

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

by P.R.R. Sinha

"I am a lay person. To me, communication means transport facilities such as aeroplanes, ships, trains, cars, buses, postal and telegraph services. While I am yet to grasp the meaning of 'communication' there has been a sudden spurt in the use of a terminology like development communication, which is somewhat broad and perhaps ambiguous. I am at a loss to decipher and any efforts to get at the real meaning have in fact created more confusion than clarification of my thinking." This observation was made by a very knowledgeable and experienced person during one of my recent visits to an Asian country. I was caught unawares at this direct but basic query, but after a little reflection, it dawned on me that since it is basic, we need to try and find out a satisfactory parameter of what is and what is not 'development communication'. To do that, let me briefly discuss the two components of development communication, namely 'development' and 'communication'

DEVELOPMENT

Development has today become a catch-word and its discussion seems to be the order of the day. It has assumed the status of a 'king pin' and provides an acid test for the success or failure of a government. It runs through all the activities of a government, its people. But what exactly, one would like to know, is development. It may be easier for me to pinpoint 'what development is not' rather than to define development. Some of the terms used interchangeably either consciously or unconsciously are change, growth, progress, modernisation and development. A change refers to a state of movement in a given situation either at the same time or at two or more different points in time. It reflects not only a positive or favourable side of the movement (physical and/or mental) but also the negative and unfavourable side as well. There can be changes without any development. If so, can change and development be synonymous? Development stands for all that is good, positive and favourable, it vouchsafes for all the pluses and no minuses. The terms which are very often used interchangeably are 'growth' and 'development'. A careful look would, however, reveal the glaring differences between the two. A tree might have grown in size, but has it developed the capacity to bear fruits as well?; can a growth in physique and size of a man reflect his development of the qualities of head and heart?; can a growth in the structure of an organisation indicate improvement

in its efficiency and productivity?

The obvious answer would be no. Nevertheless, if growth is the result of some conscious and deliberate planning and executed efforts, it will assume the traits of development. "While growth implies spontaneity and naturalness, development subsumes direction, pace, kind, quality, extent and control of growth. This implies that for development, spontaneity of growth has to be planned, guided, directed and stimulated". If this premise is accepted, then we get into the whole hog of development being an objective, a programme, a movement and a process. Considered carefully, development can be a combination of all these and/or any one or two or three of these factors. Whatever the nuances of these differences, a common sense approach would view 'development' first as a goal, as an objective to be accomplished. But the attainment of the objective(s) would entail a systematic approach, thus giving it the character of a 'process'. This also indicates that as development is a process of movement from a state of dissatisfaction to a state of satisfaction, it is dynamic and not static.

While the debate whether development is an objective, a movement, a programme, and a process is unending, development is increasingly used for 'national development', especially in the third world countries. The yardstick for development, however, has yet to be refined and validated for various reasons, most importantly, the conceptual differences. Scholars such as Rostow, Milikan, Chenery, Galbreigh, and Rodan have stressed the importance of economic impact in accelerating the pace of development. However, Robert Heilbroner, Rogers and Svenning, Lucian Pye, and others, view development as an all embracing concept, encompassing economic, social, cultural, educational, political aspects of society. The latter concept seems to have been better received because development cannot and must not be viewed as an economic entity alone (it may be a prime mover) but as a sum total of all round, balanced and planned growth.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is at the root of all human activities. Human beings share knowledge, information and experience, and thus understand, persuade, convert or control their fellows through communication. As stressed rightly by Everett Kleinjans,, Chancellor of the East-West Centre, Honolulu, "Communication is such a potential part of living, like breathing, that we are usually unconscious that we are communicating or unaware of what we are in fact communicating". Like development, communication too, has been subjected to various conceptualisations. However, the basic tenets of communication are:

- (a) communication is a process for transmission of ideas, thoughts, feelings, behaviour from one person to another;
- (b) communication is persuasive and seeks to obtain desirable response to what is being transmitted;

- (c) communication is a two-way process both vertically and horizontally in a spirit of 'give and take', or 'send and receive'.

Communication is a field of study which has come a long way to attain the status of a science. Furthermore, it cuts across many disciplines. Because of this advantage, the science of communication views an individual, a society or a nation in its totality, refraining thereby from a piecemeal or fragmented view.

Mover and Moved Relationship

Granted that communication has come to stay as a multi-disciplinary science, how about its relationship with development per se? At this stage, I would like to quote Wilbur Schramm when he echoes the concern as "communication is asked to help survey a new environment, raise people's aspirations, guide and control a dynamic process, teach new skills, and socialise citizens to a new and different society that is still only in the process of becoming". Does this observation reflect any relationship between development and communication? I think so -- in ample measure. While the relationship is accepted by all, the issue of cause and effect is still unresolved. In other words, which is mover and which is moved, is a chicken-and-egg question.

Whatever the case may be, both development and communication are engaged in a symbiotic relationship, one helping the other, complementing and supplementing each other in the process of fostering balanced growth and progress. Examples abound all over the world (based on empirical studies) indicating positive association between the two. Some of the notable examples bearing testimony to this are: Lerner's study in 50 countries which revealed positive association between media participation and urbanisation, literacy and political participation; Cutright's findings that communication development is related to political development, economic growth, education and urbanisation (more than 70 countries were studied); Unesco's report highlighting strong correlation between mass media factors and economic factors in the countries of Latin America, Africa, Middle East and Southeast Asia; Schramm and Carter's findings for 100 countries; Farace's findings for more than 50 countries; Rao's study of two Indian villages; Frey's survey of nearly 460 villages of Turkey; and Keith, Yadav and Ascroft studies in Columbia, Kenya and India. According to Fagen, "although the correlations themselves tell us nothing about commonality, it is clear that the mass media have been both cause and effect, both mover and moved, in the complex interplay of factors which we call the modernisation process".

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

It is imperative to discuss now the fundamentals of development communication. The question in my mind is whether or not development communication is very broad based and vague; whether it carries anything specific with itself; whether it claims to have some well delineated parameters of its own without in anyway interfering with

other related domains. It is hard to find direct answers even though it has specificity of its own aside being less broad based and ambiguous. Let us try to get a clearer picture in terms of what, why and how of development communication.

A rural Filipino broadcaster once observed, "If someone loses a carabao (water buffalo), we try to locate it for him. If a farmer gets to town and cannot get home, we broadcast a message so informing his family." In Japan, journalists from Kobe Shimbun stay in the homes of farmers and fishermen for varying periods in order to get a real feel of the problems, needs and aspirations. They eat the same food and talk the same language. Do these examples have anything to do with development communication? Can they help us in getting a better picture of development communication? May be. The Filipino broadcaster and the Japanese journalists are engaged in understanding the people's problems in the right perspectives and in the process gain their confidence as well. Once this is achieved, broadcasters and journalists will be better equipped to project the people's problems and assist development agency (agencies) in accelerating the pace of progress and development.

Meaning and Nature

The concept of development communication has gained prominence during the last decade. However, its genesis can be traced to the introduction and application of Agricultural Extension, termed Extension Education during the later half of 1940's and early 1950's in most of the developing countries. The need for bridging the gap between the rich and the poor, between the haves and the have-nots called for a new philosophy and approach in the efforts aimed at achieving the objectives. This necessitated rational decisions on the part of the people, which in other words, implied a desirable change both in their thinking and doing. Thus, the importance of communication as a tool to motivate and persuade the people for eliciting positive response to various developmental ideas grew manifold. As such, the use of 'Agricultural Communication' became very popular in some of the developing countries, giving rise in due course to the use of the term 'Rural Communication' for the sake of wider coverage and application. Communication input, however, cannot be confined to the development of agricultural aspects alone. Instead, it runs through the entire gamut of rural life. The term 'Rural Communication' though in vogue in many countries even now, seemingly does not carry with itself the dynamism, activity and above all the sentiments and emotions to surge ahead for progress and advancement. Further, apart from rural areas, urban areas need a great deal of improvement and development in the life and living of their inhabitants and hence, the need for communication input. Interplay of some of these factors has led to the emergence of the term 'Development Communication'. Its recent origin and continued use of such concepts as agricultural extension, extension education, agricultural communication, rural communication, etc., make it incumbent on us to have a clearer concept of development communication.

The question still lingers. What is, after all, development communication? I would at this stage buy straightaway the definition of Nora Quebral: "It is the art and

and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country and the mass of its people from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth that makes possible greater social equality and the larger fulfilment of the human potential". Nora herself is aware of the possibility of refining this definition, even though the basic tenets are unlikely to change.

An Innovation

Development communication is basically an approach or a point of view comprising the elements of a method, a programme, and a process. As against such terms/concepts as advertising, public relations, propaganda, agricultural extension, etc., which owe their geneses to advanced countries, development communication is an 'innovation' of the developing countries alone. It has emerged from practical life situations and of the developing countries alone. It has emerged from practical life situations and assumes the distinctive characteristics of 'purpose' and 'place of operation'. It is not a 'graft' from any outside situation and sooner or later it has to evolve and develop its own ethos and philosophy. It is not an easy job, but it has to be done by our own efforts and ingenuity.

Development implies desirable changes in the thinking and doing of the people. Individuals, therefore, provide the fulcrum for all the direct and indirect efforts of development communication. As such, development communication has to take into account the totality of an individual. It should not isolate one problem of individual's life from his overall problems. The piecemeal view of different social scientists depicting the life of an individual in the backdrop of development could be compared to the descriptions of an elephant by seven men. But the elephant could not be an elephant if the descriptions of all the seven men were not pooled together. Likewise, development communication views an individual as a complex of many disciplines in order to suggest better, richer and fuller way of life. In other words, it can be said to derive its essence from the modern philosophy of 'New Humanism' and the psychological findings about the 'Unity of Mind'. To be more specific, development communication grows mostly out of people's participation and people's satisfaction, the ingredients of which are:

- (a) a sense of feeling to have actively participated;
- (b) a sense of pride in evolving solutions to the problems in hand, and
- (c) a sense of achievement - mental as well as physical.

Development journalism which is a branch of development communication pushes for awareness towards various ideas and programmes set afoot for desirable socio-economic changes in a society or a nation. Print and broadcast journalism reach a fraction of the total mass that is still illiterate and lacks resources. However, if mass media are to serve the cause of development, 'armchair journalists will have to abandon the

habit of waiting for officials' press release, get out of their offices into fields, factories and homes of the common man', so stresses John Lent in his paper *Mass Media in Developing World*.

One has to be realistic about the socio-economic, cultural and political milieu of the situations impinging all the time on the stance adopted by the journalists. However, as Alan Chalkley has pointed out, in trying to mirror government policies and programmes for development, development journalism need not become government-say-so journalism.

Extending the discussion a little further, mass communication and/or communication differ to some extent from development communication. Mass communication refers to communication with masses through media such as print and broadcasting and communication stands for the process of transmitting information, ideas or messages from sender to receiver. But, they may or may not be purposive, but development communication is always purposive as it seeks to advance development.

Again, development communication can use any channel or a combination of channels to achieve the objective(s) of development or conversely, each communication channel or medium can play the role of 'development communicator'. Depending on the situations and socio-economic and cultural setting, the channel might be radio, TV, newspapers and other print media or even extension agency and interpersonal sources. For example, researches conducted in many developing countries have shown that the mass media, mainly radio and TV, are the best communication sources for creating awareness and interest among the audience regarding a new idea or a message. When it comes to the adoption process, interpersonal sources such as extension agents, friends, neighbours, local leaders, and others are the most effective communication sources. As all these sources are engaged in accomplishing the goals of development, they fall within the ambit of development communication.

The role of various communication media in furthering the cause of development and desirable change can be seen in the Masagana 99 programme launched in the Philippines in 1971 to boost agricultural production; various campaigns organised in Singapore with respect to socio-economic, cultural and educational aspects; and campaigns on family planning, agricultural production, sanitation, slum clearance, crime prevention, etc., being mounted from time to time in the developing countries.

Some Conditions for Development Communication

May I briefly try to draw up, however hazy, some conditions or pre-requisites for development communication. Some of the vital conditions are (a) shift from dissatisfaction to satisfaction, and (b) psychology of completeness.

(a) Shift from Dissatisfaction to Satisfaction

It is said that dissatisfaction is the root cause for change. It stands not only for a shift from less to more but also a shift from much to more and from more to most. As development communication is purposive and development-oriented, its basic citadel is motivation. Without sufficient motivation and stimulus, it would be impossible to make the people move along certain desired lines. The process of such a shift is beset with many problems related to psychology of the people. This psychology makes it incumbent on development communication to transmit the new knowledge about any idea, object, group, society, or community in a way that the people do not get psychologically imbalanced. This has a bearing on what to communicate, why to communicate, when to communicate and how to communicate.

(b) Psychology of Completeness

The ultimate goal is the development of the society. This can be achieved through the joint efforts of both the development communicators and the people. The element of effort has to be complete in all respects. If development is the result of deliberate, conscious efforts, then one must not be satisfied with the half-baked, incomplete development. There are instances where success in a few aspects of development programmes such as agriculture, health, sanitation, etc., has resulted in complacency and afterwards in the failure of the programme. It may, therefore, be appropriate to start with one or a few items only and complete it to the fullest satisfaction of all concerned.

Another important facet of this completeness is the psychology of 'seeing is believing and learning by doing'. A desirable change in behaviour complex and the resultant satisfaction, can be achieved when this psychology is enforced and reinforced in development communication. A lasting and enduring change calls for a rational thinking by the people, which could be brought about only if they have had adequate opportunities for seeing and trying out the idea(s) themselves.

Somewhat equally, if not more, important is the psychology of the two-way process. In development communication, a giver is a taker of information as well. Information must not only trickle down to the people but be channelled up as well to make the two-way process meaningful. Development communication emphasises invariably the results, a response to a message transmitted. It is the quality of response that provides the acid test and constitutes one of the salient features of development communication.

Creation, Transmission, Application

In short, development communication rests on the tripod of Creation, Transmission and Application of a message (C-T-A). Jamias also feels the same way when he

considers innovation, communication and action or performance as the elements of development communication.

It is obvious now that the concept of 'development communication' has emerged primarily from the rural scene. The developing countries, by and large, still live in rural areas which have begun to attract the attention of people engaged in planning rural development strategies. The rural areas call for urgent action(s) to uplift and usher in peace and prosperity. Starting with agriculture which forms the focal point, development of all other aspects such as health and sanitation, family planning and population, education, roads, transports, communications, etc., need great efforts. Furthermore, one is confronted with the difficult problems of providing social justice (bridging the gaps between haves and have-nots through equal distribution of opportunities and benefits), and of ensuring people's participation in developmental and political activities.

It would be wrong if one goes away with the impression that development communication stands for rural upliftment only. In fact, it is culture free, if not situation free. There is enough room for progress and advancement in urban areas as well. For example, issues such as sanitation and health, family planning, drug addictions, crimes, accidents, conservation of water and energy are among the many issues confronting the urban areas. The bulk of the urban population have to be stimulated and motivated to play their parts in overcoming these problems successfully. Without their active assistance and cooperation, the development efforts will prove to be abortive. It is in the sphere of involving the people that development communication can and must play a positive role.

A Process

Whether it is urban or rural area, in order to be purposive and pragmatic, development communication has to be practised in a planned and systematic manner. A balanced growth and desirable change in the behaviour complex of the people could result only from a systematic operation of development communication. The following stages would constitute the process of effective development communication:

- a. Analysis of situation
- b. Delineation of problems and fixing up priorities
- c. Consideration of resources
- d. Preparing a plan for action
- e. Action
- f. Evaluation

This is a continuous process of growth and development. Experience gained from one programme must be used effectively in subsequent programmes.

To sum up, development communication, like the science of communication has come to stay and owes its genesis to developing countries. It is a relatively young field of study within the discipline of communication. It is dynamic, purposive and pragmatic in approach and can be utilised effectively in journalism, mass communication, communication, public relations, etc. Furthermore, development communication can use any one or some or all the communication channels available to advance development.

Development is the result of interaction(s) of many factors, development communication being only one of them. For instance, it is a common experience that the mere acquisition of information, say in agriculture, is no guarantee that development will ensue. Untimely and inadequate supply of inputs like improved seeds, artificial fertilisers, pesticides, etc., have resulted in the failure of the entire programme in many places. The problem is further accentuated because development in agriculture requires effective coordination involving related units representing irrigation, seeds, implements, cooperative, information, etc. The same is also true of other aspects of development such as health and sanitation, family planning, education, prevention of crime and accidents, slum clearance, etc. So, it would be worthwhile to remind ourselves that development communication is only one of the means employed for speeding up the pace of progress and development. It is not a panacea for all ills, but is one of the most vital components in any developmental planning and its implementation.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

**Discussion leaders: P.R.R. Sinha
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In discussing the concept of development, it was felt necessary to avoid treating the topic from a purely academic and theoretical angle as such an approach might well ask more questions than provide some answers. Hence, there was need for an operational definition of development, more meaningful to the discussion of development communication.

The guidelines formulated by the United Nations University (UNU) Expert Group on Human and Social Development were thought to provide an adequate framework for the discussions. According to the UNU guidelines, "development is fundamentally not about index numbers of national income and its growth; it is not about savings ratios and capital coefficients; it is about, by and for human beings. Development must therefore begin by identifying human needs. The objective of development is to raise the level of living of the masses of people and to provide all human beings with the opportunity to develop their potential".

"This implies meeting such needs as continuing employment secure and adequate livelihoods, more and better schooling, better medical services, cheap transport and a higher general level of income. It also includes meeting non-material needs like

the desire for self-determination, self-reliance, political freedom and security, participation in making the decision that affect workers and citizens, national and cultural identity and a sense of purpose in life and work”.

Two recent books -- One Hundred Countries, Two Billion People: The Dimensions of Development by Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank, and “We Don’t Know How: An Independent Audit of What They Call Success in Foreign Assistance” by William and Elizabeth Paddock -- were cited as indications of the current thinking on the subject of development.

McNamara’s view is that development must move beyond growth to distribution; its benefits must begin to touch the lives of the masses. He has attempted to focus the attention of the international development community on the need to look at development in terms of people rather than in terms of numbers, of living and working standards rather than projects and programmes, of social justice rather than simple growth.

The Paddocks on the other hand took a hard, critical view of the aid programmes in developing countries, concluding that most development projects have either been over-sold or crudely implemented.

A comparison between the messages of these two books were made. The point was made that although one could speak from top about what development should mean, it was no less essential to consistently review what exactly happens in reality.

The Indonesian state policy outlined by the People’s Congress in 1973, was brought into focus as a case study on the concept of development by an Asian country. The state policy says: “The aim of national development is to realise a just and prosperous society based on Panca Sila... National development is implemented in the context of development of the Indonesian human being, man as a whole and the development of the Indonesian society. This means that development does not only strive for material progress and spiritual satisfaction, but also for harmony and equilibrium between the two; that development must be equally spread out over the whole country; that it is not for the benefit of one group or one part of the society but that it should indeed be felt by the people in terms of better standard of living’.

The discussants viewed the Indonesian state policy as an example showing that each country has enunciated its own concept of development in broad terms, although such state enunciations may undergo changes in the process of implementation.

The three major goals of every developing country were seen as:

- 1) sustaining a polity
- 2) developing an economy, and
- 3) shaping a society.

ROLE OF COMMUNICATION

To reach the above goals, one of the foremost prerequisites was seen as willing and fullfledged participation of the people. And one of the most effective ways of bringing about a people's participation is through communication – by informing them, influencing their attitudes and motivating them towards change and development. Hence, the need for DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION – a process that attempts to successfully marry the interests of the policy makers, planners, administrators and the PEOPLE.

The major objectives of development communication were seen as:

- 1) meeting the demand for social justice
- 2) shaping expectations in ways that maximise satisfaction and minimise frustrations; and
- 3) sustaining a dynamic equilibrium between the socio-economic and psychocultural components in a rapidly changing polity.

One of the basic questions that came up was the issue of interdependence between communication and development. It was asked whether development could not be independent of communication. It was felt that although development could be independent of communication in a discussion of abstract concepts, development does indeed depend on communication and is conditioned, to a large extent, by the character of communication. It was also pointed out that empirically tested evidence has shown that wherever communication existed on a planned level, development has been accelerated.

As regards the role and nature of development communication, it was felt that communicators should not be used by policy makers as mere instruments or conveyor belts of information but as active participants in the decision making process itself, while efforts should be made to bring about a consensus between policy makers and communicators on development goals and priorities. The constraints to such an ideal situation were also discussed in some depth.

It was noted that communication was a process that pervades the gamut of human activities and therefore cannot be confined to mass media functions alone. It has also been convincingly shown that major development programmes will not reach their targets without proper and planned communication inputs.

The Masagana 99 campaign in the Philippines and the Keep Singapore Clean campaign were cited as examples where communication inputs have had great impact.

The participants shared the view that one of the major handicaps to the effective practice of development communication in the region today is the dearth of journalists who have the expertise to report and interpret development stories in a language and style that is easily understood by the people. For example, the area of family planning has been full of intense activity during the last decade, involving detailed public

and private planning, manpower and material resources. Although the human element predominates in such activities, journalists have, to a great extent, failed to treat the family planning theme with the attention it deserves and have merely scratched the surface of the 'story of the decade'. There has in fact been very little communication support to family planning.

One of the reasons for such a dearth of trained journalists is probably because most newspaper organisations have not as yet been convinced that they have a role to play in the spheres of development and nation building. Their overall preoccupation has been with providing topical information with speed, accuracy and objectivity. Moreover, the mass communication schools which teach journalism are preoccupied with teaching the techniques of the craft -- information gathering, reporting, feature writing, investigative reporting, etc. It was found that only the University of the Philippines, Los Banos has a full-fledged curriculum on development communication, in addition to the Government College of Commerce, Manila which is now in the process of instituting a degree in development communication.

The participants also felt that if mass media were to play a meaningful role in development, it was necessary not only to attempt to influence the attitudes and opinion of the people but also to provide a check on development policies and programmes, some aspects of which could be undesirable. It would mean that mass media assumes not merely a role of information channels but take on the moral responsibility for the overall development of a nation.

Since development communication has evolved out of the exigencies of the third world, an attempt was made to trace its genesis to agricultural extension and rural communication where government departments attempted to reach the rural masses with development messages in order to seek their active support and participation.

Development communication as a science and as an art is still evolving and any basic theory module can only be formulated from empirical evidences that may be forthcoming from its practice in the developing countries.