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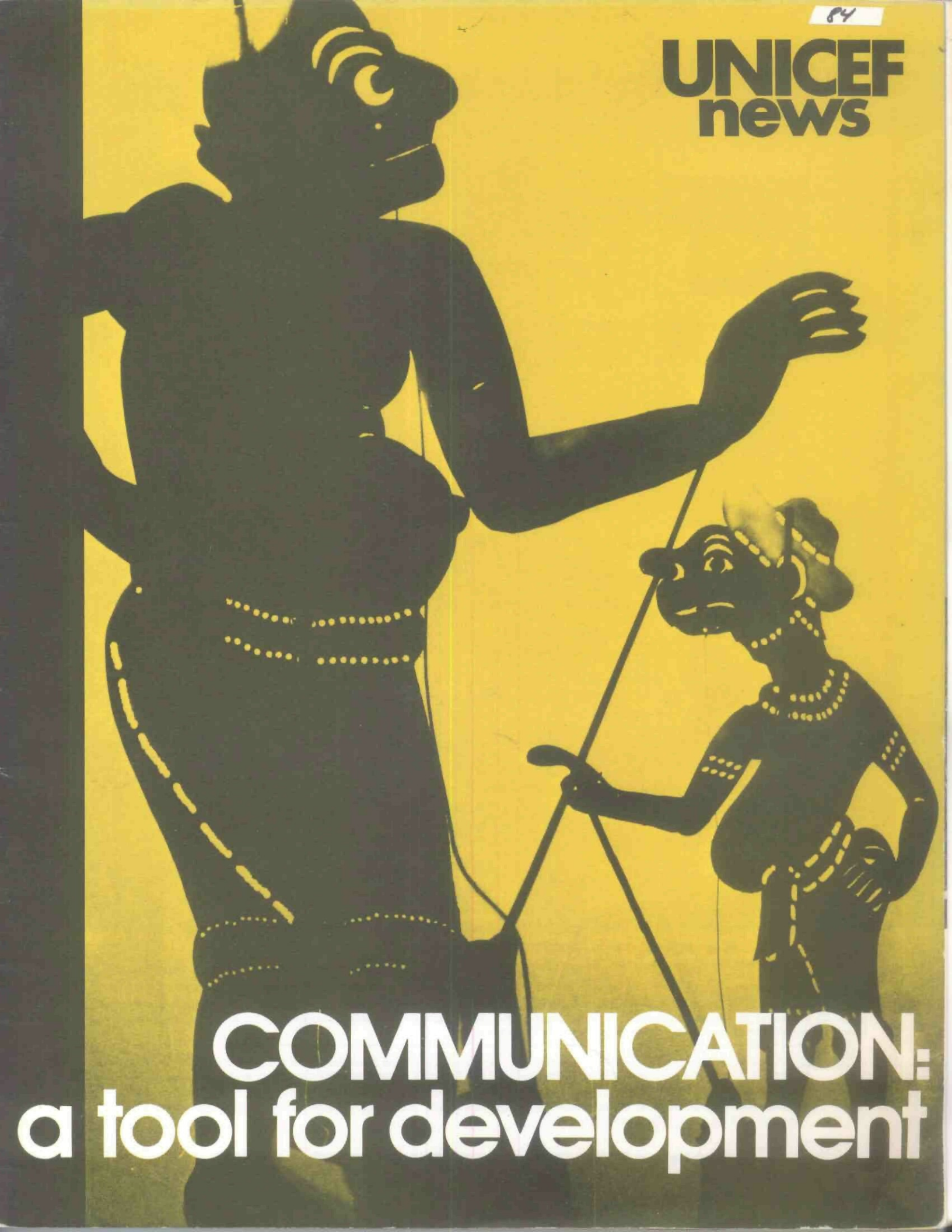


COMMUNICATION: a tool for development

UNICEF NEWS

Issue 84/1975/2
Editor: Miriam Miller
Design: Bernard P. Wolff

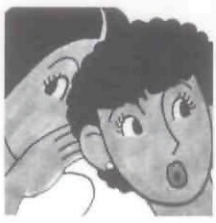
Communication for Development: From Propaganda to Dialogue AND Entertainment. Improving two-way communication, combining "entertainment" and "education" and avoiding western stereotypes in development work are stressed by *John Balcomb,* Chief, Communications and Information Service, for Eastern Africa. (Page 3)

Kid Stuff: Modules for SITE-TV in India. Villages in India can now have TV via satellite. *Gopal Dutia,* Assistant Project Support Communications Officer in UNICEF's New Delhi office describes plans for school broadcasts, adult programmes, and UNICEF-sponsored children's film modules. (Page 11)

The Communications Gap. Why do some development projects fail? Often because communications and development experts don't communicate too well with each other. *Alastair Matheson,* Deputy Director of UNICEF's Information Division, believes more use of traditional folk media can help close the gap. (Page 14)

The Waiting Room. For mothers waiting hours at a crowded maternal and child centre in Cairo, a sound tape combining entertainment and health and nutrition messages was produced by *Mohamed Islam,* Project Support Communications Officer in UNICEF's Beirut office. Other countries are copying the idea. (Page 22)

Educational TV: Catalyst for Social Change. A mass educational TV project to teach Pakistan's adults to read and write is described by *Ole Dich,* Chief, Editorial and Publications Services of UNICEF's Information Division. Today only 15 per cent of the country's 65 million people are literate. (Page 24)



Posters Can Help Family Planning. Many family programmes fail because of poor communication. Posters can be an especially useful tool because they are inexpensive and easy to produce and distribute. *Bjorn Berndtson,* UNICEF's Project Support Communications Officer, offers tips to improve them. (Page 27)

Communicating a Vision. The role of the "story-teller" emerges as vital in a major new approach to development. In an overview UNICEF staff writer, Anthony Hewett sketches the approach and looks at its implications for communicators. (Page 31).

Cover: Shadow play, a traditional form of folk entertainment is used widely in the south of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. The scene on the cover comes from a story based on the Ramayana epic, and while the drama is shown, a narrator skillfully weaves in family planning messages. (Photo/DSCS Bangkok)

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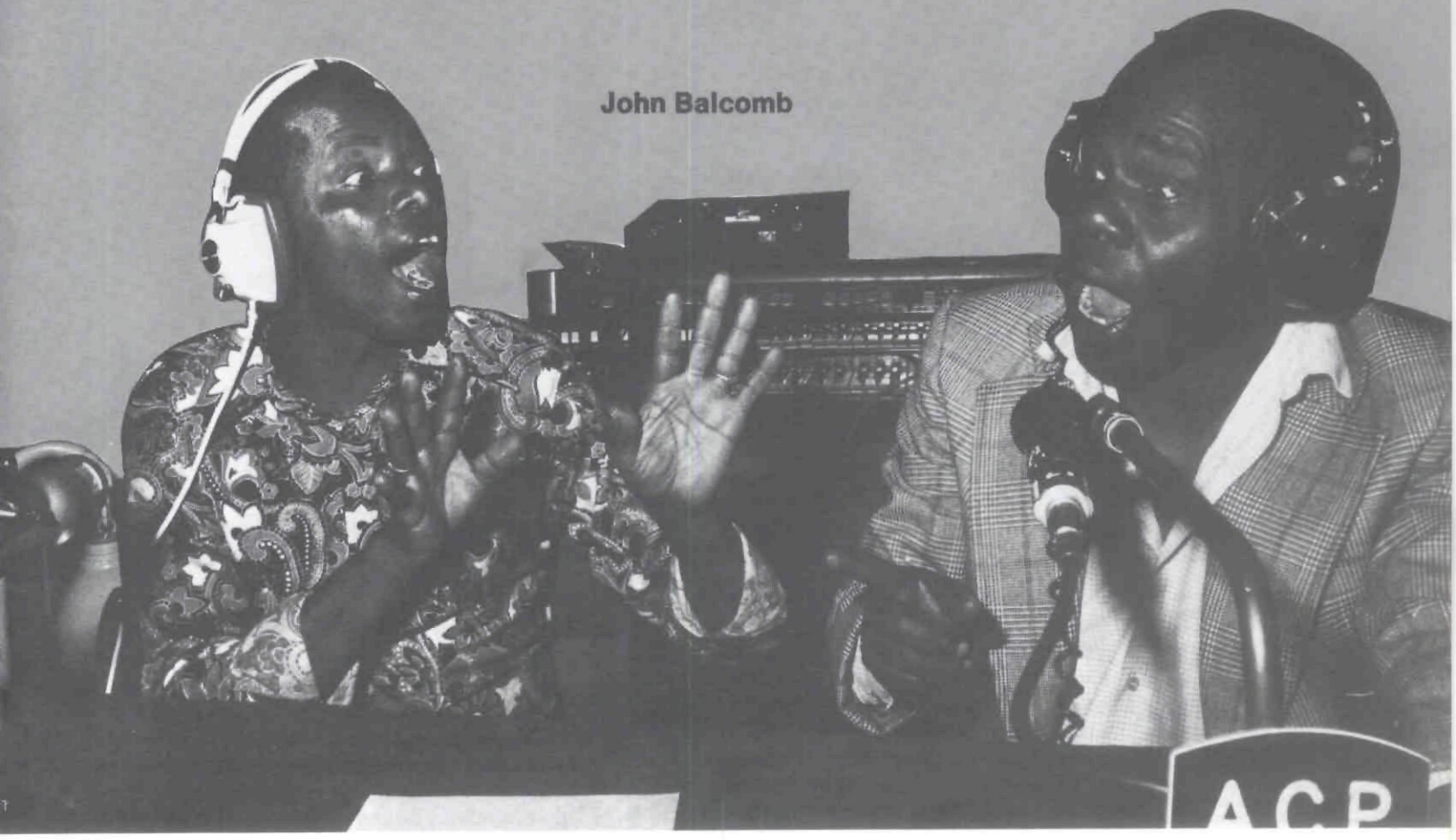
COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT: from propaganda to dialogue AND entertainment

John Balcomb



All present-day governments recognize the power of communications. Most of them spend considerable sums on radio and television and go to considerable trouble to publicize political and economic developments. A great deal of this official information work is devoted to image-building—persuading citizens in various walks of life that the government has their interests at heart and is doing a good job. This is fair enough, all things considered. No government can function effectively without the trust of its people.

But this is only a small part of the communications job that needs to be done to promote

Mzee Pembe and Kipanga, Kenya's top radio comics, are broadcasting a UNICEF-sponsored family-health show which is one of the best recent examples of combining "entertainment" with "education". (ICEF 8025/Campbell)

John Balcomb is Chief, Communications and Information Service in UNICEF's Nairobi office for Eastern Africa. Part of this article has been drawn from one by Mr. Balcomb in Educational Broadcasting International.

On Sunday afternoons at four-thirty, when the cows come home in rural Kenya, crowds tune in to the hit radio show. Broadcasting in Swahili, Mzee plays a conservative old man with 20 children. Kipanga plays the parts of various friends who tease him about his old-fashioned ideas about health and child care. (ICEF 8026/Campbell)

development at large and to support the great number of individual projects which, taken together, add up to development. Anyone who has had first-hand experience in development work can cite many examples of ambitious projects which have failed because of poor all-around communications. Even trained communicators, when they are called in as consultant physicians so to speak, to ailing development projects, often overlook the importance of two-way communication.

It seemed important at the time to give a good deal of well-intentioned advice on how messages could be better slanted to various audiences, on how previously underexploited channels of communication could be better utilized and how campaigns—to get people to feed green vegetables to their children say—could be better orchestrated. All this was sound enough, I dare say. Centrally devised propaganda has a legitimate (though I would now say a limited) place in development work, and it is foolish to undertake it in an amateurish way.

The arts of persuasion

When I went to India in 1967 as UNICEF's regional public information officer, it was presumed that I knew something about the arts of mass persuasion. I soon found myself called upon to advise on the communications aspects of development projects. Given my background as a writer of newspaper articles and a fabricator of publicity handouts, I naturally thought in terms of target audiences, delivery systems, multi-media campaigns and such. (The warlike nature of these terms, which are common to most communications handbooks, did not occur to me at the time, but is worth noting. The communicator is usually conceived as a kind of artilleryman who bombards his targets with messages with enough "feedback" built into the system to enable him to correct his fire.)

I found that UNICEF and other agencies had supplied a considerable amount of audio-visual equipment to various projects, and that much of this equipment was being poorly used. The hardware* was there, but the software* had very often been left to take care of itself. The small project support communications (PSC)* staff which our regional office began to assemble, drawing on a small part of India's immense pool of creative talent, initiated the production of some prototype materials. Several important ministries showed an interest in what we were doing. Soon UNICEF found itself supporting national efforts to overcome the "software" gap in a variety of ways.

We were eventually assailed by serious doubts, however. The campaigns we were assisting were basically advertising campaigns, and they didn't seem to be working as well as expected. Centrally produced slide sets, film strips, flip charts, etc. took a long time to percolate down to local level, and when they got there, they didn't seem to be very well adapted to local conditions. How could they be when there were so many different local conditions!

Avoiding western stereotypes

It has become increasingly clear that in thinking about communications and development, we need to clarify what we mean by "development". If we are not careful, western stereotypes prevail, bringing to the mind's eye factory chimneys, skyscrapers, ultra-modern hospitals and frozen lamb chops.

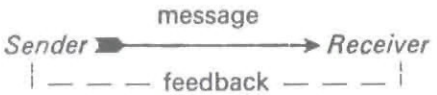
This type of development has its place, but let us try to substitute a picture of development more appropriate to the needs of the 80 to 90 per cent of the inhabitants of the Third World who eke out a marginal existence in rural areas. Let us think, for example, in terms of village workshops, improved traditional housing, one-room dispensaries, home and community gardens, pit latrines and protected springs.

This is the kind of development that offers the greatest hope of a better life for the masses of people in the developing world in the immediate future, and it is the kind of development that UNICEF promotes.

What kind of communication do we need to promote this sort of development? It is obviously the kind of communication that encourages people to think for themselves and to act on their own initiative, not just to do as they are told; to function as project participants, not merely project beneficiaries.

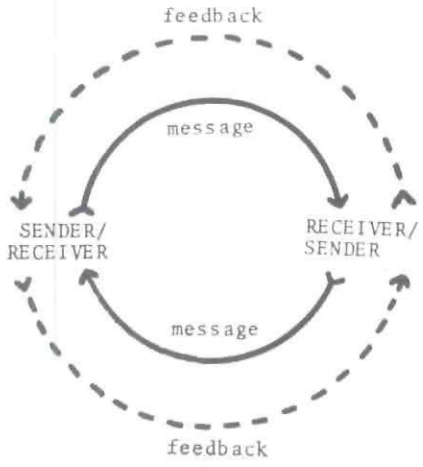
Getting away from manipulation

Existing theoretical models are not much help in this regard. As Wilbur Schramm observes in his recent book, *Men, Messages and Media,* the idea, prevalent in the early 1920's, that mass media could condition people to do precisely what those controlling the flow of messages wished them to do, has long since been exploded. Hard-sell, one-way communications campaigns arouse audience skepticism. They tend to be self-defeating in the long run. Eventually people make jokes about them. Yet most of the textbook models go like this:



This is the simplest version, of course; some models are complicated with little boxes labelled "encoder", "decoder", and the like—but the message line is always much heavier than the feedback loop.

This classic model implies that the purpose of communication is to manipulate the receiver. If we wish to get away from the idea of manipulation, we need a different model. What might be more appropriate is a circular diagram, in which the parties to the "communications contract" as it is sometimes called, function dually as senders and receivers:



*Perhaps the terms "hardware", "software" and "Project Support Communication (PSC)" used so widely in the communications field are self-evident, but a simple explanation may be helpful to some readers. "Hardware" applies to the entire range of technical equipment used for communications purposes, "software" is the message or any kind of information being transmitted through the "hardware"; and "Project Support Communication (PSC)" is the overall term used for the entire activity devoted to building some form of communications elements to help implement development projects in every field: health, nutrition, education, etc.

A live broadcast at the Educational Television Station in Dakar, Senegal. In 1965, a TV pilot series was started on health and nutrition. The next year a TV series promoted functional literacy in the French language among factory and farm workers throughout Senegal. (Photo/UN)

This is the sort of thing that happens automatically in a conversation between two friends. A talks to B. If he keeps it up for too long, he begins to get negative feedback—B's eyes wander; he yawns. A may tell a joke or raise his voice to regain B's attention. But sooner or later he must shut up and let B have his conversational innings.

Two-way communication is simple enough in a context of this nature. Establishing two-way communication in the context of a large-scale development project is a much more difficult matter, particularly if mass media are to be used, for the media have a built-in, one-way bias which is difficult to counter. Nevertheless, it is absolutely essential to open up two-way channels in development work.

The two-way system

In attempting to bring this about, what are the practical implications to broadcasters and other communicators in the developing countries? This is a fair question. A communicator's approach is conditioned to a large extent by the media which are available to him and the very word "broadcasting" implies the diffusion of information from a central point to the periphery.

It would be a mistake, I believe, to assume that broadcasters and other mass communicators are inevitably locked into a one-way system. Portable audio and video-tape recorders have loosened things up considerably in recent years. Field interviews, which once involved the transport of a lot of bulky equipment from place to place, can now be conducted with equipment that can be slung over the interviewer's shoulder. The man-in-the-street interview is an old radio device in the western countries. One can see how it could be used with considerable profit in the developing countries for agricultural extension broadcasts. To take one example out of the many that come to mind:

"Here is Mr. Singh, a farmer in Ludhiana District. Tell me, Mr. Singh, what difficulties, if any, have you encountered with high-yielding maize?"

This would be an instance of using radio to facilitate the flow of information from an "early acceptor" to a much larger number of other farmers than he could ever meet in person. It would also serve to feed certain vital pieces of information up the line to ministry officials and planners; perhaps Mr. Singh has encountered difficulties they have not foreseen.

Radio: a powerful development tool

Last year at a workshop UNICEF was sponsoring in Lusaka, Zambia, on "Communications for Social Development", the question of radio as a vehicle for development communication was taken up in some detail. Several professional broadcasters were included among the participants, so the discussion was not merely theoretical. Everybody agreed that at the present time radio is the only mass medium worthy

A humorous one-act play called "Distortion" by Kabwe Kasoma, Zambia's leading playwright, was commissioned by UNICEF for a communications workshop. The play satirizes what happens when communications break down between project managers and the villagers they are trying to help. Kasoma believes theater is a powerful development aid when used effectively. (ICEF 8027/Lanning)

of the name in most developing countries. Newspapers have a small circulation and television reaches only the more affluent classes, but the cheap transistor receiver has put radio within the reach of almost everybody.

Just putting a message on the air, however, does not mean it is going to get across. The message delivered by radio is a fleeting one, and, as with all verbal communications, listeners "edit" what they hear; they tend to retain the messages they already agree with. Moreover, radio is a permissive medium requiring the listener's indulgence. All he has to do if a programme bores him, is switch to another station. Whether or not one believes in permissive education in other domains, radio education has to be permissive. You cannot make the listener "do lines" or stay after school for having missed the message.

To be effective, radio messages—about agriculture, health or anything—have to involve quite a bit of repetition, they have to be reinforced by on-the-spot extension work, and above all they have to be entertaining. Given these conditions, radio can be a very powerful development tool.

A success story in Tanzania

An excellent example of the use of radio for social development was the *Mtu ni Afya, Mama* ("Man is Health, Mama") campaign in Tanzania —a campaign which the Government regards as a phenomenal success.

Several things stand out about the campaign. It was carefully worked out ahead of time, the preliminary investigations having started 18 months in advance. It was adequately financed, with a $200,000 grant from SIDA, the Swedish aid organization. (About half of this amount was for explanatory pamphlets.)

Listening groups were organized throughout the country, and 70,000 discussion group leaders were given advance training. The twelve half-hour radio programmes included music, dramatization, sound effects and interviews. Each programme was repeated three times in a given week so that different groups could listen at their convenience. The emphasis was on what people could do for themselves. Environmental health generally was discussed and such specific health problems as malaria, hookworm, dysentary, bilharzia, tuberculosis and water.

Sunday afternoon in Kenya

One of the best recent examples of combining "entertainment" with "education" can be found in Kenya.

Four-thirty p.m. is when the cows come home in rural Kenya, and four-thirty on Sunday afternoons is when people who are waiting for the cows to come home have, since February of this year, been tuning in to a new kind of comedy broadcast over Voice of Kenya's national service: the UNICEF-sponsored Mzee Pembe family-health show.

Mzee Pembe and partner, Kipanga, are Kenya's top radio comics. Broadcasting in Swahili, Mzee Pembe can impersonate five tribal or community accents; Kipanga can do ten. They have been at it since 1946, and they are still going strong. In the present show, Mzee plays a conservative old man with twenty children. Kipanga plays the parts of various friends and visitors who tease him about his large family ("They're going to call you 'Bwana Population', you know") and about his old-fashioned ideas about health and child care.

On a recent broadcast, the "message" was that people should take their sick children to a government clinic rather than to a local *mganga,* or witchdoctor. In the dramatic rendering of this, one of Mzee Pembe's children is sick. He takes the child to the *mganga* who demands an outrageous fee in terms of cows, goats and chickens. While Mzee Pembe and the *mganga* haggle over the price—"Don't I get to eat some of the meat, too?" asks Pembe—the child keeps on crying. "Why should I pay you anything when the baby just cries more when he sees you?" Pembe finally asks in disgust, and, on the advice of his friends, takes the child to the clinic.

Entertainment ranks high

Swahili humour is satiric and at the same time good-natured. It is a fast-paced form of continual kidding. Mzee Pembe and Kipanga are masters of the genre, and their show has all the indications of being a hit. Anyone who thinks that the communications business can't be fun —meaning fun for the people on the receiving end of things—shouldn't be allowed near a microphone, a tape recorder or a camera.

Poverty, hunger and disease are hardly laughing matters, but this does not mean that development communications has to be approached with a puritanical grimness or that the poor have no right to enjoy themselves.

A recent survey of Bangkok's Klong Toey slum—a densely settled agglomeration of wooden shacks perched over stagnant water—revealed that 22 per cent of the households had television. Entertainment obviously ranks high in the list of the slum dwellers' "felt needs", as the sociologists would say. Experience, both in the developed and developing countries, increasingly demonstrates that entertainment is the best medium for delivering many messages.

There is no substitute for face-to-face communication. Here, an Auxiliary-Nurse-Midwife talks of family planning with an Indian mother whose baby she delivered. Using story flip charts, she explains that during the breast-feeding period, the baby also needs nutritional supplements. (ICEF 8028/Myers)

This can apply to messages directed to decision makers as well as to the populace at large.

The use of theatre

At the Lusaka communications workshop referred to earlier, Kabwe Kasoma, Zambia's leading playwright, who is also Dean of Students at the University of Lusaka, was commissioned to write a play.

The Government of Zambia, with assistance from the World Bank and UNICEF, has launched a project in the squatter areas of Lusaka to help the residents up-grade their communities. It seemed to Kasoma that there was great danger of "project managers" and "project beneficiaries" finding themselves at loggerheads through a failure to communicate. He wrote a hilarious one-act play called *Distortion* to illustrate his contention.

In *Distortion*, the mayor, town clerk and city engineer visit a squatter settlement to announce the great new development programme they are going to bring the inhabitants. Owing to the fact that the mayor does not fully understand Bemba, the tribal language spoken in this particular settlement, he gives the people the impression the government is going to condemn their land to put a railway through. All hell breaks loose as a result: the people pull up the stakes the surveyors have planted and greet the city officials on their next visit with catcalls and volleys of rotten fruit. All is rectified in the end by an understanding community development worker who explains the importance of good project communications to the project managers.

Theatre on TV

The city officials are not merely satirised, they are lampooned in *Distortion*. Kasoma's wit is sharp and it is rough. When the play was performed at the formal opening of the workshop, the distinguished audience laughed, but some people felt it went much too far and might backfire. Actually, it did not. The play was later staged especially for the mayor and council—who laughed at it heartily and commended it.

It was broadcast on Zambian television, and it was one of the plays performed for Zambia's 10th anniversary independence celebrations. The message seems to have hit the mark, too. The Lusaka urban project now has a built-in communications unit to ensure that the sort of misunderstandings shown in *Distortion* don't arise.

Kasoma's informal, theatrical group, which staged *Distortion*, has since given birth to a Zambia Arts and Theatre Association, which includes university students and city officials among its membership, and which regularly stages original plays with political and development themes. ZATA has been given a weekly 45-minute slot for its "Play for Today" on Zambian Television, and public response has been enthusiastic.

Learning can be fun

The idea of using entertainment as a vehicle of instruction is certainly not new. Early Renaissance artists in Italy portrayed stories from the Bible in comic strip form on the walls of churches. At an even earlier era, artists in Asia dramatized the Buddhist and Hindu scriptures in a similar manner. But in today's developing countries it is difficult to find as many examples as one would hope of a happy wedding of entertainment and popular education. An unfortunate heritage from colonial days that has only recently been challenged may have something to do with this: the belief that learning is something that takes place only in school and is not meant to be pleasant.

Plenty of talent—not enough money

While broadcasters at the workshop concurred that "entertainment is the name of the game", most of them complained that money for what producers call "talent"—scriptwriters, performers, musicians, etc.—was the hardest kind of money to get out of their ministries.

Herbert Mokhachane, of Lesotho's Agricultural Information Office, was able to demonstrate that entertainment need not be expensive. Mokhachane played some tapes of a disc jockey show he runs for young farmers in Lesotho. All you need for a disc jockey show is a stack of pop records and somebody with the gift of the gab, which Mokhachane has. Between records he sticks in tips about farming the way ordinary disc jockeys insert commercials using a few sound effects like roosters crowing.

Even for a more elaborate type of radio show the costs are not high. The entire budget for the Mzee Pembe show in Kenya for 18 months comes to $21,000, including artists' fees, studio rental and prime air time. This is considerably less than it costs to send an outside expert to Kenya for a year.

Talent is abundant in most developing countries, and it doesn't cost a great deal to mobilize it to deliver development messages. Perhaps a

certain amount of outdated puritanism makes officials reluctant to exploit popular performers for social purposes. Anyone who doubts that an entertaining radio show can work as a development tool should study the history of *The Archers* in England. *The Archers* is a dramatic serial about a rural family. New agricultural information is fed into the programme as a natural part of the plot. It is tremendously popular, and has proved much more effective in spreading new farming methods than the old-style radio talks the BBC used to run for farmers.

More talent for communication

International development agencies have in recent years given considerable assistance to help countries strengthen their broadcasting and other communications services. Most of this aid has consisted of hardware and experts, the classic package. Little outside assistance has been available for talent. UNICEF is an exception to this rule. Just as it has long supported local training for nurses, nutrition workers and the like, so it is now beginning to support local talent in the very important field of popular communication for social development.

Rowland Hill, an eighteenth century English itinerant preacher, on being reproved for setting hymns to popular melodies, asked: "Why should the Devil have all the good tunes?"

It's a good question and is as pertinent today as it ever was. ■

The radio serial: a hit in Sri Lanka

The hero is the village doctor, the other characters are just ordinary people going about their daily lives, and once a week many people in Sri Lanka turn on their radios to hear what has been happening to them.

This popular weekly serial began in July 1974 as part of UNICEF's effort to help the Government promote the goals of World Population Year. With financial support provided by the UN Fund for Population Activities, Radio Sri Lanka introduced the programme of 15-minute weekly episodes broadcast in the island's two major languages, Sinhala and Tamil.

Aired during the peak listening hours, it is believed that the programme now reaches about 60 per cent of Sri Lanka's radio audience as well as many listeners in Southern India where Tamil is spoken.

Built around the day-by-day, run-of-the-mill problems to which listeners can easily relate, the weekly plots deal with the heartaches and frustrations, the joys and sorrows, the hopes and fears of village people or slum dwellers. The serial moves on from one personal crisis to another, following the usual pattern of radio dramas everywhere.

The village doctor was deliberately chosen as the main character because he is an important part of the everyday lives of the people and the perfect channel for introducing important messages about family planning, health and nutrition in a natural real life manner.

More episodes will undoubtedly be devoted to nutrition following the announcement of UNICEF's $2.7 million special assistance programme for child nutrition services in Sri Lanka. Messages will be introduced to alert people to the signs and dangers of malnutrition and to urge them to seek help at nutrition rehabilitation centres.

Occasionally some straight "spot announcements" will be included at the end of a programme to inform the people about the importance of growing more nutritious local foods to help alleviate the current food shortages on the island.

Once the serial is firmly established and the doctor's name becomes a household word, some thought is already being given to ways of making wider and more constructive use of his popularity.

One idea being considered is to use the doctor on a separate programme in which he could invite listeners to write letters asking his advice on family health problems. A panel of respected physicians, psychologists and sociologists could be organized to help frame responsible answers to the questions raised. This could prove to be a very useful interchange with the villager or with those who work directly with villagers.

A survey is being planned to determine not only the popularity of the programme, but the effectiveness of the messages. If the results show that people may be listening to the show and enjoying it but failing to understand the points being made by the doctor, then a decision will have to be made to either alter the content of the programme or cancel it entirely.

Jim Breetveld, Chief, Information Service, of UNICEF's South Central Asia Region, New Delhi.

KID STUFF– Modules for SITE-TV in India

Gopal Dutia

A space-age experiment will bring TV—via a communications satellite—for the first time to 2,400 villages in India. Morning broadcasts will reach rural schools. Evening programmes will vary with entertainment and practical information. (Illustration by Marion Farwell)

Some villages in rural India will soon be having their first encounter with television with the Satellite Instructional TV Experiment (SITE). At present, TV in India has been centred around the metropolitan centres of New Delhi and Bombay, apart from a few scattered "secondary" stations like Poona and Amritsar, also populous cities. The peripheral rural coverage of existing stations is negligible, because sets are very expensive, servicing facilities are meagre and up to the present time, almost no community sets have been installed.

The proposed coverage of 2,400 villages in six states in widely differing regions of India through a communications satellite is the first step in the Government's stated objective of using the television medium to spread agricultural information and innovation, promote literacy and foster rural development in general.

Gopal Dutia is Assistant Project Support Officer in UNICEF's New Delhi Office.

The SITE broadcast project is scheduled to last for a year with four hours of daily broadcasting — one and a half hours in the morning for rural schools and two and a half hours in the evening for more general development programmes. The programme, recorded on videotape and prepared in AIR (All India Radio) stations in Delhi, Calcutta and Hyderabad, will be sent to a ground station in Ahmedabad which is to feed the satellite.

An innovative and flexible approach

UNICEF has contributed to the SITE programming effort by sponsoring a series of teaching/learning modules for non-formal education involving children. These film modules—of varying lengths—are designed to give rural children a better understanding of the natural environment and to help them learn the alphabet, words and numbers.

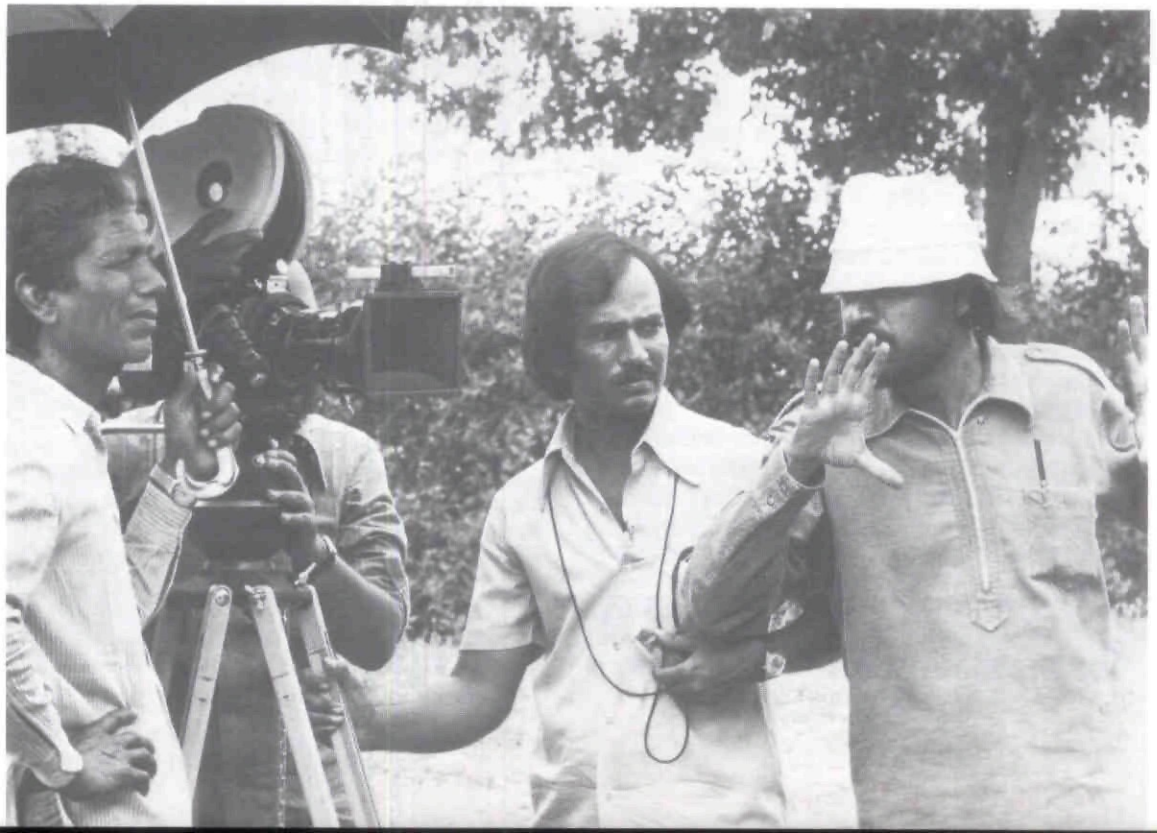
The modules are produced so that they can be used in various combinations in widely differing formats and with studio-based lead-ins and inserts. The module format shows a way to release children's television programming from the exclusive hands of professional film-makers and TV producers, and provides the possibility for teachers, social workers, psychologists and others with some knowledge of film production to produce their own programmes using local artists.

The project shows how the Government could assemble a series of low-cost module banks at major television stations, which would reduce the cost of producing individual TV programmes. The modules could be used again and again in different combinations and with occasional additions of new material. Carefully executed modules would have the life of good text-books so that their initial cost would be spread out over a long period of time.

Twenty modules, commissioned by UNICEF, show these advantages in a variety of formats. Some are straight live-action, using folk actors from rural travelling repertory companies. Others use different forms of simple animation: photo, object, and card-and-cut-outs to keep down costs. The scripts, songs, and music are all of folk origin and are recorded by folk artists from the Chattisgarh region of Madhya Pradesh State (one of the SITE cluster areas).

A few examples

The longest module, a 15-minute story about a *bania* (village tradesman and traditional money-lender) and an impoverished *Brahmin*, illustrates the pitfalls of avarice and not keeping one's word. On being promised a reward, a passing *Brahmin* helps a stranded *bania* from a tree. The *bania* then reneges on the reward, and the *Brahmin*, with an accomplice plays on the *bania's* guilty conscience to get several times more than the initial reward. This module is an adaptation of the traditional *panwani* form



Shyam Benegal, producer of film modules for the television experiment, is shooting on location in Chattisgarh. These teaching/learning modules for non-formal education, to which UNICEF has contributed aid, help children learn the alphabet, words and numbers and gain a better understanding of their environment. (ICEF 8020/UNICEF—New Delhi)

(song narration with minimum dialogue) which is the way the folklore is performed in villages of this region.

A puppet module, *Story of Man,* uses a song about the various parts of the body and how they were put together by Lord Shiva to make man.

The Circle, a simple object animation using a ball of wool, illustrates how a circle is formed and shows how many familiar rural objects such as sugarcane chunks, grindstones, tomatoes and balloons have the same shape.

Cut-out animation modules attempt to relate the seven days of the week to their mythological origin and to help children recognize the words for them. To make each month more meaningful, a specific rural activity such as sowing, harvesting, or a special rural festival is related to that particular month.

The modules, *After, Before,* and *Up and Down* illustrate these concepts through two village buffoons who try to outwit each other. Natural phenomena, such as the formation of rain are illustrated in a cut-out animation module using a folk-song in place of narration. A module on animals, *The Bear Cub,* is based on a well-known children's poem by a celebrated North Indian poet. The funny, live-action skit, *Cup and Saucer,* is about object identification.

A good combination

An unexpected fall-out of the production of these modules has been the interaction between sophisticated film producers and folk artists of the region. The carefully-researched scripts were first tried out at a rural workshop in Durg (district headquarters—Madhya Pradesh State) where about 150 folk artists from 18 troupes of the region were assembled for a workshop. The scripts were substantially modified and some of the action improvised during filming. A useful exchange of ideas took place when some songs prepared by researchers and social anthropologists in Bombay found ready acceptance in the folk troupes, and were heard being sung and performed in remote villages some months after the shooting.

The actors, musicians and singers were found so engaging that the producer of the modules, Shyam Benegal, used them subsequently in a children's feature film, *Charandas Chor,* based on a local folk story sponsored by the Government-run Children's Film Society, for dissemination at children's morning film shows in cinema theatres all over the country.

Thus, the commissioning of Shyam Benegal to produce modules for the SITE project has resulted not only in clarifying the fact that the module bank can be a feasible concept for children's TV programming, but, in the process, has also brought into prominence a number of rural folk artists, singers, musicians and storytellers who, in the future, will, undoubtedly provide much more material for children's films and television programmes in India. ■

Songs and music of folk origin are being recorded by folk artists for use in the film modules. Of the 20 modules commissioned by UNICEF, some are straight live-action, using folk actors; others use different forms of simple animation: photo, object, and card-and-cut-outs to keep down costs. (ICEF 8021/UNICEF—New Delhi)

The Communication Gap

Alastair Matheson

Some 300 years ago a big project was started on the outskirts of Rome to drain the Pontine Marshes, try to eliminate the mosquitoes and the disease menace to the city, and at the same time to create more arable land which could yield food for the urban population.

The city dwellers welcomed the idea, for they had visions of a ready supply of fruit and vegetables nearby and, hopefully, those commodities would be abundant and cheap.

Not so the swamp dwellers, mainly fishermen, whose livelihood depended on the status quo and who became irate at the prospect of the swamps being drained and no water left where they could fish. Their reaction was predictable—they tore down the banks and walls that had been created to lead off the water, and soon the ambitious drainage project had been completely wrecked.

No one had thought of taking the trouble to explain to the swamp dwellers how they could adapt themselves to a new way of life as farmers instead of fishermen—a lamentable communi-

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Alastair Matheson, Deputy Director of UNICEF's Information Division, has travelled extensively throughout the developing world studying the communications aspects of development projects in many fields of activity including health, family planning, nutrition and education. While working for UNICEF in Eastern Africa, he established the Project Support Communication Unit, using various media in support of assistance programmes.

A typical Balinese song and dance drama weaves family planning messages into the entertainment. Using traditional media is especially effective in rural societies where sophisticated tools are relatively unknown. (Photo/United Nations)

cations gap—not the first nor the last since man began to walk erect and added speech to his other senses of seeing, hearing and feeling.

Changing attitudes—a difficult task

Unfortunately, although the tools of technology are available today to help improve the lives of people throughout the developing world, too many projects are failing to achieve their goals because communication experts and development planners often do not communicate effectively with each other or with the people they are trying to help.

I well recall a campaign in a certain coastal area of Africa where the tribe, well known for its predilection to enjoy life even to the extent of spending much of every night dancing and drinking, became the target of a communica-

tions campaign to increase productivity. A serious economic problem had arisen because the people were refusing to pick more cotton (the main cash crop in the area) than was needed to give them enough cash for the next two or three weeks. They left the bulk of the crop to rot on the ground.

A campaign was launched to tempt the people with such worldly goods as bicycles, radios and sewing machines in the hope that they would pick all the cotton and so make enough money to buy the items which were dangled before them as "bait". The cotton remained unpicked, however, and the majority of the people continued their traditional way of life, resting during the hot afternoons instead of picking cotton, conserving their energies for the evening's jollifications.

Whose values are better?

One of the most common mistakes made in developing countries since the Second World War has not so much been in ignoring the need for communication, but basing messages on wrong assumptions. Some communication experts have described this as "Western ethnocentrism"—the belief, often false, that a more modern, more western way of life is automatically better for people in Asia, Africa or Latin America, and the assumption that the people there will accept drastic changes, merely because they must be better.

All communicators are not agreed about this by any means, and there is a growing realization that often much harm can be done by trying to persuade close-knit societies to abandon entirely their old way of life, forget about their culture and traditions and accept strange new values.

Even when there is indisputable evidence that some of the new ideas, such as clean water or more nutritious food, will improve the people's lives, development projects do not achieve their goals when the people have not been sufficiently prepared for the changes or when wrong assumptions are made about the kinds of messages people are ready to understand or the best way to convey these messages.

"Our flies are smaller"

A story is told by Andreas Fuglesang, the well-known communications expert who has had considerable experience working in Africa. It is about an agricultural extension worker who was lecturing to a group of cattle farmers about the dangers of the tsetse fly. For that purpose he had brought along a teaching aid which is commonly in use all over the world, namely, a model of the tsetse fly about half a yard or so in length. After the lecture a farmer came up to him and said: "It may be so true what you say about this disease in cattle, but it cannot concern us because the flies are not so big in our district". When Dr. Fuglesang tells this story to communications workers he adds some advice of his own: "Beware of your own reaction to the story. If you find it intriguing, there is hope. But if you find it just laughable, you had better get out of the communication business."

"A souse like us"

The perils faced by the communicator who relies on conventional approaches is related in an anecdote by Paulo Freire, the celebrated Brazilian educator. He writes of an investigator in Santiago who showed a group of tenement residents a picture of a drunken man staggering down the street and three well-dressed sober men conversing on the corner. His expectation was that this would provoke a discussion on alcoholism. The tenement residents reacted in quite an unexpected way:

"The only one there who is productive and useful to his country," they said, "is the souse who is returning home after working all day for low wages and who is worried about his family because he can't take care of their needs. He is the only worker. He is a decent worker and a souse like us."

The message, the medium, the audience

The most carefully conceived information campaigns can fail to convey their message because the planners have not given sufficient thought to the people's way of life and their lack of exposure to modern methods of communication.

A health worker told me of a mobile cinema van that came to a remote village to show a film about family planning. Most of the women had never been more than 20 or 30 miles from their villages and none had ever seen a film before. They were so awed and overwhelmed by the rapid succession of pictures being flashed on the screen, that the impact of the message was largely lost on them.

In another village, a nutrition worker used a simple flannelgraph to demonstrate the value of certain nutritious foods. The dominant reaction from her audience was one of wonder—how did

Housewives from two villages in Ghana learn new ideas about food and cooking from nutrition workers. In communities where literacy levels are low and traditions are deep-rooted, the single most effective means of communication is the interpersonal one. (ICEF 3597/Almasy)

the pictures stick on the board?

Finding the right message for the right medium for a specific audience is a constant challenge to communication experts and development planners and workers. Much has been claimed for the power of the mass media during the 20th century, and it has certainly achieved wonders in bringing people instant information and in shaping life-styles and beliefs. But when it comes to rural societies, especially where literacy levels are low and traditions deep-rooted, the effectiveness of mass media in bringing about change is very limited, and experience has shown that probably the single most effective means of communication is the inter-personal one—face-to-face between two or more people.

Mass media: the "class media"?

In India, it has been said that the mass media is actually the "class media" which serves only the urban dwellers and the "haves" in the countryside. There is little or no outreach to the rural poor. This can be said about the mass media to a varying degree in most developing countries, although radio is the one medium which cuts clean through the literacy barrier. (Since the advent of the transistor, it has even cut across the economic barrier so that today you can see

an Ethiopian peasant ploughing with a radio strapped to his wooden plough, or a Sudanese with a tiny transistor perched atop his camel.)

Yet despite radio's power to penetrate literacy and other barriers, it can seldom act as an effective agent for change when used alone. This is because it is too impersonal a medium, and unless there can be a "face" to reinforce the bodiless "voice" and give some substance to the message, little or no lasting effect can be hoped for.

The personal element

Experiments in India with radio have shown some interesting results. When All India Radio broadcast a series of programmes containing advice to farmers, special listening groups were assembled in one set of villages to discuss suggestions after each broadcast. Sometimes the groups rejected the advice out of hand, but at other times they readily accepted it.

In another set of villages, no listening groups were organized and villagers were left to listen to the broadcasts on their own, or ignore them altogether if they wished. No action at all resulted in this second situation. It took a combination of information through the media and reinforcement by personal discussion to get the people to act—when they wanted to.

The Director of MIT's International Communications Programme, Professor de Sola Pool summed it up neatly this way:

"The media may din propaganda into people incessantly, but if their friends and relatives preach different values, the mass media are not likely to win . . . in securing action, the mass media are even less effective in the absence of personal reinforcement. To get people to act in ways that conform to new values almost always requires that mass communications be reinforced by personal influence."

Many agricultural extension workers have reported that while farmers can learn about new techniques from listening to farm radio programmes, they are much more likely to adopt them if they see one of their neighbours getting a better yield by using the new method.

Using traditional media

In places where more sophisticated communications tools might be neither feasible nor practicable, much greater use should be made of traditional folk media. Take the puppets of Indonesia or Malawi or India for instance. They are a well-known medium of entertainment and

with a little skill, development messages can be worked into the repertoire here and there, taking care not to lose the main entertainment thread. This has been done to good effect in family planning motivation in Indonesia.

Repertory players, so commonplace in parts of Nigeria, can also be used to put over desired messages woven into simple plots. Well-known local singers who add messages to their vernacular songs often succeed in getting a point home.

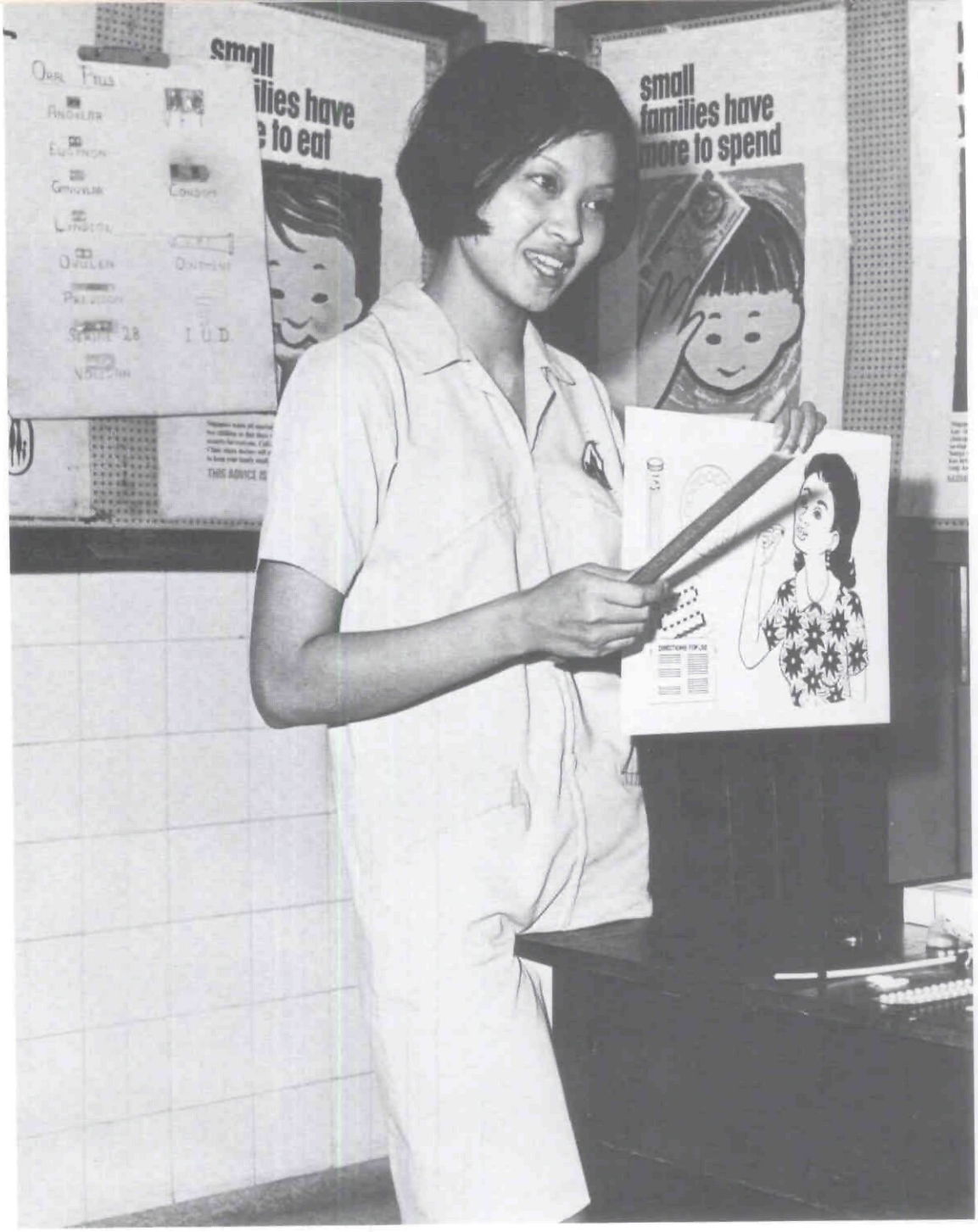
Graphic materials are used skillfully by a doctor to teach young Pakistani mothers and housewives about pregnancy and labour. Even simple visual aids can produce unexpected results when women see them for the first time. A field worker using a flannelgraph reported a dominant reaction from one group: wonder. How did the pictures stick on the board? (ICEF 6794/Wolff)

Mwishehe Mbarak, the Tanzanian singer well-known through East Africa for his Kiswahili songs in "Congolese-style" rhythm, recorded a song in praise of nutritious foods for young children under the title "Mama Chakula Bora". It soon reached the top of the local charts for several weeks, and could be heard from the coffee shops of Zanzibar to the markets of Western Kenya.

With a little ingenuity, too, suitable slogans worked into dress materials of the "khanga" type worn traditionally by many women in East Africa carry the message far and wide. Anyone familiar with Africa knows that once a topic has been "launched" to women at a well or a market-place, they are quite capable of "taking it from there", and the extent of the subsequent dissemination can be quite staggering.

Trial and error

The centuries-old folk media are tried and true and should be used to their greatest advan-



The warm and friendly manner of this health worker goes a long way to help communicate new concepts about family planning when she meets with women's groups throughout Singapore. (UNICEF/UNDP 8030: photo by Prathana)

tage. New communications tools are now being tried and tested every day and new lessons being learned—especially from the mistakes that have been made.

It was, in fact, some years before UNICEF itself realised just how out of place and irrelevant white plastic dolls were in Africa when used to demonstrate to village mothers the correct way to bathe their babies during the child-care class.

And today many irrelevant training films are being shown in developing countries because there are no suitable ones about local conditions and situations. The result in many cases is that those who watch them consider them devoid of meaning and any inherent message tends to be lost or under-utilized, even where films have been "dubbed" into the local language or vernacular.

The story, probably apocryphal, is often told of the training course for sanitation workers held in the capital of a certain land-locked Middle Eastern country consisting mainly of desert. The request went out for an instructional film to be shown to the students, and when the film was shown, it proved to be all about how New York City disposed of its garbage!

Only recently have studies begun in earnest into how different people perceive films and pictures. In many cases, the studies are incomplete but surveys carried out, for instance, into a series of photographs clipped from "Life"

Experience is the best teacher. It took UNICEF some years to realize how out of place and irrelevant white plastic dolls were in Africa when teaching village mothers the correct way to bathe their babies during child-care classes.
(ICEF 4773/Bernheim)

magazine a few years ago and shown to secondary schoolboys in Tanzania, yielded some surprising conclusions. One picture of a jazz group performing before an excited audience was interpreted as being a battle between two rival groups of people.

Another study of perception in Africa took the form of a series of simple line-drawings shown to different categories of people. One of the drawings was of a typical African hoe—the *jembe*. Many of those shown the drawing interpreted it as a man walking along a road.

Preventing communication failures

These examples are sufficient to show that the possibilities of misinterpretation are considerable and serve to underlie the warning that even well-planned campaigns can end in failures if there is no proper monitoring or "feedback" to make sure that the wrong effect is not being created by the communicator—however innocently.

But communicators do not work in a vacuum. Even their best efforts and their most effective tools cannot turn a poorly planned development project into a good one. Moreover, communications elements must be built into a project in the initial planning stages. Experience has shown that when they are "tagged" on as an afterthought, a serious communications gap may well arise which could hinder the eventual success of the project. ■

the waiting room

Mohamed Islam

"I wait about 2½ hours till my turn comes."

"It's sometimes fun sitting around here. You know, a rest from housework. It's also cooler than at home."

"I just gossip with my friends."

These were but a few of the remarks made by women sitting in the maternal and child health centre in Cairo's Boulak area one warm April day last year.

The waiting room with long low benches was full to capacity. Some 35 women with their children. The "sound-mix" was an interesting conglomerate of chatter, wails, screams, gurgles, coughs and, above all, merry laughter.

A group of us were on an assignment to shoot a film, and one of our locations was this particular centre in Boulak.

Dr. Nabil, in charge of the centre, was busy as usual. With traditional Egyptian courtesy, however, he allowed us in with our equipment. We filmed him talking to a mother and giving her advice about her three-month old baby. His office was bedecked with the usual run of the mill posters—baby foods, weight charts, smiling babies.

"How long do these mothers have to wait to see you, doctor?" I asked.

"Well, as you see," he replied, "I am the only one here, so sometimes it could be as long as a couple of hours."

"Have you ever thought of trying to put this waiting time to some profitable use for mothers?

"Not really, frankly, I'm too busy just trying to serve as many mothers and children as I possibly can."

An idea is born

This is where the idea originated. How could these long waiting hours be used more constructively? Perhaps the Egyptians' love for

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Mohamed Islam is the Project Support Communications Officer in UNICEF's Beirut Office for the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

POSTERS CAN HELP FAMILY PLANNING

Bjorn Berndtson

Why are so many family planning programmes making such little progress? Certainly it has not been for lack of worldwide attention. The problems of a too rapid population growth and the need for family planning have been emphasized over and over again through every possible medium of communication and received added impetus during the recent World Population Year.

Yet the sad fact remains that the results of most family planning programmes are disappointing, and few of them are achieving their goals.

One attempt to search for some answers to this question was made by the Community and Family Study Center of the University of Chi-

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Bjorn Berndtson, currently Project Support Communications Officer in UNICEF's Information Division, was associated with the Community and Family Center of the University of Chicago for many years. This article draws largely upon the monograph, Relevant Posters for Family Planning, *which Mr. Berndtson co-authored with Donald J. Bogue and George McVicker.*

Parents who see too many of their babies die from disease or malnutrition go on having more and more children to ensure that some of them will survive. But today improved health and nutrition services in many developing countries are helping to keep more children alive and healthy than in the past. This concept can be effectively portrayed in posters displayed among peoples who, as yet, are not sufficiently aware of the possibilities of a better life for their children.

cago. Based on the premise that the root of the problem is the failure of most family planning programmes to *communicate* their message effectively to the audience they are trying to reach, the Center conducted extensive research in many developing countries on the communications aspects of family planning programmes.

The results of this research have been published in a series of four monographs which examine the major obstacles countries face in conveying their messages. The study suggests ways to improve the use of direct mail, radio, television and posters.

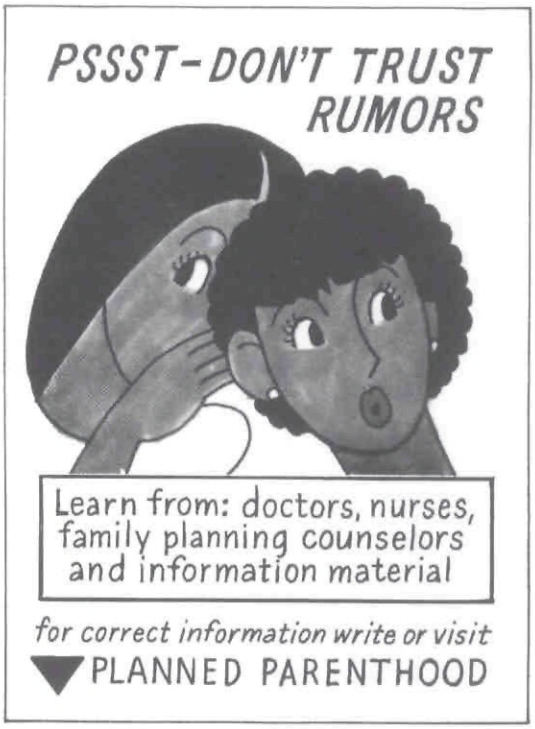
The overall conclusion of the studies is that communications aspects in most family planning programmes are "in need of immediate and drastic overhaul", and the Center hopes that some of the ideas and prototype materials presented in the studies will help to "stimulate the process of overhaul . . . and lead to fresh and improved work in the individual countries of the world".

The need for better spacing of children can be dramatized very effectively in posters by using various approaches. This poster attempts to "desexualize" the subject of family planning. Experience has shown that separating sex from family planning tends to encourage many people to talk about the subject more freely.

The importance of posters

The poster, while only one of many available communication tools, can be of special value to developing countries because it is so inexpensive and easy to produce and distribute. Much use has already been made of posters and signs for publicizing family planning programmes. The threat of famine and other disasters due to overpopulation and the plight of families who bear too many children are themes which easily lend themselves to dramatic presentation in posters. Such posters, placed in spots where large numbers of citizens can see them, are able to convey their message silently, yet persistently and effectively.

Within the past few years, however, with a few exceptions, there has been little progress in both the quality and quantity of posters ad-



When new ideas clash with centuries-old customs and beliefs, exaggerated and distorted gossip or hearsay begin to flow widely through the population. False rumours are especially quick to spread about the effects of contraception on health, on the morals of the young and about the basic motives which underlie the work of family planning itself. Posters can alert people to this danger and direct them to the people who can help them understand the true from the false.

vertising family planning. Many merely repeat vague messages already known and consequently cease to be challenging. Since many family planning programmes in the world are not attracting sufficient numbers of new "adopters" which they have set as "targets", how can posters be improved to help family planning programmes motivate more people to action?

Three important principles

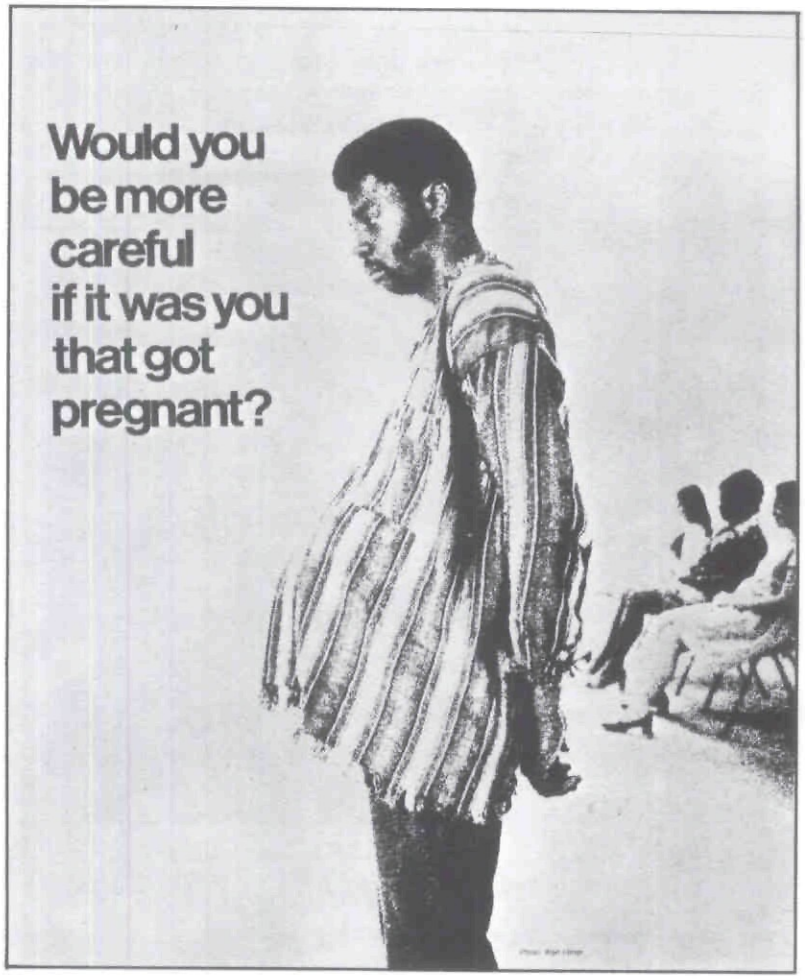
In seeking to raise the level of posters and make them more effective tools of communication, the study, *Relevant Posters for Family Planning*, stresses three major points:

Posters must have a purpose. Instead of being just broad "shotgun" reminders to practice family planning, the new generation of posters should deal with highly specific problems and obstacles. Rather than a few posters with a general message used for prolonged periods of time, there should be a much wider variety of posters, each dealing with a specific topic. In other words, they should be pointedly relevant to current issues in family planning and cause the viewer who is not a family planner to re-examine his thoughts on the subject.

Posters must have good design. Many posters violate the basic principles that govern effective communication via public display. Discussion and review of these principles and their application to the production of family planning posters should be encouraged.

Posters must be pretested. Too many posters are produced because they are found pleasing to family planning administrators and communicators (who usually do not know a great deal about communication theory), not because they

Men should also do some thinking about family planning. This poster, with its humorous barb, attempts to promote such thinking.



have been found pleasing or convincing to the audience for which they are intended. Before a poster is produced in quantity, it must be evaluated critically by a professional communications audience and then "pretested" carefully to learn how its intended audience will react to it. Much poster communication has been wasted effort; the audience has simply been unimpressed by the efforts of the poster-makers.

A few examples

Twenty-five situations or conditions impeding family planning are presented in the Center's poster study as well as 100 poster designs aimed specifically at these obstacles. The intention is not for the designs to be copied, but rather to stimulate a complete re-thinking of the poster-making activity in order to make it more relevant and more powerful in removing the obstacles to progress. A few examples are given below.

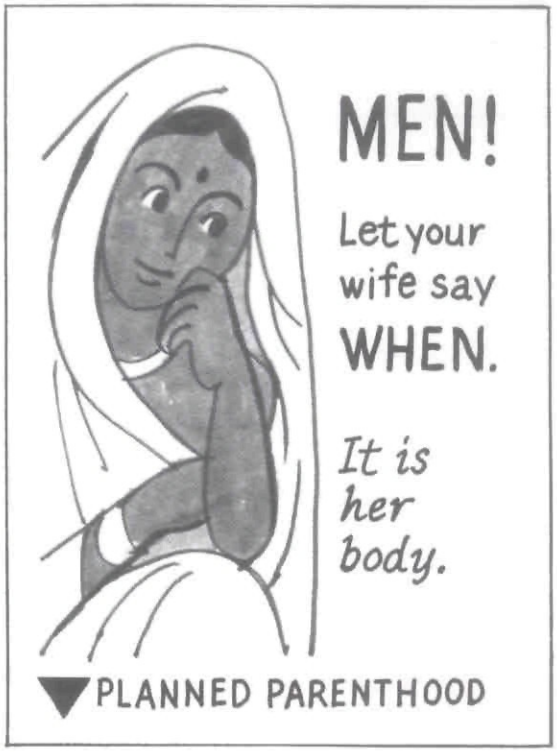
Room for improvement

Since 1798 when the first mass-produced posters were made possible by the invention of the process of lithography, posters have been used to convey every conceivable kind of message. Some succeed, some fail. In his book, *The Art of the Poster,* E. McKnight Kauffer compares "a good poster with a well-selected fly cast by a skillful angler who knows his particular fish".

Today, throughout the developing world, some family planning posters are succeeding in catching their "particular fish", but there are many more that are not. In view of the simplicity, the speed, the low cost, and the relatively small effort required to produce posters, it is hoped that more people involved in their production will examine the possibilities of making them more effective rather than continuing to waste large amounts of time, effort and money in turning out posters that do nothing more than convert the already-converted, have a boomerang effect, or (most often) go unnoticed. ■

1. For information about the availability of the four studies referred to in this article, write to the Community and Family Study Center, 1411 East 60th Street, Chicago, Illinois 60637. The titles of the studies are: Mass Mailings for Family Planning, Twenty-five Communication Obstacles to the Success of Family Planning Programs, Radio and Television Spot Announcements for Family Planning and Relevant Posters for Family Planning.

Sex shyness and the subordinate status of women are common in many countries. Posters can aim to encourage couples to talk with each other more frankly about family planning matters and to call attention to the need for women to take a more important role in making decisions about the number of children the family should have.



Communicating a Vision

By Anthony Hewett

In the last three weeks of May, a major development story sprang into sharp focus at UNICEF's Executive Board session in New York: the last pieces of a coherent, overall strategy to forge a "missing link" in the development process finally dropped into place.

For professional communicators, one of the story's key elements was clear recognition that the strategy's success will depend crucially on the story-tellers themselves.

The Board's word for this is "advocacy": the job of everyone involved—journalists or not—at all levels of the development process to bring about the changes of attitude needed to make the strategy work.

The strategy's target is what UNICEF Executive Director Henry R. Labouisse calls the "missing link", the assembling of a basic package of services aimed specifically at children and the force for development growth they represent.

Attack at the grassroots

The new approach is based on the growing recognition that traditional development theories, which assumed human and social needs among the poorer segments of the population—including children—would be met from benefits of increased economic productivity "trickling down", have not had this effect.

Now it has been seen that these basic needs—adequate food, clean water, simple health care and a degree of education—are a prerequisite and a complement to the development process, rather than its by-product. As such they must be spread to the broadest possible population.

The strategy's answer: simplified services, meeting the bulk of real needs and problems, spread across the society as a whole. And to do it by capitalizing on the human resources already existing at this grassroots level.

Not only does this make services cheaper to run; the involvement and identification with the community is a major source of the strategy's strength.

The big challenge: communication

Such a profound change of approach cannot succeed without overturning many traditional development doctrines. These are as often enshrined in international assistance procedures as, within developing countries themselves, in the existing attitudes of government administrations and professional elites.

It is a communications challenge of immense proportions, demanding every effort from people in all aspects of the development process.

By its nature, however, particular responsibility falls on the professional communicators—and their role as an integral part of the development process is implicit or explicit in all the strategy's component parts.

An "affordable" vision

Immense though it is, the communications task is not impossible. The strategy's clear vision provides its own compelling logic.

And it *is* an "affordable" vision. Because it draws on skills and capabilities already existing in the communities, the new approach needs only moderate levels of initial investment by external funding and modest recurring costs within the means of the developing country.

To suggest a perspective, Mr. Labouisse pointed out that total external funding from all sources for basic children's services could be met with 10 per cent or less of the $30 billion the World Bank estimates will be needed for all development assistance by 1980.

The pieces begin to fit

In the past few years, decades of experience in all these basic services for children—ranging from health care, nutrition education and small-scale food production to schooling, clean water supply and services for women—have been reappraised by the experts and organizations most involved, including UNICEF.

The result has been a series of reports to UNICEF's Board, each adding to a final picture of the new approach. The work was capped at the 1975 Board by reports on two major areas of the problem: basic health care and child nutrition.

The lessons drawn from this work meshed closely with those from earlier and complementary work on basic education, formal and non-formal.

Health care: simple is better than none

These lessons emerged most clearly in the landmark WHO/UNICEF study on basic health care alternatives.

The study suggested that scarce resources could be more effectively used for brief courses in specific health problems for primary health workers from village communities themselves, rather than on extended and expensive training of doctors and nurses.

Village pharmacies with a small range of the most commonly-used drugs would supplement this work which, while able to detect and refer more complicated cases to higher levels of the health care system, would be able to handle 80-90 per cent of health problems in these rural communities.

(The report on non-formal education to the 1974 Board proposed analogous measures aimed at spreading basic literacy and numeracy, allied with practical skills attuned to the needs of the rural communities.)

Also . . . adequate food, clean water

Many of the same conclusions were drawn in the study on child nutrition priorities: a community approach, with heavy reliance on village workers, co-ordinated with the primary health workers. And a special need for advocacy, to focus greater attention on what could be done—through policies, planning and programmes to improve the frail nutritional status of hundreds of millions of the developing world's children.

Now, with the growing body of knowledge in safe-water supply, family planning and services for women, and the development of the new approaches in basic health, education and nutrition, the way is clear for Mr. Labouisse's "missing link" at last to be forged.

Words into action

The challenge to professional communicators posed by the new strategy was reinforced by an examination at the Board of UNICEF's own information policy. Recommended: increased emphasis on these key information areas:

- —strengthening efforts to educate the public;
- —advocacy, aimed at decision-makers;
- —fund-raising, with traditional and potential new sources of revenue; and
- —Project Support Communication, to improve project effectiveness.

As Mr. Labouisse pointed out: "It is time, now, to translate words into action." ■

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