

GUIDELINES FOR THE EFFECTIVE DISSEMINATION OF VETIVER TECHNOLOGY BY THE VILLAGE-LEVEL WORKER

R.N. Singh

Central Arid Zone Research Institute
Jodhpur, India

Abstract

The village-level worker (VLW) should disseminate to all sections of the village society in order to upgrade their knowledge and skills about vetiver grass. As this task is delicate and difficult, he must be friend, philosopher and guide for the villagers. He must know the villagers' backgrounds and the resources of his area of operation through participatory rural appraisal, village records and census reports. It is essential for him to have a thorough knowledge of vetiver grass. He must visit the research station once a year to learn all aspects of vetiver grass. The other sources of learning are books, newspapers and the electronic media.

It is not possible for the VLW to conduct all interviews with the villagers individually; therefore, he has to concentrate on a handful of villagers of different land size in each village of his area. The group meetings, demonstrations and field days should be conducted at these villagers' fields to motivate other villagers. Leaflets, folders and successful stories should be prepared on the field experience. Visual aids should be made by a local artist as well as by the villagers under the guidance of the VLW.

Village training should be part of the dissemination program. It should be conducted at the right time at demonstration plots for an appropriate number of trainees on vetiver grass. Inputs for the adoption of vetiver grass must be collected prior to the training. In the training session, the farmers learn faster and easier through seeing and doing. There should not be a long gap between the teaching of the practice and its adoption. Besides formal training, the VLW should also adopt informal methods for training the villagers on vetiver grass.

There are several extension methods and audio visual aids. Each has specific advantages and limitations. The VLW should select the appropriate extension method and audio-visual aids and should implement the method skilfully, looking into various factors such as villagers' background, cost and availability of the media.

The VLW should evaluate closely the field activities to strengthen the program. He should keep a diary to record all the observations on vetiver grass. Case studies on the success of vetiver should be written for wider publicity by the mass media. The government should recognize the important role of the VLW in disseminating vetiver grass and provide facilities for an effective performance.

Introduction

Vetiver grass is very useful; yet, its rate of adoption is quite low among the villagers. Its adoption is a complex process. It is governed by the interplay of many factors. An effective dissemination system is necessary for widespread adoption of vetiver grass. The field extension worker has a great role in the dissemination of vetiver grass to the villagers because he is in direct contact with them. It is he who assists the villagers in agricultural development. He stays in the village and functions in government departments and voluntary agencies worldwide. The designation of the field extension worker differs from country to country. For convenience, the term village-level worker (VLW) used in India has been adopted here. Below are guidelines for effective dissemination of vetiver grass among villagers.

Attributes

Disseminating vetiver grass to upgrade the knowledge and skills of villagers is a very delicate and difficult task since learning is voluntary. Several problems come in the implementation of the

program. This calls for the VLW to have a genuine desire for the village welfare. It is quite clear that merely following the routine compliance to orders would lead nowhere. He should really be sincere, dedicated and friendly with the villagers and command their respect and confidence. He should also be patient. The visible results of his effort will give him a unique happiness. Thus what type of man is the VLW? What does he do? What does he hope for? These are the personal attributes that affect his image in the village resulting in the success or failure of the dissemination of vetiver grass to a great extent.

Clientele

All sections of the village society – men, women and schoolchildren (12 years and above) – should be the clientele of the dissemination program. The schoolchildren will not only take interest but will spread the vetiver message fast in the village. The women too would contribute no less than their male counterparts. In many countries, the women devote a large percentage of time to agriculture. Even in such countries where the *parda* system is observed, they can contribute because they are already working in the field.

Knowledge

It is essential for the VLW to have full knowledge of the villagers' backgrounds, of the resources available to them and of the local problems. This will enable him to relate the vetiver message effectively to their real life. Participatory rural appraisal, village records, census reports and participation in religious ceremonies, weddings and festivals would provide useful information. He needs to understand local agricultural practices. He should discuss them with the villagers and observe them in the field. He must know the vetiver grass practices developed at the research station to become confident to disseminate vetiver grass to the villagers. He should visit the research station each year for three days to learn vetiver grass practices. He should fix the program for discussion with the scientist with the help of the head of the research station. The items for discussion should include objective, methods of operation, uses, costs, impact and limitations of vetiver grass. After discussions, he should write down what he has learned and show his notes the next day to the scientist for improvement. The scientist should show the VLW the vetiver experiment plot. The VLW should discuss the technical problems of vetiver grass cultivation faced in the village with the scientist to seek practical solutions. The other sources of learning are books, newspapers, journals, radio and television. There should be provision for him to subscribe to a journal on vetiver technology.

Extension methods and audio visual aids are tools for disseminating the message to the villagers. The Extension Education Institute should conduct one-week or two-week courses to upgrade the knowledge of the VLW on extension methods and audio visual aids. VLW training is best carried out in small groups.

Concentrated Effort

The individual contact with villagers affects greatly the success of the dissemination program. It is not possible for the VLW to maintain regular individual contact with most of the villagers. He has to concentrate on a handful of villagers in each village of his jurisdiction to make the impact needed to spread vetiver grass among the villagers most quickly. Vetiver grass demonstrations should be conducted on these farmers' fields. They will also make the VLW confident about vetiver. Modifications can be done on vetiver grass practices on the basis of the demonstrations to suit local conditions. The VLW should select farmers from each category, i.e. marginal, small and big farmers. Farming women should also be included. The farmers should be willing to try out vetiver grass in their fields, allow other villagers to visit their fields and spread vetiver grass in the village.

The VLW should visit the demonstration farmers often. There should not be fixed date for the visits. He should make a visit schedule for the forthcoming month on the basis of the time of operation of vetiver grass and the demonstration farmers' convenience. He should educate them along with their family members. He should visit the demonstration plot(s) along with them to witness the performance of vetiver grass. The demonstration farmers should be given plenty of time to talk about vetiver grass when a dignitary visits the demonstration plot.

Field Day

The field day should be conducted with a great festivity at the demonstration plot to spread the success of vetiver grass, and extension workers and mass-media personnel should attend. A great effort is needed to organize a field day. The demonstration farmers and the villagers would help the VLW to conduct the field day properly. A small tent should be erected for an exhibition.

The participants should watch the demonstration plot and then attend a meeting inaugurated by a dignitary. The demonstration farmers should explain vetiver grass to the participants, after which it will be the VLW's turn to speak. Participants should be encouraged to raise questions. These should be passed on to the concerned department when the VLW does not know the answer. Leaflets should be distributed to give more impact to the field day.

Teaching Aids

The VLW should write leaflets out of his field experience. Similarly, visual aids – posters, charts, flash cards – should be made on vetiver grass by local artists as well as by the villagers under the guidance of the VLW. The visual aids made by the villagers may not be attractive as mass products, but they would reflect their involvement and interest in the program.

There are several extension teaching aids. Each has its advantages and limitations. They cannot be valid for all villagers or even for a particular villager over a period of time. Appropriate methods should be selected according to cost, time and the availability of villagers. There should be proper coordination among the media. Funds should be budgeted for teaching aids to the VLW.

Training

Training villagers about vetiver grass should be an integral part of the dissemination program. The number of training sessions and the topics should be on the basis of the villagers' needs. Training should take place at the demonstration plot. It should involve ten to twenty villagers at most to impart knowledge and limited to a few, perhaps even a single villager for skill development. The VLW should do the training. When the farmers become confident about vetiver grass, they should take over the training. The inputs for adoption of vetiver grass should be collected by the VLW before the training.

In the training session, the villagers should be intensively trained. They learn better, faster and easier through seeing and doing. Accordingly, the VLW should show the stalk of the vetiver in the training session. It would be even better to show vetiver grass in the field and discuss its use, characteristics and cultivation practices. To develop skill, the villagers should do the operation.

Besides the formal training discussed above, the VLW should impart training informally to the villagers when he meets them in the village. There should not be a long gap between the teaching of a practice and its implementation.

Success Story

The VLW should keep a diary to write down the activities performed in the fields and the villagers' response. He should write success stories on the basis of his notes for publication in newspapers and journals. The electronic media should invite the VLW to broadcast his experience of vetiver grass.

Evaluation

The VLW should evaluate the effectiveness of each and every activity of the field program. The methodology will be simple and practical, based on first-hand information of the field collected through observation. The villagers can be asked if they know the vetiver grass practices and are adopting them. If they do and large areas are under vetiver, the program is going well. If they don't, there is a problem in adoption. The VLW must study to find out the solution to the problem to strengthen the program. Besides continuous internal evaluation, it would be useful to have evaluation of the program by the external agency.

Facility

The VLW has low status and motivation. The government should recognize the importance of the VLW and efforts should be made to provide facilities for mobility, promotion and children's education. Financial rewards should be given to outstanding VLW.