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Working Group Reports
WAYS OF INCREASING THE ECONOMIC VIABILITY
OF THE RURAL MEDIA THROUGH PROFESSIONALISING
MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

Report of Working Group No.1
18 January 1989

The Group examined basic issues in the professionalisation of management in the context of finding a framework for institutions involved in training and advice to the rural media in Asia.

While acknowledging that in a small newspaper managers need to have a working knowledge of all the processes under their control, i.e., printing, layout, editorial skills, and need to ensure that these keep pace with the development of new technology, the working group feels that the greatest impact can be made on individuals in short-term training periods by concentrating on values and attitudes of mind.

For that reason, the group concentrated on identifying a range of attributes thought desirable in terms of maximising the newspapers influence on the community, increasing community awareness of the role of the newspaper on their daily lives and developing the publication's credibility, without which newspaper influence is considerably diminished.

- contd. -
The group thought that primarily managers should be able to open their minds to new ideas, should be able to conceptualise their role as one of being socially responsible to the community being served and taking a certain moral responsibility for the impartiality, accuracy and multi-faceted nature of the information printed.

The group felt that managers embracing these concepts had an equal responsibility to impart them to their staff. Particularly on the editorial side. A motivated, unified staff approach to the community role of the newspaper was essential.

Equally it was believed that the quest for new ideas and approaches, the ability to analytically examine the newspaper's operation, also involved the search for solutions to management problems related to profitability, production and distribution. It was thought that a good manager would, for example, not be content with being in situations in which the newspaper is allowed to be the victims of larger forces outside his control, such as lack of access to advertisers, but would actively seek solutions such as making contact with the advertising world and marketing the newspaper as a desirable outlet. Open-mindedness also includes the search for innovative solutions to financial problems.

- contd. -
While it is difficult to quantify the outcome of this 'state-of-mind' approach to economic viability, the group is confident that the improved outlook for rural media is related to their being perceived as reliable vehicles for relevant and credible information for local communities. Appropriate motivation by media managers and their staff is the key to this.

* * *

Neville Petersen
(Chairman)
PROMOTING ACCESS TO AND PARTICIPATION IN THE MEDIA

DEFINITION

We define access as increasing availability of the media to its audience and the ability of the audience to gain access to the media. We define participation as making the media more responsive to its audience.

I RURAL PRESS

1. Promoting availability

In exploring methods to increase availability of the rural press, the low purchasing capacity of readers should be recognised.

   a) Governmental and Non-Governmental Subsidies

   b) Private Marketing Efforts

   c) Improving Marketing Strategies, Regional Editions, Specialised Markets

2. Increasing Access

   a) Letters to Editor

   b) Hot-line

   c) Action Line

   d) Writing Competitions

   e) Inviting local views

   f) Publishing Locally relevant Stories
3. Increasing Participation
   a) Sponsoring Events
   b) Public Shareholding
   c) Feedback Forums
   d) Ombudsmen
   e) Feedback Surveys
   f) Encouraging Local Writing

II BROADCAST MEDIA

1. Increasing Availability
   a) Expand Reach of Radio Broadcasting
   b) Development of Low-Cost Radio Sets and Lowering of Import Tariffs on Receiving Sets
   c) Establishment of Radio Community Centres

2. Promoting Access
   a) Promoting Local Productions
   b) Ensure Appropriate Timing of Broadcast
   c) Development of Community Radio

3. Promoting Participation
   a) Talent Scouting
III. TELEVISION

Same as Radio. However, in light of economies of scale, emphasis should be placed on radio broadcasting as opposed to television broadcasting in most Asian countries. The simultaneous development of television and radio broadcasting often dissipate resources from radio broadcasting to expand its reach in rural areas.

IV UNCONVENTIONAL AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA

1. Explore potentiality and possibility.

2. Coordinate with Non-traditional Media
ADAPTING NEW TECHNOLOGY TO RURAL MEDIA

The group feels that in bringing new technologies it is wiser to catergorise the rural media into the following:

1. Print media
2. Electronic media
3. Non Conventional media

Print Media

Refers to newspapers and magazines. The following technologies are thought to be useful to accelerate the development of the rural print media:

a. Establishing a desk top publishing (DTP) centre where rural newspaper groups can share the resources available. The DTP centre can be located in the most strategic town or village in a given area where the concerned groups find it most convenient to go to.

b. Establishing a central printing centre compatible to the DTP technology.

c. Providing VCR facilities in the DTP centre so that the rural print media people can take photographs from it so that rural newspapers and magazines can have relevant photographs to make the publications interesting and attractive to the intended readers.

d. Where possible to provide fax facility.
Electronic Media

Electronic media refers to radio and television. In nearly all developing countries radio and television stations are fully government owned. The group feels that where possible governments should improve the quality of their broadcasting. This is especially for radio which should be received by all the people since with the advent of the transistor radio nearly everyone can afford to own radio. To improve quality of reception the governments should where possible change to FM as better receptions can lead to more listeners.

Non Conventional Media

a. Governments and relevant organisations should provide VCR and monitor to village community hall.

b. Governments and relevant organizations should provide the relevant agencies communicating with rural people with appropriate vehicles equipment with VCR and other relevant communication technologies that could attract the rural people to come and listen or view.

c. Providing relevant communication officers with video cameras so that they can produce quickly video programmes relevant to the intended viewers.