Development Communication: Role of Mass Media and its Approach

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Abstract

Communication is used for more than just passing on information from one person to another. As we know the communication which is used for the development purpose is known as development communication. "Development communication is the process of intervening in a systemicor strategic manner with either media (print, radio, telephony, video, andthe internet), or education (training, literacy, schooling) for the purpose ofpositive social change. The change could be economic, personal, as inspiritual, social and cultural, or political", according to Thomas L.McPhail (2009, p. 3).

Media plays an important role in development communication through circulation of knowledge, providing forum for discussion of issues, teach ideas, skills for a better life and create a base of consensus for stability of the state. From the early stages of the introduction of the media in India various attempts were made to exploit their potential for development purposes.

The history of development communication in India can be traced to 1940's when radio broadcast was done in different languages to promote development communication through various programmes, like—Programs for Rural Audience, Educational Programs and Family Welfare Programs. Today television in our country is also used as a medium for social education, weapon against ignorance and awareness among the people, through is difference programs like Educational Television (ETV), Countrywide Classroom (CWC), Teleconferencing, SITE Program and Kheda Communication Projects. New Technologies have also been put to serious use for development communication. New technologies like mobile, website and internet are interactive in nature. Interactivity, instant feedback and persuasion capability are used to rope in common person into the process of development.. Right from its inception, development communication has been pursued by all kinds of media, both traditional and new.

1. Introduction: Development

The concept of development has been open to many definitions, connotations and interpretations and has invited multi-disciplinary approach as a consequence of the scale of the connotations it assimilates in its realm. Development as a term has emerged as an umbrella under which numerous phenomenonvarying from human and spiritual development to economic development as well as technological development have become related. At the beginning of 21st century, development was recognized as complex, integral, participatory process, involving stake holders and beneficiaries and aimed at improving the overall quality of human life through improvements in a range of social sectors in an environmentally responsible manner. (Cambridge, 2002:114).

Various means of communication have been used for communication purposes. From paintings to stone writing to printing press to the modern computer based technology, the media have been used to efficiently transmit knowledge and information to people. Communication is used as an empowerment tool in order to facilitate the participation of people in development activities.

The term "Development Communication" can be divided into two components Communication and Development. In this scenario, communication implies the utilization of different types of media in the context of development. Communication also signifies the understanding or sharing of information to further the process of development. Development refers to the change of society for the better. It can be about social or economic change for improvement or progress.

Hahn-Been Lee says , development is a process of acquiring a sustained growth of a systems capability to cope up with new continuous changes towards the achievement of progressive, political,

economic and social objectives. Development is seen as a process of change to be set in motion and guided toward the objective of eradicating the hunger, disease, injustice, exploitation and related ills that afflict vast section's of the world's population

2. Development Communication: Definition, Scope, Objectives

In general terms, communication means interaction between two individuals or within a group or a community or a nation. The foundation of communication is based upon four principal elements ----- communication source, a message, a channel or medium and a receiver or audience. But in development communication it becomes the process of affecting or influencing behavior of individuals or groups towards certain desired goals and objectives, necessarily for the benefit of the entire society. Thus, the receiver is expected to show the behaviour desired by the source of communication.

2.1 DEFINING DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

When we refer to development communication, it is about such communication that can be used for development. It is about using communication to bring change or improve the way of living of the citizen of a country. The messages which are designed to transform the behavior of people or for improving their quality of life can be termed as development communication and these messages used to change the socioeconomic condition of people. Though communication for development or development communication grew out of agricultural communication, the term comprehensively includes not only agriculture but also population, nutrition, health, education, housing, employment and so on. Because all these areas require communication inputs to expedite the process of development, development communication has vast scope for its reach and utility in development.

Nora Quebral (1975) defined development communication as "the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth and makes possible greater economic and social equality and larger fulfilment of human potential".

F.Rosario Braid is of the opinion that development communication is "an element of the management process in the overall planning and implementation of development programs."

Everett M. Rogers, an influential scholar defined development communication as "it refers to the uses to which communication is put in order to further development. Such applications are intended to either further develop in a general way , such as by increasing the level of the mass media exposure among the nations citizens, in order to create a favorable climate for development, or to support a specific definite program or project."

Roger's definition essentially emphasizes the creation of climate for development which includes physical climate and psychological climate. Development communication through dissemination of information plays a key role in bringing about a social change among the receivers. Primarily, development communication performs two key functions: transforming role as it seeks social changes for a higher quality of life: socializing role as it seeks to maintain some of the established values of the society. These roles expedite the process of development.

The purposive and positive nature of development communication enhances the ability of contemporary society to usher in an environment of change and progress. Significantly, communication as a process facilitates in making people understand their environment. Majority of people in the third world countries are illiterate and may not be aware about the benefits of literacy and hence they need to be educated about the positive effects of literacy. The reinforcement of messages through communication channels will positively impact them and the role of mass media is crucial in this regard.

The term development has been interpreted in various ways by sociologists, communists, development planners, etc. To some it means modernization, to others social change, and to others it means enhancing quality of life or Sustainable Development.

The term "development suggests some amount of improvement, self reliance, upliftment and progress and also self awareness and independence to an extent. Development implies change and this is one sense in which the term development is used; to describe the process of economic and social transformation within countries.

3. Use of technology in Development Communication:

Mass media and technology should be extensively and tactfully used for development purpose. It should be kept in mind that it is a weapon in the hands of the government for positive

developmental purpose. When the media is used for developmental purpose, develop communicator has to keep in mind that the usage should be extensive. And for this purpose the mass media structure should be planned and efforts should be made to reach out to maximum number of people every time. Daniel Lerner in 1958, while discussing the relation of development with that of any mass media said that: ―the greater the communication facilities, the greater or even faster is modernization.‖ According to Wilbur Schramm, the role of media in development can be divided into three parts i.e. (i) to inform (ii) to instruct and (iii) to participate. To inform: for the development of the society, correct social, political and economic influence is the main criteria. This information should be both national and international. People should be aware of the areas or facts which hamper the development process. To instruct: Mass literacy is an essential criteria to development. This is possible by imbibing basic skills among the people. Mass media plays an important role in this. Mass media can instruct people and educate them. Projects like Educational Television and GyanDarshan are few such examples where media is used to instruct people, educate them and teach them basic skills. These basic skills help people to develop their standard of living. 5 To participate: Voluntary and steady participation of the citizen of the country is necessary for its overall development. Such participation is possible in a liberal society. Such awareness is possible through debate, conflict and discussion. Discussions and debate helps people to know current issues, participate in developmental programme and bring a change in the standard of living of the society. Media in developing and under developed countries strive to bring in developmental change, through its message to the mass. Mass media through interpretation, analysis and discussion point out the drawbacks of the society and core areas of development. The message should be such that it should create an urge for change and development among the common men. The media in its aim to developmental changes shall function as a decision maker and teacher. D. Lerner, while discussing the role of radio (as a medium of mass communication) said that the emergence of radio in different villages and town not only help to educate people, but at the same time bring in consumerism in that place. Consumer arouse wish to own a radio, due to which the people work harder and usher in better standard of living (a form of development). Radio programmes help to educate people about different social issues like farming, agriculture, health, small scale industry etc. Radio forums are a weapon for radio programme producers to involve people in developmental projects. Here use is made of

Telecentre where communities gather to phone in. Discussions on difference topics are done as well as queries by expert are answered. Television as a mass medium has a huge appeal to common person. For such reason, television is used in a planned manner to motivate people to participate in developmental programs. Feature, documentaries or development campaigns should be such that it creates interest in the mind of viewers, contents should be contemporary to attract people of all ages and should be capable of influencing viewers to take part in the developmental programs. Wilbur Schramm in his book Mass Media and National Development discussed the role mass media play in development communication while Lerner and others saw all of the media outputs as having modernising effect. For Schramm it was their content that was the key to their use in development. Schramm has put a lot of importance on feed back for successful communication for development. Because a proper feedback helps implementation to findings whether or not the community is meeting their purpose or aim. According to him, it should never be a one way traffic. Modern communication technologies, according to him, would be of great use to meet the demand by multiplying the messages and reaching each and every worker associated with developmental work.

4. Use of mass media for development— An Indian overview

The history of organised development communication in India can be traced to rural radio broadcast in the 1940‗s. Independent India‗s earliest organised experiments in development communication started with communication development projects initiated by the union government in the 1950‗s.

Different medium was used in the following manner for development purpose:

4.1 Newspaper as a medium of Development Communication:

The power of the press arises from its ability of appearing to the minds of the people and being capable of moving their hearts. However, it has been noticed that the press has not met the requisite interest in developmental communication. In order to correct the imbalances noticed in the media coverage of Rural Development Programs and to ensure that these program are portrayed in proper perspective, several steps are taken to sensitize the media about issues relating to rural development. The Ministry on a regular basis interacts with the Press mainly through the Press Information Bureau

(PIB). Review press conference, press tours and workshops are organised through PIB, with the financial assistance from the Ministry, so as to sensitize press persons about Rural Development Program. For the purpose of creating awareness in respect of rural develop programs among the general public and opinion makers and for disseminating information about new initiatives, the Ministry issues advertisements at regular intervals in national and regional press through DAVP. To enable people in rural areas to access information on Rural Development Program a booklet _Gram VikasPrograms at a glance is brought out in regional languages.

4.2 Radio as a means of development communication:

Radio is a fascinating medium among the various mass communication media because of its special characteristics. It continues to be as relevant and potent as it was in the early years despite the emergence of more glamorous media .As we know radio is a blind or sightless medium, the performer (announcer, newsreader, discussant, narrator, etc.) has to creatively conjure up images of their listeners. The listeners too have to imagine the performance creatively. But the performer must spark off the imagination of the listeners with expressive performance or communication. The role of the mass media is to provide the audience information, education or entertainment or all the three balanced in different proportions. The role of radio, as a medium of mass communication varies from country to country. The most important and universally recognized category of broadcasting is often referred to as Public Service Broadcasting which uses radio for public service by providing a blend of programmes of information, education and entertainment in accordance with the communication needs of the people it serves. Radio has certain unique advantages for development communication under Indian conditions. However, this potential has largely gone untapped. Unlike the Newspaper, radio gets through to an illiterate population. Compared to television or film, radio is relatively cheap and portable, so radio broadcasts can be localized to each community, thus appealing to local people. Radio can also effectively reach individuals with less formal education and lower socio economic status; these individuals are usually the priority audience segment for rural development, family planning, and public health initiatives. Even though radio only appeals to the sense of hearing, it is still most effective channel for reaching the vast audience of rural poor.

In developing countries, the radio is looked upon as catalytic agent for development. The Vidyalankar Committee constituted by the Indian Planning Commission in 1963 envisaged an active role for radio when it observed "our development task is so great and our population so large that only by the most efficient possible programmes of public information can we hope to reach our people often enough and effectively enough to activate on the needed scale, discussion processes and subsequent actions in the cities, towns and villages". According to a policy document of the Government of India, "radio should become an input in the nation building tasks and must strengthen the confidence of the people, promote the concept of self-reliance and encourage forces of unity and national harmony."

4.3 Radio Rural Forum:

All India Radio has been the forerunner in the process of implementing communication strategy adopted by the government. The Radio Rural Forum experiment of 1956, covered 156 villages. It contained 30 minute duration program two days a week on different issues like agriculture and varied subjects that could promote rural development. Efforts are being constantly made to use radio for social change. Apart from radio rural forum, other continuous efforts are being made to bring in development. As, in the case of project taken up to promote adult literacy in the 1980s. More recently, NGOs have helped broadcast program on women and legal rights etc.

4.4 Local Service of AIR:

On the basis of the Verghese Committee (1978) report which recommended a franchise system for promoting local radio for education and development. Several NGOs use local radio to further their development activities. For instance, Chetana of Kolkata records their program on adult education, in the field using local talents. School Broadcast: Programs for school are broadcast from the metros and other centers of AIR. Many teachers make excellent broadcast through this platform. AIR draws up these programs on the advice of Consultative Panels for School Broadcast.

4.5 Television As A Medium For Development Communication:

Television was introduced in the country on 15th September 1959.It started as an experiment in social communication for which small teleclubs were organized in Delhi and provided with community television sets.

4.5 (a)ETV:

In 1961 Educational television beginsto support middle and higher secondary school education. Educational Television is another area in which Doordarshan has made significant contribution. Ever since the inception of television in India in 1959, one major responsibility entrusted to it is to provide support for the education system in the country. School television (STV) was launched in October 1961 as an organised, systematic and sequential support to formal school instruction. Teachers appreciated STV as a tool for teaching and presentation of content (Kumar, 2000). The country-wide classroom initiative of the University Grants Commission dedicated to higher education started its telecast on Doordarshan in 1984 with one-hour educational programmes. Though the urban youth may not even be aware of such programmes, these were found to be very useful in the small towns and remote areas of the country where people had less access to other sources of information (Ninan, 1995).

Its experiments in teaching of science, 6 mathematics, and language proved successful and received appreciation from many UNESCO experts (Kumar, 2000).

4.5 (b) KrishiDarshan:

A few years later a pilot project was initiated by the Department of Atomic Energy in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, All India Radio, the Indian Agricultural Research Institute and the Delhi Administration telecasts for farmers began in the form of KrishiDarshan. It was telecast on Wednesdays and Fridays for 20 minutes each day and served 80 villages (around Delhi) provided with community television sets. (Kumar, 2000).

4.5 (c) Gyandarshan:

In order to boost educational telecasts, a satellite channel devoted exclusively to education Gyandarshan was launched in 2000 in collaboration with the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the Indira Gandhi National Open University. Gyandarshan offers interesting and informative programmes of relevance to special categories – pre-school kids, primary and secondary school children, college and university students, and youth seeking career opportunities, housewives, adults, and many others. In addition to educational fare, programmes from abroad are also broadcast to offer viewers a window to the world (Agrawal and Raghaviah, 2006).

4.5 (d) SITE (Satellite Instructional Television Experiment):

The journey of television in India took a new turn with the launch of the Satellite Instructional Television Experiment in 1975-76. It was a one year pilot-project using the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's ATS-6 satellite to broadcast educational messages through satellite to 2400 villages in the six states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Bihar, Orissa, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. With the help of NASA, UNDP, ITU and UNESCO the Indian Space Research Organisation succeeded in launching SITE on August 01, 1975. Programs on topics generally considered development oriented like agricultural modernization through hybrid seeds, better farming methods and management, family planning, public health, social and educational improvement of women and children, better learning and teaching methods were transmitted through the satellite to community. The experiment ended on July 31, 1976. J V Vilanilam (2003) considers this experiment as one of the important factors contributing to the expansion of TV in India

SITE is one of the most extensive educational and social research project ever conducted in mass mediated communication. The effectiveness of TV as a medium for educating the masses in rural areas was emphasized by this experiment..

4.5 (e) Kheda Communication:

ThisProject was yet another pioneering experiment using television for educational purposes in India. It aimed at the development and local communication in Kheda district of Gujarat. This project began in 1975 and continued till 1990. For empowering the rural community, an instructional television project was introduced. The experiment is named as Kheda Communication Project. Social evils were addressed in this special television experiment. The project was in operation under the charge of the Space Applications Centre, Ahmedabad. The Development and Education Communication Unit (DECU) of Space Application Center (CAS) is involved in the conception, definition, planning, implementation and socio-economic evaluation of space applications.

Dooradarshan and the Space Application Centre produced programmes for over an hour every day. Programmes focused on alcoholism, caste discrimination, minimum wages, family planning, gender discrimination and cooperatives. Television serials, folk drama, puppet shows and other popular formats used for local productions. Villagers

worked for the project as actors, script writers, directors and visualizers for the programme production teams. Constant interaction with the people was the distinct characteristic of this project.The focus of Kheda Communication Project was:

- Exposing the oppression and bondages in the present social and economic system in such a way as to heighten understanding.
- Mobilizing the community and the individual himself to break away from these bondages.
- Promoting self-reliance among the individuals and the community.

4.6 New Media as a medium of Development Communication:

New media or computers started creeping in the Indian Society around 1986. The actual transition in India happened after 1996 when several independent media houses brought out news website. Today, new media has become an active tool in the run to development communication. This takes various forms like E-Governance, E-Choupal, Telecentres etc.

4.6 (a) E-Governance:

In simple terms, electronic governance is the delivery of public services and information at the doorstep of the people with the help of computers. The "e" in e-Governance stands for 'electronic'. Thus, e-Governance is basically associated with carrying out the functions and achieving the results of governance through the utilization of ICT (Information and Communications Technology).Citizens can use the Information Community Technology (ICT) as administrative tools to pave the way for a silent, social change. E-governance can play the role of a catalyst for sustainable inclusive growth. E-governance uses the ICT for planning, implementation, and monitoring of government programmes..While Governance relates to safeguarding the legal rights of all citizens, an equally important aspect is concerned with ensuring equitable access to public services and the benefits of economic growth to all. It also ensures government to be transparent in its dealings, accountable for its activities and faster in its responses as part of good governance. **Computerization of Land Records**, **Gyandoot, Bhoomi Project**, **e-Mitra Project in Rajasthanare some initiatives which are done by the government in recent times for the development.**

4.6 (b) E- Chaupal:

The e-Choupal is a unique web-based initiative of ITC Limited [a large multi business conglomerate in India] offering farmers required information, products and services they need to enhance farm productivity improve farm-gate price realizations and cut transaction costs. Farmers can access latest local and global information on weather, scientific farming practices as well as market price at the village itself. The serviced are provided through this web portal [http://www. e-Choupal.com] in different languages. It also facilities supply of high quality farm inputs as well as purchase doorstep thereby saving them time and transportation costs. Basically, an e-Choupal is a desktop computer with internet access, housed in a small room, costing fewer than three lakhs to set up and about Rs 10,000 annually to maintain. The e-Choupal also providers daily need items manufactured by ITC.

Launched in June 2000, "e-Choupal" has already become the largest private sector initiative among all Internet-based interventions in rural India. e-Choupal services today reach out to more than 40 lakh farmers growing a range of crops-soyabean, Coffee, wheat, rice pulses, shrimp- in over 40,000 villages through 6450 kiosks across 8 states [M.P., Karanataka, A.P., Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Tamil Nadu]. It has future plans to cover 100,000 villages or one sixth of rural India, within a decade.

5. **Conclusion**

Media Community expert Rostow, Lerner and Schramm discussed the importance of development communication in communication process. But how much effective have development communication been, is a question that arises in our mind. This is because, even after the omnipresence of media in our society; there is a vast difference between the rich and the poor in most developing countries. According to experts the main obstruction in the path to development is that the scope of information is not available to everybody and that the development brought through development communication should be equally shared by all section of the society. Opening up of different mass media is necessary so that common people have easy access to them. Availability of information will open up new avenues of development. In Indian context, mass-media expert functions in a manner as if development communication is a favour they are doing to common people. Development communication sadly is not given its due importance to a large and developing country like India. Politicians and

bureaucrats still believe that different economical and infrastructural projects under taken by the government is enough to eradicate poverty. Development communicator of our country laid more stress on the projects undertaken by the government rather than communicating these information to the mass. India, despite the communication and information technology revolution, there does not appear to be a commensurate change in the lives of millions of the poor. Indeed for the poor the promise of the new information age — knowledge for all- seems as a distant star. 11 With the advent of electronic media it was thought that the print media will lose its importance, and ultimately perish. But, this never happened. Print media with its features and advantages not only competed with electronic media but is still a favourite among many, specially the educated class who are info-holic, prefer interpretation and love reading in their leisure hours. However, print media has become highly commercialized, and social responsibility has taken a back seat. Today a key feature of print media, unfortunately, is the glossy reporting. With the increasing cost of news –print and production, and the pressure of market imperatives, news paper house has started and is following the trend of carrying ad friendly fluff at the cost of more serious developmental reports. There have been trends of leading dailies over the past few years to drop their special sections devoted to development and health. The government controlled media has been more or less toeing a centralized form of communication. AIR (All India Radio) during its initial days formulated its community policies in Delhi and got it translated to various languages for broadcasting. However, in this process it never looked into regional variations of the problems, and the necessity of customizing the messages was not felt. Hence, spending so much transmission time on such issues and messages could never give positive result. Community radio, an important weapon to development has not been enough importance and popularity. Community radio can help in development of local area by upholding their problem or disseminating information locally. Steps have not been taken by the government to popularize this form of radio to support and influence communities to set up these. Rules have not properly been framed to regularise the contents of private channels. Plans should have been drawn in a manner to strictly promote development through radio channels which have not been done. The state controlled television, Doordarshan, which has a very wide coverage area too has its program designed in the same fashion and hence suffer from the same affliction as that of radio. Here, programs are prepared without keeping the target audience in mind. Development communicator fails to prepare development messages and programmes that can inform as well as entertain its viewers. A good development communicator is one who can pass on development message without bringing in boredom. But broadcasters in television have often failed in it. Projects like SITE and Kheda though initially successful could not be continued throughout years later. Educational TV or Country Wide Classroom projects are more successful on pen and paper than practically. It failed to meet its targeted TRP points. Programs like GyanDarshan, though educational and informative in its approach, but 12 lacks efficiency in its presentation. School and college goers who are most used to private satellite channels are rarely even aware of these programmes. Development communicators should try to popularize these programmes. This can be done by being more interesting and attractive in its approach and bring variety in choice of subjects. Use of more colours, picture and info-graphic can make the presentation styles more acceptable. In such a condition it is necessary for a developing country like India, to most urgently rethink their communication policies and research priorities to address the information problems and knowledge gaps in social development. Development communicator should try in applying communication technology for economic and social changes. Problems that lie in the path should be found out and highlighted. This should include both government policies and other different policies that initiate faster social development to match and sustain the momentum of economic progress. Given, the current media scenario, and the needs of the development sector, it is necessary for a development communicator to develop a regulatory framework that shall under the umbrella of public service broadcasting shall include state owned media as well as noncommercial broadcasting. This will encourage non-profit institutions such as community organizations, local bodies and NGOs to participate in development communication. Media education and literacy to create demand for better, need based media stories and programmes are necessary. This is important to attract readers and viewers and to pass the development messages among the common mass, for which the programmes are undertaken. Decentralisation and provision of training for communities is necessary for local broadcasting like community radio. Putting communication resources in the hands of community is a way to achieve success in developmental projects with the use of mass-media.

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