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Speaks about basic operational definitions of communications; community participation in developemnt; communications in development; the mass media; mass media and social change; new conceptions of developmen communication; gives advice on how developing countries could make use of traditional media to further development.

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DEVELOPMENT, WOMAN AND CHILD WELFARE SEMINAR, DACCA, 5 - 7 MARCH 1980

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES - Dream and Reality

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1.   Basic Operational Definitions

1.1   Communication, broadly speaking, is the process through which human beings share
information, knowledge, experience, ideas, skills, motivations and aspirations.
It is necessary to state this obvious fact because too many people concerned
with development work still tend to think that they are talking about communi-
cation when, in fact, they are restricting themselves to communication aids,
such as posters, billboards, one way radio or TV programme etc. K.E. Eapen of
Bangalore University sums it up nicely: "A basic misconception of thinking of
communication and change ... is the lack of understanding of communication as a
social (change) process and (thus) mistaking it for transmission towers,
documentary films, one way lectures etc." The message is the mainstay of
communication and the principle communication channels include -

postal services - telecommunications - radio - Television-satellite -
computer telecommunication linkup and data banks - libraries and
documentation centres - press - films and movies - other audio-visuals -
popular culture - organised interpersonal communication - metereological
communication - commercial and trade communication - advertising -
administrative and security communication services.

Therefore, communication has social, economic and political functions, and these
functions are interrelated in any socio-economic and political situations.

1.2   Development has two interrelated but analytically separate lines of definition:-

a)   development is concerned with increased production of material goods and
services. This is a notion of development as 'economic growth', where
the focus is largely on quantitative problems of the production and
use of resources;

b)   development is concerned with change in the distribution of material
goods and in the nature of social relations. This is the notion of
'social development', where the focus is qualitative and distributional
changes in structure of societies through elimination of discrimination
and structurally determined exploitation; the creation and assurance of
equal opportunities and more equitable distribution of benefits of
economic growth among the people who create this growth.

(c) political
The balance between the two processes will determine the development goal.
Both process call for a well determined peoples participation.

[handwritten margin notes: - Big investment / H2O + Milk / - coverage / - quality / - cost / important]

[handwritten notes at bottom: - Slow and painful - human beings / process - Minimum needs]

.../2

1.3 <u>Popular Community Participation in development</u> is viewed as a) mass sharing of the benefits of development b) peoples contribution to the development of efforts and c) decision making in development d) self-reliance and independence at community level with an emphasis upon the potential of local resources: rural societies have a wealth of knowledge and tradition which should be respected and utilised e) integration of traditional and modern systems, so that modernisation is a systemetization of old and new ideas, with the exact mixture somewhat different in each locale f) the quality of distribution of information, socio-economic benefits and so forth.

Therefore, participation leads to self-development accompanied by the decentralisation of certain aspects of planning and execution to the village level.

These conceptions of development can be summarised by defining development as a widely participatory process of social change in a society, intended to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom and other valued qualities) for the majority of the people through their gaining greater control over their environment.

2. <u>Communication in Development</u>

The most influential book about communication and development is probably Wilbur Schramm's <u>Mass Media and National Development</u>. When it appeared in 1964, social scientists and communicators thought that they understood the nature of development and the role of communication in development. The issuing decade and a half show us that the conception of development was rather limited and perhaps not entirely correct. In the old paradigm of development Governments were expected to provide for the people and development was planned centrally to prosper on an expensive cash economy infrastructure in which people were really <u>involved.</u> Decisions were imposed on the people through local councils and through self-help schemes and projects.

2.1 <u>The Mass Media Magic</u>

Previously mass media communication had been considered to play an important role in development, especially in conveying informative and persuasive messages from Government to the public in a downward, hierarchical way. It was thought to be a very powerful and direct force for development. Certainly, the media were expanding during the 1950s and 1960s. Literacy was becoming more widespread in most developing countries, leading to greater print mediaexposure. Transistor radios were penetrating every village. Hence a predominantly one way flow of information from Government development sectors (ministries and agencies) to the people. Mass media seemed ideally suited to this role. They could rapidly reach large audiences with informative and persuasive messages about details of pre-determined development. Thus the relative power of the mass media in development was mainly assumed rather than proven.

In the last decade research findings indicate that the role of mass communication in facilitating development <u>has been often indirect and only contributory</u>, rather than direct and powerful. But this varied upon such circumstances as the media

message, the audience, and the nature of the intended effects. In the 1970s a number of critical evaluations were made. Some scholars, especially in Latin America, perceived the mass media in their nations as an extension of exploitive relationships with US-based multinational corporations, especially through advertising of commercial products, and questioned elite ownership of the mass media institutions. The 1965-1975 decade saw rising of dictatorships in Latin America, Africa and Asia and these Governments stressed the media's propaganda role, decreasing the public's trust in mass communication.

2.2 Mass Media and Social Change

In the last decade communication researchers have questioned the efficiency and performance of some of their previous assumptions and have become especially critical of the earlier inattention to:

a) The design and content of mass media.
b) The need for social-structural changes in addition to communication if development is to occur.
c) The shortcomings of the classical diffusion of innovations view points which had become an important explanation of micro-level development.

2.3 Newer Conceptions of Development Communication

2.3.1 The self-development principle is fully explained in the quotation from President J.K. Nyemere's book "Freedom and Development", which reads, " ... But people cannot be developed, they can only develop themselved ...... man develops himself by what he does ... by making his own decisions ... by increasing his understanding of what he is doing and why! ... by increasing his knowledge and ability and by his full participation -- as an equal in the life of the community he lives in ... to live is to learn, and to learn is to try to live better."

Naturally, self-development implies a completely different role for communication than in the usual top-down development approach of the past. Technical information about development problems and possibilities and about appropriate innovation is sought by local systems from the central government, so that the role of government development agencies is mainly to communicate in answer to these locally initiated requests rather than the top down design and content of most communication campaigns.

Therefore, in recent years several nations (examples are the People's Republic of China, Tanzania, the Republic of Korea, Ethiopea and Taiwan) have recognised the importance of self-development at the village and urban neighbourhood levels. In this approach some type of small group at the local level (e.g. mothers clubs in Korea, farmer's associations in Taiwan and radio listening groups in Ujamaa villages in Tanzania, communes or work brigades in China and Mozambique, peasants associations in Ethiopea etc.) takes primary responsibility :

a) for deciding exactly what type of development is most needed in the village or neighbourhood;
b) for planning how to achieve this development goal;
c) for obtaining whatever government or non-government resources may be necessary;
d) for implementing these activities.

The advantages of this approach are that (i) the rate of accomplishment is higher than in the case of top-down development by the government (ii) the cost to Government, which often lacks sufficient resources in most poor countries, is much less and more likely to be affordable (iii) the nature of development activities is more feasible and more appropriate to changing local needs.

The main roles of mass communication in self-development may be summarized as : (a) providing technical information about development problems, and about appropriate innovations, in answer to local requests (b) circulating information about the self-development accomplishments of local groups so that other such groups may profit from others' experience and perhaps be challenged to achieve a similar performance.

This communication function is illustrated in the radio listening groups campaigns for public health and for food/agriculture that were conducted in Tanzania in the last decade -- 'see supplementary paper titled', "Communication in Tanzania Development".

2.3.2 The Communication Effects Gap

The unfortunate consequence of communication in developing countries is assisting to widen the gap in knowledge between two categories of receivers, namely high and low in Socio-economic status. The radio and TV systems favour those who can afford them and the energy (batteries) required to sustain their continual use. Programmes and messages developed by the educated elite are usually geared to the middle and upper classes of the nation. The poor socio-economic communities have no say or feed back system on these capital city generated messages.

To deal with this serious consequetial gap the following communication strategies might be considered in a developing nation:

a- use the traditional mass media as credible channels to reach the most disadvantaged audiences;
b- identify the opinion leaders among the disadvantaged segments of the total audience, and concentrate development and communication efforts on them;
c- use change agent aides who are selected from among the disadvantaged to work for development agencies in contacting and educating their homophilous peers;
d- provide means for motivation and education to the disadvantaged audience to enable them to participate in the planning and execution of their development priorities;
e- produce and disseminate communication messages that are redundant to the middle and upper classes because of their ceiling effect, but which are of need and interest to the downs.

2.3.3 New Communication Technology and Approaches

(a) What is the potential of new communication technology, such as satellite broadcasting, television and computers for facilitating the process of development in the developing countries? Because of cost involved it will probably be fairly limited for some time to come.

The effectiveness of these technologies will solely depend on the social technology of how the new communication devices are organised and used. Much of the total effect of communication system rests on a well designed participatory communication strategy, software aspects and on how the audience is organised to receive and discuss the messages and how the feedback is conveyed to and utilised by the communicators at all levels including the villagers.

(b) Community based media: The active involvement of the community in the communication strategy design, production, pre-testing, monitoring and evaluation of the effects is an essential component of development communication. Community based media enhances the inter-active relationship between the communication systems envisaged and the village community systems involved. The specific features of other approaches are:
- all media programming is based on the needs and intents of the community;
- involvement of the non-professional in the production, that is the villagers will have a major part to play in the productions;
- there is an active relationship between the communicators and villagers during the utilisation of messages and their aids after their production.

This approach will:

- provide alternative information and education to that distributed by traditional mass media programmes;
- enable villagers and individuals to persue subjects to the level which suits their needs and level of technology:
- provide a means of communication and a flow of information tuned and tailored to community needs as circumstances require;
- create and enhance a flow of communication, in the form of dialogue vertically between those who have information and those who need it and between those who make the decisions and the people affected by them;
- enable groups to communicate with others at their own level horizontally, so that experience gained by one group can be available to another.

- Energy Sources / Sturdy models / trigger screens for village TV monitors

3. Applied Communication Research

Media and Social Communication institutions tend to side with the 'establishment' in the industrialised countries; hence the content of most mass media messages is seldom designed to radically alter the existing social behaviour or structure in a society. Therefore, there is a need to allocate resources to field communication research designs which enable a developing country identify relevant communication systems suitable for the needs of its citizens. Criteria and effectiveness of the various media must be established . How suitable are

posters and other printed matter in populations which are either completely
illiterate or functionally unfamiliar with the written word?

4. Training and Orientation Needs

4.1 Development Policy Planners as part of their deployment articulate development
policies which include all sectoral goals and analyse investments possibilities,
feasibility and assess the returns and factual investment. Unfortunately, there
is a global pausity in their familiarity and understanding of the role and power
of communication in development.

Therefore, they need a good introduction to social change and communication
theories, models of diffusion of information to local levels, media alternatives
and their comparative uses and in the use of communication technology for
development.

4.2 Media Policy Developers should work with officials in each sector to help them use
media effectively and to formulate a sectoral media policy.

They need through training in integrated development planning methods , principles
of institutional development: participation strategies in development planning,
communication and social change theories, large systems planning and management.

4.3 Message Designers should understand how to carry the development planner's
message to the villagers and vice versa. They should be able to interprete
evaluation data and use it to design an instructual programme appropriate to the
medium being used. This group includes various descriptions of field workers,
information and press officers, communicators, public relations officers, adver-
tisers etc.

There is a need for thorough training in curriculum design based on audience needs,
social change and communication theory and practice, learning theory, education
systems -- formal and non-formal, community participation, simple research and
evaluation techniques.

5. The Press and Social Change

Recently there has been a serious discussion on how the press in developing
countries can be a medium of change. To this effect courses in development
journalism have been founded in several countries. The press has a tremendous
role in:

Investigative reporting could also be developmental.

- advocacy work amongst national policy makers and villagers on
   development issues;
- disseminating ideas and research findings on development in
   a readable form;
- monitoring and evaluation of the consequences of developmental
   innovations in villages;
- writing materials for enhancing and strengthening newly acquired
   numeracy and literacy skills.
- *motivation*

dialogue closeness between govt/people /people systems

In these efforts a partnership relationship and strategy between the press
corps, the villagers and the sectoral personnel must be designed.

- dialogue on development issues.
- credibility gaps.

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