

This document is downloaded from DR-NTU, Nanyang Technological University Library, Singapore.

Title	AMIC-EWCI-Thammasat University-IDRC Seminar On Communication Policy for Rural Development : Bhumiphol Dam, 2-8 March 1981 : [opening address]
Author(s)	Xuto, Somsakdi
Citation	
Date	1981
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/10220/906
Rights	

Opening Address

By

Somsakdi Xuto

Opening Address

by

Dr. Somsakdi Xuto

The Minister Attached to the Prime Minister's Office
at the Opening Ceremony of
the International Seminar on
Communication Policy for Rural Development
2 - 8 March 1981
at Thammasat University, Bangkok, Thailand

The Rector, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this International Seminar on Communication Policy for Rural Development. It is my great honor to be among distinguished participants and guests at this opening ceremony today.

First of all, I would like to extend my congratulations to Thammasat University Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication, East-West Communication Institute (EWCI) and Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC) on your success in jointly organizing this international seminar in Thailand. The seminar is important not only in the fact that it is the first joint venture by such outstanding international organizations as EWCI and AMIC and Thammasat University but also in the subjects of the seminar and their implications for societal development and regional cooperation.

I am very interested in the field of communication and well aware of the importance of communication in the development process. Theoretically speaking, communication can play a crucial role in the development of all nations. To the extent that communication processes can be better understood and

- 2 -

improved, all of the country's development processes should be promoted. There is also empirical evidence indicating that new communication technology, particularly in broadcasting and satellite, has enormous potential for stimulating quantum jumps forwards in the national development process.

However, on the practical side, the application of new communication technology has been relatively limited and, thus far, not lived up to the expectations initially claimed for it. It is also found that existing communication resources are not being utilized as effectively as they could or should be. Moreover, in certain parts of the country, especially in rural areas, no serious effort has been made to put communication into work. Under such circumstances, communication has been inevitably criticized for failing to boost up the development processes.

I think the problem of communication in the development process results from a lack of clear-cut national communication policies. It should be admitted that, although communication is regarded indispensable to development, little is known about how development policies or plans should recognize this indispensable component. The fundamental problem is that the role of communication in development has not been made operational and integrated into national development plans. The relationships between the communication sector and other sectors of society have not been developed. The past, present and potential contributions of communication systems and services for rural development have not been systematically measured and cannot be compared effectively to that of other sectors of society. I believe that if these and some other policy problems have been clarified, several existing issues resulting from the implementation of communication in development programs would also be solved, thus, leading to a rapid development in rural areas.

- 3 -

As in many other developing countries, Thailand has not yet formulated a national policy for communication. However, during recent years, groups of communication scholars and practitioners seem to have come to grips with the need for official communication policies. The present government has realized the importance of having well - defined national communication policies and has taken steps toward that goal. To cite as a good example, a National Commission for Public Relations Policy has recently been appointed by the government to assess and restructure a more efficient public relations system in the country. Hopefully, the Commission's activities will be expanded to cover formalization of communication policies in the near future.

It is noteworthy that Thailand is now in the process of formulating the Fifth National Social and Economic Development Plan (1982 - 1986). This new development plan represents a significant departure from the previous ones in that, for the first time, it attaches top priority to integrated rural development projects in the country. It may be possible that the role of communication in the rural development process will be integrated as part of this development plan.

All said, I am very delighted to day to see EWCI, AMIC and Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication join hands to organize the international seminar on this urgently important subject of communication policy for rural development. As I review the topics on the agenda, I am impressed with diversity of subjects for presentations and discussions: review of development paradigms and current experiences of communication policy - making, policy for appropriate communication technology for rural development, software production and distribution policy and institutional policy. I feel that these topics represent a wide range of crucial communication problems relevant to rural development that exist in most developing countries in Asia and the Pacific region. It is my hope that knowledge,