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Genesis And Development Of Communication Planning
In Southeast Asia

By

Edwin Emery
Genesis and Development of Communication Planning in Southeast Asia

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Dr. Edwin Emery

Genesis and Development of Communication Planning in Southeast Asia

For three decades there has been international interest, demonstrated largely through UNESCO, in the state of the mass media throughout the world and in the role of communication in modern society. For two decades there has been attention focused on communication and the mass media in Asia. And in the decade just closing there has been concern with the problems of communication policy making and planning at the national level. It was my assignment in this paper to review briefly the trends and major events in communication planning, in reference to Southeast Asia.

In reviewing the literature and preparing the bibliography which accompanies this paper, I noted that there were three major areas of communicator interest that caught the attention of both journalists and governments in the decades of the 1950s and 1960s. These were rural communication, family planning, and development communication. As conferences were held, papers written, and policies adopted, it became clear that there was urgent need for communication policy making and planning at the national and even regional level if the potential for communication support of rural programs, family limitation, and national development were to be realised.

I also noted that there were three major organizations playing roles involved in this story: UNESCO throughout the three decades, the East-West Center's Communication Institute for two decades, and the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC) this decade. There are other groups which enter the script: the Confederation of Asian Journalists, the Development Support Communication Service in Thailand, the Institute of Mass Communication of the University of the Philippines, the National Broadcasting Training Centre in Malaysia, and the Indonesian Journalists Association, to name a few. One should add for their tangible support Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the International Development Research Centre, and the governments of Singapore and
Sri Lanka, the latter being the first of the Asian nations to sign an agreement with AKIC.

UNESCO was preoccupied during the 1950s with the compilation of information about the mass media, the news agencies, and journalists and communicators. The decade opened with the appearance of the first edition of World Communications. Press, Radio, Television, Film, a country-by-country report. It was a far cry from the 533-page fifth edition which appeared in 1975 with a 200-country survey. News Agencies. Their Structure and Operation was published in 1953, Training of Journalists in 1958, and Professional Associations in the Mass Media in 1959. That same year Unesco foreshadowed its expanding role in communication study when it published An Indian Experiment in Farm Radio Forums, by J.C. Kathur and P. Neurath, among its papers.

The 1960s were ushered in with a Unesco seminar in Bangkok in January, which produced a set of papers, Developing Mass Media in Asia. The next year Unesco was able to report to the United Nations on Mass Media in the Developing Countries, with recommendations for communication planning and development goals. The ensuing debate resulted in Unesco's 1964 publication of Dr. Wilbur Schramm's ground-breaking book, Mass Media and National Development. This brought Unesco squarely into the national development communication movement which had taken its place alongside the rural and family planning programs.

Film and broadcasting were very important in Third World planning and Unesco produced several studies: Film Production by International Cooperation (1962); Social Education through Television—an All-India Radio–Unesco Pilot Project (1963); Space Communication and the Mass Media, the report of a 1963 Paris conference; Communication in the Space Age. The Use of Satellites by the Mass Media (1968); and Radio and Television in the Service of Education and Development in Asia (1967). The decade closed with Mass Media in Society. The Need for Research (1970).
In the Asian milieu, a 1964 conference convened at the East-West Center's Communication Institute produced a group of papers edited by Daniel Lerner and Wilbur Schramm for a 1967 book, Communication and Change in the Developing Countries. It was so successful that a similar group was reconvened in 1975 to produce the articles for Schramm and Lerner's Communication and Change, the Last Ten Years—and the Next, a current "must" in university classes and research seminars. The unexciting but vital area of documentation was covered in a 1970 East-West Center development communication conference.

In Southeast Asia, the University of the Philippines' Institute of Mass Communication held its first International Conference on Communication and National Development in 1967, with the cooperation of Unesco. The same institution was deeply involved in family planning communication. After 1969 a series of papers appeared by Erskine Childers from the UN Development Support Communication Service in Bangkok, also heavily involved in family planning. The government of Indonesia and the FAO sponsored a 1969 National Seminar on Rural Communications and Farm Broadcasting, in Jakarta, that formulated a policy for Indonesia. Agitation began in 1969 for a National Broadcasting Training Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, a project realised by 1971. That year the International Broadcast Institute and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung sponsored an Asian Broadcast News Workshop in Tokyo in support of the Asian Broadcasting Union.

Four years earlier, in December 1967, the German foundation had organized another meeting of mass communication specialists in Tokyo. It passed a resolution suggesting that a regional clearing house in mass communication be set up for Asia. And on February 8, 1971 the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre was registered in Singapore as a non-profit regional organization. AMIC initially was Unesco-encouraged regional documentation centre, but it soon expanded into research, training and publications. Like Unesco did on a world scale, AMIC first had to compile
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mass media information on an Asian scale. AMIC's first director, Dr. Y.V.L. Rao, initiated a 1971 traveling seminar to acquire papers on mass communication in Asia. During 1972 regional seminars were held on Communication Teaching and Training in Den Pasar, Kuala Lumpur, and Colombo, leading to a climactic conference in December 1972 at Seoul bringing together 44 participants from 15 countries and producing blueprints for journalism education and communicator training in Asia. AMIC's major 1973 effort was a Conference on Communication and Change in Rural Asia, held in Bangalore. The need for workshops and courses to fill in gaps in communication knowledge and practice among both media people and scholars occupied AMIC until early 1976, when it held a Study Seminar on Development Communication in Singapore, in cooperation with the ASEAN journalists (now the Confederation of Asian Journalists). This led to a December 1976 10-day Bangkok Seminar on Development Communication and the first AMIC Regional Conference on Development Communication Policies and Planning which met in Manila in May 1977. Attended by delegates from ten countries, it drew up basic recommendations including the setting up of national development communication councils by each country's governmental, educational, and media groups. Coordination of governmental and private media efforts was pinpointed as a major problem. AMIC and the Confederation of Asian Journalists (CAJ) meanwhile signed a charter of cooperation and at a meeting in Kuala Lumpur in September 1979 laid plans for cooperative training of media professionals from the five ASEAN nations, at a common training centre.

Thus Southeast Asians and their neighbors, interested in the mass media and their relationship to society, had gone through a series of experiences bringing them to the threshold of interest in communication planning. They had cooperated in encouraging more and better media facilities, better trained journalists, and the use of the media in efforts to promote family planning, improve rural life, and support national development policies.
Other events, meanwhile, were occurring under the sponsorship of East-West Center and Unesco that form the background for our current meeting here in Solo. East-West Center held a 1972 seminar on the role of government information in national development, including papers read by delegates from nine Asian countries including all of ASEAN but the Philippines. It followed in 1975 with a conference in communication and change in the developing countries and a 1976 conference on communication policy and planning for development.

The East-West Communication Institute's major efforts in forwarding communication policy and planning was the publication in September 1978 of Planning Methods, Models, and Organization: A Review Study for Communication Policy Making and Planning. Dr. Syed A. Rahim was project coordinator for the study, done under a grant from Unesco. The five parts of the 260-page oversized mimeo volume and their authors are: Organizational and Methodological Aspects of Communication Planning (Syed A. Rahim); Economics of Communication (Donald M.C. Lamberton); Long-range Communication Policy and Planning (Dan Wedemeyer); Urban and Regional Planning Methodology: Lessons for Communication Planning (John Holmstrom); and Educational Planning: Lessons for Communication Planning (John Middleton and Barclay Hudson).

At Unesco, the 16th general conference in 1970 was active in discussing communication problems. That year Unesco called a meeting of experts on the role of the mass media in a multi-racial society—a topic of major interest in much of Asia. It followed with a meeting on management and planning of new communication systems in 1973. The same year it held a seminar on instructional training techniques for broadcasters at the National Broadcasting Training Centre in Kuala Lumpur, followed by a seminar on the training of communication planners in KL in 1974. The effort was to put the subject in the Asian context. In 1976 Unesco launched a major effort in communication policies and planning by sponsoring a top-level intergovernmental meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica,
Two years later, in 1978, a similar conference was held in Kuala Lumpur for Asians.

In its October, 1978 Report on progress achieved in the development of mass communication systems, Unesco pointed out there needed to be a realistic understanding of what planning can achieve. The basis of the Unesco communication planning programme lies in treating communication as a resource which may be conserved, planned and allocated within the development planning process. Planning, obviously, can proceed more surely in a society whose organization is centralized, or when it is geared to developmental requirements. The Unesco conferences reaffirmed the principle of freedom of expression, and that communication systems, policies, and planning should recognize the existence of both a public and a private sector.

Unesco in 1977 established a 16-member International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, chaired by Sean MacBride of Ireland. The commission issued an Interim Report on Communication Problems in Modern Society in September 1978 and is compiling 100 supporting papers, not all yet issued as of October 1979. The final report of the commission will be debated by the 1980 Unesco general conference. Among the topics covered are the international news agencies, international and national regulatory trends, the "new world information order," communication in developing nations, communication planning, communication training and education, the new technologies, and communication in traditional societies.

Among the topics attracting current attention, involving communication planning, are the use of satellites (such as the SITE experiment in India and increasing use in Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore), the development of an Asian news agency, the ASEAN national news agencies cooperative plan, and exchange of educational experiences. As delegates from the various countries represented here present their reports and papers, some of this background may apply.
Additional Bibliography

In addition to bibliographical references in the text of this article, the following will be of interest:


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Sommerlad, E. Lloyd, National communication systems: some policy issues and options. Unesco, 1975 (paper).


UNESCO, Revised guidelines for economic evaluation of national communication systems (from KL seminar papers). Unesco, 1974 (paper).


TE: Copies of the papers listed, and also of books, are available by photocopy, microfilm, or microfiche, from AMIC.

International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems:

Copies of its Interim Report, its 100 supporting papers, and of its forthcoming Final Report to the 1980 UNESCO general conference may be obtained by request from Executive Secretary, International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, Unesco, 7, place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris, France.