

## Devcom and community organizing process

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**Devcom And Community Organizing Process**

**By**

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development communication

1436

10

## DEVCOM AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZING PROCESS

By:

MINA RAMIREZ

DEVCOM in this specific case study refers to the interactive process through which persons or groups relate or interrelate around a common concern, enabling the self-expression and self-determination particularly of the poor, deprived and oppressed people towards a quantitative, qualitative and structural change in their life.

One notices at the outset—that the foregoing definition is to be put in the context particularly of Third World realities which suffer from the following structural dimensions in communication processes:

- 1) monopoly of media resources;
- 2) media manipulation;
- and 3) one-way top-down communication.

These patterns in communication processes are correlative with unbalanced power and economic social arrangements evolving from feudalistic structures and long colonial status. The situation calls for more meaningful communication processes: decentralized people to people communication; a move towards empathy, truth and sense of responsibility; and a two-way responsive flow of communication. The main social fact that challenges communication is that a great majority of economically or socially marginalized people in the Third World have no access to media resources and have no control over them. This social fact becomes both the cause and the effect of powerlessness of people whose culture due to the dominance of the economic, political and social elite

- page 2 -

groups is suppressed leading to the worsening of marginalization. (See APPENDIX A)

DEVCOM within this specific context is thus focused on empowering the marginalized. That people may express themselves as communities or sectoral groups not only for them to be able to articulate their needs but also that they may contribute to meaningful societal development is a most essential objective of DEVCOM. COMMUNITY ORGANIZING on the other hand is a way by which the marginalized and poor people acquire power in a society. It is the thesis of this paper that DEVCOM and COMMUNITY ORGANIZING are twin aspects of the same process of TOTAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. Both lead to qualitative change in personal and institutional life of those involved.

DEVCOM as an interactive process among the poor, marginalized and powerless may be facilitated first by what is now known as Group Media. Defined, it is that medium which becomes a means for small groups to develop a critical attitude towards the reality of the self, the group, community and society through participation in group interaction. Group media taken as "form" has provided suppressed information to the information-poor through newsletters, soundslides, posters, drama, photos, comics, etc. (See APPENDIX B) As approach, group media has helped marginal groups to speak to one another, to articulate their thoughts and feelings. As process, it has been successful in community organizing. The messages being transmitted by the twin process of DEVCOM and COMMUNITY ORGANIZING may



- page 3 -

be amplified by mass media. To illustrate this process, I would like to cite the case of the small fishermen who in the process of organizing have been aided by a communication support technology.

#### THE CASE OF THE SMALL FISHERMEN

ASI runs a department involved in organizing the fishermen of three provinces. What propelled the fishermen to organize themselves is the issue of injustice in the lake. A 90-thousand hectare lake in the outskirts of Metro Manila prior to Martial Law in 1972 was a public fishing ground for the 70,000 people living around it. By 1978, it has become a private lake for influentials in government and big business. "Democratization and justice" in the lake was the cry from among small fishermen who have organized themselves to protest against this injustice. But for the issue to be broadcasted to various sectors of society, the communication capability of the fishermen especially of the leaders had to be assured. So what ASI offered as support communication technology is training the fishermen in the production and use of group media. Through the facilitation of the ASI staff, the fishermen leaders were taught how to handle their own newsletter; they were likewise taught to document their own programs and activities through photography; they were initiated into the rudiments of a participatory type of research which lasted six months after which through ASI's technical assistance they wrote their own script based on their own research for the making of their soundslide production which incorporated their own poetry and songs. Equipped

- page 4 -

with group media in which process their collective consciousness grew while becoming even more articulate in expressing their own problems the fishermen developed the needed self-confidence to broadcast their plight.

There was an instance when they called for a press conference to which the Federation of Rural Broadcasters of the Philippines obliged. Trained through a multi-group media approach, the fishermen told their story to press people as well as to T.V. and radio broadcasters. In telling their stories, they have been very much aided by some of their group media productions - posters, photos, the rural newsletters called "Alon", drama and soundslide productions. Their plight was thus disseminated through television, radio and print media.

Today, the fishermen are supported by broad groups of people from various sectors - farmers, laborers, students, professionals and church workers.

Control of communication processes was clearly demonstrated in the following incident: One of the broadcasters of Radio Veritas after several exposures with the fishermen, regularly communicated to fishermen in his early morning broadcasts. He would call on fishermen to articulate their plight over the radio. A time came when the administration of Radio Veritas had wanted to change the morning schedule of the program for fishermen to an afternoon program. It was quite suprising to discover that the fishermen - deprived of their favorite program immediately reacted to the change of schedule. About five hundred letters reached Radio Veritas to protest against the schedule. The administration had no other recourse but to return the program to its original sche-



- page 5 -

dule.

The above story is a demonstration of a communication process in which the fishermen felt they had a control. However this control could never have materialized without the catalyzing role of the ASI staff facilitating participatory processes in research, organizing as well as in the production and use of group media among the fishermen. It must be said that concurrently the fishermen leaders have gained the necessary self-confidence to confront the modernizing elite, whenever it is necessary to do so.

#### A REFLECTION

To analyze further this twin process of DEVCOM and COMMUNITY ORGANIZING, a study was done on the impact of the group media process as perceived by the small fishermen. This study came up with the finding that it is not so much a particular medium that is important in the social change process as it is the way in which that particular medium is used. What should be present in the process are the following elements: a) In the production of the medium, there should be a certain element of participation; b) the message should be reflective of people's realities (ex., lake issue); c) in the use of the medium, there should be a process of consciousness-sharing, organization building and expansion. All these elements become a natural expression of an evolving culture which would otherwise have been suppressed.

The participative element in the production,

- page 6 -

the manifest message being transmitted, and the use of the medium reinforce the humanizing character of the PROCESS which itself is a Message. (See APPENDIX C) It allows people to be conscious of the richness of their experience, of their inner resource to bring about qualitative changes in their life. It likewise humanizes also the organizing process. However, these human messages do not happen in linear terms for all individuals. It is dependent on each one's social experiences, on each one's innate capacity to understand happenings. In Appendix C is demonstrated how people have reflected on their growth process regarding the soundslide production as well as the various perceptions and understanding regarding their realities and actions taken by them.

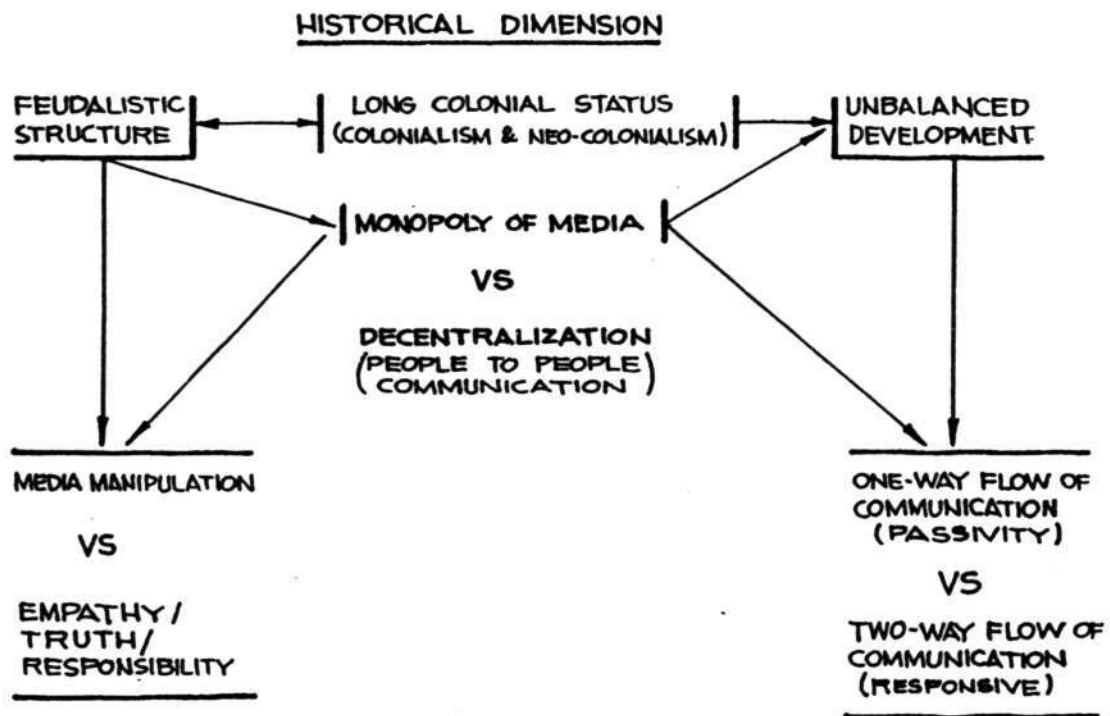
The role of the facilitator as a catalyzing agent is significant in any process of communication and organizing. In the ultimate analysis, it is the esteem and profound faith in the dignity of every person that becomes reflected in the communication and organizing process. On this conviction underlies humanizing message of development lived in the process itself by virtue of the participative element. Only then, I believe, will DEVCOM and COMMUNITY OR SECTORAL ORGANIZING empower marginalized groups to give expression to their aspirations as well as enhance their capability to determine the quality of their life and that of their society of which they are part.

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APPENDIX A

MONOPOLY OF COMMUNICATION PROCESSES  
FROM AN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE  
(GLOBAL & NATIONAL)



APPENDIX B

# TYPES OF GROUP MEDIA BEING USED IN THE PHILIPPINES

## legend:

- ⊙ Audio type
- △ Visual type
- Electronic type
- ⊙ Songs
- Poetry
- △ Dance
- ▲ Cartoons
- ▲ Photolanguage
- ▲ Posters
- ▲ Blackboard Bulletin
- ▲ Newsletter
- ▲ Comics
- ⊙ Creative Dramatics
- Puppetry
- ⊙ Cassettes
- ⊙ Soundslides
- ⊙ Radio
- ⊙ Movie Films
- ⊙ Video/Betamax

## COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE GROUNDS UP



APPENDIX C

A. A REFLECTION AMONG SMALL FISHERMEN  
ON THEIR ORGANIZING PROCESS AND  
THEIR DECISION TO DO A SOUND-  
SLIDE PRODUCTION\*

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NEW FISHERMAN MEMBER (NFM): How about the leaders?  
My question is, what really urged you to  
take part in making the soundslide pro-  
duction?

FISHERMAN LEADER 1 (FL 1): You see, for me, we  
were stressing even then, as part of our  
organizing work, the need for participa-  
tion. In anything we did, it was always  
in our mind, in the minds of fishermen,  
that it was important to do things toge-  
ther. So when ASICC suggested that we  
make the soundslide together, it was easy  
to accept.

FL 2 : Another thing, our program was to expand  
the organization. This is the thing that  
urged us, our desire to expand the orga-  
nization as soon as possible. Now, be-  
cause the idea was to open up the eyes of  
people, and we as leaders were not yet  
adept in expansion work and giving study  
sessions to people, we thought it best for  
a soundslide production to help us in our  
tasks. So we, as leaders then who were  
very eager to expand the organization  
right away, joined in the soundslide pro-  
duction. If it was possible, we wanted  
to finish it immediately - maybe in two  
months time - so we could use it right  
away. You see, the program was really to  
expand the organization, and the fisher-  
men during that time were very eager to  
get immediate results or solutions to  
their problems. We looked at the problem  
then merely as a problem brought about by  
the big fishpens. This is why we thought  
we could solve it right away.

\* Transcriptions of cassette tapes of a reflection process  
among small fishermen.



APPENDIX C ..... page 2

FL 3 : We can say that what paved the way for our decisions to have our own soundslide was the showing of another soundslide production about a problem in Mindanao ("Saging"/Banana). It seems we got the idea - on the part of the leaders of CALARIZ, our partners in the FCASI and in ASI - that by giving or sharing our own life stories - what has happened, what is happening, and what will happen - we could easily draw the attention of people to be one with us in our actions. In other words, the soundslide was an instrument (kasangkapan) - an instrument that can easily draw people's attention because, first and foremost, when we look at a soundslide presentation, the people we see there are people whom we see in reality, the things we see there are things that are really happening. On the other hand, if we just talk to people, it will take a lot of time for us to explain things. This is why the soundslide production is very effective as a tool for organizing people.

FL 1 : On my part, one reason why I really strove for the fishermen to involve themselves in the production was that during that time there were only a few among the leaders who could really speak to other fishermen. It was such that a whole group of leaders was needed to conduct sessions in other places. This was very slow. We figured that with the soundslide production, only one or two leaders would be needed. Further, it was much easier because people would see right away the true situation. That is why almost all of us here were involved. Even the old folk - they were really very helpful.

NFM : I can still remember, I was not yet a member of this federation, when the soundslide was shown in my place in Wawa (barrio). "Ang Dagat Ba'y Amin Pa?" - I saw that when I was not yet a member. And I asked myself, why is there a question - "ang dagat ba'y amin pa?" Now that I'm

APPENDIX C ..... page 3

involved, I realize that this was one way to reach people there and in other far-flung places - also part of expanding the organization - to bring to them a certain message.

FL 1 : So, you see, for Nory (NFM), this was one thing that made him be involved - when he saw the real situation of the lake. This is one of the reasons. You see, before, we thought everything was so simple. But when we showed the sound-slide . . . Even when people just heard the tape, there were already some who were crying despite the crowd - and the pictures were not yet there.

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NOTE: THE FISHERMEN, IN THEIR EAGERNESS TO EXPAND THEIR ORGANIZATION, DECIDED TO USE THE SOUND-SLIDE SOUNDTRACK RECORDING (AUDIO-CASSETTE MEDIUM) WITHOUT THE SLIDES. SLIDE SEQUENCING WAS NOT YET COMPLETE THEN BECAUSE SOME OF THE SLIDE ROLLS WERE STILL BEING DEVELOPED IN AUSTRALIA.

APPENDIX C ..... page 4

B.                   A REFLECTION AMONG SMALL FISHERMEN  
                      ON THE IMPACT OF THE PROCESS OF  
                      DEVCOM AND ORGANIZING IN THEIR  
                      LIFE

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- FISHERMAN 1 (F 1) : Another question in my mind, something which has been bothering me who has just joined the organization - this research we're doing now, this feeling of our problems, because it is just new . . . but the organization has been there since 1980, and it seems that up till now there has not been any resolution as to the problems of the fishermen. What I'm trying to say is, if the fishpens are our problem, up till now they are still there; there hasn't been . . . My only question is: When will we ever be able to bring about the true spirit of our coming together so that these things could be wiped out, and what is due us will be ours?
- F 2 : That question is addressed to us, to each and every one of us. When?
- F 3 : Don't be impatient. The time will come. They will do so voluntarily. (NOTE: TINGE OF SARCASM IN THE VOICE. SOME PARTICIPANTS GIGGLE, SOME LAUGH, SOME COUGH)
- F 1 : It's not that I'm impatient . . . but if . . .
- F 2 : Maybe, an easier way to explain this would be: It all depends on the people affected by the problem, how they look at the problem; whether they see it as a problem or not. And if they see it as a problem, how will they join in helping to solve it?



APPENDIX C ..... page 5

- F 4 : If they accept that they are also part of it.
- F 2 : But as long as more than half, as long as the majority are still not doing anything to solve the problem, the process of change will be very slow indeed. If we look at it, if we do our best to study the problem carefully, we will see that it is not only the fishpens that is our problem. We will see that the fishpen is but a leaf compared to our problems as small fishermen. Our problems are not only personal, but we nonetheless look for another problem to settle. This is the context in which we try to find solutions to our tasks.
- F 5 : This also means that we are not the only ones who have problems. Remember the time before we made our own soundslide production? We saw "Saging" (Banana) and other soundslide productions that were brought here (FCASI TRAINING CENTER). Our minds were opened to the fact that there are problems elsewhere. The problem therefore is much wider.
- F 4 : What is needed here is a wider kind of helping each other.
- F 6 : As to the question of Nilo, my answer is short. If we were to examine what is happening here in our country, people will have different thoughts. They will not be united. Because of this, no matter how hard the authorities may strive to do things which may be good for the country, they will not succeed. Those who may benefit from their good intentions are themselves not clear, and they have selfish feelings. So, through what we are doing now, coming together like this, it is clear that we are trying to form a certain consciousness. This is because we believe that people are of various kinds and attitudes. What is needed is to put these together, to give them form.

APPENDIX C ..... page 6

F 2 : A united form of consciousness.

F 7 : And also, what we are doing or this process in which we are taking part is just a trial. It is an experiment, and we are just testing them out (SIZING UP THE AUTHORITIES). Consider that when we compare our problem in the lake to the bigger problem. it is just a dot. So our focus is really on the bigger problem. That in the lake is just a dot. If we continue running our organization and expanding it, it is because we cannot as of yet see a solution to our problems. We had tried to do things and to air our grievances but, in spite of these, the authorities responded contradictively to our wishes.

F 4 : And those things, Noli saw. That is why he involved himself because he knew that he had to shed light to other people. (LAUGHTER FROM SOME PARTICIPANTS. LIGHT SIDE JOKES)

F 1 : That's true. I joined only last December 9 (1984). Now it was my first time to attend a seminar - that was in ASI. When I was there, my mind was still a blank to all these things because what was in it was just the lake. Why is it, I asked myself, that this lake which is small has so many problems? Why is it that the problems cannot be solved? It is possible, I told myself. But when I went home I came to think about it again, and I realized that our problem is not really in the lake. It went beyond it, it was vast. This was really a change in my thinking. There, my mind was opened. I think there is really a need, for example, in my place where people want to join, to respond to the questions that grow their minds. Like me, before I underwent study here, they may have the same questions.

F 6 : If we relate what has just been shared to what we are taking up now in this seminar, it would be easy to do so. May be this could be one indicator of change,



APPENDIX C ..... page 7

the one that was just mentioned -  
getting interested, being more open-  
minded about things.

FACILITATOR : Yes, that can be one indicator. Maybe  
we can discuss it some more when we go  
into our group discussions later. We  
will look at ourselves. First, the  
changes within us, then the changes  
taking place in the organization and in  
our relationship with other people. But  
so far, what has been shared or surfaced  
has served to enrich the context in  
which we will take these indicators of  
social change. These are very sponta-  
neous reflections.

F 8 : Reflections as a whole (GROUP  
REFLECTIONS)

F 9 : As a whole life (LIFE REFLECTIONS)

F 10 : At this stage, it seems to me that the  
problem which we are trying to picture  
here is too vast. But actually, it is  
just like illnesses that afflict man.  
Now, you're strong. The next moment,  
you get a toothache, then you might  
break some bone - and then other malad-  
ies may come. Why don't we put this  
problem of ours in its true context?  
For example, if your tooth aches, why  
don't you attend to your tooth? Take  
care of the tooth first - not to the  
other maladies that may come later,  
not to the earache, not to the illness  
of the eyes. Let's put things into  
focus, just like what we are doing now  
in trying to document what it is to be  
a fishermen. Let us be here first.  
Let's not go into discussing the nation's  
economy. Else, we will be looking into  
so many other illnesses. So let us  
start first with our illness here, in  
the lake as fishermen. This is what we  
should think of. After all, we have  
our own levels. There are farmers;  
they do what is within their capacity  
to do. We are fishermen; so let us just



APPENDIX C ..... page 8

do what is within our capacity to do. Now, so that we can be strong, what is needed is for us to inter-relate with one another. But let us not go into other's problems. Just take care of our own problems. For example, if the tooth aches, take care of the tooth. I think those foreigners are correct when they say: "We analyze and analyze to the extent that our minds later become paralyzed." I believe that. If the lake is our problem, then it should be the lake we should take care of.

F 4 : If we recall, we exhausted all avenues, tried all ways to respond to our problem in the lake. We sent a petition to the president. We talked to the Bureau of Fisheries. We talked to the LLDA (LAGUNA LAKE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES). But in all that we did, we saw that the root of our problem in the lake and sea is not here. It is there. That is why we came to realize the need to continue the expansion and firming up of the organization. We saw that this was the only way to help bring about results to our problems. This is not an easy task, because it really needs a big and far-reaching group. And what you said is right, that we should continue to think about ways to draw in more people in the fastest way possible so that we could grow and prosper.

F 11 : The fact is, we even talk about ecology. That is not a worthless topic to study with regard to the lake.

F 6 : I would just like to refresh the mind of our companion, Uring (F 10), with the fact that it is very hard for us, given our present circumstances, not to involve ourselves in national matters. When we consider it, and this surfaces in our studies, there are three aspects, it only means that we are not in that society. Therefore, matters pertaining

## APPENDIX C ..... page 9

to the lake and matters pertaining to the nation's economy are related. We are just using our own experiences in the lake as a tool for discussing national matters. If we do not give birth to a certain type of thinking, to an idea by which we stand, to principles we fight for, it would be very hard for us to convince other people. That is why when we say, "What is happening in the lake?", we are talking about matters pertaining to the nation's economy. That is one aspect of society.

- F 7 : Another thing, supposing we have settled the problems in this lake from which we earn a living; if there are still problems in our society, our problems would still not have been resolved. We, as people, have our rights, too, in the bigger society. If there are still problems there, these will also be ours.
- F 2 : What Ka Bert ( F 6) is pointing out, I understand - but we should not try to act like experts here. If whatever, it serves to remind us that if we try to resolve our problems here, whatever little we do will become part of the solution to the bigger task. If the farmers in their own places are doing something to solve their own problems, this will likewise be a contribution to the bigger task.
- F 6 : I'm really not trying to say anything. We're just clearing matters as part of our discussion on our country's ills. In actuality, do we as fishermen go into the work of farmers? Do we go into the work of laborers? What we're only doing is building relationships, linkages, because we believe in supporting each other. That is one way of strengthening our respective organizations.

APPENDIX C ..... page 10

But what we are really fighting for are matters pertaining to our own place where we earn our living. Where and how we earn our livelihood - that is what we are fighting for and studying. Now, how to bring about a victory - all these, as I mentioned before, are part of the three aspects of society. (CULTURAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC)

FACILITATOR : I'll cut in a bit here. Thank you for your rather passionate exposition. It seems, however, that we may be going a bit too deep for the task at hand. You may bring these matters up again during your group discussions. As of now, we are still on the subject of what to you, as fishermen, would be indicators of change. What has transpired so far has been an exposition and can serve as the context in which you will consider this task. So if there are no other questions or clarifications, maybe we could take a little breather before we continue.

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RURAL WOMEN IN PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION

( WORKSHOP )

PICTURE

00 minute 1 second -  
Picture of Chandrakala

14 seconds  
Integrated Hill Development  
Project (IHDP) Coordinator,  
Krishna B. Sharma.

33 seconds:  
Picture of Chandra Kala shooting

53 to 59 seconds:  
Video on irrigation

1 minute  
Picture of Participants at Workshop  
watching the video presentation  
(2 project people K-BIRD representative  
and Principal of Women Training Centre,  
Surkhet are visible.

1 minute 06 seconds  
SFDP Manager

1 minute 13 seconds  
In fore front watching video,  
Mr. Shyam P. Adhikari, Joint  
Secretary from MPLD and Additional  
Secretary, Mr. Yogendra Nath Ojha.  
Both serve on the Advisory Committee  
of the Project.

1 minute 17 seconds  
REpresentative from Women Dev.  
Section, Ms. Sangeeta Rana  
viewing video produced by  
project women.

1 minute 20 seconds  
Chandra Kala (embarrassed, because  
she is on video)

SOUND

Voice over of IHDP Coordinator:  
"Now, she might have made commitments  
to the women in her village but the  
problem is that there might be no budget  
for these needs or it might not be  
approved .....

✓Same voice:  
"Now, the thing is how can we, the bank,  
the Women Development Section, meet  
these needs .....

Background:  
Videos on community needs, produced by  
the women were screened at the workshop.  
Irrigation and health were focused on.

Background and voice on screen:  
"Irrigation is the major problem in  
the village. The villagers discuss  
their problems with the SFDP manager  
in Ramghat.

Voice  
"We need pipes to get the water up  
this valley."

Voice over Video  
Villagers are capable of understanding  
their problems and can work to find  
solutions.

1 minute 30 seconds:

Mr. Dil Bahadur Shrestha  
health materials produced by  
Ministry of Health.

Voice

"This is a ludo game which teaches  
about health and we use in our adult  
literacy classes."

Representative from UNICEF --  
Mr. Naresh Gurung and Principal  
of WTC, Pitambara, look on.

1 minute 38 seconds:

Picture of Participants, including  
Woman Development Assistant (WDA)  
Maya Gurung of Ramghat.

1 minute 46 seconds:

Dil Bahadur Shrestha continues  
explaining other materials.

1 minute 48 seconds:

Rati Dameni  
Laxmi Sunal from our project  
site in Ramghat.

1 minute 52 seconds:

Close-up of poster "Village Life"

Dil Bahadur Shrestha's voice:  
Explaining, "these pictures explain  
why we must keep our drinking water  
area clean."

1 minute 52 seconds:

Mr. Dil Bahadur Shrestha,  
K-BIRD Officer, Mr. Binod K. Shrestha  
and Naresh Gurung.

2 minutes 2 seconds:

Pavishara Sahi and WDA listening to  
Mr. Dil Bahadur Shrestha.

2 minutes 4 seconds:

Nandakali Rawat from Ramghat project  
with Japanese Volunteer at workshop.

2 minutes 7 seconds:

Dil Bahadur Shrestha.

"Thank you for listening."

2 minutes 10 seconds:

Nanda Sharma

Voice of Nanda explaining that,  
"we need irrigation urgently. Our  
food production has gone down because  
we have no water, and unless we have  
food -- a very basic need, we cannot  
do anything else -- people are moving  
away."

2 minutes 17 seconds:

Principal WTC, Pitambara Sharma  
and K-BIRD Administration Officer  
Delite Singh (in pink) on Advisory  
Committee of Project listening to  
Nanda.

2 minutes 32 seconds:

Participants from centre listening to Nanda.

2 minutes 39 seconds:

Naresh Gurung, UNICEF

2 minutes 51 seconds:

Nanda Sharma

Nanda Sharma

"With no irrigation we'll have no settlements left in about 2 years."

"I think the women's expectations are too high."

"But we need irrigation -- but, of course we know that the Ministry must approve and the budget must come from abroad."

3 minutes 13 seconds:

Chandrakala and Pavishara

Chandrakala,

"If we have have irrigation, we can grow more food."

3 minutes 32 seconds:

Landscape

If we have more food than we can eat we will sell the rest -- this will ensure a better future for our children and grand children. That is what we have come to tell you."