

THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION MEDIA IN THE SPHERES OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

The tribal watchman sits crosslegged on a high rock gazing over the horizon. His attention is fixed on dark rings of smoke rising in a regular pattern from the opposite hill. The smoke rings convey a meaning to him, which he quickly carries to his tribal chief. The tribal council is hurriedly convened, discussions take place and decisions for action are taken. Within minutes the whole tribe is alert to the situation and is ready for action; communication of the oldest order is taking place.

From the very inception of life on this planet, even among the lower animals and insects, various means of communication, some very complicated and unique, prevail. Notably among them is the 'dance' of the worker bee, performed to give details of a new source of nectar to the other worker bees. However, for all its uniqueness, the modern bee's dance is the same 'number eight' which its ancestors performed hundreds of years ago. It has not changed nor improved. This is because, animal communication is born of instinct and not intelligence and is only a means of survival of the species.

In contrast, human communication which started with signs and signals, as with lower animals has developed with the expansion of man's knowledge and intelligence. In the distant past, human communication was limited to direct contact between individuals and between groups of people who were associated daily in small geographical areas, limited by the distance one could walk during a short space of time. Smoke signals, drum beats, messengers or runners, — for instance, extended man's horizons considerably. However, until recently, for a majority of people, the world was the village they were born in, where they lived and where they died. Their future was carved out for them by their immediate experiences in the community and what was transmitted to them by their elders, by word of mouth and by demonstration. The gradual development of languages paved the way for the expansion of communication, while the invention of the wheel, with the resultant development of roads was a major breakthrough in broadening the horizons of the people. More recently, the steam engine, the motor car and the aeroplane have greatly widened man's range of direct experience. Much more profound

have been the dramatic effects of the printed word, the motion picture, the radio and now television, which are major milestones along the roadway to modern communication.

Though modern technology has opened new vistas in the realms of communication, if we look closely we could see less differences between the early and the late patterns of communication.

In a primitive tribe it was the watchman who would scan the horizon and report back, but today this same function is performed by a mass of reporters, foreign correspondents, news agents, editors, etc.

It was the tribal chief of old with his counsel of elders who acted on information received and decided what the tribe should do. Modern society has legally constituted bodies like boards, corporations and governments to carry out this function.

The runners of ancient Greece, the King's drummers of ancient Sri Lanka, the carrier pigeons of a number of countries were charged with the responsibility of carrying messages and information, making announcements and proclamations and spreading news. Today the buzzing of telephones, the blaring of radios and loudspeakers, the headlines in the newspapers and the transmission of messages and pictures from satellites, all carry out this same function.

The teaching of new skills and the socialisation of new members of society was another important communication function that has come down the ages. The tribal children learnt at the parent's knee. The village 'guru' or priest in the temple handed down knowledge to the children. Today this same function is carried out by schools, text books, film, radio, television etc.

Therefore, it is seen that the functions or roles of communication through the ages have been the same and that they have varied only in degree and not in kind. In modern society, communication is faster more complex, more extensive but it essentially performs the same functions as of old.

If the functions of communication had changed only in degree and not in kind, it would be pertinent to say that communication generally answers the same needs in all societies, — Ancient or Modern. We could also surmise that the development of the communication network in a country runs parallel to the development of other institutions of modernisation in that country, — like schools, roads, industries, etc. These in turn are closely related to indices of social and economic growth, like per capita income and literacy. We will also see that when these indices of general socio-economic growth are high, the circulation of newspapers, the number of radio receivers and therefore the flow of information through the country is also high. Thus the size of the communication activity, i.e., the development of mass media, the shift from individual communication of traditional societies to organised communication, the expansion of communication networks, all reflect the economic development of a country.

When shifting our attention from society as a whole to the individual, we see that man's image of his environment is shaped by his experience and his experience can be greatly widened and even altered by communication.

It is the radical alteration of the perception of the average man that has brought and is bringing about great upheavels in the socio-economic and political structures of the third world countries.

As the development of modern communication runs parallel to the development of other modern institutions, it is subject to most of the problems faced by other growing institutions. This is more so in the developing countries, burdened with illiteracy, rural backwardness coupled with people's fatalism and counter productive customs and social patterns, poor transportations and above all, low income levels.

However, against all the odds, the developing countries (or their leaders) have striven hard, during the last decade or so to bring about economic development. It is the vastly extended mass communication media that has made people aware of the gap between developed and the underdeveloped countries of the world. The end of colonialism and the emergence of new states also gave the people of less developed countries a chance to do something about their economic situation. Whatever, the causes of this awakening, the less developed countries are striving hard to attain economic stability during a short space of time and communication media, especially the mass media have been put to widespread use. Radio has been used by charismatic national leaders to implant the ideas of "nationhood" and to raise the aspirations of the people. In the developing world the press has to play the dual roles of critic and nation builder. In some countries the radio and the press have been taken by government to use them as aids to nation building.

However, when reflecting back over the past decade or so, this process which, as Learner¹ has said has been characterised as a "Revolution of Rising Expectations" has in actual fact not come up to expectations. The implicit view held by most planners and policy makers about the operation of mass media can be labelled as "disappointment". It is felt that mass media are ineffective agents of action.

Though leaders and planners have become disillusioned about the power of the media in their own hands to enjender desired actions, communication media per se cannot be blamed. If the various communication media are used 'piece-meal' by various institutions having the same goal of national development in mind, but without due consideration to each others strategies and without any coordination the result would be far from expectations. Under this hapazard approach, each specialised agency or institution, whether it be national or international, will pursue its own narrow objectives and its own independent course of action, with little, if any attention to whether it harmonises with complementary objective of other agencies. But investigations² have revealed that mass media alone, unlinked with other means of communication and without other support and services, while creating interests and desires may not generate action. Research³ has shown that the press and the radio can have a profound influence in changing the lives of people, only if they are fully supported, by the more informal channels of communication.

Therefore, in the context of agricultural and rural development, if programmes are well thought out and planned as 'integrated' development programmes with all available communication resources plugged into the programme, with each medium playing its expected role in harmony with the other media the results would be in the expected direction. Although agricultural and rural development could and sometimes does operate

independently, there is always a communication component involved in the process. What is important however is that so far there has been no discernable involvement of communication media as a 'system' in these programmes in most developing countries. Therefore, development goals have suffered seriously on account of planners and administrators acting independently of the communication system. This is why scholars, national planners, and communication specialists have gone into the question of planned and purposeful use of communication media for development and this is how the discipline of 'Development communication' was born. If it is to be defined it is "a discipline in development planning and implementation in which more adequate account is taken of human behavioural factors in the designing of development projects and their objectives. Then on the basis of a behavioural analysis and the development of a feasible design, the requirements for technical human communication are built into that project, as part of its own plan of operation and part of the budget".⁴

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

The concept of development communication is still new. Therefore, a full discussion of its nature and components with its potential and problems would be almost unending. Moreover, a discussion of the concept from a purely academic point of view would be purposeless, and so, to see how communication media must begin to shift its role, readjust its priorities and support development, with an effort to change the life styles of the masses in the developing world will be far more meaningful.

When the word 'communication' means different things to different people, the use of the phrase 'development communication' would perhaps be more confusing to many. Therefore, to begin with, it is best to discuss the two components of development communication, namely 'development' and 'communication' separately and then to explore the possibilities of joining or marrying the two to make the discipline of development communication.

1. DEVELOPMENT

The word development is very commonly used specially, in the third world and very often words like change, growth, progress, modernisation, etc....., are used interchangeably with it. But, what exactly is development? A change refers to a state of movement in a given direction. Therefore, there can be change without development. Then again, are growth and development synonymous? Economists would say that development is "a steadily increasing per capita income" or as Dudley Seers says, "the question to ask about a country's development are therefore, what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to employment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of them have become less severe, then beyond doubt there has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, specially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result 'development'. Even if per capita income has soared.⁵ But these are all economic criteria. There is also the sociological aspects to consider. Thus, while some scholars have stressed the importance of the economic aspect of development others view development as a concept embracing economic, social, cultural, educational and political aspects of a society. "This concept seems to be better received

because development cannot and must not be viewed as an economic entity alone (it may be a prime one) but as a sum total of all round balanced and planned growth.”⁶

2. COMMUNICATION

Like development “communication” too has been subjected to a varied number of conceptualisations but basically it is a process by which ideas, thoughts, feelings and behaviour are transmitted from one person to another. It is a two way process, and is persuasive in nature, seeking to obtain desirable responses to what is being transmitted. Communication encompasses the bulk of social behaviour and penetrates the social environment and is to be found in every aspect of human life as a web of human society. It cuts across many disciplines and as such has the advantage of viewing an individual or a society in its totality, rather than from a fragmented view.

Thus, we see that both development and communication complement and supplement each other. They both act in symbiosis in the process of promoting balanced growth.

3. DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

We have discussed about ‘development’ and ‘communication’ separately and seen the two as clearly related to one another. We can now discuss the fundamental of development communication. At the on-set it should be said that the concept of development communication was not born out of any one person, nor has it originated in the advanced countries.

It is an innovation that developed out of practical situations and problems within the third world and has gained prominence during the last decade. However, its origin can be traced to the introduction of agricultural extension, into the developing countries in an attempt to bridge the gap between the urban rich and the rural poor. But it was seen that the extension effort of agricultural technologists alone did not have much effect, without the active support and coordination of other allied institutions in supplying the required inputs, credit facilities, subsidies and other incentives and so the concept of ‘integrated rural development’ came into being. Here, the efforts of all agencies concerned with rural upliftment were pooled together into a joint programme for the overall development of the rural community.

Thus, the importance of communication as a tool to motivate the rural people grew manifold. Therefore, the use of the term “agricultural communication” became popular and in time came to be called “rural communication”. But it was seen that communication cannot be confined to agricultural development alone. It should run through the whole gamut of rural life. Furthermore, the term “rural communication” did not carry any dynamism with it and urban areas also need improvement and development and hence the need for communication. Thus, the emergence of the term “development communication”.

It is basically an approach “which comprises the elements of a method, a programme and process” and emerged from practical situations in the developing countries, unlike concepts like public relations, advertising, propaganda etc., which have their origin in advanced countries. Development Communication is different from mass communication per se in that, mass

communication is communication with the masses through media like print and radio. It is only a process of transmitting information, ideas or messages from sender to receiver. It may be or may not be purposive. But development communication is always purposive, as it always seeks to advance development. It can use any channel or a combination of channels to achieve development, or in other words each channel has its own particular role, to play in the whole process. For example, mass media like radio and television are the best channels of communication for creating awareness and interest among farmers, but when it comes to actual adoption of an innovation, interpersonal channels like extension agents, neighbours, friends and opinion leaders are more effective. As said by Katz and Wedell, — "the media are most effective when they link up with the social infrastructure which is dedicated to doing a certain job such as when media reinforces the work of the teacher, the agricultural agent, the farm forum, the literacy worker, health worker and local influential." As all these channels are engaged in accomplishing the goals of development they fall within the ambit of development communication.

SOME CONDITIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

The mere use of the press, radio, television, together with the more interpersonal links in the dissemination of information will not have much effect in overall agricultural development. There are certain pre-requisites or condition for development to take place. One such condition is dissatisfaction, it is said that dissatisfaction is the root cause of change, causing a shift from dissatisfaction to satisfaction. "As development communication is purposive and development oriented its basic citadel is motivation".⁹ Without motivation it is impossible to make people move towards certain desired goals.

The almost miraculous effect of motivation in making farmers take up to the extensive cultivation of certain crops is seen in the agricultural efforts of Sri Lanka. Agricultural Scientists had evolved new high yielding varieties of grain crops, root crops, and pulses, if grown extensively by farmers would not only have made self-sufficiency in these crops a reality but would have made the export of these crops a possibility. But the impact of all these research and extension effort on production was negligible. Rice and other food crops continued to be imported. As the country could not afford to continue importing increasing quantities of food, the prices of which were steadily rising in the world market, drastic cuts in the imports of some food like rice, sugar and milk food, while a total ban of imports of others like potatoes, onions, and chillies had to be affected together with the rationed issues of these to consumers. Due to their scarcity in the open market, prices soared to heights never reached before. The law of supply and demand worked a miracle. Farmers who earlier could not be persuaded to grow these crops now crowded into agricultural centres in search of seed material, fertilizers, pesticides and advise and potatoes, chillies and onion growing became thriving economic enterprises. But it was the same extension workers who were working with the same farmers as before. The only difference now was that there was motivation due to economic reasons. "Motivation is the main motor of human movement.....the process of change starts and accelerates when people are sufficiently motivated."¹⁰ As dissatisfied people are always demanding the more dissatisfied they are, the better the chances that they will be receptive to change.

Another condition for development communication is the psychology of completeness. If the ultimate goal is development of the society, it has to be achieved through the joint effort of both communicators and the audience. In this case the farmers and their efforts have to be complete in every respect, otherwise it would end with only half backed, incomplete development so often seen with the agricultural development programmes in the developing world. Complacency often comes with the success in a few aspects of a particular agricultural development project, only to cause a breakdown and failure of the programme as a whole later on. Therefore, it is always best to start with one or a few aspects and on a planned programme complete them to the fullest satisfaction of all concerned. Another aspect of this psychology of completeness is that of popular participation. A lasting change calls for rational thinking and doing by the farmers which could be brought about only if they have had enough opportunities for trying out changes and innovations themselves. This can be enforced and reinforced by development communication. Very closely connected to this is the two-way flow of information. Information must not only "trickle down" from planners, policy makers etc., to the farmers but be channelled up as well to make a meaningful two-way process. In development communication "a giver is a taker of information as well" as it emphasises the response to a message transmitted.

INHIBITIONS TO DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

Given the above conditions for development communication it is important to consider at the same time, some of the factors that could inhibit effective communication in the field of agricultural and rural development in the developing countries. Font Galland¹¹ views these from three major angles. (i) From the view point of communication infra-structure (ii) From the point of the audience and (iii) From the view point of the communicator and his message.

1. COMMUNICATION INFRA-STRUCTURE

The impact of science and technology on the area of mass communication is so great as to stagger the imagination. Though the first television set appeared only a few years ago, "today", there are over 3000 million of them all over the world, with over an estimated thousand millions television viewers. Radio has even greater potentialities. There are more than 2000 broadcasting stations and 700 million radio sets throughout the world.....there are over 8000 dailies (newspapers) in all countries, apart from other periodicals, with a total circulation of 390 million copies.....there are nearly 250,000 cinemas throughout the world with audiences totalling 78 million and more than 550,000 book-titles published annually, i.e., roughly 1500 titles a day".¹² Despite such advances, unlike in the advanced countries, the communication networks in most developing countries are far from adequate and still does not reach even the fringe of the large mass of farming rural populations. Thus, there is a gap between what modern communication technologies can offer and what in fact are the possibilities in the developing countries to absorb such technology. In most developing countries, mass media are chiefly limited to the "elite" and the media are elite oriented. Rural communication networks are still not expansive in their reach, except, may be the radio. Even though media in the developing countries should predominantly be rural based and tend to be so.

at the initial stages "media urbanisation" quickly occurs and ultimately become elite and urban oriented and continues to be as it seen in the introduction and use of television in most Asian and African countries.

Another situation met with sometimes in the developing world is that "Governments that realise the importance of building an adequate media structure are thinking of sophisticated technology rather than intermediate technology which is inexpensive and could have wider use."¹³

Therefore, one finds in some developing countries that have limited resources for the development of communication infra-structure squandering them on sophisticated "hardware". Some developing countries including Sri Lanka have even given priority to the establishment of expensive television networks even before the total coverage and penetration by radio have not occurred. Thus, television will be a national symbol in these countries, — a mark of modernity and prestige and which reach only a very limited category of people who can afford to buy television sets.

In contrast to the poorly developed modern media in the third world countries, there is a strong traditional rural network of inter-personal communication, which is of great importance in agricultural and rural development, — the monk in the temple, the school teacher, the native physician, village leaders etc. These traditional communication channels have not been clearly identified and studied in the developing world and diverted towards the development of agriculture.

The most neglected area in communication infra-structure in the developing countries is communication research. Whatever research has been carried out has been done by Western researchers under advanced country situations and environments. But, we in the developing world have to get down to more action oriented research that could provide a clear insight and knowledge of the farmers media habits, penetration, selectivity of media by them, traditional paths of communication etc., before attempting to change the attitudes of the rural farming population.

2. THE AUDIENCE

Unlike his western counterpart the communicator in the developing countries is bedevilled by various problems in trying to establish links with the people. One of the major problems of communicating with the masses is the high rate of illiteracy, specially with the rural masses. The illiteracy rate in Asia is still 46.8% as compared to Europe's and U.S.S.R.'s 3.6% and North America's 1.3%¹³

Sri Lanka holds a unique place among the third world countries having a rural literacy rate of 78.5%. Even so an illiteracy rate of 21.5% in the rural areas is a hinderance to communication but has to be recovered with in any development communication programme. Moreover from the writer's experiences in the field of agricultural extension and studies done in the area of print media, ¹⁴ has shown beyond doubt that rural farmers even though literate are not a reading lot, preferring to learn by doing.

These reasons preclude the wider use of print media like books, magazines and newspapers as a part of the communication effort. The more serious problem when considering a country like Sri Lanka is the gap in the literacy rate

between the rural and urban sectors within the country coupled with the bias towards the use of English, still. The yawning gap in the cultural ethos between the rural and urban has also to be taken into account. Depending on the exposure within the community in which they live, between communities within the country and also the world at large, the value systems, attitudes and motivations of these two groups are often not the same and very often are in conflicting contrast.

Therefore, communication strategies in national agricultural and rural development plans, biased towards the rural masses is largely wasted on the urban population, while plans with an urban bias is useless to the rural folk. A typical example of this kind of strategy is the way TV has been introduced to Sri Lanka. It is completely urban biased in that the present transmission is only within a 30 mile radius from the city of Colombo and is totally composed of 'canned' programmes imported mainly from the U.S.A. This brings out the importance of "de-centralised" or "local" plans and programmes to suit the educational, cultural and social ethos of the audience concerned instead of one single national level plan or programme.

Another inhibition to effective communication in the developing world is that a large part of the development communication flows between a leadership keen on modernisation and a reluctant, passive, if not resistant rural mass. Policy makers have to take the blame at least in part as more often than not policies and plans are handed over to the rural farming population in "surprise-packages" which are not relevant to the felt needs of the people. On the other hand the masses also tend to accept programmes that offer immediate rewards in their personal lives and fail to understand the short and long term meaning behind growth and development targets.

The frustrating problem in communicating with the rural masses in the developing countries is the existence of an established bureaucratic link-down, from say — the minister, director, district officer, divisional officer, village level officer and finally to the rural masses, which tend to dilute and contort the messages as they "trickle down" to them. The messages would finally be conflicting and lacking in any meaningful motivation. This same bureaucracy could be often a barrier to any proper feed-back system that would give communicators the feel of the people's pulse; as it is often a one-way top-to-bottom communication. Thus the mass media like the press and a radio tend always to talk to people, rather than talk with them.

Lerner's theory of the "revolution of rising expectations" brought about by the media leading in time to a "revolution of rising frustration" seems valid in most developing countries. This is because the media have created an awareness of the good things in life enjoyed in the advanced countries. But, what the media of most developing countries bring from time to time are appetizing "dishes" of socio-economic victories and "good days to come". These pledges become empty dreams, causing psychological depression of the people. Therefore, if communication media is to be used for development, politicians, planners, administrators and communicators have to make the link with the people more credible, valid, viable and meaningful.

3. THE COMMUNICATOR AND HIS MESSAGE

The above discussion brings us to the most vital area that could inhibit effective communication in the third world countries and that is the communicator and his message. Communicators have traditionally regarded themselves as mere conveyers of information; mere cogs in the bureaucratic machine and his role did not warrant close involvement with the audience. But, in the light of the new role for communication media in supporting agricultural development, the communicator cannot merely transmit relevant information but device messages that will arouse a felt need, a sense of practical benefit which will stimulate willing cooperation. Therefore, communicators in agricultural development have to act as "change agents". Another factor that communicators have to bear in mind is that one medium or message could effectively negate another. The author once had the occasion to produce a short documentary film on the life of a farmer who started without land of his own, but with perseverance and initiative together with the adoption of modern practices became a land owning progressive farmer who ended up as a "Govi Raja". The Government film unit distributed this short film to be shown in public cinemas before the commencement of commercial films. But the time of release of this documentary coincided with the release of a popular commercial film which depicts the life of a rural farm boy who seeks his fortune and makes good in the city of Colombo and the irony of it was that this film was shown immediately after screening the life of the progressive farmer to the same audience. Thus, a well planned communication strategy by one source, to show the value of rural life and farming was completely negated by another sources showing the glories of city life. In the developing countries there is no lack of such examples, within the same organisation, between private agencies and government departments, between various departments, between various media, various conflicting messages negate one another creating confusion in the mind of people than guiding them and motivating them towards development. This brings us to the question of communication policies and planning.

COMMUNICATION POLICIES AND PLANNING

In development communication the formulation of communication policies and its integration to the overall agricultural development plan of a country is of the utmost importance.

However, even the concept of communication policies is rather new to the developing world, as media like the press, radio and now television have been introduced mostly for reasons extraneous to development. They were originally not considered as major instruments of stimulents of development and thus there were no proper communication policies. But independence and the subsequent struggle for development has made new nations recognize the role that media could play in agricultural and rural development. However, though the importance of media in agricultural and rural development and the need for planning have been realized, what still exists in the third world countries is more in the nature of ad hoc projects or programmes, often unsystematically designed to serve a specific or urgent need in a particular situation, ending up without proper evaluation and follow up. These agricultural development programmes are often imposed on the administration by government due to some urgency and the administration designs the programme. Thus, "media practitioners are largely left to themselves with

certain superficial guidelines instructions and stricatures.¹⁴ Therefore, more often than not media is misused rather than used, bringing up another problem — the question of credibility of the media. However, clear-cut policies with the media practitioners involved at decision making level with an active involvement of the various media in the development of a country could bridge this serious credibility gap that exists between the media and the people. Therefore, in communication policies and planning for agricultural and rural development in a third world country, the communication system has to be designed to give maximum support to the national objectives of integration and development. Here, ways and means have to be planned for mass media to work together with extension agencies of agriculture, health, community development etc., to promote development, collecting information for technological development into a national information system and disseminating it through national information networks.

Many different departments have responsibilities for communication control and administration, while many more departments with their extension services require the help of communication media. There are also numerous private or non-governmental communication enterprises like newspapers, motion picture companies or even private broadcasting organisations. In communication planning what is necessary is the integration of all these agencies into a coordinated whole, with a unified communication strategy towards development. This approach requires the acquisition, retrieval, distribution and productive use of all information and experiences and thus requires not only coordination between government departments and ministries at national level but also close links between government and the private sector.

This brings us to the problem of the actual state of media and their operation. In the early stages of development mass communication skills are invariably in short supply. Trained journalists, radio and television engineers and other technicians, broadcasters are all generally limited in numbers. Equipment is scarce and what is in use is old and obsolete. But still most developing countries show very low investments in communication when compared to investments in other areas of development. Developing countries would do well to review this type of policy for the development of communication. A necessary pre-requisite to any development communication programme would be the allocation of adequate funds for the development of the necessary technology and skills of communication itself.

Thus, within an integrated development communication plan the following components have to be taken into account; a mass media like broadcasting organisation, film industry, book publishers etc., agencies concerned with the application of communication such as extension agencies of agriculture, health, family planning, education and rural development; industries and agencies supporting the communication chain such as news agencies, research organisations, advertisers, writers and manufacturers and or importers of communication equipment, information documentation and data system of the telecommunication infra-structure.

EVALUATION OF COMMUNICATION

Communicators have seldom time to take a critical look at their own performance as they are often caught in a web of unending activity. Therefore, they might never get down to seriously analysing what exactly they are

providing the public, often giving answers in very broad terms; that they inform the public of what happens within and without the country; that they disseminate information on innovations and that they entertain the masses. But, such answers are unsatisfactory when communication media has to be channelled towards mobilizing people for rural development and nation building. When media are geared to development, communicators, need to know the precise nature and functions of their media, so that they would be in a position to correct, if any, the imbalance in the flow of information. Thus, evaluation of media content and effect becomes important, which, in other words is an assessment of efforts and content put in by individuals and institutions and of programmes launched. Evaluation can be done in a very simple way and one need not know the techniques of sophisticated research. A simple common sense approach is all that is needed with the idea of getting reliable and valid information about what has gone into the communication effort and its impact on the audience.

From the above discussion we see that development communication is a purposive, pragmatic and planned process, the essential stages of which has been summarised by Sinha as:—

1. Analysis of situation
2. Delineation of problems and fixing-up priorities
3. Consideration of resources
4. Preparing a plan of action
5. Action
6. Evaluation¹⁵

It is a continuous process of growth and development where experience gained from one programme can be used in subsequent programmes.

CONCLUSION

THE CHALLENGES TO COMMUNICATION IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND STRATEGIES TO MEET THE CHALLENGES:

The greatest challenge to communication media in Sri Lanka as well as with most third world countries is that they are expected to perform all their expected roles and functions while developing themselves as modern institutions within limited human and material resources. At the early stages of development the necessary skills are in short supply, as mentioned earlier, and those that are present continue to be influenced by the more affluent and industrial west, not only for basic technological infra-structure and production skills but also for style, format and also for basic principles on the scope and functions of mass communication.

But what is necessary in our countries is new thinking on the theory and practice of mass communication coupled with the more informal channels found in the rural areas. Thinking and action that would pay heed to national aspirations, problems, needs and priorities. It is in this context that communicators as "change agents" were discussed in the preceding chapter.

As far as the shortage of "hardware" or equipment is concerned, developing countries would do well to review the type of policy and planning so far adhered to and reallocate priorities with an accent on agricultural and rural development. In the allocation of scarce resources in the developing countries

some economists advocate the growth of all sectors of the economy in a balanced fashion, but the snag here is the meagre resources would spread so thin as to be of little practical value. To break through this impasse, Oshima¹⁶ has suggested a "strategy of selective growth" what he suggests in short is that specific areas in each sectors of the economy be selected for development according to the resources available.

If this theory is accepted, in the field of communication instead of trying to develop the press, radio, films and television simultaneously, priority is first given to one or two aspects, say, — radio would be developed to its full potential before the development or even the introduction of television is considered. In this respect the wisdom of introducing colour TV to Sri Lanka, even before the radio has been fully developed is questionable.

The other major challenge to communication is the developing countries are the difficulties of role and function confronting the growing institutions of modern communication. The mass media represent the people in keeping a check on the activities of the government. But in the developing countries mass media is also expected to be one of the biggest advocates of the national development programme, informing and inspiring the masses. These two functions of "critic" and "advocate" are often not compatible. It is often argued that countries in a hurry to develop cannot afford the luxury of a completely free and uncontrolled mass media system. In such a situation, a country is perhaps justified in forcing its mass media to enlist in the national effort. But the sad fact is that in most developing countries we find the mass media being denied free and democratic action. They are forced to support and qualify all the actions, good or bad, of the government in power, in the name of "nation building" and "development".

Therefore, the biggest challenge to communication media in the developing world is to bring into balance these two roles of objective criticism and supporting government actions. This issue is as old as politics itself and cannot be resolved by easy, formula or universal rules of conduct. The situation differs from one country to another and policies applicable in one situation may not be suitable in another. But in general, it could be said that to obtain a balance between the two roles what is required is political-integrity and a sense of patriotism among power holders, a sense of dedication among communicators and public officials and a sense of "nationhood" among the people at large.

We now come to a crucial challenge of all which is that, the communication system in a country have to play a planned and positive role in all spheres of activity that contribute towards national development, at micro-levels, supporting an agricultural extension programme, providing information support to a particular regional development programme or attempting to influence the attitudes of a particular group or society. At macro-level, astutely planned and full-fledged mass media coordination integrated with the mass and interpersonal channels in the field, in national food production, — family planning, land reform or community development programmes.

This, in fact is the real meaning of "Development Communications" — a process that attempts to successfully marry the interests of policy-makers, planners, administrators and the people and herein lies the problem — in Sri Lanka. The question of agreement between policy-makers and communicators concerning matters of development policies and priorities as well as interaction

and coordination among them, some aspects of which were discussed earlier. This problem cannot be easily or speedily solved but the first step in this direction would be the realisation and understanding by the powers that be, of the importance of coordinated activity and of an integrated approach to development with planned communication support and involvement. This means unified policy, planning and implementation.

If we review, in summary, the path we have travelled in this exercise, we have seen that in recent years, people in three quarters of the world in the so called third world are engaged in the process of shedding traditionalism, searching for new relationship with their fellow men and fellow nations, moving towards modernity and striving to find an appropriate place in the world.

It is primarily the stimulations of communication which has brought about and is bringing about changes in traditional societies. This clearly reflects the important relationships between development and communication. Both of which are engaged in a symbiotic relationship, one helping the other in the process of fostering balanced growth and progress. Hence, the birth of the discipline of Development Communication, which is a new role for communication media in the developing countries.

In conclusion it must be said that what has been attempted here is not to give a set of definitions or even a *modus operandi* of development communication nor has it been discussed from a purely academic point of view. The main purpose has been to show how mass communication media coupled with interpersonal channels must begin to shift their role, readjust priorities and support agricultural and rural development in the context of the need to channel every available resource bettering the living standards of the rural masses in Sri Lanka and other developing countries in the world.

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