

**Issues In development Message Transfer
Through Popular Culture and Media In The Philippines**

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INTRODUCTION

In any development effort, communication is a recognised determinant of success. Communication, in development outreach activities assumes the responsibility of effecting the internalisation and application of information so that these are imbibed in the development process. The wise use to advantage of communication allows the establishment of an organised and cost-effective delivery mechanism, a responsive and supportive service delivery channel, and an equally organised receiving mechanism of the client system. Thus, for any development outreach activity to be successful, a comprehensive communication extension programme must be developed and implemented.

Communication, to impel development message transfer must have a dynamic relationship with the resource system of the community that it serves. Several factors must interplay to effect the desired change.

For one, various media of communication must play important roles in this undertaking. Some of the popular communication strategies being used in outreach activities include interpersonal communication, radio broadcasts, print, posters, folk media, audiovisuals. Each strategy or combination of strategies has a specific function to perform in the development message transfer scheme.

But more importantly, communication must be integrated into the behaviour, thinking, feeling, and doing process of the community, taking into consideration the premise that for development to take place, the people directly involved in it must be able to understand, accept, and act upon new ideas introduced. Hence, access and participation in the communication process must be provided.

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In a country like the Philippines where majority live in the rural areas, communication strategies must be developed through which people's needs and interests can be articulated. Communication programmes must provide for the expression of self-reliance, self-help, and self-determination of a community anchored on development messages that are people-oriented, need-based, and location-specific.

The lesson in this type of approach is simple - - effective development message transfer cannot be achieved if social and cultural factors are not considered in the communication/extension programme. What needs to be stressed is the critical role of two-way communication in the transfer of information through strategies that are attuned to the sensitivities, preferences, and inclinations of the people.

This paper discusses some research studies and cases on efforts in development message transfer through popular culture and media in the Philippines. Specifically, it presents issues on the utilisation of indigenous media, folk media, radio and print in the transfer of research information and technology generated by research institutions, inventors, and successful producers.

The following cases and research studies are discussed briefly:

- The Regional Applied Communication Outreach (RACO) Experience;
- Extension Strategy of Barangay Nambalan in the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization- Canadian International Development Agency (SEAMEO-CIDA) Pilot Project for Integrated Community-Based Human Resource Development; and
- The Communication Technology for Rural Education (CTRE) Study: Piloting a Distance Learning System for Small Farmers.

Case I:

The Regional Applied Communication Outreach (RACO) Experience

Overview of RACO

In 1979, the Regional Applied Communication Programme (RACP) was initiated by the Applied Communication Division (ACD) of the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCARRD).

The RACP was developed in response to the need to make research a partner in countryside development. To operationalise this thrust, a subnetwork for applied communication in all 13 regions of the country was established. The subnetwork was called the Regional Applied Communication Office (RACO).

By 1983, ten RACOs had been set up. At present, a total of 15 RACOs serve as working components of the regional consortia which PCARRD coordinates. The National Agriculture and Resources Research and Development Network (NARRDN) established and coordinated by PCARRD's consortium scheme forged the necessary interagency linkages among research centers, institutions, state colleges and universities, and extension systems toward maximised research resources and technology utilisation (Stuart and Quisumbing, 1990).

The RACOs have the following tasks (Stuart, 1989):

- To provide communication support to the research activities of the regional research centers/consortia;
- To pool the scant communication resources of consortium member and cooperating agencies;
- To foster interagency cooperation by providing the venue for cooperative communication work;
- To develop and upgrade regional communication capability; and
- To translate technologies into low-cost acceptable and useful communication materials.

The six general activities that the RACOs undertake are the following:

1. Publications preparation and production;
2. Instructional materials development;
3. Scientific literature service;
4. Mass media linkages;
5. Communication and social action research projects; and
6. Trainings.

Most RACOs utilise radio broadcasts for technology dissemination by translating technical materials into radio scripts for different radio formats. The Department of Agriculture (DA), a member agency in all the regional consortia, utilises RACO-produced software for its radio programmes.

Among the radio formats that the RACOs have developed are the school-on-the-air (SOA), developmental radio plugs, radio dramas, radio programmes featuring consortium research and development (R & D) activities, technology breakthroughs, and farmer testimonials.

Part of the RACOs' audio visual strategies is the revival of indigenous or folk media in the transfer of technology. Some forms of these are poetry contests, folk singing, theatre arts, puppet shows.

Use of Indigenous Media

The use of indigenous media for the transfer of agriculture and resources technology is one of the strategies in the project "Strengthening Regional Applied Communication as a Tool for Agriculture and Natural Resources Technology Transfer Programme (1988-1991)". The project is being implemented to strengthen the applied communication capabilities of the RACOs in Regions I, III, V, VIII, X, and XII. Funded by the Rainfed Resources Development Project/United States Agency for International Development (RRDP/USAID), the project started in July 1988 and will end in March 1991. The second phase of the project will be implemented in the other regions by 1991, with funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

As an activity under the project, the use of indigenous media encompasses the RACOs' commitment of championing the cause of the rural poor. It is a realisation of the RACO's desire to address the problem of lack of access and participation of the people - particularly in the communication process towards the shaping of more progressive and productive regions.

Indigenous media are flexible; they are capable of giving local relevance to communication by adapting them to local situations through the use of dialects or by incorporating specific references to customs and traditions that help fit the communication into familiar contexts. Basically, indigenous media are sensitive forms of two-way communication and can be adapted quickly in a community.

The RACOs that applied indigenous media in their outreach programmes are: the Ilocos Agriculture and Resources Research and Development Consortium (ILARRDEC-Region I); Central Luzon Agriculture and Resources Research and Development Consortium (CLARRDEC-Region III); Visayas Coordinated Agricultural Research Programme (VICARP-Region VIII); and Central Mindanao Agricultural Resources Research and Development Consortium (CEMARRDEC-Region XII). Their experiences are discussed briefly as follows:

ILARRDEC (Region I)

A "bukanegan" is similar to a "balagtasan" where two competing individuals present the positive and negative sides of a certain issue through poetry. The winner is judged based on the individual's persuasiveness in presenting the issue.

A study was conducted to determine the radio clientele's acceptance of the "bukanegan", results of which showed that the programme is highly acceptable. A linkage was established with DZEQ, a radio station in Baguio City. The "bukanegan" programme is entitled "Rangtay ti Rang-ay", aired from 8:05 to 8:35 pm every Saturday.

ILARRDEC-RACO also utilised folk drama as a communication strategy. Native dances related to the techno transfer activities of the clientele such as mungbean gathering and shelling were likewise developed.

CLARRDEC (Region III)

CLARRDEC-RACO's popular packaging and mobilisation-dissemination-utilisation-monitoring/evaluation framework has been pursued through publications preparation and production, instructional materials development (print, radio, audio-visual, indigenous media), scientific literature services, linkages, communication and social action researches, and trainings.

Specifically on indigenous communication strategies, some of CLARRDEC-RACO's outstanding accomplishments are community theater productions, puppet shows, folksongs, and poeries.

Three rural theater productions namely "Sama-samang Paggawa Tungo sa Kaunlaran (Cooperative Efforts Toward Development)", "Mga Biyayang Dagat (Blessings from the Sea)", and "Ang Buhay sa Kabundukan ng Sto. Niño (Life in the Uplands of Sto. Niño)" were presented in several barangays in the region. Two puppet shows entitled "Ang Hidden Wealth ni Ungga (The Hidden Wealth of Ungga)" and "Welgang Organ (The Strike of the Organs)" were also developed and presented in different barangays.

A number of folksongs and developmental poems were composed and developed by the barangay talents and were presented during rural theater presentations.

VICARP (Region VIII)

Creative drama. Believing in the still high acceptability of stage plays, the VICARP-RCTU Kasanag Arts Ensemble was formed. Members of the core group attended the Creative Drama and Visual Arts training conducted in 1989.

So far, the group has staged four (4) developmental plays. The first play was entitled "Panokiduki" (conducting research) aimed at creating environmental awareness. This was presented to some 350 people at the Visayas State College of Agriculture (ViSCA) Social Hall in November 1989.

The second play, "Ang Pagduaw" (The Visit), focused on forest conservation. The play was first staged on July 8, 1989 during the Symposium for R & D Highlights and then in September 1989 to coincide with the month-long celebration of environmental awareness and protection. The two other plays were "Ang Baboy (The Pig)" and "Ulahi na ang Tanan (Its Too Late)".

Developmental songs. The VICARP-RACO project staff launched the Development Song Writing Contest or the "Bangga sa Awit '90". About 27 entries were received by the

Bangga sa Awit Executive Committee, of which 10 were included in the finals. Various support committees were also organised; criteria/guidelines were defined; and the song festival was launched. The 10 finalist songs have been reproduced and distributed on commercial audio tapes.

The song festival was no different from other song contests in the country in terms of quality of performers and accompaniment and overall production, but for the lyrics of the songs. The lyrics contain messages that promote environmental awareness, value formation, technology transfer, and messages against drug abuse.

"Mastambayayong" (Cooperation), which won the grand prize, tells its listeners of the ill effects of slash-and-burn farming, uncontrolled use of pesticides, and dynamite fishing. It prescribes contour farming and judicious use of chemical farm inputs, and enjoins the listeners to work hand in hand to solve environmental problems.

CEMARRDEC (Region XII)

"Dayunday", or love song is popularly sang during courtship or community gatherings. It was identified, improved and developed for technology awareness and appreciation among Muslim Maguindanaoans by CEMARRDEC-RACO.

A full length "dayunday" on integrated farming systems has been documented both in video and radio cassette tapes. The VTR production of this dayunday presents the message of the song in a series of video footages on integrated farming systems.

Radio plugs on Maguindanao sayings and proverbs related to technology and social values were also produced. Reproduced and distributed to the pilot sites were ten video tapes on "dayunday".

CASE II: Extension Strategy of Barangay Nambalan in the Pilot Project for Integrated Community-Based Human Resource Development

Barangay Nambalan in the Municipality of Mayantoc, Province of Tarlac, was one of the pilot sites of the "SEAMEO-CIDA Pilot Project for Integrated Community-Based Human Resource Development". The barangay was selected because it represented the poorer segment of the rural population while having local resources with potential for sustained development.

The ultimate goal of the project was to uplift the quality of life in the pilot barangay through human resource development. The villagers were provided with necessary trainings for the acquisition of proper values, knowledge, and skills for self reliance.

The project was integrative and multidisciplinary in approach, covering the many aspects involved in the process of development and improvement of human welfare.

The implementation of the village development plan started in June 1987 and was completed in December 1989. It was initiated by SEAMEO alumni working in the development service team in cooperation with the local community and with the support of selected departments of the Philippine government. The project was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

An impact evaluation of the project showed that its goal to uplift the quality of life in the pilot communities has been achieved in varying degrees. After almost thirty months of implementation, the effects of the project on the people of Nambalan were most visible and impressive. Ninety percent of the adult population had been reached. As early as 1988, rice farmers with supplemental crops and livelihood activities had monthly net incomes of US\$106 which was above and beyond the Philippine poverty line level earning of US\$84 in 1989 (Pages, Hatuina, et. al 1989).

According to the project participants, the village farming system greatly improved through the technologies learned from the training programmes conducted. Increased incomes have allowed them to enjoy better living conditions.

The formation of a cooperative in the village improved the lives not only of its members but of all the people in the community as well. The cooperative developed leaders from among those who had potentials.

Sanitation in the village had likewise improved, along with the positive change in attitude of the mothers toward good health practices, e.g. immunization, better food for children. All in all, the SEAMEO-CIDA Pilot Project left Nambalan a better place to live in for most of the villagers.

Extension Strategies and Support Components

The implementation of the Nambalan project development plan was managed by the Development Service Team (DST) based in the project sites. Its members were government field workers representing the DA, Department of Health (DOH) and Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS). Some of the team members were from the Tarlac College of Agriculture.

To prepare the team for the responsibilities mandated to them in the implementation of the project, members were trained at the Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) in Los Baños and the Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (INNOTECH) in Quezon City.

The DST became the mobilising force in the village - - providing guidance and inspiration to target clientele, facilitating activities from planning to implementing trainings and projects, working with villagers and community workers in initiating livelihood programmes, identifying and developing barangay leaders, and serving as a disseminating body for development messages. The ultimate responsibility of project management in the site rests upon the team. If they fail, the project fails.

The necessary extension strategies and support mechanism were provided to the community by the DST and some government agencies.

As reported by the project leader of the Nambalan Project, the communication networks in the village were instrumental in bringing about the present level of community development in Nambalan. The village has a system of closely-knit groups or networks bound by religion, friendship, kinship, and compadrazgo relationships (ritual kinship). In all these groupings are indigenous means of communication such as the pass-the-word-system, use of errand boys, and other forms of interpersonal or group interactions.

The village leaders also played important roles in the community development project. Village leaders were selected based on their being highly qualified, dynamic, and sociable.

In Nambalan, information is disseminated through interpersonal or group discussion among neighbors, friends, co- farmers, relatives, and compadrazgos. This scheme has a stable and firm social structure, thus, has greater influence on the decision making of its members. Also, the speedy diffusion of a particular information is dependent on the degree of importance assigned to it by the receivers.

To effectively disseminate agricultural and non-agricultural information, various communication strategies and support components were utilised under the project as follows:

- Villagers' training on how to plan and develop their own projects.
- Village-level human resource development trainings that were prerequisites to successful village project planning and implementation.
- Production and utilisation of small media such as posters, leaflets, primers, and news board.
- Utilisation of indigenous communication networks such as pass-the-word-system, use of run-errand boys, and other forms of interpersonal or group interactions.

The success of the pilot project in Nambalan were attributed to the following:

- commitment and dedication of the Development Service Team (DST);

- education and training provided by the DST and its constant monitoring and follow-up of projects and activities;
- effective leadership in project management (all levels);
- receptivity, cooperation, and participation of the villagers;
- cooperation among village leaders barangay council, cooperative officers, and other cooperative leaders;
- adequate fund support from CIDA;
- adequate seed money provided for the coops;
- coordinated government support;
- regular consultative meetings with village leaders;
- perseverance and integrity of cooperative officers;
- problem study possessed by the villagers; and
- extension designs and concept of the project.

**CASE III:
The Communication Technology for Rural Education
(CTRE) Study: Piloting a Distance Learning
System for Small Farmers**

The Communication Technology for Rural Educators (CTRE) or "Komtek" project was developed and implemented from January 1978 to December 1981 with the barangay coordinators of the municipality of Baliwag, Bulacan and some other barangays in the Southern Tagalog region. This project was carried out by the Educational Development Projects Implementing Task Force (EDPITAF) of the Ministry of Education and Culture, University of the Philippines at Los Baños (UPLB), Educational Communication Office (ECO), Institute of Development Communication, and was funded by the World Bank.

The project's objective was primarily to pilot and evaluate the use of communication technology for education in the Philippines.

Specifically, the project aimed to:

- Explore the use of radio, combined with other media and face to face communication, in expanding knowledge and improving the work attitude of farm families, local leaders, and extension workers;
- Evolve a model of a media-based learning system for farm families, as well as for extension workers and local leaders, before and after they train at the Philippine Training Center and as they relate with farm families; and
- Develop a mechanism through which development agencies and regional educational institutions may integrate their mediated educational activities.

The piloted CTRE distance learning system consisted of open radio broadcasts designed for home listening, followed by two- tiered monthly group sessions and supported by print materials and occasional field day demonstrations. It tried to combine the desirable features of open and closed broadcasts, and of informational and educational formats.

The one-hour radio programme was aired over Radio DZLB and the Voice of the Philippines (VOP) which were based at UPLB and the National Media Production Center, respectively. The programme, entitled "Ugnayan sa Himpapawid" (Dialogue Over the Air), was principally intended for local leaders and farm families, although extension workers were also urged to tune-in in case they were asked by farm listeners about matters relating to the broadcasts, and so they could use it as an added resource in their field teaching.

Leaflets, fact sheets, and simple charts were distributed to supplement those broadcasts that required figures. The materials provided more detail than was feasible for radio communication, and explanations of somewhat abstract concepts.

The contents of the learning systems were on agricultural production and social technologies. Agricultural production technologies embraced the commodities suitable to the small farming systems in the region: irrigated lowland rice, upland and rainfed rice, coconut, field crops, vegetable crops, perennial crop and multi-crops, poultry and livestock. The choice of which technology to recommend received the most serious consideration. Appropriate technology was defined in the study to mean tested, localised university research information that a small farm family can apply within their financial, intellectual, and social capabilities (CTRE Workshop 1980).

Social technology was operationalised to mean values and attitudes such as self-reliance, initiative, integrity, self dignity, and discharge of one's obligations. These were promoted or reinforced among Filipino farm families in order to enhance human dignity and at the same time facilitate agricultural and rural development. The format considered best for teaching pro-development values and attitudes was the radio drama.

Formative evaluation was undertaken with the following objectives:

- To continuously assess learner needs;
- To update guidelines and procedures for the development, production, and utilisation of communication materials and methods; and
- To gauge short-term learning outcomes of study activities.

The CTRE project was evaluated based on the following:

- Solicited comments from staff members, objective reviewers, and participants;
- Reports and log entries of staff members concerning study activities;
- Pre-test/post-test data on knowledge, attitudes and practice;
- Audience survey or perception gleaned from interviews and questionnaires;
- Observation notes from sociograms and taped proceedings; and
- Unsolicited comments such as letters from listeners.

Impact of the Project

The CTRE study was a pilot scale field test of a supplementary learning system for farm families that evolved from concepts and ideas from research experience. The study explored the use of local radio programming and some print materials in the delivery of technology from research institutions to farm families and local leaders. It was an attempt to weave mediated teaching activities into the fibres of the interpersonal communication structure. The study supported previous findings that radio, especially if reinforced by other modes of teaching, is capable of initiating and continuing learning among rural adults outside the classroom, and that it will perform better with some type of learning supplement such as print materials.

From the study, a model of a distance learning system for farm families and local leaders was evolved. Such model had a good deal of influence on what and how information was to be delivered in the pilot site. During the conduct of the study, however, the implementors were not able to relate directly with extension workers. Thus they could only offer their compilation of research results to the DA and other outreach agencies as printed teaching material or references for their field workers.

The CTRE's objective to develop a mechanism through which development agencies and regional educational institutions may integrate their mediated educational activities into the distance learning scheme should have been pursued by the Countryside Action Programme (CAP), the R & D dissemination and utilisation arm of UPLB which packages

technology for the DA. DZLB, which was the main transmission medium of CTRE, was however not equipped to reach the pilot sites of the CAP.

The CTRE study was piloted in the Philippines at a time when major attempts at social reform within the vast rural population of the country was at its height. The system was apparently not quite ready to embrace related innovations proposed by the study. The agricultural sector was not functionally decentralised to absorb regional development communication planning, while the national communication infrastructure was not entirely receptive to the needs of educational broadcasting.

In the course of evolving a model for a distance learning system, the CTRE study generated the following:

- a model of a process for planning, integrating, and producing research-based multi-media communication materials;
- a compilation of 210 broadcast lessons and their equivalent radio scripts and tapes;
- prototypes of accompanying print materials; and
- an English-Filipino glossary of agricultural terms.

Subjected to formative and fundamental evaluation, the CTRE study was in itself a type of an evaluation study sometimes referred to as a demonstration project, an intensional experimentation, or a process-oriented qualitative research (Rossi and William 1972).

Conclusion

One of the many ways by which rural development can be attained is to mobilise the people to make them involved in the many development outreach activities now going on in their locale. Access and participation must be provided, particularly in the communication process.

In the development message transfer scheme, communication must be based on more than assumed audience needs and interests. The key: popular culture and media - - adaptations of media for use by the community.

The three cases discussed in this paper illustrate communication forms and strategies to which members of the community have had access for their information, education, and entertainment. They were communication processes in which the community participated as planners, producers, performers.

The three cases provided partial answers to the question on how development messages can be transferred more effectively to the intended clientele. Some

communication devices and channels were cited, illustrating how these were utilised by community members in identifying their alternatives to improve their means of livelihood, for community organising, for pooling their scant resources, and for articulating their needs and interests.

The usefulness and effectiveness of any communication/extension approach can be measured through the popular and active participation of the rural audiences in development.

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