WHAT IT’S ABOUT:

Three Reductions, Three Gains (3R3G) aims to reduce the poverty level and increase the environmental sustainability and health outcomes in the rural communities and rice farmers of the Mekong River Delta. These goals are pursued through an innovative campaign that encourages farmers to modify three key resource management practices - fertilizers, insecticides, and seeds - to achieve three gains including economic prosperity, health, and soil productivity. The Fabián campaign makes use of leaflets, billboards, and a radio drama to transmit scientific data on sustainable agricultural practices in a highly accessible way.

Three Reductions, Three Gains taps into the desire of local farmers for increased savings and profits, as well as for healthy communities. It has used various communications tools to motivate buy-in among its target audience, including a radio drama in the early stages of the initiative, leaflets, billboards, and community events.

PRINCIPLES IN ACTION

STAKEHOLDER-FOCUSED

Three Reductions, Three Gains started through a participatory planning process which engaged more than 950 volunteer farmers across 11 provinces to help design and test the Three Reductions methodology. Workshops were held at which concise messaging was co-developed, grounding 3R3G in culturally relevant language and outreach approaches.
BETTER LIVING

Three Reductions, Three Gains presents a vision of and clear case for sustainable and prosperous livelihoods for rural rice farmers and their communities by focusing on reducing inputs of expensive and toxic chemical fertilizers and insecticides, and tying them directly to cost savings, increased crop yields, improved health outcomes, and better soil sustainability. The economic imperative dominates the framing of communication materials, however, environmental and health benefits are part of the approach.

IMPACT

Three Reductions, Three Gains benefits from a simple and clear impact goal and has had great success in measuring its results and distributing the information to reinforce the central message of the campaign. For example, in An Giang province, 3R3G achieved adoption rates of about 70% in its third year, reducing insecticide use by 33%, seed use by 11%, and fertilizer use by 7%. The impact on livelihoods has been significant, with an increase in profit per hectare of USD $35 - $58, and a marked decrease in crop vulnerability to plant hopper outbreaks leading to larger harvests.

SYSTEMIC

One of the biggest challenges facing the Three Reductions, Three Gains campaign was the deeply held conviction that using more fertilizer, insecticides, and seeds would result in higher profits, given this assumption was leading to persistent negative impacts on rice cultivation, soil sustainability, and human health. The campaign revealed the systemic impacts and in doing so, convinced farmers that reducing the three inputs would actually deliver desired outcomes. A radio soap opera called My Homeland Story was developed and broadcast to break down the complexity of the issue and generate support for shifting practices.

RESPONSIVE

The 3R3G campaign built on the prior experience of the No Early Spray campaign, a highly successful government programme, which addressed issues of income and toxicity in farming by targeting the use of pesticides. 3R3G learned from the success of No Early Spray’s communications strategy and built on it using a participatory, co-creation methodology for developing its messaging. My Homeland Story played a role in bridging between the two campaigns and tying objectives together.
COMMUNICATIONS TAKEAWAYS

Connecting with Audiences:
Leverage Stakeholder Driven Campaign Design

Engage stakeholders directly in the design of sustainable lifestyle programs. This is particularly useful when there are education, language, culture, economic or other barriers to overcome. For example, agricultural scientists and farmers worked together to develop language and imagery for the 3R3G campaign that would accurately convey the messages around appropriate and sustainable resource use. This ensured the messaging and engagement incentives were appropriate to the target audience.

Framing:
Connect the Dots Between Systems that Impact Sustainable Lifestyles

Don’t assume audiences understand the connection between consumption and the environmental, economic, health, and community impacts and solutions. Make the connections visible using narrative and visual concepts. For example, the focus on the three inputs to be reduced and the three resulting gains to be made in the 3R3G campaign was easy to understand and remember while at the same time illustrated the interconnection between different parts of the system. Most critically, it helped undercut the common assumption that more inputs would equal more outputs.

Strategy:
Adopt a Multi-Channel Approach

Take a multi-channel approach to ensure the saturation of messages about the benefits of sustainable lifestyles, particularly when there are assumptions to overcome. This also allows content and outreach strategies to be tailored to the needs of different groups with different educational backgrounds, education levels, and affinity to the issue. The use of multiple vectors and media for communication in the Three Reductions, Three Gains initiative – leaflets, posters, billboards, and radio – results in a wide reach for the campaign. The radio soap opera dramatized the experience of farmers going through the learning process and moving from high insecticide, fertilizer, and seed use to make the three reductions and reap the three gains.

Tactics:
Use Cartoons and Easy to Read Graphics to Address Education Barriers

Cartoons, posters, and easy to understand graphics can go a long way in translating complex issues for those not versed in the issues, with limited technical knowledge, and/or holding assumptions about sustainability. In the 3R3G campaign, while there was still a tendency to rely on text, cartoon images of smiling farmers were incorporated as well as simple graphics that show how the the goal of three reductions (insecticide, fertilizer, and seed) can increase yields and income.

MORE INFORMATION

http://ageconsearch.umn.edu/bitstream/6014/2/cp08hu02.pdf