT); National

Academy for Agricultural Research Management (NAARM); National Bureau for Plant Genetic Resources (NBPGR); National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD); National Plant Protection Training Institute (NPPTI); National Research Centre for Sorghum (NRCS); Project Directorate on Poultry (PDP) and Water and Land Management Training and Research Institute (WALAMTARI).



Mobile Video Conferencing in the districts

Orientation Programme for Agriculture Functionaries on formation of Rythu Mitra Groups (RMGs) in different districts of Andhra Pradesh

The Department of Agriculture, Govt of Andhra Pradesh has taken the lead of organizing farmers into 2 lakh Rythu Mitra groups for the benefit of small and marginal farmers. The state's experience with women's self help groups has been very positive with savings/thrift and credit activities and this is being used for formulating the guidelines for RMGs.

The orientation of key partners in organization of Rythu Mitra Groups is being done through mobile videoconferencing by MANAGE for all districts of Andhra Pradesh.

The advantages of this technology are increase in the learning opportunities through experience sharing, saving of time for overall management of the project; improved transparency in sharing of information at all levels, and possibility of utilising review sessions for capacity building of different stakeholders.

Xpressions-03

Xpressions-03 a media event, was organized on 31st May at MANAGE. Students of PGP-AJMC were actively involved in the event. Mr. Rahul Dev, Head of Aajtak and Mr. Chandrakant Naidu, Senior Editor, Hindustan Times were the chief guests gracing the occasion. Students from various other institutes were also present. Dr. Vikram Singh, Principal Coordinator of the PGP-AJMC programme at MANAGE gave an overview of MANAGE and the PGP-AJMC Course. He explained the need for the course and highlighted the unique features of the programme



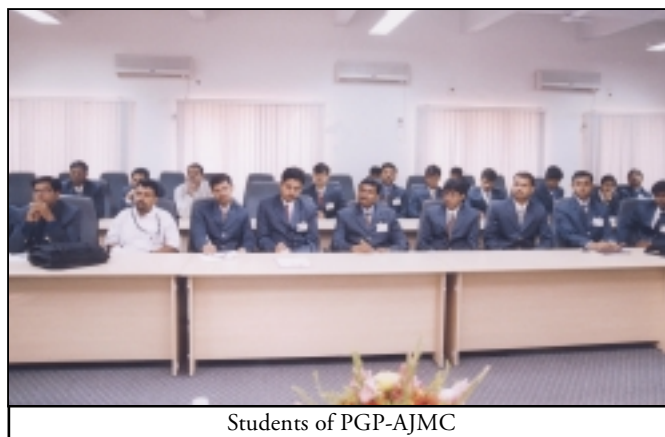
Mr. Rahul Dev addressing the Participants

Delivering the keynote address, Mr. Rahul Dev highlighted the importance and uniqueness of Agri-Journalism in the Indian context. He emphasized the need for changing the mindset of the policy makers, administrators, ruling class and society with regard to the place of Indian villages and the future of Indian agriculture. He stressed the need to harness an appropriate attitude and create journalistic skills among the students. He hoped that the students of PGP-AJMC would be the harbingers of an ideology that promotes

self reliance for rural livelihood, with an appropriate mix of native wisdom and latest scientific innovation.

Mr. Chandrakant Naidu, while addressing the gathering expressed that the students are going to create history by highlighting the agricultural issues in media and eventually seeking space for the farmer.

The students made presentations on commercialization of print media, influence of electronic media on society, agriculture without glamour, cartoons and caricatures etc. An advertisement quiz titled “Advertisement World and Preview” was also organized in which the students of AJMC and other Institutes participated. All these presentations were received as well designed learning inputs and the expert comments provided by the chief guests, Mr. Rahul Dev and Mr. C.K. Naidu, further added value to this event.



Students of PGP-AJMC

In the evening, the students added color to the day by performing a cultural show focusing on agricultural journalism as a central theme.

Media Share in Agriculture

The following day on June 1, 2003 a symposium on ‘Media share in Agriculture’ was organized in which the Editors of National and Local newspapers participated along with Mr. Rahul Dev, Mr. C.K. Naidu and Mr. Alok Verma, Chief of Media Mentors, New Delhi.

Dr. Vikram Singh made a presentation on the National Agriculture policy and its highlights as a basis for further discussions.

Newspapers Editors and Television personalities expressed their concern over the poor coverage of agricultural issues in

the media. Senior journalist and well known television personality, Mr. Rahul Dev, while introducing the subject expressed that the mainstream media is driven by the taste of the target audience and the stakes for agriculture and rural life are getting smaller and smaller in media.

Mr. C.K. Naidu, Senior Editor of Hindustan Times felt that there is very little coverage of developmental issues in the media. He opined that there should be an army of agri-journalists as torchbearers of agricultural journalism for the cause of farmers.



Dr. Narayan Rao, Editor of Annadatha, opined that there is non-availability of relevant information in agriculture. He added that Eenadu group was the trendsetter in agricultural journalism. Mr. P.K. Kurien, Deputy editor of The Hindu, said that media should come forward to protect the rights of farmers and should facilitate the farmers in getting the right price for their produce. Mr. Syed Ahmed Jaffri, senior journalist from Reuters highlighted the fact that the media is becoming consumer oriented and there is a need for reform.

Mr. Ashok from Vaartha expressed the need for variety in coverage on agriculture by academics, consumers, producers and other stakeholders.

Dr. Vikram Singh, Dr. M.N. Reddy, Dr. B.D. Tripathi and Dr. G. Jaya, Faculty at MANAGE also took part in the deliberations and raised relevant concerns of farmers which need redressal. Dr. Tripathi elaborated the need for a farmers lobby in India to address their problems through media. Dr. Reddy stressed the need to organize the farmers to seek their due space in media. Dr. Jaya emphasized the need for coverage of agriculture in regular news, as is the case of business, and sports.

Reporters from various media participated in the symposium. The students of Agriculture Journalism and Mass Communication took an active role in seeking answers to some of the practical problems and issues of concern. Mr. Alok Verma, Chief, Media Mentors and Consultant, MANAGE and Aajtak moderated the symposium.

DAESI -2003 launched



Shri A.K.Goel, Director General, MANAGE addressing the agri-input dealers

A Diploma course in Agricultural Extension Services for Input Dealers (DAESI) was launched by MANAGE on July 6th 2003. The programme seeks to transform input dealers into para-professionals and enable them to serve the farmers better, thereby strengthening the National Agricultural Extension System. The course would build

their capacity in handling field problems and extension communication abilities while increasing their skills in dealing with inputs and discharging regulatory responsibilities. The duration of the programme is one year. Currently 28 agri-input dealers have registered for the programme.

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