# PART 6
# COMMUNICATION PLANNING
# FOR TELECENTERS AND THEIR PARTNERS[1]

## 1. WHY COMMUNICATION PLANNING

There are two major situations in which telecenter personnel can use the communication planning material in this module. First, a telecenter must convince the community that the telecenter is important to the lives of the people. Without this awareness of the telecenter's value to the community the value of the information and the communication resources available) the telecenter will have a difficult time surviving. It will not be sustainable. A telecenter needs a communication strategy to do this awareness-raising systematically, effectively, and efficiently. We know that promotion of the telecenter in a community often is not a high priority. The principles presented in this Module expand and reinforce the ideas offered in Module 6 (Marketing) in the original *Handbook*.

Second, telecenters can help other community agencies, both government and non-government bodies, use telecenter facilities in efforts to improve life in the community. Schools, health posts, farming support organizations, local government officials and others need to communicate with various groups *they* serve, and the telecenter can be one of the links between these groups and their constituencies. By helping these organizations design information and communication strategies, the telecenter will be providing them the knowledge and the resources for doing this well. Later in this module we will say more about communication in development activities such as agriculture, health, and education.

There are various benefits to preparing an explicit communication strategy. These include:

1. Building coordination and cooperation. Carrying out a communication project often involves collaboration among a variety of people and agencies. The plan helps all those participating in the project to work together knowing what each one's roles and responsibilities are.

2. Controlling the flow of activities. Timing is a vital part of communication campaigns. Sometimes it is as simple as planning your information output in a sequence so that you make the community aware first, then you convince them to act (motivate), and then you guide them to act. Or it might be necessary to time an information campaign according to environmental factors such as the agricultural growing season, or monsoon weather, or festivals.

3. Estimating resource needs. Indicating what needs to be done by whom and in what time period will suggest the kinds of resources that you will need. Such resources might include time on a radio station, posters and staffing for a telecenter exhibit, refreshments for a special occasion at the telecenter, and other activities.

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1 This is adapted from Module 7 of Royal D. Colle and Raul Roman, *A Handbook for Telecenter Staffs*. The full *Handbook* is available at http://ip.cals.cornell.edu/commdev/handbook.cfm.

Many information campaigns start with sending messages − putting up posters, broadcasting spot announcements on radio or television stations. However, the planning process must begin much earlier – with a communication plan and a strategy.

## 2. ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNICATION PLAN

We can use the need for community awareness of telecenter benefits to illustrate the steps that go into an information and community strategy. You can then use the model, or your own adaptation of it, to help groups in your community design their own strategies. In almost all places where there are telecenters, these groups need to learn about the value of information and know how to get that information and how to share information with others − in the community and beyond. So the examples used in this chapter may be particularly useful for your telecenter as it builds the number of people who use the telecenter.

The elements of a good strategy include (1) research, (2) precise objectives, (3) identified population groups, (4) specification of content (5) a selection of media, and (6) evaluation of impact. Because there are usually various options and priorities that you should consider, it is important to know the *kinds of decisions* you will need to make in regard to each of these elements. And it is important that the decisions be made after careful thought and analysis.

Two brief cautions. First, campaign efforts frequently are aimed at changing knowledge or attitudes, but often the intent is to change *what people do.* For the telecenter planner, an awareness campaign is most immediately concerned with how people think about information and possibly telecenters, but the campaign may be really about using that awareness to change people's behavior, that is, to *use* the telecenter.

Second, developing a strategy is time-consuming and may be demanding. Often it is more interesting and exciting to start immediately to make television programs or put up large signs (sending information), than it is to start with information gathering, doing analysis, and laying out a strategy. *However, the planning process will provide important rewards.*

The principles that we cover in Part 6 apply not only to telecenter issues directly (such as building awareness of telecenters) but also to communication needs of the telecenter's partners. For example, some of the partners may be concerned with issues related to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG): these are internationally declared goals related to poverty, health, education, the environment and other problems that challenge many nations. Careful analysis of these MDGs by a variety of agencies concludes that communication is a key element in trying to reach these goals by 2015. As an important link connecting many people to the Information Society, telecenters can help partners be more effective in using the community's (and possibly the world's) information and communication resources toward reaching the Goals.

## 3. KEY DECISIONS IN PLANNING

### 3.1 Step 1 –  Research

The kind of research that you start with is sometimes called "situation analysis." In Part 4 we discussed some of these issues. The situation analysis helps you understand the system or the context with which you are dealing when you propose a communication intervention. Here

are some of the kinds of information you may wish to obtain:

(1) Demographic information, including population size, and its geographic and age distribution

(2) Psychographic information, including the populations values, lifestyles, and dominant beliefs

(3) Historical legacies, including important forces that have shaped communities and the people's current practices related to the development program being proposed

(4) Economic realities, including the class structure, how people earn money, patterns of poverty

(5) Political realities, including formal and informal leaders, the structure of the political system

(6) The social structure, including patterns of settlement, ethnic structure, community organizations, cultural diversity, family patterns, and social networks

(7) Communication patterns, including the prevalence and uses of the mass media and indigenous channels of communication, credibility of information sources and channels, accessibility of the intervention agency and stakeholders to communication media facilities and organizations

(8) Beliefs and perceptions related to the product and the intervention and the organizations associated with them; how people presently deal with situations an intervention intends to improve; people's view of the intervention(s) and innovations in general, people's perceptions of the change agent (such as a community health worker) or the public representative of the government or the company.

(9) The goals and methods of the intervention itself, including its real and perceived benefits, limitations, undesired consequences, costs, and limitations and constraints to adopting different behaviors (such as using a telecenter), and what activities or agencies in the community compete with this intervention.

(10) Various stakeholders' knowledge, attitudes and practices related to the proposed intervention. (Even though an organization or a telecenter conducting a campaign may want to reach all the people in the community, it must focus initially on its priority target populations. This is true in the case of development projects such as health as well as in the case of promoting telecenters. We can call those whom we identify with special interests in the intervention "stakeholders.")

That is a lot of research! In fact it can lead to "paralysis by analysis" − spending too much time on unnecessary research and analysis. So the first decision must be to decide which of the 10 items (or more if you have added some) are most important for the intervention being planning. There is no right answer. Perhaps *parts* of all the items would be enough for getting started. Consider putting a strong emphasis on 7, 8, 9, and 10. But it is important to make the decision as to what data are going to be gathered and *how they will be used.*

STOP! Assume your telecenter sees the need to make people and organizations aware of the

telecenter and its value to the community. What kinds of information would be useful in planning a communication campaign or program to persuade them try out the telecenter services? Where and how would you obtain the information?

## 3.2 Step 2 – Setting objectives

**Outcomes.** It is important to recognize that our tools are information tools, so our objectives must be about outcomes to mental processes. For example, information and communication campaigns often use such words as

*to inform        to educate        to train        to persuade*

So the kinds of objectives you select relate to changing people's awareness, knowledge, skills, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions; or changing their feelings like happiness, motivation, and enthusiasm. For example, a telecenter might have as an objective "to make the community aware of the benefits of the telecenter."

Sometimes objectives are expressed in terms of the communication *output.* For example, "the telecenter will set up three exhibits and print (or put up) 300 posters." But notice the difference between this objective and the one about community awareness. In one, the emphasis is on what the telecenter is going to do; in the other, the emphasis is on what changes will take place in the people (outcomes). You may wish to have both kinds of objectives, but at least include those that refer to intended outcomes, because it is the outcomes that really matter.

**How much?** "Making the community aware of benefits of telecenters" is not enough detail for a good quality objective, especially if you want to measure (evaluate) your results. It is useful to define what we mean by awareness, and suggest some kind of measurement to indicate when awareness exists. You also need to specify *who* the target group is, and *when* you expect to reach the objective. For example, consider the following communication objective: *Within four weeks from the start of the campaign, half of the adult population of the community will know where the telecenter is and what services it offers.* The objective is quantified: it specifies how many, how much and when.

A related objective might be: *Within four weeks of the start of the campaign, all non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the telecenter service area will know at least three benefits of the telecenter to their programs.* Having explicit objectives will help all those associated with the telecenter stay focused on the communication task.

**Remember:** Communication *cannot* increase harvests, nor reduce poverty, nor improve child health. These all take other ingredients. However, communication can be a partner in all of these attempts to change conditions in a community.

## 3.3 Step 3 – Identifying stakeholders

There are different kinds of stakeholders in every community and each may have a different relationship to the telecenter and its resources. What needs they have for telecenter services may identify them as a particular kind of stakeholder. They may have significant characteristics such as those associated with age groups, gender, economic activity, educational level, or urban/rural residency; they may be organizations whose interests may

make them potential partners in the awareness campaign or in other on-going activities (such as increasing harvests and reducing poverty); they might be part of the community's governmental or informal leadership. In developing a communication strategy it is important to identify the most important groups related to your campaign, and also indicate why they are important.

Here is a short list of the different kinds of persons who might be relevant to a telecenter:

School and libraries – because they too are in the information, education and communication field, and are potential partners.

Adults in rural families – because they might benefit directly from ICTs. They can get market information and make inquiries through e-mail about agricultural inputs.

Representatives of public agencies and NGOs – because they can benefit directly from ICTs and because they can influence others to use the telecenter. Agricultural extension agents can recommend that farmers get information at a telecenter.

Formal and informal opinion leaders – because they can set an example for their followers, and they can help clear obstacles in the path of your project.

Teenage children – because they are potential users of the telecenters who can influence parents.

Stop! Return to the task of making the community aware of the telecenter and its value to the community. Who are the possible stakeholders in your community who might be relevant to an awareness campaign? Put them in groups of "necessary," "very important" and "important." Also indicate why each stakeholder is in that particular category of importance.

## 3.4 Step 4 – Deciding on content

**Content substance.** Deciding what you put into the messages that go to the particular stakeholder groups is an important part of your planning. This is the "substance" issue, and it is one of several parts of decision-making about content. It should be obvious at this point that in a communication campaign we are not usually dealing with one objective, one stakeholder and one message. *Each* objective has its set of stakeholders, and for *each* stakeholder there may be a particular body of content out of which messages are created. Some of the content may be the same or similar for two different stakeholder groups; sometimes the content can be quite different.

To make decisions on content we need to go back to what the objectives are, noting that in these objectives we are usually referring to changes that we hope will take place in a stakeholder's mind and behaviors. We borrow an example from *Facts for Life*, a communication guide prepared by UNICEF, WHO, and UNESCO. One objective in a health project may be to get rural families to understand the importance of hygienic practices in using water. Another objective may refer to what families can do to insure clean water. We can group the information needed by rural families (stakeholders) for accomplishing these objectives under the theme:

1. Preventing illness by using clean water. Under this theme we can identify the kinds of information that will be needed by people without piped water. Here they are, identified with numbers – which we will explain later.

1.1 Explain relationship of clean water to health (awareness)
1.2 Clean water means fewer costs for treating illness and less time lost for children's school or work (motivation)
1.3 Water can be protected from germs by keeping wells covered (action)
1.4 ...by keeping feces and water waste (especially from latrines) away from water used for cooking, drinking, bathing or washing (action)
1.5 ...by keeping buckets, ropes and jars used to collect and store water as clean as possible, for example, by hanging up buckets rather than putting them on the ground (action)
1.6 ...by keeping animals away from drinking water (action)
1.7 ...by storing water in clean, covered containers (action)
1.8 ...by taking water out of a container with a clean ladle or cup (action)
1.9 ...by preventing anyone from putting their hands into the container or drink directly from it (action)
1.10 ...by keeping animals out of the house (action)

Another theme that might be part of a health communication campaign is:

2. AIDS can be prevented, with numbered ideas listed as in the case above: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, etc.

Note that these are not the *specific* messages that will be used – they are the content that those preparing radio announcements, posters, television dramas, etc. will use as a guide for creating the messages. The intent here is to identify the pieces of information a stakeholder group needs to move from their present knowledge or behavior to something different.

Stop! Before we continue, work on the telecenter awareness task by listing the kinds of information you could provide to one of your stakeholder groups to persuade them to use telecenter services. Consider such issues as knowing what a telecenter is, the advantages of information, and the location of the telecenter.

**Content design.** In planning the content for messages, there are several other issues you should consider. In what *form* will the information appear? The answer may take into consideration:

Associating a credible person with the message (a popular leader, a religious leader, a sports or entertainment star).

Using drama, or music, or lecture.

Using comedy or threats.

Mixing entertainment with persuasion.

## 3.5 Step 5 – Selecting channels of communication

There are several key questions you need to ask in order to make a decision on what media or channels to use for reaching stakeholders. Note first that different media may be appropriate for different stakeholders. We start by raising some questions about each stakeholder group.

**Stakeholders and media**

What media do the stakeholders use?
For what do they use a particular medium? (Information? Entertainment?)
What channels do the stakeholders trust?
What media might they use if they were available? (Audiocassettes? Web pages? Television?)
What is the cost to stakeholders of using particular media? (In money? In time? In convenience?)

An important consideration is *your* perspective on the media. Here are some questions you need to consider.

**The organization and the media**

What do we need for our messages? (Color? Interaction with the stakeholder? Speed? Repetition? Action?)
What media can we afford?
Do we have the resources for using particular media? (Writers, artists, webmasters?)

We pause to reflect briefly on what information and communication technologies can do in community development initiatives. Here are some reminders drawn from FAO's "Discovering the Magic Box."

**FAO and benefits of ICTs**

ICTs offer opportunities for two-way and horizontal communication and for opening up new communication channels for rural communities and the intermediaries and development organisations that support them. Once mastered, they potentially allow every user to be a sender, receiver, narrow-caster and broadcaster. The Internet, for example, has been described as a "people's network" that allows every user to be an information producer and knowledge sharer.

ICTs can support bottom-up articulation of development needs and perceptions and facilitate the merging of global and local knowledge and information.

ICTs can support, create and strengthen interactive and collaborative networks that enable information to flow to and from rural communities, facilitate dialogue between communities, intermediaries and development organisations, foster co-ordination of national and local development efforts and overcome physical barriers to knowledge and information sharing. ICTs can also enhance the capacity of grassroots organisations for their voices to be heard. This is especially true of ICT projects that are managed by local communities, such as community-owned media and community telecenters.

ICTs can support policy and advocacy by meeting the information needs of elected officials, decision-makers, interest groups and grass roots advocacy organisations. They can be activated for social networking and mobilization, to build up public awareness around development issues and for upward pressure on policy decisions.

ICTs can help build consensus through the provision of information on government programs, policies, decisions and issues to advocates. Many governments are putting such information on-line. On the other hand, opponents can also seize the same tools for Internet campaigns to support their own

agendas. Such on-line "checks and balances" of political agendas potentially can contribute to political debate and democratic processes.

ICTs can enhance partnership with the media. They are particularly relevant for community media that have limited human and financial resources.

We continue with some specific guidelines from FAO for selecting media for campaigns. While the discussion leans toward agriculture, the principles apply more widely to other topics. No single medium is better than any other. Circumstances and the requirements of the development project dictate which should be used. Audience research concerning what media the people have access to and which enjoy credibility, and what is actually available or could be realistically established greatly influence the choice. However, it should be remembered that a message arriving in a slightly different form and through different channels has the most impact in helping people towards behavioral change. Hence, multi-media approaches are usually the most effective.

It should be stressed, however, that behavioral change is seldom the result of exposure to media alone; most people require face-to-face discussion with someone more knowledgeable or experienced than themselves before they can make their own judgement and try an innovation. In effect, any information received has to be absorbed and evaluated for its usefulness and appropriateness in the recipients' circumstances before they will act on it. Discussion is an essential element in this process.

The pros and cons of the various media are set out in the following section.

**Television**

| PROS | CONS |
|---|---|
| Prestigious and persuasive. | Tends to be monopolized by powerful interests because of its prestige. |
| | Not available in all rural areas. |
| | Expensive production/ reception. |
| | Program production for agriculture can be difficult. |
| | Difficult to localize information for agriculture unless there are local TV stations, still rare in developing countries. |

**Summary:** Although potentially powerful, television is not easy for agricultural and rural development in most developing countries.

**Radio**

| PROS | CONS |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| Wide coverage and availability in rural areas. | Weak as a medium for training and education since it is audio only. |
| Cheap production/reception. | |
| Relatively simple program production. | |
| Local radio stations facilitate localized information. | |

**Summary:** Excellent medium for motivation and for drawing attention to new ideas and techniques but weak for providing detailed knowledge and training.

## Video

| PROS | CONS |
|---|---|
| Highly persuasive. | Multiplicity of standards/formats. |
| Constantly improving technology is making it ever cheaper and more reliable. | Requires talent, skill, and experience to produce good programs for development. |
| Electronic image/ sound recording gives immediate playback and production flexibility. | Requires rather sophisticated repair and maintenance facilities. |
| Allows more than one language to be recorded as commentary on a single tape. | Dependant on the use to which it is to be put, may call for quite large capital investment. |
| Can be shown in daylight using battery-powered equipment. | Color/visual quality mediocre in some standards. |

**Summary:** Video has become *the* medium in the minds of many. Indeed it is highly effective but calls for a careful strategy and skilled producers.

## Slide sets/ filmstrips

| PROS | CONS |
|---|---|
| Slide-sets quite simple to produce. | Production requires laboratory process. |
| Low-cost equipment for production and projection. | Cannot be used in daylight without a special rear-projection screen. |
| Very good color/visual quality. | Lacks the appeal of video (which relates to TV in most minds). |
| Filmstrips made of robust material and are small, easy to transport. | Turning slides into filmstrips requires laboratory process, which is not always available in developing countries. |
| Excellent training medium for all subjects except those few for which showing movement is an absolute essential. | |

**Summary:** Slide sets/ filmstrips have proved an invaluable training aid in rural and agricultural development but they are tending to lose out to video, despite the higher cost of the latter.

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## Audiocassettes

| PROS | CONS |
|------|------|
| Easy and cheap to produce programs. | Audio only and so suffers some of the weaknesses of radio, though repeated listening may help to overcome it. |
| Cassette players quite widely available. | |
| Easy to localize information. | |
| Good for feedback because farmers can record their questions/reactions. | |
| Can be used well in conjunction with rural radio. | |

**Summary:** Very good low-cost medium. Potential has not been sufficiently recognized. Especially useful used in conjunction with extension and rural radio. Pre-recorded cassettes and Compact Disks (CD) can be marketed by telecenters.

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## Flip charts

| PROS | CONS |
|------|------|
| Cheap and simple to produce and use. | Not as realistic as projected aids. |
| Good for training and extension support. | Care required to make drawings understandable to illiterates. |
| | Lack the attraction of audio-visual materials. |
| | May be thought of as "second-rate" by people with experience with electronic media. |

**Summary:** Flip charts very useful to help outreach workers in their work with rural people. Drawings difficult to understand for people with low visual literacy, so careful design and pre-testing needed.

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## Printed materials

| PROS | CONS |
|------|------|
| Relatively cheap, simple and easy to produce. | Of limited use among illiterates but bear in mind the |

possibilities provided by "family literacy" as opposed to literacy of individuals.

Can be taken home, consulted, and kept as a permanent reminder.

Particularly valuable for extensionists, technicians, and community leaders.

**Summary:** Well designed, carefully written for their intended audience, printed materials can provide a vitally important and cheap source of reference for extensionists, and for literates among the rural population.

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### Folk media (Theatre, Puppetry, Storytelling, etc)

| PROS | CONS |
| --- | --- |
| Does not require capital investment. | Requires skilled crafting of development messages into the fabric of the folk media. |
| Does not depend on technology that is liable to break down. | May lack prestige vis-à-vis more modern media in some societies. |
| Intrinsically adapted to local cultural scene. | May be difficult to organize, and calls for close working relationship between development workers and folk media artists. |
| May be highly credible and persuasive where folk media has a strong tradition. | |

**Summary:** Creative use of folk media-- in cultures where it is popular and well entrenched-- can be a subtle and effective way of introducing development ideas and messages. Care required to ensure that the mix of entertainment and development is appropriate, so furthering the latter without damaging the former.

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### NEW MEDIA

### Computer, Internet and other Web pages

| PROS | CONS |
| --- | --- |
| Can make information available on demand. | Requires some skills in searching for information. |
| Provides links to a wide range of information. | Requires "computer literacy" or help of computer-skilled person. |
| Allows searching for information. | Technology may not be readily accessible to those who can benefit most. |
| Potential for interactivity. | Development agency needs skill in crafting web pages. |
| Source for time-sensitive information such as | |

market prices and weather forecasts.

**Summary:** Computers and information portals reached through telecommunication networks provide a modern way for people to access, on demand, a wide array of information including establishing direct contact with distant expert sources and government officials.

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Cine film has been deliberately left out of this overview. Experience has shown it to be too expensive, complex and slow in production, and inflexible for use in rural development. Video has replaced it.

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Deciding on media – whether it be for an awareness campaign for the telecenter, or campaign related to HIV-AIDS or good nutrition – requires some careful consideration. Success in a behavior change project often depends on intelligent decision-making concerning media and content, as well as the vaccines, fertilizers, and good roads that make adoption of new behaviors possible. Your telecenter can be a valued partner with other organizations in the community if you can anticipate what media work best in your community and make them a part of the telecenters resources.

### 3.6 Step 6 – Scheduling and integrating Steps 1-5

It is important to arrange the information in the first five steps in a way that will guide action. One way to do this is to use a chart or a matrix that integrates all the information.

First, select a period of time that you will use as a unit for doing the planning. The unit might be a week, a month, or some multiple of months. For this example we will use "weeks" for our unit of time for planning.

Next take your first objective. Use the NGO-related objective under Step 2 above. Here's a framework for organizing the elements of the strategy shown in Steps 1-5.

Objective 1: *Within four weeks of the start of the campaign, all non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the telecenter service area will know at least three benefits of the telecenter to their programs.*

Week

| Stakeholders | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Focusing on your first objective (and working on the chart below), list the relevant stakeholders (we have done this under the "stakeholder" heading.)

Look at the chart below where you will see the Week 1 box enlarged. We now will work in the area below number 1.

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There you list the channels you will use. We have written in some suggestions. In the empty boxes you can put a code number representing the content that will be carried in those channels.

## ACTION PLAN

**Objective 1:** : *Within four weeks of the start of the campaign, all non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the telecenter service area will know at least three benefits of the telecenter to their programs.*

**Week 1, enlarged from the table above**

**Channels**

| Stakeholders 9 | | Radio | Audio cassettes | Meetings | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Women's association | | 1.3* | 1.2, 1.3 | | |
| Farmer's association | | 1.1 | 1.2, 1.3 | | |
| Literacy association | | | | 1.4, 1.5 | |
| | | | | | |

*In the cells are numbers indicating information points that are necessary to achieve the objective for that particular stakeholder. Each number represents a single information point (as indicated in section 2.5).

This approach to planning a communication initiative may appear to be very time-consuming at the beginning. However, it will reward you and your partner agencies with greater organization, coordination and accountability. It will help you assign particular responsibilities to people handling particular media.

## 4. SUMMARY – DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

At an ITU-organized conference on telecenters in Tunis in 1999, Johan Ernberg reminded all that the core user groups of telecenters will include teachers, health workers, local entrepreneurs and business people, community and government authorities and NGOs. These are key partners who, with the telecenters, can help improve public services in various sectors, including education, healthcare and government services. Ernberg stressed the need to measure the impact of telecenters in this development role.

FAO has taken a very active leadership role in exploring and testing ways of systematically using communication in community development programs. It has developed some useful suggestions that helped define development communication and aim us toward having the impact that Ernberg anticipates. So we conclude this module with some general reminders from FAO's *Guidelines for Communication in Rural Development* that can contribute to your partnerships with the community.

***What is the idea behind development communication and what is it?***

Development communication rests on the premise that successful rural development calls for the conscious and active participation of the intended beneficiaries at every stage of the development process; for in the final analysis, rural development cannot take place without changes in attitudes and behavior among the people concerned.

To this end, Development Communication is the planned and systematic use of communication through interpersonal channels, and audio-visual and mass media:

►to collect and exchange information among all those concerned in planning a development initiative, with the aim of reaching a consensus on the development problems being faced and the options for their solution;

►to mobilize people for development action, and to assist in solving problems and misunderstandings that may arise during project implementation

►to enhance the pedagogical and communication skills of development agents (at all levels) so that they may dialogue more effectively with their audiences; and

►to apply communication technology to training and extension programs, particularly at the grassroots level, in order to improve their quality and impact.

***What are the problems that development communication can help to overcome?***

1. Problems of designing projects that take properly into account the perceptions and capacities of the intended beneficiaries.

Development communication can help to ensure that the design and action plan of a development project take into account the attitudes, perceived needs and capacities of the people which the project is trying to help. Many projects have failed in the past because assumptions were made about the willingness and capacity of rural people to absorb new technology and development infrastructures into their way of living and working. Abandoned irrigation schemes and settlement programs, broken down equipment, and the slow adoption of improved crop varieties are examples that bear witness to this failure to bring about attitudinal and behavioral change.

As an adjunct and complement to the usual situation analysis that is done for project formulation, development communication helps to identify attitudes, felt needs, capacities, and constraints to the adoption of change. And through the dialogue and consultation process it employs, it naturally elicits the participation of the intended beneficiaries of a development action.

2. Problems of mobilizing rural people for development action and ensuring an information flow among all concerned with a development initiative.

If a rural development project has been planned with its beneficiaries, their participation and mobilization are almost certain to follow quite naturally. However, in any event, communication support during project implementation keeps people informed, helps to mobilize them, and to stimulate the more conservative to action. This is especially so when communication (in the form of audio-visual presentations, for example) is used to spread knowledge of successful development action taken by some communities and individuals to other communities and individuals that have not yet mobilized.

Furthermore, even the best project – designed with its beneficiaries – cannot be rigid. As it progresses, there will be need to review and refine its activities and introduce changes of emphasis. A good communication system can keep a dialogue open among those involved in a development project, thereby addressing problems as they arise. Such an ongoing information flow can also help to ensure coordination and proper orchestration of inputs and services to a development initiative.

Development communication spreads information about successful development experience as a stimulus to others, keeps a dialogue open among all concerned in a development project, and helps to smooth project implementation.

3. Problems of improving the reach and impact of rural training programs

Training at the grassroots level has become a major priority in recent years. At the same time, communication technology has been improving and becoming ever cheaper and easier to use in rural areas. Audio-visual media make it possible to:

+ help overcome the barriers of illiteracy and incomprehension (by conveying ideas and practices in an audio and visual form);

+ illustrate new ideas and techniques more effectively than by word-of-mouth alone, and thus improve the impact of extension and training;

+ compress time (a whole crop cycle can be shown in a short presentation);

+ compress space (events and practices in distant locations can be transferred to other places where they can be useful testimonials);

+ standardize technical information (by creating audio-visual materials that illustrate the best available advice to farmers and having these materials used throughout the extension and farmer training chain, thereby ensuring that the technical information will not become distorted during its passage from its source to the smallest and most remote farmer).

Development communication applied to training and extension in rural areas increases their effectiveness and reach, and ensures that the best available technical information is standardized.

**The role of campaigns.** Campaigns bring together all the communication functions we have discussed into an intensive and relatively short period of time, usually a few months. They aim to promote a few clearly defined objectives. These might be, for example, improved cultivation techniques for a certain crop, or control of a pest.

Indispensable preconditions for a campaign are that the proposed technology package be truly appropriate to the socioeconomic needs of the people, and that the required farm inputs and services be readily available.

Campaigns are based on a careful analysis with the rural people on matters such as their knowledge, attitudes, and practices related to the proposed innovations, the information channels they use and find credible, and other groups of people who may influence them.

The campaign itself uses a variety of different communication channels to reach its audience with the same basic messages, but in slightly different forms. Specially trained and motivated field agents play a key role in interpersonal communication for the campaign, and they are backed by well-orchestrated use of group and mass media

Campaigns of this sort, which draw heavily on marketing techniques, have proven remarkably successful in providing people with the information they heed as a basis for attitudinal and behavioral change.

### What types of development initiatives require communication inputs?

Any development initiative which that depends for its success on rural people modifying their attitudes and behavior and working with new knowledge and skills will normally benefit from communication support. So also will projects that have a multi-disciplinary nature, that is to say those which involve a number of subject-matter ministries and authorities, and which are therefore inherently difficult to manage. Communication can provide the linkages that will ensure coordinated management.

### Are development communication activities always planned as part of a development project?

Not necessarily. There are also development communication projects *per se.* This is the case when, for example, assistance is being provided for institution building such as creating or strengthening an agricultural or rural development communication unit, or providing assistance to rural broadcasting. Such institutions can often provide communication support to a number of agricultural and rural development projects in a country.

### What are the overall considerations when planning communication inputs?

Successful development communication calls for a well-defined strategy, systematic planning, and

rigorous management. Experience has shown all too clearly that ad hoc communication inputs such as the provision of some audio-visual equipment, or the stand-alone production of some audio-visual or printed material has seldom made any measurable impact. It has also become clear that communication activities require a certain critical mass – of resources, intensity, and duration – if they are to realize their full potential in mobilizing people for development action and become self-sustaining in this role. This explains the minimal results when symbolic attention has been paid to development communication by including of some token equipment and expertise in the project.

A communication plan should be tailored to the particular conditions being faced. There are so many variables of a human, cultural and physical nature that a communication plan that worked for irrigation development in an arid zone of one country cannot effectively be transferred *in toto* to another country. For even if the principles remain the same, the details will almost certainly call for differences.

## CONCLUSION

Telecenters can become part of the fabric of a community. A good test of this idea is to see how much community organizations such as health clinics, agricultural extension services, and the schools look at telecenters as partners in *their* initiatives in the community. Telecenter staffs need to do more than offer a computer and a link to the Internet. By applying some of the approaches suggested in this chapter, telecenters can help partners use communication resources *strategically.* Ultimately this will result in the telecenter being a more valuable tool in the community's effort to build a better society.