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Date

8/19/2007

Time

5:05:19 PM

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CF-RAI-USAA-PD-GEN-2007-000112

Expanded Number **CF-RAI-USAA-PD-GEN-2007-000112**

External ID

Title

"Communications Support to Project Implementation" EXPRO-240. Memo from Charles A. Egger to UNICEF Field Offices

Date Created / From Date

5/12/1975

Date Registered

8/10/2007 at 2:21 PM

Date Closed / To Date

Primary Contact

Home Location **CF-RAF-USAA-DB01-2007-09431 (In Container)**

F12: Status Certain? **No**

Item Fd01: In, Out, Internal Rec or Rec Copy

Owner Location **Programme Division, UNICEF NYHQ (3003)**

Current Location/Assignee **In Container 'CF-RAF-USAA-DB01-2007-09431 (Upasana Young)' since 8/19/2007 at**

F13: Record Copy? **No**

Document Details **Record has no document attached.**

Contained Records

Container **CF/RA/BX/PD/CM/1986/T001: PSC Files - Programme Support Com**

Date Published

Fd3: Doc Type - Format

Da1:Date First Published

Priority

Record Type **A01 PD-GEN ITEM**

Notes

Outlines purposes of PSC, policies and field experience from 1970 to 1975. Introduction ("In 1970, EXPRO-1899 was issued to field offices pointing out how modern and traditional forms of communication could support UNICEF-assisted programmes, both for training and public education. Much field experience has been acquired by UNICEF in the past 4 years in this relatively new skill of a systematically-planned communications effort - first in Asia, then in East Africa, and more recently in the Eastern Mediterranean. ...); The communication task; defining and understanding target groups; planning and implementation; PSC field officer's participation in project preparation; inventories of communication resources; radio; film; traditional media; equipment; feedback; financing; summary

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SARAJA DOUGLAS

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EXPRO-240

12 May 1975

TO: Field Offices

FROM: Charles A. Egger

SUBJECT: Communications Support to Project Implementation

1. Introduction

In 1970, EXPRO-189 was issued to field offices pointing out how modern and traditional forms of communication could support UNICEF-assisted programmes, both for training and public education. Much field experience has been acquired by UNICEF in the past four years in this relatively new skill of a systematically-planned communications effort - first in Asia, then in East Africa, and more recently in the Eastern Mediterranean.

Recently, a professional adviser has been appointed in the Information Division at Headquarters to provide support, guidance and advice to field offices and generally act as a "clearing house" for data about communication to support projects.

The objectives of Project Support Communication, or PSC, are to facilitate the better attainment of project objectives by systematic use of communications. National communication facilities, resources and personnel are to be supported and strengthened to reach these objectives. An initial step will be to help establish or strengthen production units in the countries which can produce software and teaching aids. There is also the possibility of undertaking joint operations with other United Nations agencies where interests coincide.

Project Support Communication (PSC) entails the use of a selected number of communication channels and components which will make up an effective communication input. UNICEF would now like to see an increased use of communication elements appropriately incorporated into projects and used as a tool in support of project implementation.

As they are directed towards project implementation, PSC activities are distinctly separate from the general information and fund-raising work which is to make available for diffusion general information about UNICEF and the needs of children in developing countries.

2. The communication task

Communication is seen as a continuous two-way process which, when successful, brings about an acceptance which leads to new habitual behaviour.

In this process knowledge is imparted and facts and occurrences are received; however, the information flow has to be strengthened by persuasive methods of presentation.

In order to have new attitudes and behaviour incorporated and changed, and to have new beneficial values and beliefs established, the receiver of messages needs to pass through several stages, e.g., awareness, interest, knowledge, trial and evaluation. The establishment of these steps constitutes the communication task.

3. Defining and understanding target groups

One of the first things to do in planning the PSC component of any project is to identify the people you want to reach in the project - the "target". Failure to make this preliminary and often difficult analysis will make it impossible to make subsequent judgements about PSC on an intelligent basis. In defining the target group, it will be necessary among other things to define the geographical area, the size and extent, and the languages spoken for each group, and the methods of communication which can reach each group most effectively, bearing in mind the group's size, importance and influence.

Motivation or persuasion usually involves trying to change attitudes and deeply-ingrained customs. The PSC Officer can help out with study of the cultural and behaviour patterns of the target group. The assistance of a social scientist familiar with the target group will often be desirable, so that traditions, customs, taboos, needs and beliefs are taken into consideration when formulating the desired communication programme.

4. Planning and implementation

It is the responsibility of the Programme Officer to take the initiative, where there is a need for some basic communication input, to plan and outline the PSC components of UNICEF-assisted projects. A field PSC Officer can be of help to a Programme Officer from the moment a Government proposal is contemplated, and can contribute to the preparation of projects. Later on, the national authorities will often need assistance to produce message materials and diffuse them to the intended target groups.

5. PSC field officer's participation in project preparation

The field PSC Officer is prepared to help out with budget estimates so that a programme draft can specify cost of communication personnel, equipment, supplies, production of software, mass media utilization and any other expense which may be relevant. His knowledge of target groups who need to be reached, media resources available, and strategies and tactics to be utilized should make him a useful member of the planning team.

The PSC Officer's work can also consist of persuading Government officials to use effective means of communication and to arrange for the creation of appropriate messages for media which can reach the largest number of a target group. The PSC Officer can serve as a liaison between ministries who could provide assistance to a project, in particular the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

The PSC Officer will also assist with local and on-job training and when necessary advise on the availability of fellowships for study in the region or abroad. These include training and orientation of both project implementers and associated national communication personnel.

Also, it is important to involve local communication people in all related fields at an early stage, especially artists, writers, sociologists, communicators, broadcasters, teachers, rural development workers, agricultural instructors, health and family planning workers, etc. In this way the local people can be informed through various well-selected channels and there can be opportunity for a two-way exchange. Maximum involvement and co-operation from local people helps to overcome barriers which otherwise can prove insuperable.

A breakdown of the main day-to-day tasks and responsibilities of the PSC "field unit" is as follows:

Primary tasks:

- i. To participate in the preliminary planning of projects to make certain that appropriate communication elements are included from the start;
- ii. To assist in working out plans, strategies and tactics for the communication elements to be included in a project. These will include determining time elements, budget and research;
- iii. Occasionally to assist in carrying out such plans;
- iv. To assist in evaluating the communication input.

Secondary tasks:

- i. To bring about increased awareness, interest and understanding of the effectiveness of communication activities when integrated into a project;
- ii. To bring about a better use of PSC in projects in which UNICEF and the Government are involved.

No project is pursued without complete agreement between the two parties involved. In the case of acceptance of new communication ideas, the Programme and the PSC Officers may have a "persuading" job to perform during negotiations

with Government officials. PSC Officers in the field should seek to give advice and technical assistance where needed in cases where Government officials are not entirely familiar with the value of using communication for development projects. Such advice may include the task of explaining, e.g., the necessity of two-way communication and better communication reach with meaningful messages. UNICEF should try to convince officials of the potential of PSC and, in certain cases, UNICEF, through their PSC units, can produce the prototype material to serve as samples or models.

6. Inventories of communication resources

For these purposes, the Programme Officer needs an up-to-date inventory of the main communication resources in his country of operation. Not all programmes necessarily need an external communication input, but the Programme Officer should be sensitized to consider the need in every case, especially where the supply of audio-visual equipment or training aids is under consideration. With an inventory available, the Programme Officer is in a better position to provide communication input to the programme at its formulation stage. The PSC Officer in his area will help him with such an inventory which would cover not only the pertinent details of all newspapers, periodicals and other print media regularly published, including information on language, circulation, frequency and area of coverage, but would list all television stations (where they exist) and all radio stations. The inventory would also contain data on all other media outlets, such as cinemas, mobile information/cinema vans, traditional media, etc.; and on production facilities where they exist, such as recording studios, film units and studios, film processing facilities and printing plants. In this way it becomes possible to build up a complete picture of the communication facilities in any given country, so that this information will be available when one comes to consider reaching target groups, contents of messages and most effective media use.

7. Radio

Radio is the most effective means of reaching the bulk of the rural population, especially semi-literates and illiterates, in most developing countries. It is also one of the least expensive media to produce for, as far as software is concerned. In countries which have Government-operated radio networks, air time is seldom difficult to obtain for programmes in support of development, and if the PSC Officer can assist the project to provide completed scripts or tapes, or assist the station staff to prepare them, the desired radio programme may be quickly achieved.

8. Film

On the other hand, it is often found that one of the least effective media is the film, and the many reasons for this include cost-time of production, and reach and frequency factors, which should be considered carefully before embarking on film production. In most cases, imported films, even training films, are not

the answer; and if films are to be used as communication tools, they should feature the target group people of the country, as well as the language used by the group, so that the target audience should be able to identify themselves with the people featured in the film or filmstrip/slide set.

9. Traditional media

While modern communications techniques can be effective, there are situations where the use of traditional media can have greater impact and be more suitable. Such traditional techniques can include folk songs, local "pop" music, puppet shows, itinerant players - even appropriate slogans on dress materials. While they have the limitations of a restricted audience, traditional media can be used with electronic media, such as puppets on TV programmes, local songs with appropriate messages recorded on commercial records and other combinations.

10. Equipment

The easiest thing for an international organization like UNICEF to do is to provide equipment for PSC. There have been all too many instances in the past where UNICEF has provided equipment without helping the national authorities to ensure that the equipment being provided was the most suitable or that it could be well used and maintained. There has been a common tendency to provide relatively sophisticated equipment, much of which has simply not been put to use. Equipment by itself is not enough - in every case consideration should be given as to how the software can be supplied and arrangements made in the programme to produce or obtain it. Where audio-visual equipment is supplied as part of UNICEF's contribution to a programme, attention should be paid not only to the suitability and cost of the equipment, but also to the respective merits of, say, film as compared with video, colour as against monochrome 16mm film, 16mm versus Super 8mm, film versus sound-slide sets, slides versus filmstrips. Factors related to servicing and maintenance should be considered also, as should easy access to spare parts.

11. Feedback

The importance of maintaining a two-way system of communication cannot be over-emphasized. Effective PSC work is not a one-way process, but should include the generation of "feedback" from the recipients, so that Government planners, officers and UNICEF are kept fully informed of the people's wishes and reactions to the planned changes. This monitoring process, started during the initial communications input, can be undertaken periodically so that once the project has been implemented, interpretation of its continuous feed-back can provide a useful guide to improvement or revision of the project.

Due attention should, therefore, be given to the implementation of an evaluation of the communications package once it has been disseminated, and the results of such a survey conveyed to all Government Departments and others concerned. Such a feed-back will allow them to carry out revisions and other changes.

12. Financing

From 1 January, 1976, all regional field PSC posts should be put on the regular programme support budget, i.e., the Field Office manning table. This includes secretarial support. All expenses, including production incurred for specific projects, should be charged against their respective project codes. (This should be easily done, as all PSC activities are specifically project-oriented) However, there will be occasions when a PSC Officer is asked to survey a situation or to assist in planning a project; in such cases, the travel and related expenses of the PSC Officer should be absorbed by the regular programme support budget.

In addition to field PSC posts, there will be occasions, especially in countries with large projects, when project-level PSC personnel are required. These are, of course, to be charged against projects.

At the moment, UNICEF has filming capacity in New Delhi and Nairobi and has access to such facilities in Bangkok. It is hoped that within the next year or so a minimum amount of basic audio-visual equipment would be added to each of the original PSC posts. This will be limited to equipment for graphic arts, still photography and other simple items, but will not include expensive filming equipment.

13. Summary

Communication methods and channels, properly utilized and particularly in combination, form a media unit which can effectively remove obstacles to project implementation or speed up such work. Experience has shown that a "second thought" or "stop-gap" approach to Project Support Communication can be costly and often unproductive. The introduction of a PSC element from the beginning of project formulation is much more efficient. During the planning stage, selection of teaching aids and production of material as well as media diffusion are elements to be taken into consideration.

One of UNICEF's main inputs in PSC should be to encourage governments to use communication elements more extensively to support projects, and to use the available national resources for this purpose.

It is difficult to make a quick assessment of the effectiveness of PSC, as it takes time to secure the necessary "feedback" and properly evaluate it. This type of operation can seldom be subjected to a simple straightforward cost-benefit analysis. Nevertheless, efforts should be made to document effectiveness carefully to show whether the input was justified.