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In the history of communication in Nepal while the print media has been in existence for nearly a century since 1901, it was only half a century later in 1950 that broadcasting was introduced, and television came much later in 1985. But, video had come somewhat earlier in the mid-seventies primarily as a means of home entertainment in some affluent homes in and around Kathmandu. With the help of booster antennas, they could also watch programmes telecast by Delhi Doordarsan. Interestingly, the people of Kathmandu were first exposed to TV screen in early 70's when Maharshi Maheshyogi of the Transcendental Meditation fam brought some TV screens to show films on Transcendental Meditation.

The concept of Development Communication or Communication for Development was first broached in Nepal in the National Communication Plan, 1971 which resulted in then existing mass media primarily Radio Nepal, increasing the content of development messages in their output.

Communication for the community through the electronic media was attempted several years ago by establishing community radio listening centres in villages. Attempts to create community TV viewing centres were made on an adhoc basis by providing TV screens to a few villages around Kathmandu to enable people see Nepal Television's live coverage of the Third SAARC Summit in 1987.

Needless to say that the message of development to be communicated will have its desired impact only if the medium as well as the contents conform to the realities of the targetted audience. Like in other least-developed countries, a majority of the population of Nepal to whom the message needs to be communicated possesses what may be described as the traits of underdevelopment - poverty, illiteracy, ignorance. Given this situation, the advent of video was indeed a welcome development to people and organisations engaged in communication development or otherwise. Naturally, therefore video, which had already been proven as a powerful means of communication among the

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rural populace in many countries, has increasingly been making in-roads in the realm of development communication in Nepal. A tried and tested tool both for horizontal communication among target groups and vertical communication between the urban and rural or the centre and the periphery or between planners and decision-makers and the targetted populace its versatility could not escape the attention of any communicator. It has thus become almost a fad now with organisations dealing with development communication in one form or another to have this tool. Even organisations with resource constraints have been able to find willing foreign donors to help them.

As has been already said, video came to Nepal primarily as an equipment to show movies, both at private homes or commercially in video parlours or simply in the open-air evening shows in villages.

The use of video technology in development communication was pioneered in Nepal by the Worldview International Foundation. The WIF has been involved with Nepal's development communication since 1981 under an agreement entered with His Majesty's Government, Ministry of Communication.

The WIF has made a number of video production on various fields, such as agriculture, primary health, sanitation, nutrition, population, family planning, forestry, community development etc.. The production is undertaken for or in collaboration with various international or national organisations. There is no doubt that the WIF has played a major role in popularising video technology in Nepal.

Some important WIF development communication projects by using video technology in collaboration with other organisations are as follows:

- a. Women Development Project known as WIF/Canadian International Development Fund and WDS (Women's Development Section) of the Ministry of Local Development:

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The primary objective of the project was to support the PCRW (Production Credit for Rural Women) project by

- (i) facilitating communication between the project Headquarters in Kathmandu and the project site in Surkhet in Western Nepal.
- (ii) by facilitating community participation in development process and
- (iii) by producing educational materials for use in rural areas.

The participation and direct involvement of local women in producing Video-letters to communicate their problems and ideas, regular video screening to facilitate community participation and production of educational programmes by involving local women were the highlights of the project. Acclaimed as a successful example of the use of video in development, the evaluation and experience of this project has been recorded in a four part series 44 minutes long video film in English entitled "A Chance of a Lifetime" which is available for screening.

b. WIF/Agriculture Development Bank Project:-

Under this project three types of video films were produced.

- (i) for policy and decision makers,
- (ii) for interaction between trainers and trainees during training and,
- (iii) focussing on income generating activities suitable for farmers.

Altogether 50 video films were made between May 1986 and September 1989 under this project.

The Agriculture Development Bank is a major financing institution on agriculture sector. After having realised the importance of video programme in promoting the cause of the Bank, it established its own video production unit recently.

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Besides making films, the Bank also sends mobile teams to villages to organise community video shows. At the same time, the mobile teams also make films. The Bank now claims to have some 5 dozen video films on different Bank-finance sectors which apart from agriculture, also include health, family planning, energy and forestry. The Bank also lends its production to other interested parties.

With over ninety percent of its people depending on it for their livelihood, agriculture, the mainstay of Nepal's national economy, naturally gets the priority in development plans. The principal agency responsible for development communication in the field of agriculture is, of course, the Ministry of Agriculture, which has an agriculture communication division to oversee all kinds of agro-extension and communication works. Besides using Radio, and other forms of print media for a long time, the ministry has also attempted to use video in agro-communication. In recent years, the Division has made some video films highlighting success stories of farmers, or focussing on new technique of farming, horticulture, sericulture etc. These films are mostly used during the course of training organised for different groups - trainers, progressive farmers, village leaders or just ordinary farmers.

Since last year there seems to have been a serious effort on the part of the Ministry to develop communication in a planned manner. A project called "Strengthening Agriculture Communication Programme" has been in operation with funding from the United Nations Development Programme and the Ministry and the Food and Agriculture Organisation as executing agencies. The project costing around 700,000 US Dollars, aims at creating a multi-media centre for agriculture communication under the Ministry. One of the components of the project is to develop video production capability with necessary equipment and its own trained manpower. However, under the current phase of the project, community use of video constitutes only a minor component. The emphasis is on strengthening existing regular channels of radio and to some extent the TV.

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The WIF's contribution to video technology lies also in training manpower in video production. From 1982 to 1989, the WIF organised as many as 21 video related training programmes ranging from a one-day basic training to 6 to 7 month's advanced training including video equipment handling.

Health, sanitation, family planning and forestry are some other development sectors which have made use of the video technology in reaching the masses with development messages. On health and sanitation front, a project aided by the German known as Solid Waste Management Project has been making extensive use of video in cleanliness campaign in Kathmandu and the adjoining district Lalitpur since 1985. It has its own mobile teams which organise video-shows two or three times a month with the help local committees or self-help groups created in different localities of the districts. There are at present some 42 such committees which have proven an effective and efficient net-work to reach the targetted audience through community video-shows. The fact that the audience are largely city-dwellers, perhaps more literate than the rural folks, and easy accessibility and availability of equipment and choices of films have made the task of the project relatively easy.

The WIF with the help of UNICEF did a project in 1986 on propagating Oral Rehydration Therapy by applying communication technique in health education. The project adopted a multimedia approach with video as one. Video shows were organised by mobile teams in villages, particularly to women and children. Until the end of 1988, 900 video shows were organised in various parts of the country. A docu-drama named SANU became very popular and has also been telecast by NTV.

In the field of family planning, the Family Planning and Maternal Child Health Project (currently FP/MCH Division) of the Health Ministry has used video as a tool in its "Innovative Approaches of Communication" started in the late 70's. The Division claims to be the first to use video in disseminating health-related messages in Nepal. They have produced more than 20 video programmes or telefilms. But they are seldom shown to rural masses. To be true, people working in the field feel that the purpose that was envisaged by the people who started the 'innovative approaches' by utilising video has hardly been realised. On the contrary, available VCR's and TV's have been found used in showing or viewing Indian films or whatever is available.

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In the forestry and environment sector, Community Forestry and Watershed Management agencies have made use of community video through mobile teams on an occasional basis. Part of their stock is self produced and they also borrow from similar projects.

In Nepal's experience, the video can be used in evolving a system of what may be called "Democratic Development Communication" in the sense that the desired message reflecting the aspirations of the target of development come from the bottom upwards. It could be a great help to planners and decision makers to cater to the real needs of the people. But as a colleague working in health sector said, rather cynically, "When this very strong medium of visual communication was used in bringing people's voices to the planners and policy makers, the harsh realities in the ground faced by the vast majority of the Nepalese people were so acute that the latter almost killed the programme to use video for two-way communication between them and the people, as the medium was too bright to present the problems."

The difficulties faced in Nepal in community video may be as follows:-

- a. Non-availability of necessary equipment and technical know-how in the field offices on a long-term basis.
- b. Concentration of equipment and man-power in the centre.
- c. Unwillingness or reluctance of people with know-how to visit the interior or rural areas not linked by modern means of transport.
- d. Tendency to use the equipment in producing programmes highlighting the organisation's own success stories with a view to present to higher-ups, international gathering or to impress prospective donor agencies.
- e. Misuse or abuse of available equipment for personal use e.g. the TV sets supplied during SAARC Summit mostly ended up in private drawing rooms inaccessible to people whom they were meant.
- f. Temptation to use VC_ to see or show movies.

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Conclusion:

Several development-oriented organisations, both governmental and non-governmental seem to have been fascinated by this versatile modern tool of visual communication. Somehow they have been able to manage the needed hardware. Independent production capability has been established with a number of institutions having to their credit a large number of production. As a result of the growing use of this medium, in advertisement, entertainment and also in development communication a few commercial video production companies have also come into existence. However, community video as such may still be a far cry. At present, they are limited to shows organised by mobile teams as and when such teams visit villages to meet their projected target in annual programme. The other forum where these films are used for group viewing are during trainings, as a support material or side-attraction to the rural trainees.

In short, the potential of video has been realised; efforts have been made in earnest; resource is not an unsurmountable problem. Yet, the delivery is only marginal and there is a long way before the impact of the use of video is felt in rural Nepal. It is a consolation that it gives planners the time to cope with the expectations that video or any effective communication medium inevitably raises among the people.