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Title	AMIC-KLH-EWC Workshop on Environmental Communication : Singapore, Apr 1-3, 1985 : [background note and introduction]
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**Background Note
&
Introduction**

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BACKGROUND NOTE - WORKSHOP ON "ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION"

SINGAPORE, APRIL 1-3, 1985

I Introduction

The state of the environment in Asia is becoming increasingly critical due to rapid population increase and the demand for economic growth. The danger of degradation is apparent in almost all aspects of the environment, although attention has been focused on mainly the problems of the tropical rain forest and endangered species. Public attention has been lacking on such problems as inappropriate use of land, degradation of shrimp and fisheries grounds due to the destruction of mangroves and coral reefs, the wide practice of swidden decreasing water resources, erosion, industrial and sea pollution, and poor environmental health conditions resulting in high infant mortality rates, etc.

Clearly, any effort to improve environmental conditions and prevent further deterioration needs to be supported by effective communications. However, communications in this area have not been very successful due to the special nature of environmental problems, e.g. the abstract nature of the ecosystem, longer time and space dimensions, vested interests, the economy of the environment, deep seated values and traditional practices, etc. These and other problems need to be examined in order to design appropriate environmental communication efforts.

This seminar is an effort towards finding possible solutions to problems specific to environmental communication. The initiative to organize the seminar has been taken by the Ministry of Population and Environment (KLH) of Indonesia, Institute of Culture and Communication and the Environment and Policy Institute of the East-West Center and Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC).

II Objectives

The general objectives of the proposed seminar are to examine environmental communication from various viewpoints, including social sciences.

Specifically, the seminar aims to:

1. Review problem areas, efforts and studies in environmental communication, particularly in ASEAN countries.
2. Foster close co-operation between development and environmental experts, communication specialists and the media
3. Recommend further research, policies and action programme necessary for effective environmental communications.

III Participants

The seminar participants are mainly drawn from the ASEAN region. There are 24 participants from the environment, development communication, mass media and government information sectors.

Additional resource persons have been invited, especially researchers who have conducted studies in this area and information specialists with an outstanding record of experience. The United Nations Environment (UNEP) and the Environmental Unit of ESCAP are also actively participating in this project.

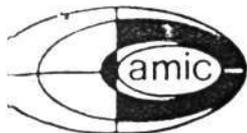
Four groups were identified as vital elements in building environmental communication networks in Asia and beyond, namely:

- (a) Environmental correspondents and broadcasters;
- (b) Citizen Action Groups, otherwise known as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO'S);
- (c) Government Environmental Agencies; and
- (d) Scientists and Researchers.

Having identified the four groups of communicators it was recommended that national networks comprising these elements, and each having a focal point, be set up and they in turn be linked to a regional focal point.

It was recommended that the national focal points identify and prepare listings of the four groups of communicators to facilitate the organisation of the networks and the flow of information.

The UNEP was identified as a potential funding source, while ESCAP has indicated that it is fully supportive of this idea and would render its assistance in every possible way.



ASIAN MASS COMMUNICATION RESEARCH AND INFORMATION CENTRE
39 NEWTON ROAD, SINGAPORE 1130, REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

30 March 1985

Dear

WORKSHOP ON ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION

Welcome to Singapore!

Enclosed are copies of the Workshop Programme and List of Participants. You are requested to complete registration formalities at the AMIC Secretariat, directly across the road, between 8:30 and 8:45 am.

Kindly hand over the text of your talk/presentation at the time of registration. Likewise, if you need any equipment (VCR, slide or overhead projector) please make this known at the same time.

Please let us have a short C.V. to enable the Chairman of your session to introduce you.

Lunch has been arranged on all 3 days at the Hotel Royal. On Monday evening there will be a Dinner Reception at AMIC. Buffet breakfast will be served in the Coffee Shop from 7:15 to 8:30 am. A special reduced rate of S\$ 9.00 only (inclusive of taxes) will be charged. Do avail of this facility.

With best wishes for a comfortable stay,

VIJAY MENON
Secretary-General

VM/h1

PS : The session when your talk/presentation is scheduled is marked on the programme attached.

INTRODUCTION

The papers in this collection were presented at a workshop on Environmental Communication held in Singapore, April 1-3 1985. The Ministry of Population and Environment (KLH) of Indonesia, the Institute of Culture and Communication and the Environment and Policy of the East-West Center (EWC) and the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC) took the initiative to organise the seminar.

It was felt that the state of the environment in Asia-Pacific had already reached a critical stage due primarily, to rapid population increases without a corresponding growth in the economic sphere. By the year 2000, if remedial steps were not taken, the situation would get out of hand.

Environmental degradation is evident in practically every area. Public attention needs to be directed towards such problems as inappropriate land use, degradation of fishing grounds due to the destruction of mangrove and coral reefs, erosion, industrial and sea pollution.

Obviously, any steps taken to improve environmental conditions and prevent further deterioration need to be supported by effective communications. Unfortunately, communications in these areas have not met with much success due to the nature of environmental problems. This is basically the result of the abstract nature of the ecosystem, longer time and space dimensions, vested interests, the state of the economy, cultural values and traditional practises. In order to design the right approach to environmental communication, these and other problems have to be examined.

This workshop aimed at finding possible solutions to these problems through an honest sharing of ideas and experiences, some of which have been tried and found to be workable. It also sought to examine environmental communication from various view points.

Specifically, the seminar aimed to:

- . Review problem areas, efforts and studies in environmental communication, particularly in ASEAN countries.
- . Foster close cooperation between environment and development experts, communication specialists and the media.
- . Recommend further research, policies and action programmes necessary for effective environmental communications.

The participants were mainly drawn from the ASEAN region. They represented various agencies - environment, development, mass media and government information sectors. In addition, resource persons were also present, especially researchers with firsthand experience

of conducting studies in this area together with information specialists. UNEP and ESCAP were also represented.

Papers presented were informative and generally dealt with current issues. Speakers voiced their opinions frankly, with regard to the shortcomings of existing environmental communication efforts. Almost with one voice they agreed with Dr Emil Salim who said in his keynote address that "It is of great importance in Asia-Pacific that we closely link environment with development".

Another view point that kept recurring was the realisation that for environmental communication to be really effective the rapport between the government and the people must be improved. At present the reality is that people often misinterpret what the government says and the government may on occasion fail to understand the people. Often there are problems that impede the bottom-to-top flow of information especially when communication occurs between groups holding different sets of values and beliefs. It is understandable that messages often get misrouted and misinterpreted.

The workshop ended on a positive note with participants agreeing that specialists and officials in this field should continue seeking better standards in environmental communication not only in their own countries but within the region as well, because environmental problems know no national boundaries.

It is hoped that the publication of these papers will serve to bring to the attention of all, politicians, government officials, religious leaders, NGO's and the public at large, the fact that we have the power to protect our environment for future generations but this can only be done through systematic and effective environmental communication.

Kathleen M Chopard
AMIC, Singapore
April 1985