



# DEMONSTRATIONS

Demonstrations are a very effective way of introducing and explaining improved or unfamiliar ways of doing practical tasks. A good demonstration will clearly show people how and why a new method or product might be useful to them. It will also give people an opportunity to participate themselves, so that they can learn from direct practical experience.

## Advantages of Demonstrations

- People are likely to remember what they have learnt, because they are 'learning by doing'.
- People can test out new methods and products and ask questions there and then to get immediate answers.
- Demonstrations are convincing because they can take place in the real situation (e.g. the home or farm of community members).
- The local language can be used, and literacy is not required.
- Demonstrations are liked by people who are not comfortable in formal training institutions.



Demonstrating a donkey plough - Darfur Sudan  
Practical Action Sudan

## How to Use Demonstrations

Demonstrations are most effective if the subject matter is genuinely relevant to the lives of people in the community and the people conducting the demonstration are trusted and well informed.

- ◆ Find out about the community's existing knowledge in the subject and current practices.
- ◆ The person conducting the demonstration should be clear about the purpose of the demonstration and have suitable expertise.
- ◆ Use a step-by-step approach if necessary and allow people to practice at each stage. Improve people's understanding by repeating parts or all of the demonstration.
- ◆ An appropriate venue and time should be chosen and announced.
- ◆ Ensure that all the necessary equipment and materials are available.
- ◆ A series of separate demonstrations could be planned (e.g. 1 preparing soil, 2 sowing seeds, 3 fertilising and weeding, 4 harvesting and storage).
- ◆ Prepare summary drawings or written sheets for people to take home.
- ◆ Consider recording the demonstration with photographs or video.

## Constraints of Demonstrations

A person with relevant expertise is essential. A poorly planned or incompetent demonstration can turn people against the method or equipment being explained.

## Real Life Story

### Practical Demonstrations Preserve Rainfall in Sudan

Like much of Sudan, farming is hard in the areas around Kebkabiya in North Darfur, in the west of the country. The land is arid and rainfall is scarce and unpredictable. Most of the land owned and cultivated by the local farmers is sandy loam soil with a hard surface. Any rain that does fall tends to run off the sloping land. Under such conditions, the traditional hand hoe is an inadequate farming tool which is time consuming to use and causes many hardships to women who perform 75% of the cultivation activities. In the 1990s several development organisations came together to develop new donkey draw ploughs to help tackle the cultivation problem. The ploughs were designed with the help of local farmers, and made by village blacksmiths.

A series of local demonstrations were designed to familiarise local farmers with the new way of ploughing. Farmers were shown how to link the plough to the donkey, how to train the donkey to pull the plough, and how to undertake cultivation. Donkey feeding and healthcare was also taught.

After the demonstrations local farmers explained that they were now able to break up the soil's surface crust and plough big ridges. This meant that precious rainfall was captured and allowed to soak into the soil, instead of being lost. Some farmers mentioned that the ploughing also made subsequent weeding easier.

Real life story by kind permission of *Practical Action Sudan*



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## Further reading

[Using existing mass media](#) Practical Action Technical Brief

[Storytelling](#) Practical Action Technical Brief

[Community/Street drama](#) Practical Action Technical Brief

[Exposure Visits](#) Practical Action Technical Brief

[Newsletters / Booklets / Brochures](#) Practical Action Technical Brief

[Public Gatherings](#) Practical Action Technical Brief

[Information, Communication, Learning](#) selection of Practical Action Technical Briefs

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This document is based on the Micro Media Card Pack: A Tool Kit for Community Development Workers produced by Practical Action in October 2003.

Practical Action is a development charity with a difference. We know the simplest ideas can have the most profound, life-changing effect on poor people across the world. For over 40 years, we have been working closely with some of the world's poorest people - using simple technology to fight poverty and transform their lives for the better. We currently work in 15 countries in Africa, South Asia and Latin America.