The Africa Soil Health Consortium (ASHC) is a project managed by CABI and supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. We aim to improve the livelihoods of smallholder farmers through better access to practical information about integrated soil fertility management. We have been doing this by working with partners as a free consultancy service to develop targeted communication materials.

We work through partnerships

Over the past three years ASHC has worked with more than twenty-one partner institutions in the region to help bridge the gap between soil scientists with significant information and those who need this information. ASHC has worked with a diverse range of partners including national agriculture research organisations, NGOs and donor funded projects and initiatives, including AGRA (Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa) and its grantees. So far we have worked in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Malawi, Rwanda and Mozambique but many of the materials we have developed would be useful for many other countries.

We develop innovative communication materials

ASHC and its partners have generated nearly 100 communication and extension support materials on a variety of crops including maize, cowpea, soya, rice, sorghum, millet, cassava, coffee and banana. The materials cover print, audio-visual, and radio formats and multiple languages including English, French, Portuguese, Swahili and a few other local African languages. These materials are now being made available on the soon to be completed new ASHC website as creative commons products for increased uptake and use by partners in the region.
We build and transfer skills

In addition to the development of communication materials, ASHC has pioneered a write-shop methodology that brings together scientific and extension experts to refine their knowledge and skills in repackaging scientific information for non-technical audiences. More than 100 scientists and extension teams in the target countries have been trained through this process. ASHC has also developed a ‘How-To’ series of tips for communicating effectively with non-technical audiences.

Looking forward

The first phase of ASHC will end in November 2014 but CABI is keen to move the lessons, products, and partnerships from this initiative forward in a proposed phase two of the project. The second phase of the project will build on past successes, but also seek to develop new approaches both in terms of partnerships, capacity building and information sharing that will contribute to a critical mass of skills, knowledge and workable models for effective dissemination of technical knowledge to non-technical audiences.

For more information:
James Watiti, Senior Communications Manager, Africa Soil Health Consortium
(e) j.watiti@cabi.org  (t) +254 (0)20 – 2271000/ 20
www.cabi.org/ashc