<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>Seminar on the Impact of New Communication Technologies on Rural Society in Asia and the Pacific: Jakarta, September 13-14, 1993: [draft report and summary of workshop]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Labrador, Virgilio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Citation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>URL</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10220/1307">http://hdl.handle.net/10220/1307</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rights</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Draft Report
and
Summary Of Workshop

By

Virgilio Labrador
Introduction

The convergence of computers and communications and the merging of broadcasting and advanced telecommunication technologies are rapidly altering the media environment on a global scale. New communications technologies are changing the way people live and relate to each other in society as well as their perceptions and values. The new communication technologies has made an impact on the emerging economies of the Asia-Pacific region, one of the fastest growing areas of the world. However, development has been uneven in rural areas, where an estimated 70% of the Asian population live.

To be able to understand more clearly the impact of the new communication technologies on rural society in Asia and the Pacific, and their role in promoting rural development, the Information Research and Development Agency of the Department of Information of the Republic of Indonesia and the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre with the support of the Asia Foundation, organized a two-day seminar attended by over 100 policymakers, administrators, scholars and communication professionals representing government, non-government and private organizations from 13-14 September, 1993 in Jakarta, Indonesia. The seminar provided a forum for discussion of important issues concerning new communications technologies and rural society in Asia and the Pacific.
The New Communication Technologies and their Impact on Rural Society

The new communication technologies include telecommunications equipment and services, computer hardware, microelectronics, mass media via satellite, cable, fiber optics, video text, teletext and various database and information services. The advances in digital technology has made it possible to transmit voice, data and images via the telephone line or the radio spectrum, cable, microwave, fiber optic and satellite links. The new information technologies are interactive, allowing two-way communication and can be "narrowcasted" to a specific audience.

Broadly, the impact of the new communication technologies can be categorized under the following headings:

Economic--telecommunications is an engine of growth for rural society providing more efficient communications and exchange of information. However, the urban focus of infrastructure development has increased the urban-rural gap. Many areas of the rural Asia are lacking in even basic telephone services.

Social--the new communication technologies are changing the way society is organized. The thrust towards an information economy has shifted the focus from manufacturing to services. The new information economy requires more and more advanced skills from the workforce. The introduction of new communication technologies are likewise opening up new two-way channels of communication between government and their constituents. Advances in communication makes it possible to reach rural areas with greater speed and efficiency.
The new communications technologies have also proven to be
effective channel for disseminating socially-relevant messages
for family planning, nutrition, health, sanitation and other
developmental programs.

Cultural--the increased breadth and scope of broadcasting
over a large area via satellite spilling over national borders
has raised the issues of foreign influences on local culture and
the threat to cultural identity. The broadened reach of mass
media poses a greater tendency towards homogenization and
integration.

Policies and Strategies

Policies towards the new communication technologies have not
kept up with the rapid pace of technological development. In the
race to develop more sophisticated systems, the socio-cultural
impact of the new technological systems has often been over­
looked.

Certain factors need to be considered when implementing new
communication technologies:

Appropriateness--the technology should be attuned to local
conditions and should be based on the actual needs of the rural
society.

Adaptability--ease of adaptation of the local society to the
new technology must be considered. It must be in harmony with the
indigenous culture.

Low cost--the high cost of new communication technologies is
a hindrance to its application in rural areas. Whenever possible
locally available materials and labor should be utilized and
creative ways of funding should be explored.
Interconnection—the technology should be able to interface with other networks adapting open standards.

Access—the technology should be made available to target beneficiaries, involving them in every stage of the planning, implementation and evaluation process. New communication technologies should promote greater access for disadvantaged groups in the rural areas to information relevant to their needs.

Attention should also focus on the software aspect of new communication technologies. Obtaining state-of-the-art hardware would be a waste of resources if not supplied with adequate software such as local and regional programming and data information.

There is a need for a systematic approach to new communication technology policy. The legal and regulatory framework for the new technologies should be formulated in line with development priorities.

The implementation of new communication technologies should be synchronized and integrated with other development programmes.

Recommendations
- Further research should be undertaken on the socio-economic and cultural impact of new communication technologies in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Follow-up workshops should be conducted on the planning and implementation of development programmes utilizing new communication technologies.
- Cooperation among government and non-government organizations should be encouraged through joint programmes and exchange of information and experiences.
SEMINAR ON "THE IMPACT OF NEW COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES ON RURAL SOCIETY IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC"

13-14 September 1993
Hotel Wisata International
Jakarta, Indonesia

SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

Introduction

This report summarizes the proceedings of the Seminar on "The Impact of New Communication Technologies on Rural Society in Asia and the Pacific" held in Jakarta, Indonesia on 13-14 September 1993. The seminar was organized by the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC), in cooperation with the Research and Information Board, Department of Information of the Republic of Indonesia (DEPPEN) with the support of The Asia Foundation.

The objectives of the seminar was to discuss the social, economic and political impact of the global trends in the development of new communication technologies on rural societies in the Asia-Pacific region; to highlight through case studies, the successful choice and utilization of specific communication technologies; and to examine innovative ways of harnessing the potential of new communication technologies for rural development.

More than 100 policymakers, administrators, scholars and communication professionals representing government, non-government and private organizations participated in the two-day seminar. The seminar programme included panel discussions and case studies of experiences from countries such as Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines.

(see Appendix B for the conference programme and Appendix B for the list of participants).

Monday, 13 September 1993

OPENING CEREMONIES

Mr. Harmoko, the Indonesian Information Minister, inaugurated the seminar. In his keynote address, Mr. Harmoko emphasized the instrumental role of new communication technologies in the development of rural societies, while pointing out that the new technologies can also have a negative impact on the rural population. He, however, stressed the need to emphasize the advantages of the new communication technologies for rural development while reducing its negative effects.

Mr. Vijay Menon, AMIC Secretary-General, in his welcome remarks, said that there is a wide gap between the development of rural and urban areas in Asia. He said that while the rural sector accounts for over 70% of the population in most Asian countries, its access
spilling over national borders has raised the issues of foreign influences on local culture and the threat to cultural identity. The broadened reach of mass media poses a greater tendency towards homogenization and integration.

The report also noted that policies towards the new communication technologies have not kept up with the rapid pace of technological development. In the race to develop more sophisticated systems, the socio-cultural impact of the new technological systems has often been overlooked. Certain factors need to be considered when implementing new communication technologies:

**Appropriateness**—the technology should be attuned to local conditions and should be based on the actual needs of the rural society.

**Adaptability**—ease of adaptation of the local society to the new technology must be considered. It must be in harmony with the indigenous culture.

**Low cost**—the high cost of new communication technologies is a hindrance to its application in rural areas. Whenever possible, locally available materials and labour should be utilized and creative ways of funding should be explored.

**Interconnection**—the technology should be able to interface with other networks adapting open standards.

**Access**—the technology should be made available to target beneficiaries, involving them in every stage of the planning, implementation and evaluation process. New communication technologies should promote greater access for disadvantaged groups in the rural areas to information relevant to their needs.

The report also said that attention should also focus on the software aspect of new communication technologies. Obtaining state-of-the-art hardware would be a waste of resources if not supplied with adequate software such as local and regional programming and data information.

The report further said that there is a need for a systematic approach to new communication technology policy. The legal and regulatory framework for the new technologies should be formulated in line with development priorities. The implementation of new communication technologies should be synchronized and integrated with other development programmes.

The report also listed general as well as specific recommendations, including the following:

- Further research should be undertaken on the socio-economic and cultural impact of new communication technologies in the Asia-Pacific region.

- Follow-up workshops should be conducted on the planning and implementation of development programmes utilizing new communication
installing low-cost switching systems in rural areas using local available materials. Reliability of the telecommunication equipment was a vital consideration in the rural areas. The introduction of new technologies enabled them to overcome the obstacles and provide reliable telecommunication service to rural areas in India.

From the lessons in the India experience, Dr. Pradhan proposed certain criteria when considering the technology to be implemented in rural areas: adoptability; low cost; indigenous; emerging key technology and high export possibility.

Sarkar then presented India’s experience in another new communication medium: teletext—a one-way, receive-only, data service aired through normal broadcast channels. With the increasing broadcast bandwidth being made available by satellites in the Asia-Pacific region, there is a huge potential for data broadcasting services. India has tapped this largely unutilized resource for providing information such as train reservations, road accidents, elections and even the results of national medical examinations, where there is a critical need for advance information. Sarkar pointed out that teletext is a relatively more economical medium to developed than two-way videotext, for instance, and more appropriate in the Asian context, especially in the rural areas.

PANEL DISCUSSION II:

Dr. S. Budhisantoso, Director for History and Traditional Values of the Indonesian Department of Education and Culture in his presentation on “The Impact of the Implementation of New Communication Technologies on Rural Society in Indonesia,” noted the vital role played by satellite broadcasting in culturally integrating the diverse Indonesian population. Satellite broadcasts played a part in promoting one national language in Indonesia, which also promoted a national culture, he said. The introduction of satellite technology to Indonesia’s predominantly rural society, however, has also resulted in some negative effects, particularly in the entry of foreign cultural influences.

Dr. Mubyarto, assistant to the state minister for Development Planning, cited the basic underpinnings of Indonesia’s modernization thrust, which is based on the state philosophy of Pancasila. He described Indonesia’s economy as having an essentially dualist character: a modern rational economy operating side-by-side with a traditional, moral society. He cited the gains achieved by the Pancasila-guided modernization program of Indonesia: such as the reduction of the number of people below the poverty line from 60 percent of the population in 1970 to 15.1 percent in 1990. Dr. Mubyarto, however, cautioned that with 27.2 million people in Indonesia still living below the poverty line there is still a lot of work to be done. The new communication technologies can play an important role in reaching the rural poor spread out over Indonesia’s 13,000 islands.

Dr. Juan Jamias of the Institute for Development Communication of the University of the Philippines, discussed the role of the new communication technologies in the development of cultural identity. As in the Indonesian case, he said, the introduction of new communication technologies can have both positive and negative effects. The introduction of television in rural villages in Indonesia, for instance played a very important role in educating the people, especially in the promotion of the national language of Bahasa Indonesia. The negative effects include the imbibing of urban consumerist values among the rural population. Dr. Jamias, however, pointed out that communication technology is a
neutral medium—it largely depends on the users of media to be discerning and critical of its products.

Dr. Samsudin Rahim of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, narrated the experience of Malaysia in utilizing new communication technologies to uplift the situation of ethnic Malays, who constitute the majority of the population in Malaysia's rural areas. Dr. Samsudin attributed the success of the New Economic Policy in improving the situation of the ethnic Malay population to the "political will" of the government and the existence of "facilitative support mechanisms." He stressed that for any policy to succeed, there must be sufficient political will on the part of the implementing institution to overcome the necessary obstacles to change.

During the open forum concerns over the negative impact of the introduction of new communication technologies on rural societies were expressed. Some suggested that policies should be formulated to regulate the potentially negative impact of new communication technologies. Dr. Pradhan, however, pointed out that policies have not been able to keep up the developments in technology. There is a need, therefore to come up with a policy agenda for the new technologies. Mr. Cassim also pointed out that the problem does not lie so much in the new technologies but in the capacity of rural societies to withstand their negative effects.

Tuesday, 14 September 1993

PANEL DISCUSSION III:

Dr. Yulpita Rahardjo, Head of the Research and Development Centre of the Indonesian Institute of Science, presented the findings of the research study on the "Uses of Mass Media by Rural Societies in Indonesia." According to their study, mass media is still viewed mainly as a medium of entertainment rather than an educational medium.

Manich Sooksimchitra, editor of the Thai Rath Daily, outlined the various changes affecting the print medium as a result of the influx of new communication technologies. He cited the case in Thailand, where two major newspapers--The Nation and Krungthep Thurakij--are now sending whole pages of news via satellite from Bangkok to regional centres. New communication technologies are also changing the way the news is reported. Mobile phones are now being used by reporters to transmit news instantaneously. As in Indonesia, he noted that there have negative cultural effects of mass media in rural Thailand.

Dr. Ofelia Valdecanas, social mobilization officer of UNICEF, Manila, presented the concept of social mobilization as a strategy to involve various sectors in society towards a certain goal. She cited UNICEF's experience in mobilizing the government, non-government and private sectors in the Philippines in order to work together for child survival and development. Multi-media strategies were adopted using print, broadcast and community media to reach out to various sectors and disseminate information on immunization and other concerns. Dr. Valdecanas posed the question of who are we communicating to when we use the new information technologies and for what purpose?
PANEL DISCUSSION IV:

Mdm. Fatimah Ahmad, manager project planning, Telekom Malaysia, presented Malaysia's efforts to bridge the urban-rural divide by implementing a national programme aimed at increasing telephone densities in rural areas in Malaysia. Mdm. Ahmad stressed the importance of providing quality and cost effective telecommunication services to the rural areas in order to raise the productivity and efficiency of the agricultural, industrial, commercial and tourism industries. This would lead to the narrowing of the gap between the development of the rural and urban areas.

Dr. Hashami Buhari of the Department of Community Health of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, on the other hand presented a specific case in the application of communication technologies in a health information campaign in Malaysia. Various communication media including print, broadcast and video were utilized in an anti-smoking campaign. New technologies are also being used in Malaysia for training of medical extension workers. Interactive video, teleconferencing and computers are now used in the three medical schools in the country, according to Dr. Buhari.

Dr. Napaporn Ajchariyakul of the Open University of Thailand presented a model whereby new communication technologies such as satellite can be utilized for distance learning for people in remote rural areas.

CONCLUSION

A committee chaired by Prof. Ina Suparto, composed of 14 members was formed to draft a seminar report outlining the main findings of the seminar and recommendations for further action. The draft report was presented to the entire body for their comments.

According to the report drafted by the committee, as amended by the discussions from the floor, the impact of the new communication technologies can be categorized under the following headings:

**Economic**—telecommunications is an engine of growth for rural society providing more efficient communications and exchange of information. However, the urban focus of infrastructure development has increased the urban-rural gap. Many areas of rural Asia are lacking in even basic telephone services.

**Social**—the new communication technologies are changing the way society is organized. The thrust towards an information economy has shifted the focus from manufacturing to services. The New information economy requires more and more advanced skills from the workforce. The introduction of new communication technologies are likewise opening up new two-way channels of communication between government and their constituents. Advances in communication makes it possible to reach rural areas with greater speed and efficiency.

The new communications technologies have also proven to be effective channel for disseminating socially-relevant messages for family planning, nutrition, health, sanitation and other developmental programs.

**Cultural**—the increased breadth and scope of broadcasting over a large area via satellite
to such basic services such as health, water and sanitation is alarmingly inadequate.

Mr. Dewabrata, Head of the Research and Development Board of the Indonesian Department of Information, cited the need for forums such as this seminar, which is the second to be organized jointly by AMIC and DEPPEN, in order to share ideas and experiences on the impact of new communication technologies on rural societies. He pointed out that one of objectives of the seminar is to obtain meaningful inputs that can be utilized for development programmes aimed at rural societies.

PANEL DISCUSSION I:

Monte Cassim of the United Nations Centre for Regional Development in his presentation on "New Communication Technologies in the Asia-Pacific: Trends and Developments" stressed the need for a wholistic approach to policy-making for the new communication technologies. He said that the new communication technologies should promote access and participation among disadvantaged groups in the rural areas.

Cassim emphasized that policies should guarantee "basic universal access" to new communication technologies. He said, however, that rural development policy should determine the future of rural societies and not telecommunication policy. A rural development policy will lead to increased demand for new communication technologies which will in turn raise the development potential of rural societies.

Cassim mentioned three areas where rural telecommunications development could make an impact on development policy: 1) national/regional policy making database development; 2) regional/rural enterprise development and 3) rural human resources development. He cited the example of UNCRD’s Business Information and Support Systems (BISS) programme, being implemented in eight Asian countries, which is using information technology to strengthen the economic base in rural areas by providing improved access to market information.

Ir. Safwan Natanagara, vice-president of INDOSAT Corporation, presented his paper on "The Development and Prospects for the Implementation of New Communication Technologies through the 21st Century," in which he outlined the major developments in communication technology from the telephone to the multimedia technology available today. He narrated the history of Indonesia's growing telecommunications industry, which he says lags behind the west by only 3-5 years. Safwan differentiated the emphasis of communication technology development in the developed countries and developing countries like Indonesia. He said that in the developed countries the emphasis is on refining existing systems for higher capacity, high definition and combining separate systems. In the developing countries, where telephone densities are low, the emphasis is still in providing basic telecommunication services. Safwan, however, believes that the introduction of new communication technologies in developing countries have the potential of "leapfrogging" the stage of development to the level of developed societies.

Safwan's presentation was followed by Dr. Bishnu Pradhan and Sumitro Sarkar of India's Center for the Development of Telematics (CDOT) and the National Informatics Centre (NIC), respectively. They presented India's experience in applying new communication technologies in rural areas. Dr. Pradhan narrated India's experience in
technologies.

Cooperation among government and non-government organizations should be encouraged through joint programmes and exchange of information and experiences.

Specifically, the report recommended the following:

1. The adoption of social mobilisation as a strategy, should be explored, in utilising new communication technologies in achieving development goals, particularly for children and women.

2. Capability-building in the management of new communication technologies and from there could be used alongside traditional communication technologies, should be strengthened.

3. The countries of the Asia-Pacific region have a common problem in relation to telecommunication, especially rural communication. The experience of the Centre for Development of Telematic (CDOT) in India, in the development and deployment of rural telecommunications technology appropriate to the region, needs to be shared by member countries. The Centre could therefore be considered a modal agency for this purpose in so far as the regions rural telecommunication technology development is concerned.

4. Applications to mitigate inter-regional disparities and establish sustainable practices between urban and rural regions; (between regions now linked to the global economic systems and those which are not), such as UNCRD’s pilot experiments on Business Information and Support Systems (BISS) programmes should be investigated and efforts made to see how such applications can be disseminated to other countries in Asia and the Pacific.

5. Applications in human resource development programmes, particularly distance-learning programmes directed at rural society, should also be investigated with the implications they hold for capacity building in rural areas, thereby raising their development potentials.

6. Investigations on the modalities of ensuring “fair access to all” is imperative if the new telecommunications technologies are to fully realise the promise they could bring to rural areas and, in particular, socially or economically or culturally disadvantaged groups, with detailed studies on regulatory mechanisms, pricing policies and burden sharing strategies among public sectors, private sectors and beneficiary communities are transparently spelled out.

7. Identification of specific on-going development programmes or existing investments on which new telecommunications applications for rural development such as CDOT’s indigenous technology and development can
"piggy-back" in order to minimise costs and maximise benefits.

8. A survey should be made of the total number of Television channels available through satellites in the region, and whether or not they use the available VBI capacity. If not, the individual broadcasters should be approached to ascertain if they have any technical or regulatory objections to data broadcasting using this idle capacity. The resulting report will be a starting point for systems and applications develops from both the government and private sectors to enhance data broadcasting services in the region.

The evaluation from the participants were generally favourable. The Indonesian participants specifically expressed their appreciation for the foreign participants' inputs and sharing of experiences.

In sum, the seminar met its major objectives. A forum was provided for the discussion of important issues and sharing of experiences on a very timely and important subject. Concrete recommendations for further action have been generated as a result.
AMIC Secretary General, Vijay Menon, giving his opening address.

Seminar participants during one of the panel discussions.
Dr Alwi Dahlan moderating the panel discussion on "The Impact of New Communication Technologies on Rural Society".

Sumitro Sarkar speaking on "New Communication Technologies in the Asia-Pacific: Trends and Directions".
Information Minister Harmoko with AMIC Secretary-General, Vijay Menon, during the opening ceremonies.

Panel Discussion on the "Use of Mass Media in Rural Society".