

Section VI: Bringing RAP to the decision-making realm: Effective communication and use

Section introduction

38. Research communication for RAP: Planning for optimal use of communication opportunities throughout the research process and effective use of findings

39. Visualizing data collection and the presentation of RAP findings: Enhancing qualitative research

40. A summary of the conference panel: Effective communication of research data to decision makers

Section introduction

The initial planning of the conference had been completed when those reviewing the agenda noticed that there was no place scheduled for a discussion of the planned communication of research results. Subsequently a session was developed which was intended to focus on the application of communication principles to studies such as those to be presented during the conference. However, in preparing the session it was found that applying such principles had implications beyond effective dissemination of results. They learned that communication principles could be effectively and appropriately applied at all phases of the research process; beginning with the planning of the study. This perspective led to presentations on what Gleason and Hursh-Cesar call "Research Communication."

The panel members noted in their introductory remarks that this session had been placed last on the conference agenda and expressed concern that communication planning, when applied to research in development, is too often an afterthought consisting of requests to communication professionals or health education specialists for help in preparing report covers, overhead transparencies and graphics. They noted that those working with RAP and RRA/PRA used data gathering techniques highly dependent on a strong knowledge of communication theory and practical communication skills. Yet, these principles and skills were often not applied ensuring the optimal use of data from their studies or the optimal use of the study process to communicate with community members and officials.

Umit Kartoglu, another panel member, provided a short provocative piece based on his contention that visualization of data should be well planned and that the new small camcorders provide a powerful tool to complement both qualitative and quantitative research.

Mark Rasmuson, Director of the USAID-supported HEALTHCOM at the Academy of Educational Development, gave a presentation demonstrating computer graphics and outlining various principles for effective presentations.