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Opening Address

By

D L Umali
OPENING ADDRESS

By Dr. D. L. Umali*

On behalf of FAO, I would like to thank the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand in general and the School of Journalism and Mass Communication, Thammasat University in particular for graciously consenting to be our host in this four-day planning workshop.

I would also like to thank you all for accepting our invitation to take part in this activity.

As some of you may be aware, FAO has been involved in rural communication ever since it was organized by member-countries in 1948. Such involvement gained sharper focus when the Development Support Communication (DSC) Branch was established in 1967 as an integral part of FAO's Information Division with the express mandate of giving communication assistance to rural/agricultural development projects around the world.

As part of its assistance, the DSC Branch has been involved in developing a selection of relatively low cost media for communicating with largely illiterate rural audiences. Audio cassettes for example, have been used as aids for extension workers in Afghanistan. In Peru, small gauge video programmes have been utilized by extension workers involved in an agrarian reform project. But of all the low cost media, the filmstrips

*Dr. D. L. Umali is FAO Regional Representative for Asia and the Far East. This opening address is presented on 19 March at the FAO-AMIC Workshop on Low cost Audio-visual Aids, Surawongse Hotel, Chiangmai, Thailand
have, by and large, gained the most widespread use. A large collection of subjects ranging from improved fertilizers to new irrigation methods and from fish farming to child-spacing have been taught to farmers and fishermen by extension workers via filmstrips.

Since the later part of 1978, FAO, through its DSC Branch has started to evaluate the impact of its own low-cost media. How effective are they in teaching? How adaptable are they in other settings and across countries? These are the questions of most concern in these studies. For example, a study is now going on in South Yemen to test the effectiveness of a selected number of filmstrips as teaching aids. In Peru, the small gauge video project is now being evaluated. In the Philippines, some preliminary work has been done in testing the adaptability of two population filmstrips among urban and rural audiences.

This week your task is addressed to the question of adaptability with particular reference to filmstrips dealing with population education themes. Having been produced for certain countries, for users and audiences of these countries, how adaptable are they for users and audiences in other countries?

I believe a programme for research and evaluation activities within countries and among countries of the region is needed for these filmstrips.

FAO's DSC Branch has a modest amount of funds available to support these activities which is intended to be complimentary to country population education projects and to regional activities such as the on-going ASEAN Multi-Media Population Communication Project.

Your deep knowledge of the countries where you work will greatly contribute to achieving this task in a manner relevant not only to the countries concerned but to this region as well. Your diverse backgrounds - ranging from agriculture to journalism, from the social sciences to population education - will add a rich and well-rounded character to the results we hope to accomplish during these four days.

In closing, may I again say welcome and may I wish you a successful workshop.