

## **DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION**

### **Syllabus**

#### **DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION: DEFINITION**

Introduction

Historical snippets

What is development communication?

Communication for development

Key elements of the development communication approach.

Methods used for development communication

Characteristics of a new 'village level worker' or development communication practitioner

Tasks to be performed by the development communication officer

The development communication process

Some pointers on the content (the 'what'), in development communication

Institutionalizing development communication

Some development communication scenarios

#### **DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION USING VARIOUS MEDIA**

#### **CORE AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT**

#### **DEVELOPMENT CAMPAIGN**

### **DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION**

#### **Tutorial**

Knowledge and information are essential for people to successfully respond to the opportunities and challenges of social, economic and technological changes. But to be useful, knowledge and information must be effectively communicated to people. Millions of people in developing countries are excluded from a wide range of information and knowledge, with the rural poor in particular remaining isolated from both traditional media and new information and communication technologies which would improve their life.

#### **DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION:**

**DEFINITION** Here, in 'development communication', you see that there are two words- 'development' and 'communication'. By now, you know what communication means. You have also learnt that communication is a message understood or sharing of experience. When we refer to communication, in the context of development, we refer to various types of communication like interpersonal, group and mass communication. Now let's try and understand the term 'development'. It is not easy to define this as it depends on the context. Development is about change. It is about changing for the better. It could be about social or economic change for improvement or progress. When we refer to development communication, it is about such communication that can be used

for development. It is about using communication to change or improve something. Here we use different types of messages to change the socio-economic condition of people. These messages are designed to transform the behaviour of people or for improving their quality of life. Therefore, development communication can be defined as the use of communication to promote development. Those who write or produce programmes on issues related to development are called development communicators. Role of a development communicator The development communicator plays a very significant role in explaining the development process to the common people in such a way that it finds acceptance. In order to achieve this objective a development communicator: z has to understand the process of development and communication; z should possess knowledge in professional techniques and should know the audience; z prepare and distribute development messages to millions of people in such a way that they are received and understood, accepted and applied. If they accept this challenge they will be able to get the people to identify themselves as part of a society and a nation. This identity will help in bringing human resources together for the total welfare of the individual and the community at large.

## **Introduction**

One of the most significant and exciting developments in reconstituting government communication systems in South Africa, has been the commitment to a democratic, participatory and responsive public information programme where people are the most important ingredient. By this we mean that government communication is driven by the needs of people, that it facilitates citizen participation in the creation and use of information, and that it opens the activities of government to public scrutiny thus promoting democracy and efficiency. These aims were spelt out in the Report which ushered in a new order in public information systems.

In this regard a few important points should be made:

- Government has adopted an approach to dialogue with its citizens which is described as 'development communication'.
- Development communication can be seen as a thread linking a number of national development initiatives aimed at eradicating socio-economic drawbacks.
- As development communication is practiced in a number of spheres in which public policy is exercised - sanitation, health, safety, economic stability, agriculture, land rights etc - the approach requires careful co-ordination if it is not to deteriorate into a haphazard and water-down effort - doing the right thing in the wrong way!

Multi-purpose Community Centres have been identified as vehicles through which development communication activities can reach communities. It should be recognised that the development communication approach is wider than the MPCC initiative and drives the service and information delivery approach used by a number of government departments.

The development communication approach is expressed and enhanced, in the context, through its connection with the following efforts:

- Universal Access: popularising the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)
- Alternative Service Delivery: efforts by government to deliver Services in a more innovative, effective and efficient way
- an approach aimed at developing user-friendly public Services by focussing on the needs of the people who will receive the Services.

Development communication is about the content of what is communicated as well as the context (how) the message is relayed to the receiver.

### **Historical snippets**

Development communication is an approach perfected by the developing world. It is thus able to speak into the real life situations of millions of the world's poor and is connected with their efforts to improve their lives for the better.

This approach was first used in the agricultural sector and the first development communication agents were village level agricultural extension officers. The approach flourished from the 1950s onwards and roughly paralleled the de-colonisation experiences of many developing nations.

### **What is development communication?**

This describes an approach to communication which provides communities with information they can use in bettering their lives, which aims at making public programmes and policies real, meaningful and sustainable. Such information must be applied in some way as part of community development but it must also address information needs which communities themselves identified. The outcome of this approach, in short, is to make a difference in the quality of life of communities.

Nora Quebral, a leading academic in this field defines development communication as follows:

- Development communication is the art 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

- fulfillment of the human potential. (Quoted in Development Communication - rhetoric and reality by Pete Habermann and Guy de Fontagalland.)

## **Communication for development**

The discipline of communication offers the development process a number of inputs:

- a way to survey a new environment especially by establishing consultative vehicles
- a way of raising consciousness and awareness amongst communities of issues pertaining to a better life for all - something to aspire to
- a way of promoting feedback - a dynamic two-way process can be set up between people and 'developers'
- a way to teach new skills selling
- a national dream and a vehicle for programmes directed at nation building.

## **Key elements of the development communication approach**

- It is responsive: it does not provide 'useless' information - that which people did not want to know, but which central planners deemed as crucial. People understand their own needs better and through this approach communication becomes a tool in the planning and development process, not a mechanism to persuade communities once unpalatable decisions have been made ('in their best interests!')
- It hinges on feedback: it is not a one-way process but involves dialogue mechanisms about the information which was transferred. It is also fundamentally about consultative processes being managed at community level.
- Innovation and creativity: the message must not be dull and boring but show clearly how the information transmitted will make a difference in the life of the recipient - it must not instill doubt or disbelief, but trust and confidence (look for local adopters). Development Communication workers should, however, balance creativity with an understanding of what communities would be prepared to accept and where consideration has been given to the norms and prevailing values of that community.
- Independent validation: it is not about 'government speak'. This approach builds participatory mechanisms and functional networks involving NGOs, CBOs, Traditional Leadership structures while also encouraging links with networks from across the country and indeed all over the world. These can either prove or disprove the validity of the information transmitted.
- It's about sustainability and continuity: it is not about dumping information in a community and never going back for months.
- It's about establishing common ground with communities who are to be the recipients of the information/message: it is not about the public servant

- who swoops in and out of a community in his or her GG like some 'phantom expert' to 'educate and uplift' communities. The standards, norms, values, habits of the community are paramount. (This may mean that those accustomed to a liaison style hinging on comfortable hotels with prepared meals and warm fluffy duvets will need to make some adjustments to their style!)
- It's about community participation: development programmes which plan for communities or supply information which planners feel communities need, fail to be relevant initiatives and more often than not fail to be sustainable. A primary emphasis of this approach is to plan with communities, create structures which offer communities and developers equal power, and use communication methods which are fundamentally participatory in nature. This often requires that government planners, developers or community workers have to listen to the advice of communities and change the views they themselves hold.
  - It's about access and visibility of government where government is no longer a distant and unknown entity in community development experiences. This approach reverses the practice of communities having to travel long distances and at relatively great cost to access government Services and information. This is made worse when government is not clearly and properly identifiable and access is difficult because of inaccessible buildings, unfriendly and unprofessional staff etc. The development communication approach brings government employees face to face with communities so promoting accountability at local level. This is not possible when civil servants are remote and impersonal.
  - It's about the use of simple and relevant language where concepts are packaged in the experiences of communities, in their own language and where communities themselves have played a major role in the development of material for development communication programmes.

### **Methods used for development communication**

- The local adopter: gets case studies or pilots programmes going.
- A community liaison programme which links with the life rhythms of that community: connected to community events, where the Communication Officer becomes well know in that community (not infamous though!), eats in community establishments, lives in communities when visits are made; empathy by sacrificing the comforts of home.
- Video: basic training in this skill and securing sponsorship of equipment. Videos then record issues important to the community -either feature as the content of the next community meeting or sent to decision makers in provincial capitals, nationally etc - why not let communities capture things for the Cabinet? Some of the themes could be:  
 "Communities in partnership with government toward a better life"  
 "A better life for all. Is the Key District Council on track?"

- A youth project capturing how young people feel about their lives in this area...their future, their situation, their excitements, their fears etc: This could be a campaign leading up to a public meeting with government decision makers on Youth Day rather than an expensive bash at a stadium which has little developmental value and entrenches negative stereotypes of young people as frivolous and disinterested in their future!
- Discussion circle: a group discussion structured along the lines of a 'quality circle' where stakeholders or representatives discuss issues of importance to the community --information needs, queries about Services being delivered etc. It is an open discussion following the principles of small group dynamics and where specific deliverables - questions to be answered, products to be introduced, programmes to be initiated - are brainstormed.
- Radio forums: live broadcasts or programming for the burgeoning community radio sector. This can take the form of a studio panel discussing a relevant topic, where use is made of the Telecentre where communities can gather to phone in. This might work well where senior officials - MECs, Premiers, Cabinet Ministers, or the Deputy President or President are involved as panel members or phone-in guests.  
In another iteration this medium can operate as follows:  
The GCIS Communication Office runs discussion circles across the district on a topic which communities have identified - perhaps domestic violence. This happens over a one or two week period. The issues raised, discussions held, questions asked etc become the content of a focussed radio programme in the third week. The GCIS Communication Officer would have spent time following-up the relevant speaker from government to answer these questions - referred the matter to the right source. He or she would have made arrangements with the radio station concerned, but would also have encouraged the manager of the Telecentre to seek government or other community sponsorship for the cost of the phone-in from the Telecentre. (This is why strong partnerships are vital - the Traditional Authority may sponsor the cost of the phone-in for their members, for example, as many of the questions raised may have come from the delegates sent by the Traditional Authority to the discussion circle.
- Community participation vehicles: panel discussions at MPCC level across the District (the SCO may arrange a school principal, a regional inspector of education and an external expert from an NGO to introduce communities to changes which will be coming into the education system...the SCO was asked about this at a Discussion Circle - he or she links up with MPCC manager to host this panel discussion in the centre but also markets the event to MPCC Advocates at satellite points across the district);
- television: (this is usually as described above but may also manifest as feature articles for national programming where the national broadcaster has specific programme which are developmental in nature)

- cassette tapes: people record their own experiences and this gets fed- decision makers indigenous forms of in-depth interviewing while the community member is busy with their work or the task which is the one in question (local unemployed youth sitting in a tavern)
- folk drama: telling community stories or events in this medium is one good way of handling sensitive things which people may not openly talk about...after all, it is the characters talking!

### **Characteristics of a new 'village level worker' or development communication practitioner:**

- community needs at heart commitment to let
- communities lead: "I will follow"
- responsive: "I want to make a difference"
- multi-skilled and adaptable
- knowledgeable on many areas of government, structures, programmes, policies - well read (but not an expert on everything rather a referral specialist)
- good facilitation skills
- strong knowledge of the district in which I work - history, people, language, economic base, structures, gate keepers, institutions, Contact Details
- creative: strong knowledge of the creative methods of development communication
- knows and accepts own limitations: "I know when I should pass on to the departmental expert so as to offer my main client - the citizen - the best service"

### **Tasks to be performed by the development communication officer:**

- networking
- facilitating
- interviewing
- interpreting information (intermediary)
- techno-mediary: selling and familiarising communities with the great value technology offers
- referring
- researching: specifically, "How do I do informal research - running group discussions, focus groups, easy questionnaires, community meetings/imbizos, writing up case studies which describe scenarios, secondary or documentary research; where to get it, what this constitutes, how do I use it?"
- some training
- a number of roles associated with my status as an employee of the public service: administration, reporting, financial issues etc.

### **The development communication process**

- Step 1: Proximity to the receiver
- Step 2: Establish credibility
- Step 3: Consultation
- Step 4: Involve receivers in planning (message design or info product)
- Step 5: The message is developed and the programme runs
- Step 6: Evaluate the message / programme
- Step 7: Next phase of planning

### **Some pointers on the content (the 'what'), in development communication**

- Generic content: this is more general and relates largely to 'citizenship' type issues. Such content may focus on rights, responsibilities and duties of citizens; information and education about government institutions, public figures and national events such as public holidays; and issues such as country's relationships internationally.
- Specific content: concerning the programmes, policies, projects and, Services of government.
- Local content: systems need to be in place to monitor the questions communities are asking. This can also be informed by ongoing national research into public information needs. FAQs will lead to responsive information products and programmes from government.
- As the initiative involves partnerships across various social sectors, some of the information transferred may originate from the private sector as well as various non-governmental programmes although this is not the primary focus of the initiative.
- Core content: a dialogue about the 'State of the nation' - corruption, crime, youth development, employment, disability, gender equity, multi-culturalism etc. If, for instance, GCIS transmits a weekly current affairs programme to communities gathered in centres (video or radio), there must be some key content which inspires this weekly activity.

### **Institutionalizing development communication**

In the context, a number of issues are important regarding the sustainability of the development communication approach:

- Government's commitment to the approach as a way of improving governance ensures that public resources are channeled into development communication efforts. When government locates to an MPCC for instance, it brings human, financial and other resources which ensure that the efforts toward this programme are sustained.
- This approach can be sustained through public/ private partnerships where business adds value to the development communication process through inputting resources.
- Various para-government programmes are focussing on efforts to promote universal access and the use of ICTs. These vehicles add a significant



dimension to the development communication approach which were not available during the former decades when the approach emerged. For instance, a Telecentre established by the Universal Service Agency and run as a business venture by a community development committee, can serve as a centre from which phone-in programmes can be run.

### **Some development communication scenarios**

- **Scenario 1**

A group of unemployed youth near the MPCC organises to look for employment opportunities. They visit the Government Information Centre where the CO assists them in visiting the DTI Website. She refers them with the site address to the Telecentre in the MPCC where they surf the net for more details. At minimal cost they print information they need.

They discover the opportunities to create a small export business for handcraft. The GIC officer refers them to the Arts and Culture Department who assists them with training which can help the group professionalise the business.

The DTI is called in to assist the group and train them in drawing up a business plan for the goods. They link the youth to overseas markets.

The Kei District Council holds an investment conference and the group successfully tenders to provide items of handcraft as Corporate Gifts for the conference (they found out about the tender from the Community notice Board in the MPCC).

They successfully get the seed capital to start their export business from this venture.

- **Scenario 2**

The women are eager to play an active role in HIV/AIDS education. They hold a meeting with the clinic sister of the Provincial Health Department who visits the MPCC each Wednesday morning. She offers them training and information based on printed material produced by the department and the NAPWA NGO. They also visit the GIC and the Telecentre in the MPCC to surf the net for more information. This is as they have decided to stage a community drama as an awareness vehicle. They write the script and the CO based in the GIC facilitates a partnership with the Local Authority to stage the play in venues around the TLC...clinics, schools, government offices etc.

The group is supported by the TLC and the GCIS in the development of a marketing campaign for this series of roadshows which occurs across the district. This is through the production of posters and flyers in partnership with the GCIS and using the DTP programme in the GIC.

By now the women have received a sponsorship from a private sector concern to extend the number of performances. This is as a result of the large crowds which the performances had drawn and the enthusiastic participation of the local community. The roadshows also successfully distributed many other information

products from other departments, to the large groups attracted. One day the production is being staged in the TLC Hall and a visitor from Germany invites the women to stage it at an international AIDS conference in Munich. The group approaches the Home Affairs office in the MPCC to arrange passports rather than travel all the way to Petersburg.

## DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION USING VARIOUS MEDIA

The history of development communication in India can be traced to rural radio broadcasts in the 1940s in different languages. Have you ever heard a rural programme on radio? If you come from a rural area, you probably would have heard. People who present these programmes speak in a language or dialect that the people in your area speak. The programmes may be about farming and related subjects. The programme may comprise of interviews with experts, officials and farmers, folk songs and information about weather, market rates, availability of improved seeds and implements. There would also be programmes on related fields. During the 1950s, the government started huge developmental programmes throughout the country. In fact, when Doordarshan started on 15th September 1959, it was concentrating only on programmes on agriculture. Many of you might have seen the 'Krishi Darshan' programme on Doordarshan. Later in 1975, when India used satellites for telecasting television programmes in what is known as SITE (Satellite Instructional Television Experiment), the programmes on education and development were made available to 2400 villages in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan. As far as the print media is concerned, after Independence when the Five Year Plans were initiated by the government for planned development, it was the newspapers which gave great importance to development themes. They wrote on various government development programmes and how the people could make use of them. If the print media have contributed to development communication, the electronic media – radio and television especially All India Radio and Doordarshan have spread messages on development as the main part of their broadcasts. However, amongst all the media that are used for development communication, traditional media are the closest to people who need messages of development like the farmers and workers. Such forms of media are participatory and effective. You may have seen construction workers cooking their meal of dal and rice over open fires in front of their tents set up temporarily on the roadside. They need to be educated about the values of balanced nutrition, cleanliness, hygiene and water and sanitation. Have you wondered how messages on such issues are communicated ?

In various parts of India, groups of volunteers use street theatre as a medium for development communication. This is done through humorous skits and plays through which the importance of literacy, hygiene etc. are enacted. The content for the skits is drawn from the audience's life. For example, they are told about "balanced nutrition". This means supplementing their staple diet of dal and rice with green leafy vegetables known to cure night blindness, an ailment common

among construction workers. Similarly, female construction workers and their children are taught how to read and write. However, problems in communicating a message in an effective way has been a matter of concern to development workers. How can people be taught new skills at a low cost? What would be a good way to deal with sensitive topics such as health issues? How can complicated new research, like that in agriculture for example, be simplified so that ordinary people can benefit? One option has been the use of comics. But, in order to achieve the desired results, these comics should be created locally. But what are 'comics' ? You must have all at some point of time read a comic. Comics involve story telling using visuals which must follow local ideas and culture in order to be understood correctly by people. The important thing about comics is that they are made by people on their own issues in their own language. So, readers find them closer to their day-to-day lives. Programmes are organized in the remote areas of Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu, and the North East to provide training to rural communicators to enable them to use comics in development communication. Information on sensitive health issues such as HIV/AIDS has been communicated through the medium of comics in several states. However, you must understand that development communication using various media is possible only with the active involvement of the following:

- (i) Development agencies like departments of agriculture.
- (ii) Voluntary organizations (iii) Concerned citizens (iv) Non governmental organizations (NGOs)

Whenever we speak about development, the contribution of voluntary groups, concerned citizens and non governmental organizations cannot be ignored. Actually these groups help the government in implementing development programmes. Of course the government, both central and state have various departments to reach out to people on various issues. The NGOs undertake studies, conduct research and develop appropriate messages for spreading awareness on various issues pertaining to development.

## CORE AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT

You must know that the basic purpose of development is to enlarge people's choices and create an environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives.

Let us list some of the core areas of development.

- z Agriculture
- z Fisheries
- z Animal Husbandry
- z Food Security
- z Communication
- z Irrigation
- z Public Works

- z Employment
- z Environment
- z Ecology
- z Income generation activities
- z Education
- z Health and Sanitation
- z Family welfare

If you are involved in development communication, you need expert guidance and relevant information to inform people.

You may seek that expertise from the following:

- z Agricultural schools and colleges
- z State agriculture department
- z State Horticulture Department
- z Universities and Colleges
- z State Fisheries Department
- z Registrar of Co-operative Societies
- z Soil Testing Laboratories
- z Poultry Farms run by the Government
- z Krishi Bhawans and Model Farms
- z Community Development Blocks
- z Primary Health Centers
- z Animal Husbandry Department
- z Government Financial & Banking Agencies
- z Local NGOs
- z Sericulture Farms

## DEVELOPMENT CAMPAIGN

You may be familiar with the term 'election campaign'. During elections we use communication to change the way people vote – from one party to another or from one candidate to another. For this, we use public meetings, print material, advertising on radio and television etc. The campaign kicks off before the election process starts and ends with the announcement of results. It's purpose is to see that a particular individual or group of people vote for a particular candidate or party. Similarly for development communication we may use the print media, radio and television. Sometimes they are time bound programmes for a certain period. Let us counter an example. A particular Sunday in a month is identified for polio immunization. There are also weekly, fortnightly and monthly campaigns on development themes. Let us take another example of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (Education for all programme) in our country This is an effort to provide useful and relevant elementary education for all children in the 6-14 age group by 2010 with the active participation of the community in the management of schools. People interested in development communication should understand their audience i.e, readers, listeners or viewers. They should also know the

needs of their audience so that whatever medium is used, the messages are relevant. The messages then have to be passed on in the most attractive manner. The need for development communication continues since a large population of India lives in rural areas and they need government support. Therefore, communication from the government remains highly significant. New forms of communication such as Public Information campaigns are held in villages to disseminate information. Participation of the local community is also encouraged.