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Welcome Address

By

Vijay Menon

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you, on behalf of AMIC, to this Workshop on Social Marketing or Public Education for Development.

A Chinese philosopher has said that "a journey of a thousand miles begins with one small step". Our presence here today is proof of those wise words.

The first of our Social Marketing seminars was held in Bali, Indonesia in December 1982. Six months later, we met in Kuala Lumpur. We meet today after a gap of almost four years. And there's still a long way to go to fulfil our desire to make Social Marketing an integral element in every Communication or Marketing curriculum in the region.

The reasons for our keen, even obsessive, interest in the topic of Social Marketing are not far to seek. The countries of Asia have spawned some of the world's most ancient cultures and have cradled some of the world's greatest religions. Yet today, with some notable exceptions, the main claim to 'distinction' of the countries of Asia is that they are home to over half the world's population. They rank largely as developing countries wracked by illiteracy, malnutrition and poverty. Tradition hangs heavy and change, beneficial change, is slow.

Mass communication can be a valuable instrument for change - to create awareness and acceptance of the need and to ensure its successful implementation.

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It is recognised today that any activity which affects the community, howsoever beneficial, must have the support of the people. Laudable programmes are not always perceived as such and good intentioned efforts often fail. We need to borrow the weapons, skills and expertise of the commercial marketer to make socially useful goals acceptable, even desirable, and therefore, achievable. This is a task that calls for many hands and willing hearts and collective effort by the public spirited.

Social Marketing is a phenomenon that needs to be more widely understood and encouraged, especially in the higher reaches of governments in Asia. It signifies a happy confluence of communication, education, persuasion and the well-being of the community. It is selling without the profit motive; marketing without self-interest.

This workshop, by bringing together educators, practitioners, policy makers and students of mass communication will help us to achieve our long-standing goal: to develop a model curriculum and a volume of case studies which will be a forerunner of similar volumes in other Asian countries.

This workshop has been made possible by the cooperation and support of a number of organisations: the World Association for Christian Communication, Unesco’s Division of Science, Technical and Environmental Education, the Philippines Information Agency, the UP College of Arts and Sciences and the Philippines Business for Social Progress. The PBSP is an uniquely Filipino institution and we hope that the spirit that animates it can be successfully transplanted to other countries in Asia.

We are grateful to all these institutions for their cooperation and support: to Dr. Susan van der Vynckt of Unesco, Mr. Ron Israel of the Education Development Centre and Mr. Neville Jayaweera of the WACC, who are not with us today; to Dr. Alwi Dahlan of
Indonesia, who was instrumental in holding the first workshop, Dr. Benjamin Lozare of the Philippines Information Agency; my colleague, Dr. Victor Valbuena, who is on loan to us from the UP Institute of Mass Communication and Dr. Conrad Lorenzo, Chancellor.

I would like to tell you briefly about AMIC, or the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, to use our full name. AMIC is a non-profit regional organisation serving the cause of mass communication in Asia. It is jointly sponsored by the Government of Singapore and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, an independent foundation in the Federal Republic of Germany. Today, AMIC acts as an independent foundation, striving to assist in the raising the standards of teaching, training, research and practice of mass communications in the region.

The presence of the Chairman and members of the AMIC Committee is indicative of our deep and abiding interest in the programme we are inaugurating today. We are grateful to all the workshop participants and to all of you who have joined us today for your good wishes.

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