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The paper outlines the history and development until then of UNICEF's PSC work, and its role in supporting the implementation of assistance programmes.

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GLOBAL INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONFERENCE

21 - 25 June 1980

Project Support Communications Service

Achievements, Problems and Perspectives

1. CONCEPT

The concept of PSC combines processes and techniques whose goal is to enable planners, technicians, implementers and communities to:-

- (a) Incorporate educational, social and psychological aspects/components into programmes benefitting children, so that behavioural change and some sort of self-reliance are facilitated by utilisation of both modern and popular cultural media.
- (b) Develop, produce, utilise and evaluate integrated programme support communications.
- (c) Assist project staff and members of the communities to "communicate" on the same wave-length so that both participate fully in the service and development programmes.
- (d) Sensitize Governments in developing countries to the problems and needs of children.
- (e) Assist Governments develop community-based media to promote and sustain community participation.
- (f) Improve programme communication and information systems and linkages.

2. HISTORY AND ACHIEVEMENTS

(a) Staff

The first field regional PSC service was established in India (New Delhi Office) in 1972 followed by Beirut in 1973, Nairobi and New York in 1974, Bangkok and Lima (Area Office) in 1975, Abidjan in 1980. Currently, there are 17 PSC Officers both internationally or locally recruited National Officers in the field offices and one at Headquarters in New York.

PSC has grown and will continue to do so in future in light of the current thrust of UNICEF's policy (basic services incorporating PHC through community participation). This policy calls for a strong emphasis on and institutionalisation of PSC, effective advocacy, motivation, exchange of vital information and co-ordination, all of which depend on good communication systems. These developments are taking place at a time when the interest of the other U.N. agencies in social communication seems, on the whole, to be stagnating or even slackening. This is not and should not be the case for UNICEF with its decentralised and project oriented approach.

(b) Progress and Trends

Over the last eight years the PSC and, in some offices, programme staff, have focused on:-

- PSC for PSC amongst UNICEF staff, NGOs and other agencies. There is a varying degree of the understanding and practice of PSC in UNICEF.
- The building up and improvement of national PSC capabilities particularly in the area of training of field workers in communication techniques, and senior Government officials in communication planning.
- Production and pretesting of project oriented PSC materials.
- Applied research in the best ways of improving the linkages between communities and the extension service staff.

(c) The State of the Art

PSC is a process within planning, programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation cycles to lead to or facilitate behavioural change. It is a programming matter. At each stage of the process there are a variety of communication issues which need to be considered. Social aspects and communication issues are among the most important components. Therefore, it is an integral part of the programming process emphasising the social aspects which will lead to behavioural change within the target groups.

In short, this process of developing PSC follows this series of steps:

- Specifications of societal values, goals, objectives in relation to the anticipated interventions.
- Analysis of programme objectives for communication components.
- Identification and analysis of communication technology, resources and services.
- Identification and analysis of target groups.
- Setting of behavioural objectives for each group.
- Designing activities to achieve behavioural objectives.
- Specifications of budgetary needs.
- Design, production and distribution of media to support the activities.
- Monitoring and evaluation of PSC activities, vis-a-vis the programme process.

By following this process, it is possible to nudge PSC away from the piece-meal approach - if it is nutrition, let's make a poster, or the slide set for latrines, or one short radio programme on diarrhoea syndrome. These are fire-brigade approaches - remembered after something has already started to go wrong or when the intervention does not appear to have an impact on the communities, policy makers, politicians, etc.

Hence, in order to institute PSC services, the duties and responsibilities of the PSC staff in the field evolve around the following activities depending on requirements of the assisted programme and government.

- Advising and assisting Governments and programme officers in the field of pre-operational appraisal, formulation, implementation and evaluation of the communication sectors of the assisted programmes. Participation in programme previews and reviews is essential.
- Advising assisted Governments and sectoral ministries on appropriate technology development and utilization for social communications.
- Assisting Governments in the training of front-line workers in the theory and practice of communication for social development.

- In collaboration with programme staff and in concert with the Supply Division, supervising the administrative details including specifications and follow-up of communication equipment.
- Carrying out the production of proto-type communication materials.
- Designing and supervising the production of materials to help programme staff explain new trends in UNICEF policy, problems and needs of children to Governments in developing countries.
- In collaboration with programme officers, co-ordinating PSC activities, including the administration of the budget allocated to PSC components in the programmes.
- Helping to identify and supervise outside expertise and resources for communication productions.
- Developing programmes for testing of field-level communication equipment and materials.
- Assisting periodically other regions and Headquarters in PSC work.
- Disseminating communication research findings and new trends in PSC to programme staff and Governments in the region or country.

3. Problems and Issues

(a) Collaboration with multi and bilateral Agencies

On the whole, the interest of other U.N. Agencies in PSC seems to have been stagnating or even slackening. For example:-

- UNDP has almost curtailed its operational status of the Bangkok DSCS Unit and no longer has a DSC Officer at Headquarters.
- FAO's DSCS in Rome continues to have a limited field involvement and production of materials is mostly centralised at Headquarters.
- WHO's health education service based in Geneva is small and Regional Health and Information Offices are understaffed and may not have programming responsibilities.

- In UNESCO only the population communication programme, funded by UNFPA, represents an area for field collaboration that seems to be on the upswing, particularly in Eastern Africa and South America.
- SIDA is funding a communication and information adviser for the Ministry of Health in Kenya through UNICEF.
- HABITAT/UNEP is focussing on the production and distribution of films on environment and human settlements.
- FORD FOUNDATION is curtailing its involvement in population communication by the end of the year.
- WORLD BANK - over the last few years has moved into social communication.
- USAID has provided scholarships for persons from developing countries to study population communication in the U.S.A. and through the University of Chicago in 1978 collaborated with UNICEF Nairobi in sponsoring a 9 week communication training programme in Nairobi.
- Governments have established communication production units on a sectoral basis. They are staffed by technicians and not communications planners.

(b) UNICEF

(i) Awareness

Unfortunately, up to now the PSC element is relatively neglected in many UNICEF assisted projects and programmes. Attempts to remedy this situation are often one shot and isolated affairs. For instance, an expensive film may be made in the hope of saving the day when no previous attention has been paid to incorporate the communication components into the programme itself.

However, as the complexities of social development, basic services through participation, PHC, etc. get better understood in UNICEF, the more the role of PSC is appreciated. There is still a long way to go before PSC is internally institutionalised and integrated within UNICEF.

(ii) Staffing

The original concept of associating PSC with only

teaching aids has changed substantially to programming, management, research responsibilities, etc., but unfortunately, the grading of posts did remain static. Hence, it is increasingly difficult to recruit the right persons with relevant academic background and social development and communication experience in developing countries at the levels that UNICEF is offering. We are competing with other better paying organisations for a limited supply.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

(a) Training

As it is difficult to find in one person all the qualities necessary for PSC work, systematic training and orientation programmes are recommended for UNICEF personnel. The following are our priority categories.

Programme Officers

1. To be able to understand the concept and function of communication in development areas and society and to apply this in relation to UNICEF-assisted interventions.
2. To be able to understand the role of communication in the process of social change and to apply this to UNICEF-assisted interventions.
3. To understand and be able to programme communication to achieve behavioural objectives of target groups within UNICEF-assisted programmes and projects.
4. To be able to identify the availability of local and international resources for support communication purposes.
5. To develop an advocacy plan.

Support Communication and Information Officers

1. To be able to understand, recall and apply development issues to the concepts of social planning.
2. To be able to programme for UNICEF-assisted efforts.
3. To be able to understand the development process and the function of communication in society and to apply this in relation to UNICEF-assisted interventions.

4. To be able to understand the role of communication in the process of social change and to apply this to UNICEF-assisted interventions.
5. To understand and be able to plan methodologies and techniques of communication to achieve behavioural objectives of target groups within UNICEF-assisted programmes and projects.
6. To understand programme evaluation and review techniques.
7. To acquire management skills.

(b) Review of PSC Function and Grading

The original concept of PSC has undergone a metamorphosis over the last three years and a PSC Officer is no longer an audio-visual aids technician but a Programme Officer in its classical sense with social communication planning and production skills. Therefore, PSC staff need comparable remuneration and contractual status. The persons we are looking for have a higher rating in other agencies and institutions of higher learning.

To minimize over-sectoralisation the placement of the PSC Service in big offices should be at a level in the organisational chart which will enable it to co-ordinate PSC plans and implementation strategies.

(c) PSC Advisory Services

Requests for advisory and training services from the Headquarter PSC Section have more than tripled over the last twelve months and will continue to do so in future. Currently the job holder is travelling to the field at an average of two weeks per month. The Unit needs strengthening in terms of human resources and seed money for non-specific country or regional PSC activities.

(d) PSC at Country Level: Perspectives

The 1980 Executive Board* concluded discussions on regional programme trends by "emphasizing that PSC should focus more on increasing countries' capacity for training front-line workers and their trainers in applied social communication; assisting planners and policy makers in incorporating PSC into their work; designing advocacy

* E/ICEF/CRP/80-36

materials for explaining children's problems and new programme trends; and improving vertical and lateral communication, especially the linkages between project personnel and the communities in assisted projects." This conclusion recognises the importance of PSC and confirms an operational authority.

A big share of UNICEF assistance is spent on cash grants for extension workers training and orientation programmes. These workers are key development agents. Unfortunately, few extension workers have had specific training in the art of communication as such, however well-versed they may be in their respective technical fields. If the new community-based approach to development is to succeed, there must be a deliberate effort to ensure that extension cadres are trained in the theory and practice of interpersonal and group communication, in the use and development of simple communication aids and the like. This is an investment that UNICEF can make.

R.R.N. Tuluhungwa
New York
20 June 1980