PROGRAMME SUPPORT COMMUNICATIONS WORKSHOP,
ABIDJAN 17-21 OCTOBER 1983

Communication Factor In Basic Services Development
(Discussion notes by R.R.N. Tuluhungwa,
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1. **The Necessity and Dilemma**

Communication components of development programmes (known as programme support
communication -PSC- in UNICEF) were and still are in many development parlours
the humanists' response to the flaws in development thinking, planning and
implementation. This is so because development is thought to be a monopoly of
economists, engineers, politicians, technicians, etc., who are more concerned
with financial investment returns from the delivery of technologies and
services to people. In most cases this is done without consultation with
those whose lives will be affected. The social infrastructure of such
communities is ignored as unimportant and considered likely to change
positively automatically with injections of new technologies and cash. This
attitude and the accompanied assumptions have led to many expensive failures.
In this scenario, the people, and rightly so, regarded most development
programmes as government programmes as in most cases they ran parallel to the
planners' perceived needs. Hence this conflict of interests led to
non-participation of the people and eventually such programmes failed to meet
their objectives.

In such a scenario communication inputs are approached in a fire-brigade
fashion. Communication Specialists are called in to help when the programme
has already run into problems. At this stage there is neither time nor funds
to gather basic information essential for the PSC inputs. Without this data
what is done is to work on assumption that people are ignorant and therefore
need an A-Z education campaign on the main components of the programme which
may already be in conflict with their interests anyway. Therefore brochures
and a few messages through the mass media are prepared and disseminated. The
impact of such an approach is questionable and not cost-effective.

2. The Basic Services approach focuses on peoples' education, motivation and participation. In practical terms this means that programmes which have direct sociological, economical and educational implications must focus on needs as seen by the people and implemented within the economic, political, and social structure of the communities.

A strong motivation and education component is a must.

3. The PSC Evolution: In the advent of the basic services strategy in 1975 and recently the child survival revolution strategies in UNICEF, PSC has become a critical component of whatever assistance UNICEF seeks (fundraising) or gives (programme co-operation with developing countries).

4. The PSC Definition is not easy to compile in a few words because it is not a linear approach, but a configuration of activities, approaches and techniques. However, PSC, in my eyes, is a process comprising a series of well-defined activities within a programme or project aimed at:-

    (a)   stimulating (community) action and activities through new knowledge and skills acquisition;

    (b)   facilitating positive practices and attitude formation;

    (c)   establishing communication systems amongst sponsors, technical staff and communities in order to optimise actions;

    (d)   strengthen the PSC capacity of governments and NGOs in training and basic services;

    (e)   orientation and mobilisation of the media to support awareness, public education and extension service efforts;

    (f)   assisting communities to express themselves in ways that are familiar and effective;

(g)   making problems and needs of children including
       opportunities for action known to decision—makers,
       institutions, and sponsors;

(h)   production of educational materials in support of
       programmes;

(i)   generating new forms of communication that increase
       efficiency among the parties concerned in development
       programmes;

(j)   establishing both qualitatively and quantitatively
       information base on the communities, the mass media and
       other channels of communication, necessary for the
       formulation, implementation and monitoring of PSC
       components of programmes.

While the concept is not new and many UNICEF—assisted programmes have foreseen
such elements in the past, the strategic importance of PSC as an integral part
of programmes from the problem/situation analysis stage onwards has only
recently gained wide acceptance. The use of PSC to accelerate the
implementation of programmes and the generation of national policies and/or
plans which are conducive to children's development has included the provision
and utilisation of a variety of media, such as posters, leaflets, filmstrips,
puppet shows, films and more recently television circuits including video.
However, now more attention must be paid to the development of strategic PSC ·
elements within the programming processes based on social data and well
defined objectives and actions which can lead to change in knowledge, attitude
and practice.

5.   Basic elements of a PSC strategy integral to programmes include:-

(a)   establishment of an information base on available
       communication technology, resources and services;

(b)   social situation analysis (specification of societal
       values, goals, objectives, etc.);

(c) setting of behavioural/educational objectives;

(d) designing of courses of action to achieve the set objectives;

(e) implementation of the PSC components in accordance with the basic programme schedule. This includes training, supply or production of well planned supportive materials, message design, pretesting, dissemination and monitoring based on parameters set on the basis of activities 5(a), (b) and (c);

(f) evaluation of inputs and outputs.

6. <u>PSC Factor in Community Participation</u> which is or should be viewed as:—

(a) sharing of the benefits of development;

(b) peoples' contribution to the development efforts as equal partners and not merely beneficiaries;

(c) decision-making in development;

(d) some self-reliance, power and independence at community level with an emphasis on the potential of local resources; rural societies have a wealth of knowledge and tradition which should be respected and utilised and not merely tolerated;

(e) integration of traditional and modern systems— so that development becomes a systematisation of old and new ideas— with the exact mixture somewhat different in each locality;

(f) the quality of distribution of information, socio-economic benefits and so forth.

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Critical features or factors of this process may include:-

- level of political or national commitment;
- reflection in national plans of community aspirations and needs;
- extent of decentralisation of responsibilities, power and accountability;
- degree of community capacity to organise own resources;
- sincerity and quality of local leadership.
- extent communication flows from centre to the periphery and vice-versa;
- relevance of community and family life education components of the development programmes;
- extent and involvement of trained and dedicated personnel who are or have to spread into rural areas with maximum catalytic and educational impact.

7. UNICEF's Involvement in PSC in developing countries falls into the following categories:-

(a) Advocacy: more targeted communications to policy and decision-makers, legislators and senior management of mass media systems, in order to influence and facilitate the development of policy/plans which create an environment conducive to the optimal development of the child and to stimulate increased international assistance to programmes benefitting children;

(b) Sensitization of planners, programme managers, and administrators on the role of communication in social and economic development;

(c) Orientation and Training of field workers in communication techniques. Unfortunately, most of the various field (extension) and community workers are not well trained in communication processes and techniques;

(d) <u>Direct Community and Family Life Education</u> aimed at
facilitating the mastery of new skills, knowledge and
providing information on available resources;

(e) <u>Strenthening of National PSC Capacities</u> for training
front-line workers and their trainers, production of
educational materials;

(f) <u>Non-Formal Educational materials for Children</u> e.g. comic
books, puppet-based TV programmes, etc., which play an
important role in positive character and behaviour
formation amongst children;

(g) <u>Provision of Equipment and Supplies</u> is the easiest thing to
do. However, without a systematic PSC strategy, efficient
utilisation of this assistance has not been possible in
most cases, therefore, our experience has been
disappointing. Nevertheless, in the advent of PSC officers
in UNICEF offices and as a result of the PSC training
programmes mentioned earlier, the situation is slowly
improving.

8. <u>The Problems and Constraints</u>

Although UNICEF is described as the contemporary fore-runner in PSC amongst
the U.N. agencies, there are still problems and constraints that need
attention. These originate from the following factors.

(a) <u>Organisation-Wide</u> (from Programme Managers' prespective)

-the idea that communication is a "back-up" secondary
activity that is not essential in the programme dynamics;

-a certain vagueness regarding what communication is and
what it can be used for and by whom;

-lack of well defined social and communication activities
in programmes;

—the feeling that communicators are somewhat like 'service stations' where one goes only when it is absolutely necessary to find the instruments and 'props' to do the communication's work deemed necessary. (Fire brigade approach);

—as a corollary of the preceding point, communicators are involved in projects as little as necessary;

—PSC skills not essential to determining the most appropriate channels for approaching the community if participation is to be the centre of the programme;

—lack of social development skills.

(b) Communicators themselves are the victims of their own prejudices and adoption of contrary attitudes that can be summarised as 'beliefs', such as:—

—communication is everything, and therefore communicators should be involved in everything;

—communication is absolutely basic in to-day's world and consequently projects should essentially be communication—oriented;

—planners are people who know least about social implications of programmes;

—the job of a communicator is merely to identify, specify, and produce instruments;

—no one knows more about participation and involvement than communicators;

—skills in programme formulation are not essential for communicators;

---communicators belong to a profession that should keep its
   identity (and aloofness);

This section gives both positions in an exaggerated manner, but reflects some
of the problems facing PSC.

9. <u>Challenge for the 90's</u>: Child Survival Revolution strategy requires a
comprehensive communication strategy to change attitudes (amongst sponsors,
planners, professionals, etc.) and behaviours (amongst parents and
communities) through sustained education and communication.

This strategy (GOBI-ff/Child Survival Revolution) has moved out of the
laboratory, the clinic and the pilot test stage. If its potential is to be
realised, the conceptual and technological breakthroughs that made it possible
will have to be matched by an equivalent <u>Social breakthrough</u>. This is a
challenge for both programme planners/managers and communicators <u>as</u> key
members of the programming team.

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Notes

Discussion paper by RRN Tuluhungwa, Chief, PSC Service, UNICEF Hq, New York. Defines PSC and places it within the context of development projects and delivery of technical support and equipment.

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