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Lozare, Benjamin V.

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By

Benjamin V Lozare

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Benjamin V. LOZARE

Assistant Professor and Institute Secretary of the Institute of
Mass Communication, University of the Philippines.

The basic framework of this paper is based mainly on three questions. Where are we now in understanding what communication has done to help promote child/family welfare in Asia? What new directions or ways can we consider to make communication contribute more effectively to the effort of enhancing child/family welfare in the region? And lastly, what concrete steps/actions can we take to realize a more effective communication support to child/family welfare programs?

Far from being definitive, this paper simply aims to stimulate discussion, present tentative ideas and raise further questions on the role of communication in promoting child/family welfare.

However, perhaps at the outset we need to arrive at a common understanding of two key concepts central to this conference - specifically the concepts communication and child/family welfare. Although definitions of concepts vary with time as well as with the manner and circumstances under which they are used, the lack of a clear agreement on what the two key concepts mean in this seminar may limit the effectiveness of our discussions.

Two basic questions therefore need to be raised at the beginning of this conference; firstly, what do we mean by communication and secondly, what do we mean by child/family welfare?

Communication is not easy to define since it has no territory that is exclusively its own. It is the fundamental social process that cuts across all disciplines. Communication has oftentimes been defined as an attempt to establish "commonness of ideas, feelings,

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or opinions". What is often emphasized is the art or science of "transferring meanings" and communication is usually restricted to a transmission-belt model where the movement of information becomes the central problem.

Recently, however, an emerging trend in thinking about communication is the increasing awareness that communication is not just the art of understanding and applying the spectrum of media techniques, nor is it merely a production process involving the systematic development of communication materials but that communication is also basically the sum of relationships between sources and receivers on the basis of which signs, symbols and messages are given meanings.

To stress that communication is basically a relationship has some added advantages. Indeed, the "message" point of view in the "transfer of messages" model of communication ceases to be meaningful when receivers are overloaded with information, or when new messages contradict existing beliefs and feelings. Awareness of the "relationship" dimension of communication on the other hand, makes us more sensitive to information patterns that are already possessed by target audiences and to the capacity of communication receivers to screen, select, process, evaluate and give their own meanings to messages received. The "relationship" angle also highlights the point that oftentimes what we do is more important than what we say. The communicator's problem then is not just to get stimuli so they can be understood and absorbed, but rather to understand the kinds of information and experiences stored in his audience, the patterning of this information, and the interactive resonance process whereby stimuli evoke this stored information.

For the purpose of this paper, we may use the following working definition of communication :

"Communication is the process through which signs, symbols, messages are shared by people - brought together in a relationship. These signs, symbols, and messages may be shared by interpersonal means or through the mass media".

Child/family welfare is also a concept that is not easy to define likewise due to its encompassing and all-embracing scope. Perhaps, an initial working definition may describe it as the state of well-being of the family as a whole and the individuals that comprise the family. Its essence is the satisfaction of the basic needs of the family which would include :

- 1) minimum requirements for a family's private consumption, i.e., adequate food, clothing, shelter, and certain household equipment and furniture;
- 2) essential services provided by and for the community at large such as safe drinking water, sanitation, public transport, health, day-care centers, and educational facilities;

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3) employment or means of livelihood yielding a sufficient level of income (Final Report of the Special Committee to Review the Philippines Population Program, 1978).

These working definitions may prove inadequate as our discussions unfold but perhaps they would suffice as starting points.

Where Are We Now ?

So far, what have we learned from research as well as from our experience in action programs about what communication can do to help promote child/family welfare in Asia ? This question is not easy to answer for several reasons.

One, although there exists a body of knowledge that incorporates varied Asian research findings and experiences which we can use as a working reference point for generalizations, Asia is still basically more of a geographical category than a cultural one. Not only are there vast differences within the region in the cultural context but also in the social, political and economic spheres. There is, therefore, the question of determining the validity and limitations of generalizations based on socio-political-economic specific findings and experiences.

Two, granted that there are grounds for mutual learning between Asian countries, we are somewhat limited in terms of making cross-cultural comparisons since there have been very little full-scale nation-wide communication campaigns (except perhaps in Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan) that have been systematically analyzed and evaluated on the area of child/family welfare. What we have are mostly project/program level campaigns that are limited in scope reach and which are often characterized by scanty resources as reflected in "compromise budgets", lack of trained communications personnel or lack of policy support. For instance, we do not have certain answers to questions like what would happen if resources for communication components of child/family welfare programs are doubled or tripled, or if they are cut in half ? (Schramm, 1971).

On the other hand, we do have certain answers to smaller but no less significant questions based on research done on pilot or experimental programs. We also have some data and insights from basic and applied research conducted in other related fields such as population, health, nutrition, and agricultural extension which could be used as starting points for further research and action on child/family welfare. Indeed, we may safely assume that what we have learned from other communication campaigns also applies to child/-family welfare communication programs.

In the past two decades, the communications model that has guided most of our communication support programs is the diffusion of innovations paradigm.

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In brief terms, the features of this model may be described as follows :

01. Wider diffusions of improved practices/technology which usually originate outside of the community, e.g., practice of family planning, modern techniques of child care, etc., contribute to improve standards of living.
02. Communication functions therefore to increase people's awareness and knowledge of improved practices/technology.
03. Increased awareness and knowledge are seen to lead to favorable attitudes towards the innovation.
04. And lastly, favorable attitudes are seen to lead to the adoption of the improved practices/technology and desired behavioral modes.

The dominant roles of communication in this model are to inform and educate, to motivate, and to encourage people to behave in certain ways.

Although the model has now been found to be inadequate in many instances (e.g., changes in knowledge do not always lead to changes in attitude nor do changes in attitudes always lead to changes in behavior), the model has provided us with some insights on the roles that communication play in social change. Due to time limitations, we can only share those insights and research findings which are most salient to child/family welfare.

- I. The role of communication in disseminating information intended to change peoples' perception, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors relevant to child/family welfare.

The dissemination of information has always been seen to be the major role of communication support programs. Depending on the type of and manner information is shared, communication has also acquired the new functions of being an "initiator, facilitator and legitimizer" of social change (Feliciano, 1980). The role of information dissemination can perhaps be best reviewed by going through research findings on the elements of the communication process. So far, we have found out that :

A. Source

01. In general, research has shown that personal communication is still the most effective form of communication, (although we lack studies on cost of effectiveness of personal sources vis-à-vis non-personal ones). The child/family welfare or the social worker, the doctor, the family planning motivator, the extension worker, the volunteer worker, etc., specially if supported and assisted by the mass media have been found to be effective not only in changing people's knowledge and attitudes but also their behaviors. Advantages

of personal contacts stem from immediacy of feedback, ability to fine tune messages suited to the particular needs of audiences and the capability to enhance behavioral changes without necessarily instituting convictions. The factors that contribute to the making a good source which have been identified by researches conducted in the Philippines, India, Korea and Taiwan include : credibility, communication skills, dedication and sincerity, sociability, positive character as well as mental traits, peeriness, availability, authority position and positive physical attributes (Alfonso, 1973, Schramm, 1971, Ocampo, 1973, Lacson, 1976, Mercado, 1973, Abaya, 1972).

02. Based on experience in family welfare action programs, we have also learned that sources, whether personal or institutional must have a clear sense of relevant direction. Sources must also have a strong will to communicate and must provide adequate resources to support the communication effort. Indeed, organizing an effective communication activity requires above all management or policy commitment - a commitment of adequate resources and commitment of purpose and intent without which no communication activity has been found to succeed (Parkinson & Rowe, 1977).

B. Messages

01. Both research and experience point to an important principle of communication, that is, messages must be based on clear communication objectives. A realistic set of objectives is vital to successful communication but, unfortunately, many child/family welfare programs have not yet set themselves communication objectives. Perhaps, one explanation is that to know how to reach somewhere, we have to know with some accuracy where we are at present and oftentimes we just guess this, and not surprisingly, we usually guess wrong (Parkinson & Rowe, 1977). Indeed, from the Korean and Taiwan experiences, mass media programs were most effective when communication objectives were specific and program-related (Sweeney, 1977).

02. Both research and experiences in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and the Philippines point to the need to identify a hierarchy of messages, from the key message points to the less important ones. By doing so, scarce resources are easier to allocate when we consider delivery of messages. When we know what is more important, and what is the logical sequence of messages, then we find it easier to package the key message points in different forms for repetition and reinforcement. We have learned the hard way that having a plethora of messages without much regard to their varying importance oftentimes lead to diffused and confused efforts.

03. If key messages are to be received well, research has also indicated that contradictions must be minimized if not totally avoided. In the Philippines, for instance, family planning messages encourage smaller families while at the same time commercial advertising of household goods show large Filipino families in their ads. Similarly, in many Asian countries, ministries of health try to encourage breast feeding but their efforts run counter to advertisements of milk products that discourage the practice. We may also ask

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whether there are conflicts in family values and children's behavior encouraged by the entertainment media and commercial advertising with those that we would like to promote. In this sense, public and private multi-agency cooperation and coordination are necessary to ensure unity of purpose and message (Lozare, 1980).

04. The chief appeals used effectively thus far in child/family welfare programs are those that emphasize individual interests rather than social or national ones (except in Singapore and Peoples' Republic of China). In many family planning campaigns, for instance, the basic themes of health, happy families, economic welfare proved more appealing than the themes of national and social development (Schramm, 1971).

05. All messages and communication materials need to be pretested with a sample of the intended audience before resources are invested in a major communication campaign. It has been observed by communication scholars that oftentimes, most materials are produced as part of "crash programs" with insufficient attention being paid to planning, preparation and testing. Although pretesting does not guarantee the production of perfect communication materials, pretesting can be an effective cost-saving device and since resources are often scarce, we may find simple pretesting methods and procedures an excellent help in managing our resources (Mercado, 1974, Feliciano, 1974, Schramm, 1971, Glattbach, 1977).

06. To communicate well, especially with people who are not highly motivated to learn, it is necessary to package information in an entertaining way, to hold their attention and interest by presenting messages in terms and context that are familiar to them (Ong, 1977). A good guide to consider is the acronym S-P-E-E-D which stands for the essential characteristics of good communication materials. S-P-E-E-D notes that communication materials must be :

1. Simple
2. Practical
3. Economical
4. Effective
5. Duplicable (Valbuena, 1980)

07. A distinct symbol can be an effective communication tool as is the Red Triangle in India which is closely identified by people to be associated with family planning. In large or major campaigns, a distinct signature color or logo provides unity to various communication activities. Private sector communications have long relied on developing "brand image" to achieve mass consumption of goods. Indeed, no organization or movement is complete without its own logo (Glattbach, 1977, Schramm, 1971).

C. Channels

01. Multi-media combinations, e.g. radio combined with listening groups and forums, radio-TV programs combined with telephone information services and mailings mass media plus home visits, have been found to be significantly more effective than single media use (Glattbach, 1977, Schramm, 1971).

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02. Although the use of multi-media has always been the advice of communication scholars and researchers, the media situation in most Asian countries, however, is such that the problem is often not the making of right choices between a number of media but of utilizing in the best possible way whatever media are available (Fugelsang, 1973).

Since resources are usually inadequate to buy media space or time on a continuing basis, the strategy that has often been used is to make full use of "free space or time" through radio-TV plugs, press releases, reports or articles on research findings, integration of family welfare messages in radio-TV dramas, comics and other entertainment media. Maximum use of existing organizations such as mother's clubs in Korea, women's organizations in Taiwan, local civic organizations in the Philippines has been found to contribute a lot in stretching limited communication budgets.

03. The effectiveness of field workers are greatly enhanced if they are closely supported by other channels of information and persuasion (Schramm, 1971). The experience of the Institute of Mass Communication in family planning communication highlights the importance of prompt and continuous distribution of support materials in the field and the provision of clear instructions regarding the use of such materials (Varona, 1972). Synchronizing the efforts of field workers and the mass media have greatly enhanced the effectiveness of communication programs.

04. Radio is undoubtedly the most extensive and popular medium in Asian countries. As such, radio has been widely used in promoting family planning, nutrition, health and agricultural extension in many less developed countries (UNESCO, 1972).

Some of the major lessons we have learned from research regarding the use of radio include the following :

1) A Bombay study noted that selecting broadcast time appropriate to intended audiences is crucial to the success of any radio program.

2) The compartmentalization of radio programming into talks, dramas, musisc, news, etc. should not deter the use of radio for development and social welfare programs. The opportunities to "infiltrate" development messages into all programs can be easily seen if we perceive all programs as educational (Quarmyne, 1976).

Thus, disc jockeys, scriptwriters, directors and producers, news commentators, song composers are all potential carriers of child/family welfare messages.

05. Localizing of messages and programs is crucial especially in areas where there are large cultural and social differences (Adhikarya and Radel, 1975).

D. Television and Film

Although these two media have been associated with urban and upper class audiences, both have been noted to be significant sources of information on child/family welfare.

The Indian Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) is perhaps the largest attempt to harness television for development purposes and scholars predict that the barriers to the use of television and film such as high costs of production, limited reach, dependence on electrical power could soon be overcome.

The most significant fact about television is not so much its great power but its rapid growth. In a span of four years, development communicators in Taiwan saw television grow from being a minority channel to the second most important after radio (Glattbach, 1977).

High movie attendance noted in countries like Hong-Kong, Taiwan, the Philippines, Iran suggests the huge potential of this medium especially for young and unmarried couples who would soon start their own families.

A UNESCO meeting in 1972 reported that film is not fully exploited for development purposes due to problems of content, distribution, hardware expense and maintenance. Against these, the potential of film is recognized in terms of the following: it is mobile and therefore can penetrate deep into rural areas, it is repeatable, and can also be easily "plugged in" to television (Glattbach, 1977).

E. Print Media

01. The advantages of permanence, reader's control of exposure (which allows repeated exposures), easy storage and retrieval, make print still the backbone of communication.

Limitations due to low literacy and difficulties in distribution especially for archipelagic states still plague the use of print but these have not deterred the print orientation in many Asian countries. Feature stories, special articles, editorials, news columns, photography, cartoons, special supplements are still the basic tools of the information officer.

Although print is generally regarded as primarily a channel for reaching elite audiences, the use of comics in the Philippines to promote family planning, nutrition and health has shown the potential of print to reach audiences from lower income levels. The Indian press has long taken an interest in the population issue and the City States of Hong Kong and Singapore have also involved the press extensively in their family welfare programmes (Glattbach, 1977).

F. Posters

01. Experience regarding posters is mixed. Its early use in Taiwan and Korea received negative feedback from fieldworkers who said that people did not want them on their walls, children tore them down, they were easily defaced and destroyed by weather, and people were not attracted to them anyway (Glattbach, 1977). Although research has shown that these complaints arose from lack of pretesting and placing artistic considerations over effectiveness, posters can be effective if produced carefully.

China has made effective use of posters which are handwritten and homemade. Taiwanese car stickers and window stickers have also been found to be less prone to vandalism.

02. Posters must have a clear purpose rather than have a generalized "shotgun" approach. They must also have good design, be pretested to intended audiences rather than to program administrators and must be displayed according to the principles of good communication (Berndtson, 1975).

G. Folk Media

01. K.B. Mathur of UNESCO was reported to have told a 1974 meeting in New Delhi that "behavioral change directly attributable to mass media varies from 10 to 15 per cent and this percentage goes up to 54 per cent when mass media is integrated with extension work". He suggests that behavioral change could well be increased further if folk media is also integrated with the two (Glattbach, 1977).

02. Folk songs, dances, mimes, shadow and puppet plays like the Wayang Kulit, folk theater have generated some excitement for development communicators. The issue now emerging, however, is how to use these channels without severely altering these traditional media forms. Since folk media is now being threatened by the modern mass media, it has been suggested that their threshold for absorbing new information appears quite low (Glattbach, 1977).

03. Incorporating traditional media into modern mass media programs offers new life to dying traditional arts. However, training of artists to act as extension workers have also been found useful in extending the reach of development workers (Glattbach, 1977).

H. Receiver

01. Careful identification of receivers into primary, secondary and tertiary audiences is an accepted communication principle. However, there is some evidence that still a great number of communication materials are produced for a "nebulously defined general public". Perhaps for reasons of saving costs, the same communication material is sometimes given to students, teachers, parents, businessmen, farmers, etc., regardless of their different education background and interests (Philippine Bureau of National and Foreign Information, 1978).

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02. Research has also shown that the effectiveness of communication is influenced by the amount of participation in the communication process allowed of audiences (Mercado, 1978).

03. Likewise, the effectiveness of communication is also influenced by the group to which the audience belongs or wants to belong. Peer group pressure has been identified as a powerful influence on behavioral change (Mercado, 1973, Alfonso, 1973).

04. There seems to be a need to broaden the scope of family welfare communications not just to women but also to men who have been found to be the decision-maker in Asian families (Lozare, 1972, Schramm, 1971). This finding appears to be quite valid not only for family planning but also to health and nutrition and child welfare.

Where Do We Want To Go ?

II. The role of communication in finding out people's problems, needs, perceptions and priorities - some research issues.

It is a truism that effective communication is a two-way street. Research is the listening ear of communicators but research, however, has not given us all the answers to our problems. The communication research process itself is now the center of controversy and many issues still remain unresolved. Among the research issues relevant to child/family welfare are the following :

01. At present, we still lack precise and systematic indicators of family welfare which could give us an idea of where we are and how much we have accomplished in a given time. As one sage put it, "it does not matter how many arrows are fired if we do not know whether they hit their targets' or not".

02. Many research studies are simply on the level of program reporting. There seems to be a lack of systematic evaluative studies particularly on cost-effectiveness. Data on cost-effectiveness are largely unavailable and when they do appear, it is not always clear what costs were included. There is therefore a serious gap in program information and planning in this area (Sweeney, 1977).

03. In most studies, specially those based on the diffusion model, the unit of analysis is often the adult individual. Families, groups or the child are rarely used as units of analysis. To paraphrase a Latin American communication researcher, "biologists study ants in colonies, in recognition of their social structures but social scientists study human beings as individuals as if they are not social animals at all".

04. There also seems to be a lack of process-orientation in most communication research although we always refer to communication as a process. Many existing studies are one-shot, cross-sectional surveys, and there are very few longitudinal studies that consider changes over time.

III. The role of communication in integrating the contribution of diverse public and private agencies concerned with the promotion of child/family welfare.

Rare is a communicator who looks beyond the role of communication in disseminating information. And yet we have a crucial but neglected problem of integrating or coordinating the contributions of diverse public and private agencies in meeting development needs (Kearl, 1976).

Child/family welfare is a broad concept and there are numerous agencies, both private and public, who work for its realization.

The challenge to organizational and management communication, therefore, is how to weld these agencies into a force that would maximize the use of scarce resources, minimize competition, correct overlapping functions and reduce irritants and conflicting interests. Contradicting messages emanating from various sources are not only wasteful but also confusing to target audiences.

IV. The role of communication in organizing indigenous resources that would contribute to the promotion of family welfare.

Change, innovations, technology have always been seen to emanate from outside a given community. Change agents are frequently seen to know more than their target audiences and thus are seen more as teachers than as organizers. Another challenge to organizational and management communication then is how to tap the vast human resources that exist in all Asian countries and transform these large but unorganized masses of people into an effective and efficient machinery for development.

There have been much talk of teaching people to help themselves in the past decade but with the exception of the Chinese experience, we still have to see a large-scale mass organization of people harnessed to the goals of national development and welfare.

What Needs To Be Done ?

Clearly, much needs to be done if we would make communication support to child/family welfare more effective. Since the conference aims to address itself to this question, we can only start the ball rolling with a few suggestions.

01. Innovative thinking and not innovations seems to be the key word. We need innovative ideas on how to stretch a communicators' limited budget. As has been said before "while a communicators' budget is limited, his imagination should never be". We also need innovative ways of maximizing the use of available through scarce materials and of stretching their lifetime as long as possible. We need innovative ways of using indigenous resources and talents which may just be lying around us.

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02. One concrete step that we can take is to learn from lessons in other related fields of communication such as marketing and advertising. The demand orientation of marketing which stresses needs of consumers is in sharp contrast to our supply orientation which stresses delivery of information regardless of need.

Social or development-oriented advertising has so much to contribute in our efforts to promote child/family welfare. Sitting down with professional communicators in the advertising and marketing field may perhaps enrich our experiences as well as extend our resources. For instance, a sincere presentation and appeal to radio-TV directors, producers, scriptwriters, comic writers for assistance may not exactly fall on deaf ears if we play our cards well.

03. Along the areas for further research, perhaps we can put more attention in understanding the following :

- a) how to develop indicators of child/family welfare that would serve as our guides for program planning and evaluation;
- b) group and family communication dynamics and decision-making;
- c) structural and institutional variables that influence child/family welfare - e.g. legal structures, policies, existing social structures of rewards and punishments, educational systems, etc.;
- d) careful matching of receivers, messages and media.

04. On the action level, we can work for closer coordination between communication support and services delivery, between media and field workers, between the various communication and service delivery programs of different agencies concerned with child/family welfare. Perhaps, a worthwhile goal to aim for is the development of a national program for communication support of child/family welfare activities.

In summary, we may well consider going beyond the information dissemination role of communication in promoting child/family welfare. Communication can also contribute significantly in integrating and coordinating the diverse contributions of public and private agencies engaged in the promotion of child/family welfare. The role of communication in organizing indigenous resources and talents to help meet the needs of child/family welfare programs is perhaps the greatest challenge to us communicators.

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