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The project had been launched in 1977 at the initiative of the Ministry of Information as a part of the Government's overall social communications policy. Since independence, the Government of Mozambique gave much importance to information and social communications, a fundamental goal of the country. In the emerging reality of communal villages the liberation of information was occurring.

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SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS PROJECT FOR DEVELOPMENT IN MOZAMBIQUE:

A tentative evaluation

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I. PROJECT. AN OVER-ALL COMMUNICATIONS POLICY AND ITS UNDERLYING PHILOSOPHY

1. An over-all communications policy and its underlying philosophy

The experimental communications project in the communal villages was launched in 1977 on the initiative of the Ministry of Information of Mozambique, as part of the Government's over-all social communications policy. UNICEF has been requested to assist in the implementation of the project.

Attention should be drawn, first, to the importance which the authorities have attached to information and social communications since independence was proclaimed. The basis for an original approach to communications was laid during the war of liberation, when the administration of the liberated areas was being organised. The authorities' interest in information and social communications can be gauged from the fact that two national seminars have been held on the subject, one in Macomia and the other in Maputo, the capital. The latter seminar - known as the first national seminar on information - was held in September 1977. It provides a forum for presentation of the full range of current thinking on the subject and for consideration of the multiplicity of problems encountered. There was discussion of such issues as the various media, plurality of national languages and the need to provide training and further training for journalists and, more generally, communications professionals and popular organisation of communications.

Mozambique's over-all communications and information policy revolves around a fundamental goal. This gives great coherence to the multiplicity of issues raised and provides a very clear frame of reference on the basis of which solutions can be evolved for the tremendous problems which are a legacy of Mozambique's colonial past. These tremendous problems include the following: widespread illiteracy, isolation, scattered population, lack of major road and rail arteries, appalling shortages of cadres, very limited radio coverage, apathy generated by a form of oppression based specifically on the marginalization of the vast majority of the population. The passive resistance which was used against the colonial régime may have adverse effects today, creating a weight of inertia. What is needed is to stimulate initiative and popular participation. The communications policy is intended to parallel the development of Mozambican society and the profound transformation which will result from the great upswing in

Mozambique's economy to be brought about by encouraging the emergence, in all sectors, of self-organisation and self-reliance.

The experimental social communications project in the communal villages must be viewed within the context of this philosophy, according to which information must be intimately bound up with development by encouraging the population to participate consciously in its own development. In his speech at the opening of the first national seminar on information, President Samora Machel sought to define information as "an avant-garde".

Upon returning from the latest UNESCO conference on the New World Information Order, the present Minister of Information, Mr. José Luis Cabaco summed up the deeply original meaning which his country sought to give to the third world's new demand with these striking words: "For us the new world information order begins in the communal villages."

Here lies the crux of the problem. For it is in the emerging reality of these communal villages that the liberation of information is occurring. In order to place this project in its precise setting, it is essential to say a few words about these communal villages.

The communal villages were first conceived as rural population centres; these new types of organisation already represent, in themselves, new forms of communication and a new interrelationship between the various elements of the rural population.

Their origin is varied:

- Settlements created by the war of national liberation in order to protect the population from raids by the Portuguese army.
- Grouping of people who had fled to neighbouring countries and who have now returned to Mozambique.
- Grouping of the population into "strategic villages" (aldeamentos) by the colonial army in order to isolate the peasants and cut them off from contacts with the national liberation movement.
- Forms of spontaneous organisations chosen by peasants who are particularly aware of the advantages of pooling their labour and their resources.
- Finally - and this last category is the largest - grouping, following major natural disasters, particularly the floods of 1976-1977, of people who used to live in widely scattered communities.

There are now approximately 1,050 of these villages, which account for 10 per cent of the 9 or 10 million people living in rural areas (following the 1980 census it will be possible to give more precise figures). It is thought that the number of communal villages will increase during the next few years.

Communal villages combine collective ownership and collective labour on the land (co-operatives) with family ownership and family farming. The communal village is one of the two pillars - or production units - on which the Government's agricultural development policy is based, the other being, the agro-industrial areas where there is a system of State farms. The plan is for workers in these agro-industrial areas also to be organised in communal villages which would be both residential areas and small family farming areas. The agricultural policy provides for these two complementary types of production: State farms, which are geared more towards export and supplying national industry and communal villages, which concentrate more on producing for the domestic market.

These communal villages or production units are administered through a combination of self-management and collective administration methods (popular assemblies, committees and the like).

These forms of self-management of collective interests constitute a link between the communal villages and other initiatives undertaken in the working-class urban districts where this project, in which UNICEF and the Ministry of Information are co-operating, has also been tested.

## 2. The project and its underlying philosophy

According to the plan of operations defining the objectives of the social communications project and the conditions for co-operation between UNICEF and the Government of Mozambique (Ministry of Information), the activities and studies concerning the use of a number of audio-visual media carried out as part of this experimental project should enable the Government to adopt a suitable policy to inform and mobilize the public with a view to development. Such applied research should have the communal village as its setting and should adopt a didactic approach not only to mobilize the population but also to prompt it to participate consciously in its own development.

This experimental social communications project has two main objectives:

- (a) In the near future, to bring advantages and benefits to the rural population and to the organised urban population included in the project; and to present information as a factor of the internal development of each community;

(b) To serve as a laboratory for audio-visual experiments which can help to guide the setting up of a national communications network and help to avoid culture shock which is always possible when technology is introduced without concern for cultural resistance or for the need to smooth the transition from traditional forms of perception to those induced by the world of technology. In short, the detrimental effects of technological aggression within communities must be prevented, and the foundation must be laid for the harmonious introduction of modern elements.

This project thus requires in-depth questioning of the vertical nature of existing models for technological communication; it is directed towards replacing communication provided on behalf of the people by communication provided by the people, for the people. Specifically, it is directed towards preparing programmes based on the specific problems and local needs of the community, towards having such problems and needs expressed by the people concerned, and lastly, towards stimulating thought and the search for collective solutions to these problems and towards prompting the basic organisations to assume responsibility for them.

The Government of Mozambique has deliberately decided to postpone setting up a rigid, heavy centralized system, such as a national television network.

To lay the foundations for a possible decision in favour of a nationwide technological system, the Government is promoting a set of decentralized experiments and is requesting aid from international assistance bodies. The purpose of the experiments made possible by the communications project in the communal villages and organised urban neighbourhoods is to provide the tools needed to implement this possible decision. This policy is also based on the idea that the communication media can play a more important educational role than actual formal education.

These experiments explicitly have a twofold teaching aim:

(a) Work with the different institutions on the basis of the needs of each community, not on the basis of assistance - giving structures. It is known that the weighty State apparatus inherited from colonial times, which is characterized by the compartmentalization of tasks, by "departmentalism", hinders co-ordination between the various institutions - health, education, transport, and the like - which deal with the community. It is also known that the different ministries have varying degrees of awareness about the need to include an information strategy in their community approach strategy. From this standpoint, the population can no longer be viewed as the beneficiary of a communication, health or education policy, but is seen as a participant in the formulation of such a policy.

This project may actually prompt institutions to step up their search for a method of approach, a language, a means of communication with the community, based on the specific needs of the population. This is not an easy task. This search for a connexion between the grass roots and the ministerial superstructure consistent with the concept of true popular participation is not without conflict, differences of opinion and problems of timing.

(b) Introduction of technology, which requires literacy in the usual sense of the word and also, because of the nature of the new media being introduced, literacy in the sense of electronic images and sound.

First of all, such literacy requires that the population should have a command of its local language and of Portuguese. It requires constant research, coding and systematizing of the data collected (for example, there arises the difficulty of translating into the local languages concepts relating both to the new organisation and to the new references being introduced).

Literacy as regards images requires that the audio-visual material produced should be directed towards teaching the population the language of such images. Clearly, this apprenticeship must be coupled with research, which takes into account the community's reaction and receptiveness, records them and derives from them theories which can serve as tools in other experiments, in other communities.

Naturally, this experiment in the introduction of technology assumes that the traditional forms of communication (songs, dance, oral forms) and the unsophisticated written forms like the wall newspapers which have been encouraged since 1975 will not be supplanted.

This teaching effort requires an understanding of the community, both local and national. In fact, to acquire this understanding is the first task of those organising these communication centres, a longer and more important task than one might suppose. The understanding of the community is the first step towards making the people aware of reality, and the first subject of the message which will be disseminated.

## II. PROJECT STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION

To accomplish its basic objectives, the project has set up two complementary operational frameworks: a production and training centre run by two expatriates and a team of Mozambicans, and village units established in five different provinces.

### 1. The production and training centre

The premises used for the project seem for the time being to be adequate and appropriate for the centre's current activities. Space and acoustical problems may arise later, when high-quality recordings or sound editing will be required. At that point, perhaps, existing radio or future television stations will have to be used.

Currently, the centre contains:

- A darkroom entirely equipped by UNICEF with extremely modern shooting, developing, printing and drying equipment;
- A video unit consisting of two colour taping and printing machines, two black-and-white receivers and two black-and-white cameras;
- A fairly large supply of tapes, cassettes, films, photographic paper, etc.

### 2. Film screenings

During the preparatory stage, the project made intensive use of films to mobilize and inform the village population. Film screenings are continuing as a means of supporting the programmes of the information units (loudspeakers). The problem now is to find films on the subjects dealt with in the programmes, since the films made by specialized international agencies are not always designed for education in rural areas. Often these are information films portraying isolated experiences or informing specific audiences about developments in the field. Together with the cinema institute, the project manager could make some films specifically geared to the country's development problems. For example, one might consider making a film about the communal villages, showing the role which the social communication project could play in motivating them.

### 3. Poster production

The centre has attempted to produce posters by reproducing certain photographs connected with educational themes. Short messages were then hand-written below the photos. This type of poster production has a high unit cost in comparison with other methods. It cannot really be justified except in the project's initial stage, involving only a few communal villages for which mass production is not justified. Serigraphy, for example, could be tried; it has the advantage of being cheaper and faster and is already used in some educational sectors, such as the communications studies centre connected with the university.

### 4. Village production units and the use of loudspeaker systems

From the technical point of view, each unit is composed of a 220-volt generator, a 120-watt amplifier, a receiver, a tape recorder and a record player. Community leaders in each village have been trained to operate the units by broadcasting a programme of music, news, announcements of various



kinds and special reports on the various activities of the village. The programme is broadcast every day except Sunday, from 4 a.m. to 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

By means of this decentralized kind of production and direct broadcasting of messages, the project aims to give the rural population the opportunity not only to discuss what those in the city suggest but also to choose their own topics for discussion. Such an approach obviously creates a certain number of problems of a sociological kind: for example, the relationship between the technical unit as an imported novelty and certain existing social and cultural facts, or the relationship between the kind of teaching approach generally imposed by the media and the patterns of expression and reference common to the people. There is also the question whether the equipment can be adapted to local climatic conditions. Detailed observations and studies must be undertaken which will give the promoters of the project some idea of how to improve the information and communications programmes overall.

#### 5. Setting up the structures

The project evolved in three different stages:

- An initial period of personnel selection and recruitment. This period allowed the promoters of the project to participate in the work of mobilizing and organising the villagers;
- A second period of instructing the personnel in the use of the technical equipment and in the installation of some of that equipment in the villages;
- A third period during which, after community leadership groups had been formed, the loudspeaker system actually began functioning. Because of the delay in obtaining some equipment, the project could not really get under way until September 1979.

#### 6. Two main problems

After having been in actual operation for a year, the project in its present stage is beset by two main problems:

- (a) A problem of a technical nature stemming from the choice of equipment and its maintenance.

It was found, when the Danish co-operation official (Mr. Erling) arrived, that some of the amplifiers set up in villages were out of order. The amplifiers chosen were not of a kind to sustain prolonged use at maximum power output. For that reason, after having repaired them, the technician fitted them out with a kind of warning system and a system for measuring their power output during use. A problem arose, in addition, with regard to spare parts, especially as each village had only one element of the whole unit. This makes it necessary to interrupt the whole system in the event of a breakdown.

As currently designed, the technical units installed in the villages could operate more effectively if their decentralized character had been well defined and geared to the objectives sought.

(b) The second problem is one of method. It involves the whole process of gathering and analysing topics and news items to be made into educational messages suited to the kind of media available. In Mozambique, all efforts are focused on setting up community groups based on democratic and popular principles. Such a procedure requires the use of so-called group or mass techniques. Certain leaders, for example, can be targeted in well-conceived programmes to be discussed by appointed or elected representatives before they are made available to the population as a whole. At this stage, the project can try out other kinds of expression or message transmission, such as discussion groups, popular theatre, flannelgraphs or magic lanterns.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. The use of loudspeakers

The three experts came to Mozambique with a prejudice against loudspeakers, based on past hearsay and experience. But their contact with the project made them change their position. It seems that, in a community that is truly governed by grassroots organisations, the loudspeaker is merely the technical conveyor of the news made by the people and rendered newsworthy by the local leaders. The vertical dimension inherent in the nature of the medium and its accompanying image seems to be to a large extent offset, if not eliminated, by the close control which the people exercise over the messages broadcast. In this connexion, the various sectors of the population must be made to participate more actively in producing the messages. The loudspeakers are also offset by other audio and audiovisual messages, by nature less vertical that are utilized in the community. It would nevertheless be worth making a medium-term or long-term evaluation of the specific effects of the use of this kind of technology in comparison with other kinds and other forms of non-technological communication.

#### 2. The need for co-ordination

In many cases, a project such as this one is set up to extend and consolidate the effects of the various programmes in specialized sectors. The technical sectors are inclined to have their own teaching methods and sometimes even their own education or communication structures geared to their clientele. It is not always an automatic reaction for technicians to draw on the structures designed to foster national development along educational and democratic lines. It is only once their own structures reach the point where they function ineffectively or not at all that they turn to educational experts in communication or mass education systems.

The social communications project was conceived and set up in Mozambique, from the outset, ostensibly to avoid such a situation. But what appears to be happening is that by its dynamism the project is far in advance of other structures, some of which are still in the embryonic stage.

The need is now felt, consequently, for a system of co-ordination for which the Ministry of Information could be directly responsible. In collaboration with all the specialized sectors which have direct contact with the people. It will be the task of the members of this co-ordinating agency, operating at the horizontal level, to evaluate the over-all situation in the rural areas; to analyse the social, structural and cultural problems connected with the project; to determine what subjects should have priority each year and see to it that they are properly programmed, in consultation with the villagers or their representatives. Problems of co-ordination among the ministries often result in overwork and excessive responsibilities for the team in charge of the project.

3. An in-depth evaluation of the social communications project should be made in the communal villages by inviting a consultant for a two or three month period during 1981 to organise systematically the observations, surveys and experiments made by the project team, with a view to applying the results to elaborate a plan for basic and advanced training of professionals under the project.

4. The same consultant could, working together with the Ministry of Information and UNICEF, lay the groundwork for an interagency and interdisciplinary meeting before the end of 1981 or at the beginning of 1982, so as to make the most of the results of the over-all project.

5. In addition to this consultant, the project should make provision for a total of 4 months of consultants' services during 1981 touching upon possibly two or three different disciplines in the fields of linguistics, educational theory, economic management or communications sciences. The experts involved should bring their technical expertise to bear in evaluating the programmes within their field of specialization and should, above all, make suggestions for producing new audio-visual and written programmes.

6. Periods of intensive and specialized on-the-spot training should be organised for the benefit of project personnel, in the various media and institutions with which they must work, before any consideration is given to training abroad.

7. All the necessary steps should be taken to guarantee the continuity of the training of the national counterpart personnel, and more especially of the Mozambican who will in the future be responsible for the project.

8. Given the absence of specialized professionals in the audio-visual field in Mozambique, it would be advisable eventually to delegate the responsibility for basic training to other ad hoc institutions, so that the members of the specialized team can work at their fullest capacity. That does not seem advisable in the short term because of the need to maintain the cohesiveness of the team and its strong spirit of solidarity.