Communications & Development

a practical guide

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Other relevant forthcoming DFID resources:

Short guide to communications policy issues: "Communications and poverty elimination: people, media and development"

DFID Gender intranet site: Gender and communications section

Guide to institutional media support: "developing the media to serve the interests of the poor"

Communications & Development

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Communications & Development

Introduction

Why are communications important in development?

Communications activities have always been central to DFID programmes. But DFID's new poverty agenda has given them a much stronger emphasis, with a growth of interest from all advisory groups and most geographical divisions. Newer, more broad-ranging programmes give far greater scope for innovative communications activities with new partners.

If priority is placed on eliminating poverty, then it is vital that channels of communication involve poor and excluded people. This involves people's rights to be involved in development programmes, and in society and governance more generally. The engagement of poorer people with government involves many complex communications issues, whether it takes place at a village level or in policy debate.

With a high level of interest in communications, and a growing awareness of how central they are to many new DFID priorities, there is need for good practice material from Social Development Division. This guide fulfils those aims, and complements other communications initiatives under way in DFID.

Interviews for Radio Gune Yi in Senegal
Pic: Mary Myers

How to use this guide

This is a practical guide to communications in DFID programmes. It stresses the information needs and rights of poor and marginalised people, as a part of DFID's poverty elimination agenda. In doing so, it should help to define an emphasis on rights and on strengthening civil society, encouraging new programme ideas as well as helping to improve existing initiatives.

The guide is divided into three sections for ease of use:

Part 1 Background to communications
(background to relevant issues)

Part 2 Guide to implementing development communications
(practical notes for implementation)

Part 3 Guide to different media
(further information about specific media)

In the **appendix** are sources, web-sites and useful contacts for further information. Contacts and sources are also given in Part Three after each section. The following lists are also provided to make the guide easier to use.

Listening to the radio, Sierra Leone
Pic: Jon Spaull/Panos Pictures

Quick Reference:

Summary of main points (with page references for further information)

1. Communications are central to rights-based approaches to development
This includes rights to receive information and exercise a voice, as well as freedom of information and media activity.

GO TO pages 12 to 15

2. Communications and media play an important role in strengthening civil society
Civil society organisations benefit from means of networking, and opportunities to lobby or advocate on certain issues. Different methods of communicating can also influence policy decisions.

GO TO pages 19 to 20, 76 to 80, 87 to 90, 38 to 39

3. A strategic approach to communications will improve project success, and can provide a set of questions to assist in planning and implementation
By planning communications components of projects, and co-ordinating activities, considerable benefits can be gained. Although each initiative is different , there are generic issues to raise for all uses of communications.

GO TO pages 23 to 31

4. The use of mass media such as television and radio can help fulfil a variety of development aims
Although not always appropriate, large and small mass media interventions can be considered.

GO TO pages 14, 19 to 20, 34 to 37, 67 to 75

5. A variety of alternative media offer a range of different options
Alternative media can give people a space to express themselves, and can provide relevant information. Examples include small-scale radio, indigenous cultural activities and drama, and e-mail discussion groups.

GO TO Part 3, especially pages 48 to 51

6. Participation and participatory approaches are a key part of good communications practice
All media give scope for some participatory input, and some can be successfully combined with other participatory methodologies.

GO TO pages 17, 32 to 33, Part 3

7. Tools exist for evaluating communications initiatives
Evaluation need not be a barrier to communications programmes: a variety of tools exists.

8. Further references and contact information are included in this guide

Where to find rapid checklists and summaries
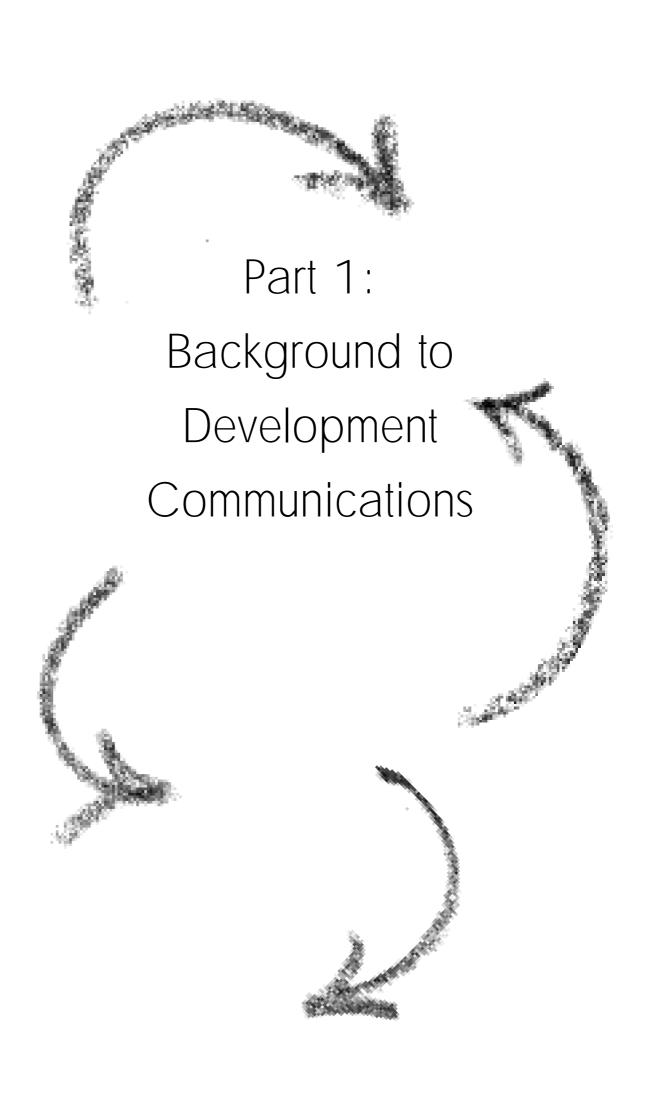
List of main case studies

Shorter case studies form part of the main text throughout.

Part 1:

Background to Development Communications

What are development communications?

Communications for development has been a specialised field for several decades. In this guide, communications issues are merged with main social development principles, including social analysis and community-level participation. This is presented in the light of DFID's current agenda. The main point is that high quality and sensitive communications can make a real positive difference to DFID's work across all sectors.

This guide takes communications to mean exchanges of information between all stakeholders, especially with poor and excluded women and men. DFID's focus on poverty elimination, and more specifically on people's rights, on civil society and on partnerships, all involve a greater acknowledgement of communications. Increasingly the centrality of communications is being acknowledged in DFID, and this guide should help define future programmes.

Communications do not occur simply with the primary stakeholder, but can be channelled through intermediaries of many different sorts.

Communications can involve:

→ participatory mechanisms

→ service delivery

→ advocacy

→ civil society building

→ research dissemination

→ networking initiatives

→ different uses of mass media.

Different media are involved:

→ radio

→ interpersonal meetings of all sorts (eg. workshops, PRA[1] or other community-level work)

→ theatre

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[1] PRA: Participatory Rural Appraisal. This and other methodologies for encouraging user involvement in defining and running programmes can be considered as key communications mechanisms. They are not covered systematically in this guide, as they are sufficiently covered elsewhere.

At a public washing place a family planning motivator explains
the use of the contraceptive pills, Guatemala.
Pic: Sean Sprague/Panos Pictures

Channels of communication

Communications flow in different directions: up, down and across.

Downwards communications include provision of technical information, health communications, cascades of training, etc.

Upwards communications include all participatory structures and forms of consultation. These can be formal or informal, direct or indirect.

Horizontal communications involve people talking to peers: farmer-to-farmer methodologies, community meetings, network, etc.

Most good communications initiatives combine these directions in strategic approaches to exchanging information. Downwards provision of good, accurate information is a central part of development work in all sectors, and the popularity of participatory methods do not alter this. But it is hard to ensure that information provided will be of any use unless there are upwards channels of information as well, to guide and help formulate information provision.

Rights and communication

Rights-based approaches tend to place a strong emphasis on information. Three main issues are:

a. people's rights to a voice

b. people's rights to information

c. freedom of media and information

a. Rights to a voice:

People have a right to express their needs and concerns, in development programmes and across society and government. At an operational level, fulfilling people's rights to speak about problems with service delivery will improve service provision. More fundamentally, communication can help create open and responsive government. Different ways of exercising a voice include voting, PRA mapping exercises, and protest marches.

Programmes that work to this end can use unconventional channels: community radio stations, or mainstream mass media, can give a platform for the views of poorer people. DFID service delivery programmes can create channels within or outside government structures, so that the views of poorer women and men reach decision-makers. This facilitating role will vary in different places: Participatory Poverty Assessments, for example, have been used as an advocacy tool and been integrated into government planning.

b. People's rights to information:
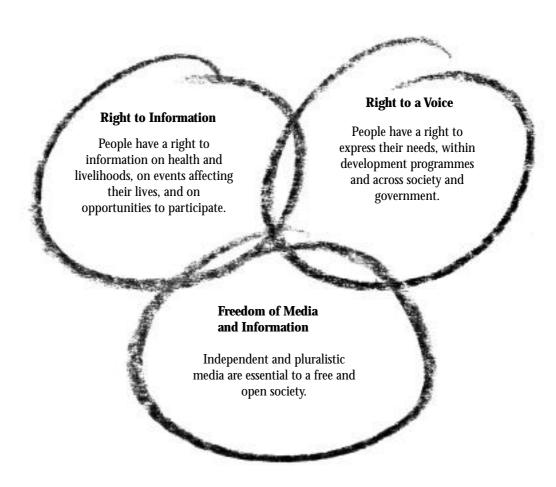
Provision of information is a central part of many development programmes. The inter-relationship between poverty and lack of access to relevant information is often strong; useful information, like useful education, produces short-term improvements in people's lives, and it also builds longer-term capacity. This includes information as part of service delivery in areas such as maternal mortality or rural livelihoods of smaller farmers.
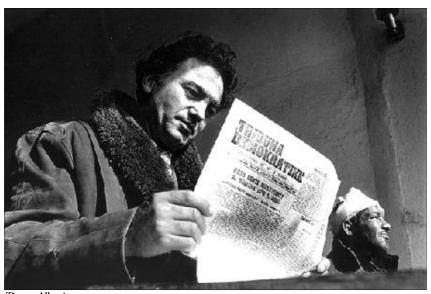
Often, information provision does not benefit from expert attention, or from the simple lessons learnt over the last few decades: there is no point in providing information to people if they know it already, if it makes no sense to them, or if it is simply irrelevant to their lives. It is important to listen as well as provide information, if the information is going to be at all useful.

Information and communication components are often bolted on to a wider programme, or conducted as isolated initiatives. This approach misses many available opportunities to communicate with people. In contrast, an integrated approach can take advantage of all

chances to transfer information – especially if it is adopted at an early stage of programme implementation. Thinking of access to information as a right held by the poor would help to make communications initiatives more integral parts of sector or programme work, with subsequent improvements in programme success.

Fig. 1.1: Communication and Rights

Right to Information

People have a right to information on health and livelihoods, on events affecting their lives, and on opportunities to participate.

Right to a Voice

People have a right to express their needs, within development programmes and across society and government.

Freedom of Media and Information

Independent and pluralistic media are essential to a free and open society.

Tirana, Albania
Pic: Mark Hakansson/Panos Pictures

c. Freedom of media and information

"freedom of expression is a fundamental right. Independent and pluralistic media are essential to a free and open society."

(1998 DFID / Foreign Office Annual Report on Human Rights)

Media can help shape an open and more democratic society, and importantly they can also help reach more concrete goals. They can make a difference by:

→ changing stereotyped attitudes about poverty, about women, about marginalised groups or about minorities

→ expressing the interests or needs of people who normally have no channel for expression

→ raising issues which otherwise are not in the public domain.

There are many cases of programmes which work with media, not just to improve media coverage for its own sake, but to improve the attention and quality given to specific development issues by the media. For example, rural broadcasting or programmes focusing on gender issues can help shift national agendas and raise the profile of excluded people.

Putting communications and rights into practice

Information about people's rights to participate in different ways is a part of many recent initiatives. From local community politics to national political debate, issues can be raised that lead to subsequent action.

For example, the development of village or neighbourhood committees as a channel for involvement in village-level government services is becoming common in many major programmes. The chances of successful participation can depend on people's awareness of what a committee is and how it is run. Rights-based communications initiatives are being considered where a grassroots awareness of participation will encourage people to take part in participatory activity and press for better service delivery. This general awareness should make it harder for committees to fold, or to be used for developing powerful individuals' local political capital, rather than for improving services for the poor.

Another example involves measures to increase understanding of the democratic electoral process through different media (radio, travelling theatre, etc.). Many such initiatives have been funded by DFID and other donors, in a variety of countries.

Information about rights also covers the needs and specific interests of particular groups in society. Recent examples include information about disability and rights, as well as media and communication campaigns on violence against women in a variety of countries. Campaigns on violence against women in South Africa, for example, have used mass media, outreach services and schools to press home women's rights to safety, inside and outside the home. The actual form of a rights-based communications initiative will inevitably vary greatly, and prescriptive instructions on how to proceed would be misleading. Part Two of this guide presents the basis for formulating strategic initiatives.

Television station interviewing and filming street child, Comores
Pic: Giacomo Pirozzi/Panos Pictures

Information and poorer people

Communications with poorer people can be especially challenging. Poverty and marginalisation both tend to accompany limited access to media and information. Illiteracy, language barriers, unavailability of television or radio, physical remoteness, poor transport, and social isolation can all create communications difficulties. Exclusion of women from public space and life, lack of available information in minority languages, and the closed nature of government offices, all reduce access to information.

Different situations call for the use of different methods of communication. Much of the work in developing a communications strategy involves defining which channels are most likely to involve those who would otherwise be marginalised. Development communications must be appropriate if they are to be effective. Communications strategies involve testing, participatory exercises, engagement of local experts, or other steps to ensure that even straightforward messages are carefully formulated.

Information and power

Lack of information often accompanies lack of power. A clear example of this interplay can be seen in efforts to strengthen civil society by working through small local partners. Larger NGOs are likely to have far greater access to information on sources of funding than smaller community-based organisations. Most attempts to provide information will benefit those organisations that are already larger, potentially to the detriment of the smaller and poorer groups. With foresight, measures can be taken to counter this.

Similar processes occur on a community level: provision of information is likely to reach the more prominent, and usually male, people in a community first. The assumption that this will then filter down to others is not reliable, as people often retain a monopoly on information. Domination is assisted by control over knowledge, within the household, in a village, between rival recipients of donor funding, or within a large bureaucracy.

On a national scale, governments often look to control media, in order to control information. Similar tensions and pressures can exist at all levels. The contested nature of media and the information they convey should not be ignored in development programmes. By increasing the number of people who can access media, both to express views and to obtain information, power relations are effectively challenged. Giving this access to poorer or marginalised groups can greatly increase their capacity to escape from poverty.

Participation

Participatory methodologies such as PRA provide upwards flows of information; other processes, such as community-based theatre and participatory video, can also do so. Innovative communications ideas can provide new channels for participatory input. There are many different forms of participatory communications. Different instances are presented throughout this document. e.g.:

→ use of video or theatre as an advocacy tool;

→ mixing generic PRA methods with indigenous forms of cultural expression such as drama or dance;

→ community involvement in mass media such as local radio

Participation improves programme efficiency and appropriateness. As well as that, participatory communications "give people a voice". The value of involving poorer people in contributing their knowledge and experience, as well as their labour, is not easily measured, but has a range of positive effects. This is explained in more detail in the section on drama in Part Three.

Communication channels that are not normally participatory can involve an otherwise passive audience. Examples include letters columns in publications or news-sheets, question-and-answer sessions during meetings, radio phone-in sessions, photographic exercises, drama role-play and so on.

Communication initiatives themselves benefit from design procedures that include major inputs from the end user. Focus groups, interviews, more complex participatory planning processes, and pre-testing (i.e. trying materials out before using them), can all be employed to make media more appropriate.

Involvement in research

Participatory involvement can help in research production and dissemination. It can address failures to present research in the right format, language, and medium for poorer people or intermediaries to access, and to distribute information sufficiently energetically. Participatory input into the research process itself can also help to create information of real relevance to poorer people's lives. This is hardly a new lesson, but it serves to underline how important it is to consider communication issues from an early point in the project cycle. DFID's Renewable Natural Resources research section is itself conducting a communications review.

Strengthening indigenous or everyday communications

In reality, channels for development information are often marginal to the lives of most people. It is easy to forget that "development", however integrated or multi-sectoral a strategy may be, is a very small part of most people's lives

In a poor rural community, word of mouth or a trip to the market might be the most common information source. The occasional visit by a health officer or an agricultural extensionist is often an occasional distraction rather than anything else. For many key stakeholders, newspapers or television may be a more common source of information than a project progress report or a workshop.

Encouraging the use of indigenous art forms that are culturally specific, such as village level theatre, shadow puppetry, or oral recital, can have a major role in giving people a voice (see section on drama methods). In many countries such forms are commonplace. They can enable people to express themselves in their own format - something which many practitioners have found to be very successful.

It is important to tap into all of the ways in which normal people receive and pass on knowledge. In doing this, much use can be made of local forms of artistic expression by integrating them with development material, and also adapting them to other media such as local radio broadcasting.

Women's media group in the studio, Cambodia1
Pic: Sean Sprague/Panos Pictures

Strengthening Civil Society

Media and communications are central to accountable and inclusive societies. Programmes that aim to develop institutions and public involvement in civil society are becoming increasingly common, and involve a host of communications issues. Two main areas in this field are covered below: networks, and mass media.

Civil society networks

The processes involved in networking are disparate, and poorly documented. Networking is here taken to consist of communication between individuals or organisations for mutual benefit. It is formal and informal horizontal communication between stakeholders, using different media.

Networks can create difficulties for those excluded. Especially where networks involve electronic transfers of information through the internet or e-mail, poorer groups might be denied access unless key groups act as brokers for smaller organisations.

Networks have been fundamental to the furthering of women's rights. However, electronic information access tends to be a male domain; gender imbalances are often exacerbated through electronic communications initiatives unless steps to counter that tendency are taken.

The role of mass media

Media can help shape an open and more democratic society by spreading understanding, provoking debate, and increasing accountability. The media provide a "public space" in which issues are raised, and information about government or other fields is provided. A strong and critical press can strengthen people's ability to take part in political processes; it is a key component of a strong civil society. DFID recognises the important developmental role that media can play.

The interests of poor people, especially women, are rarely represented in mass media. Development interventions can raise issues of interest to poor women and men in mass media, and can broadcast their voices. Role models, interviews, discussions, and fictional formats all provide ordinary listeners with experiences that they relate to.
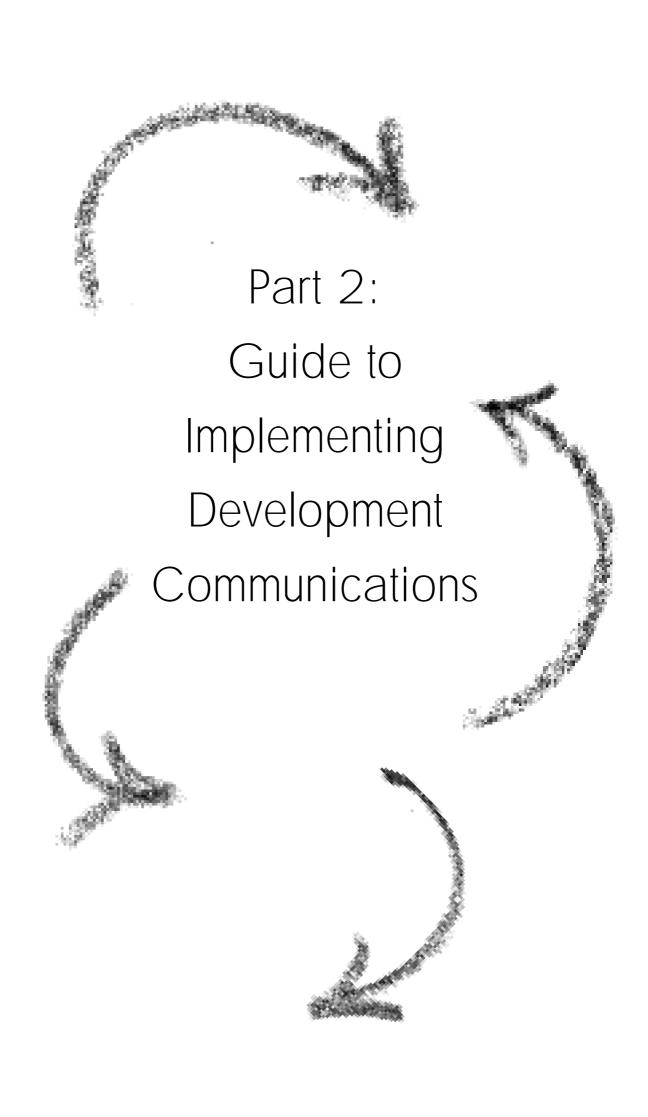
Media are critical in conflict situations. They can be used to encourage violence, and can build on existing prejudices. Yet media can also be an agent of peace, tolerance and understanding. Engagement with media in these conditions is complex, but a failure to engage at all can be disastrous. As well as directly reducing conflict by dispelling rumours and spreading accurate information, electronic media can be the only way of reaching people in conflict zones. In recent years, DFID has supported peace-building media interventions in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Afghanistan.

Fig. 1.2   Media, Conflict, and Civil Society in former Yugoslavia

Although the maintenance of peace ultimately depends on political will, positive mass media can foster the conditions for long-term stability. DFID is involved in various media initiatives in the former Yugoslavia region to build inter-ethnic tolerance and understanding, reduce the broadcasting of propaganda, and reverse ethnic polarisation.

To reduce conflict in Kosovo, DFID is supporting: radio training implemented by the BBC; provision of much-needed equipment to media organisations; and a bi-weekly briefing called "Media Focus", giving journalists from all sides access to balanced and impartial information. In Macedonia, DFID funds a children's television series which links up with the school curriculum to encourage understanding and the non-violent resolution of disputes. In Bosnia, we have been supporting a Sarajevo-based school of journalism. With training supplied by the BBC and additional funding from the Soros Foundation, the school has successfully improved the rigour, accuracy and impartiality of media reporters. The next stage of the initiative will involve looking at how to make the school sustainable in the long term.

There is scope for further assistance in the region, including: possible co-operation with an umbrella organisation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to promote independent community radio stations; and possible assistance to ensure the independence of public service broadcasting services elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe.

Part 2:
Guide to
Implementing
Development
Communications

A strategic outlook on communications

By following a series of fairly straightforward steps, communications can be approached in a co-ordinated way. There are clear benefits to thinking along these lines as a part of project planning or at an early stage of implementation.

Although there is no way of capturing every flow of information in a programme, communications are best considered strategically. A communications review can help uncover what options exist, and what the best approach would be. There is no specific blueprint of an ideal process to follow, and different places follow different approaches. One way is through stakeholder analysis. As well as analysing who primary and secondary stakeholders are, and how they might be important to a project, it would be useful to ask how communication with recognised stakeholders would occur.

This section deals with communications strategies, covering key issues and presenting case material. Figure 2.2 shows how communications issues stretch across many project outputs and across all parts of the project cycle.

Fig 2.1: Explaining the Value of Strategic Communications
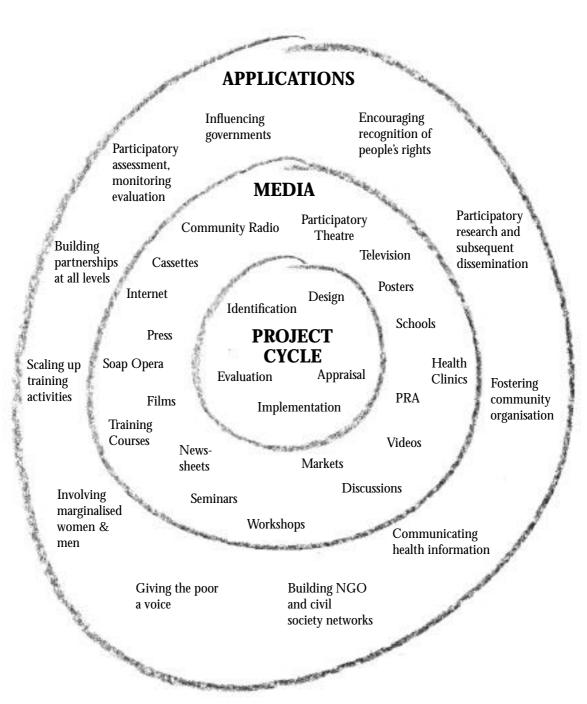
A major DFID sexual and reproductive health programme might involve:

- an IEC (Information, Education and Communication) component

- concerted discussions with the relevant ministry, and consultation with other stakeholders

- participatory processes involving community leaders and users.

- service delivery (a vital point of communication between the user and the provider).

Typically, "IEC" would be the only area usually considered as a topic for health communications. Each of the above outputs are communications of a sort, and they all overlap. A coherent strategy could use and improve all of them, or at least several. In this way, communications initiatives work with existing channels in a project to develop them further, as well as initiating viable new channels. The benefits might be seen across many different outputs.

Figure 2.2:
The "project cycle", different media, and communications-related applications.

A strategic approach to communications has the potential to use media in innovative ways, as part of a variety of outputs and at any stage of the project cycle. In the diagram, the project cycle is shown at the core, with a range of applications and different media outside.

APPLICATIONS

Influencing governments

Encouraging recognition of people's rights

Participatory assessment, monitoring evaluation

MEDIA

Community Radio

Participatory Theatre

Television

Participatory research and subsequent dissemination

Building partnerships at all levels

Cassettes

Internet

Posters

Design

Identification

Schools

Press

PROJECT CYCLE

Scaling up training activities

Soap Opera

Evaluation

Appraisal

Health Clinics

Films

Implementation

PRA

Fostering community organisation

Training Courses

News-sheets

Videos

Markets

Involving marginalised women & men

Seminars

Discussions

Workshops

Communicating health information

Giving the poor a voice

Building NGO and civil society networks

Forming a strategy

The following points give a clearer idea of how to implement sensitive and appropriate communications initiatives. They should clarify what can be expected of consultants working in this field. Figures 2.3 and 2.4 show sample communications strategies to follow.
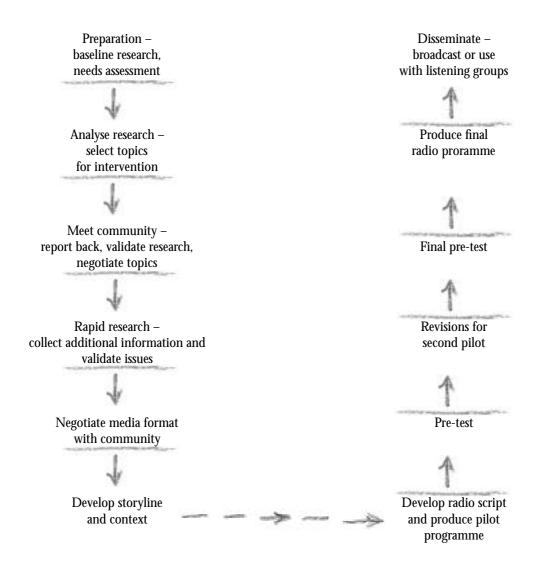
Fig 2.3:   Sample communications strategy

Adapted from report for CONSEFORH Community Forestry Research Project, Honduras. 1998. This is one example – different initiatives will require different forms of implementation.

11. Evaluation

10. Implementation

9. Participatory pre-testing

8. Formulate communication material

1. The project purpose

2. Define the aims of the communications strategy

7. Plan coordinated timing of activities

3. Identify and prioritise audiences/participants

4. Determine information needs

6. Identify communication channels and messages

5. Identify barriers and opportunities

Fig.2.4   Sample strategy for producing communications material

In this case study from Sierra Leone, radio was selected as the key channel. Adapted from Healthy Women Counselling Guide - "Mucoore (trusted friend), let's share with others", UNDP/ WHO/WORLD BANK 1997

Preparation –
baseline research,
needs assessment

↓

Analyse research –
select topics
for intervention

↓

Meet community –
report back, validate research,
negotiate topics

↓

Rapid research –
collect additional information and
validate issues

↓

Negotiate media format
with community

↓

Develop storyline
and context

- - - → - - →

Disseminate –
broadcast or use
with listening groups

↑

Produce final
radio proramme

↑

Final pre-test

↑

Revisions for
second pilot

↑

Pre-test

↑

Develop radio script
and produce pilot
programme

Communication with whom?

The needs of all stakeholders should be taken into account in planning a strategy. By separating out sets of stakeholders (as with stakeholder analyses), it is not difficult to understand how each group might need specific initiatives, often using specific media. Inevitably, efforts will concentrate on some stakeholders above others.

Social development experts in particular must consider who within a stakeholder group will receive information during communications initiatives. Gender dynamics, and other power relations within the household or the community, can be significantly altered by provision of information or by the opportunity to participate. The key issues involved here are too complex to summarise succinctly, but will be broadly familiar to social development experts:

→ How is the receipt of information or the opportunity to participate likely to affect community, household or other relationships?

→ Who will be isolated from communications initiatives?

→ Can certain marginalised groups be involved directly, or can intermediaries be encouraged to share information?

→ If information is supplied to some people, will they act to spread it further?

The stage of the project cycle at which communications activity occurs is vital. Messages work best when co-ordinated so that they arrive in a particular order, and communications work better as a set of steps rather than as a one-off initiative.

Radio Burundi AIDS awareness programme, Bujumbura School
Pic: Howard Davies/Panos Pictures

What to communicate?

Basic assumptions of communications initiatives:
Through participatory research, experience, or in-depth understanding, experts with an awareness of the issues covered in this document can ensure that communications are heading in the right direction from an early stage. A simple example: HIV/AIDS communications proposals might assume that people's awareness of the disease is a barrier to healthier practice. In many places, knowledge of HIV/AIDS is in fact already widespread, and an awareness campaign would be a waste of time unless its priorities were sharply re-defined. This is a matter of moving beyond assumptions and applying proper analysis of relevant issues.

Defining communications:
This becomes important once an initiative is moving in the right direction. It involves awareness of information deficits, and of what currently limits greater involvement or other change that the project is aiming to achieve. Participatory involvement in message formulation is important in this process, as is experience of what specific reactions are likely to be generated.

The success of initiatives often depends on the extent to which people feel involved in them. A public information announcement that reaches a large number of people may raise awareness, but have little effect on behaviour. This limited effect can be a product of a lack of involvement of the people the communications are designed for. The distance between people and communications can be reduced, by using media that allow for participation, by choosing indigenous media which people associate with, or by involving people in the creation of the media.

Fig 2.5   Defining communications: "Background Noise"

Communications often contain unnecessary information. This acts as background noise that obscures the main issue. For example, poorer people rarely benefit from knowing the name of a project, so long as they are aware of the field of work itself. A complicated donor-generated acronym could be an extra fact that adds little except confusion, and will only last for several years in any case. Where information is being provided, it is important to isolate the key aspects to be put across and leave out the rest.

Will communications be understood?

Sensitivity, time and experience are needed to understand people's likely reactions to information, and to produce material that will put across the intended meaning. Pre-testing (trials or pilot runs) is usually considered essential. Consultants and specialist organisations can improve the appropriateness of communications in training packages, health information exercises, education guides, etc. Different methodologies exist which aim to make material, training exercises and other interactions appropriate to the users in question.

Decentralised communications initiatives can respond to particular circumstances and involve greater levels of stakeholder participation, but lack economies of scale. Given the variety that exists within (and between) many countries, an understanding of what information requirements exist, and what media, language, etc. will be most appropriate, is often only possible on a local level. It is tempting to stress the benefits of economies of scale: whereas they might be effective in places, they often lead to information that has little local relevance.

Fig. 2.6 Getting visual communication right

Images can involve illiterate as well as literate people, and can be more powerful than the written word. As with written or spoken text, images are interpreted in different ways in different cultures: care needs to be taken to ensure that the intended meaning is correctly communicated. In many places urban artists will draw designs which rural people do not interpret as expected: perspective might not be understood, and conventions like ticks or crosses can be meaningless to many.

Illustrations and designs often benefit from local input. Whilst communications organised centrally can benefit from economies of scale and from greater availability of expertise, designers used to commercial urban work might not be suitable for communications with poorer people. It is often possible to incorporate locally produced images with printed words or graphics of a professional standard.

Image development can be linked into participatory exercises, using it as an opportunity to extend involvement in a programme and to give valuable feedback. Steps could include:

– Testing material with groups, building in their own ideas

– Participatory exercises like mapping

– Photography: people can be given disposable cameras to use, with minimal instruction and little cost. Results can be used in different ways.

A poster promoting key reproductive health topics using stories and poems from local women, West Bank.
Pic: Philip Wolmouth/ Panos Pictures

What media to use?

Sources people already use:
The first step is to find out what sources of information the target population normally uses in their daily lives. A category such as "farmers", or "poorer people", is insufficient for this purpose as subgroups (women and men, children and adults, etc.) may have variable access to different media. It is important to define the audience precisely.

Multiple channels:
As a general rule, use of more than one channel for communicating is more effective. This can ensure that people who miss one information source are given another opportunity to receive a message. More importantly still, people who hear the same message from more than one place also tend to give the message much greater credibility.

Technological limits:
The specific technological capacity or limitations of an initiative can easily be overlooked. For example: electricity supply may be erratic even where it does exist; capacity to print material, even simple news-letters or posters, may not be available. Transport might be impossible for much of the year. Low-cost and appropriate equipment can often be supplied as part of a project.

Quality of material:
Quality of communications material is another important issue. In many cases it will be impossible or too expensive to produce material which conforms to the highest professional standards. Money is better spent on ensuring the appropriateness of the media than on slick presentation. But communication initiatives have to attract and hold the interest of the public, and will rarely do so without reaching a standard regarded as high in the operating context. Where people are used to watching imported television programmes (e.g. Brazilian soap opera in Mali), it will be hard to persuade them that a low quality locally-produced product is as good.

Box 2.7:   Communications Strategy Summary:

                          Key Questions For Implementers Or To Assist With Terms Of Reference

– Defining communications: What do people already know, and what do they not know? How can communications help? What information will people actually find useful? Is the initiative actually addressing the real problems, or is it based on supposition?

– Target audience: Who are the participants for each communications initiative? Who will be left out (women, young, landless, etc.)? Will messages or content be comprehensible and accessible to all targeted groups? Should intermediaries (outreach workers, opinion formers, others) be considered more? Do communications take into account who makes decisions, and what the consequences of those decisions will be for the individuals or families involved?

– Pre-testing: Have you got messages right? Have the communications and media been tested on representative groups? Do the results of earlier evaluations exist?

– Participation: Has the communications strategy taken into account the results of any earlier feedback? How do we know what people's information needs are? How can we encourage horizontal communication at the grassroots?

– Message definition: Can the message be defined any more closely, to increase effect and level of understanding?

– Media to be used: What are the ways in which the target audience already receives information in their daily lives? Can any of these channels be used (eg schools, marketplace, religious authorities, radio, farmer-to-farmer)? What other media should be introduced? Perhaps most importantly, what is already established and can be built upon?

– Timing and coordination: Multiple channels of communication reinforce each other if they are timed to interact. Information needs to be provided before participation can occur.

– Scale: How will the communications be carried out? Could it be done more locally to improve appropriateness, or would this not be practicable?

– Capacity Building: What institutions exist, and how can their capacity to carry out this as well as future work be furthered?

Participatory planning in communications

This section deals specifically with participatory planning and communications. Participatory communications can:

→ a. involve people in the formation of communications initiatives

→ b. further good participatory practice in general

Pre-testing communications initiatives

Pre-testing is an essential component of a communications strategy. It involves trials of communications with sample groups of the audience prior to implementation. There are many different forms of pre-testing.

→ It is not always necessary to conduct massive trials, and rapid participatory exercises or carefully planned group discussions ("focus groups") can reveal a wealth of information.

→ Individual face-to-face interviews are not usually the best way of pre-testing, as people feel a need present a "correct" answer rather than an honest one. The issues involved are similar to encountered elsewhere when participatory involvement in design processes is required, but are especially important here. Many initiatives have failed when symbols or messages have not been properly tested to ensure that they are understood correctly.

→ Established lessons from some social marketing methodologies could be applied more widely. By finding out what it is that users really want, where they want to get it from, what form they want to receive it in, etc., more appropriate services as well as information can be provided. Countless evaluations have shown that this work is not done sufficiently thoroughly before implementation in many projects, and with a target audience of young people this is still more important.

Fig.2.8   Pre-testing case study: Soul City

Soul City, the South African health media NGO, conducts lengthy testing with their intended target audience before broadcasting their radio and television programmes. Two main methods are employed:

– Soul City develops teams of people from diverse backgrounds to assess programme scripts, and point out parts that are not appropriate. This can be done with other communication tools, or even with specific non-communication interventions as part of a thorough stakeholder analysis.

– Soul City also pre-tests their products with target groups. These sessions need to be well facilitated, but provide useful feedback on what might not ring true with users.

Similar methods can be applied to other communications initiatives, and with a little imagination, to other parts of a planning process
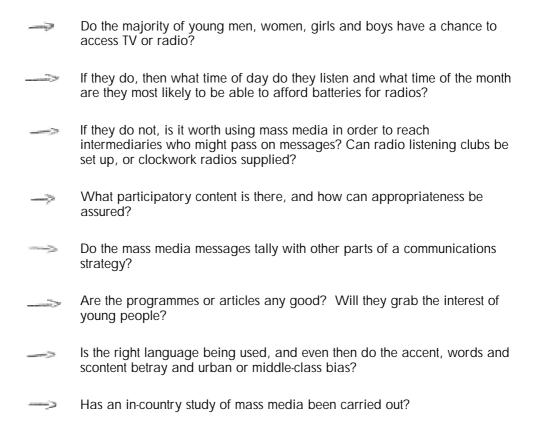
Participation and Internal communications

There is little point in good practice at the field level if final decisions made higher up the organisation do not take advantage of knowledge gained. Participatory feedback needs to reach beyond the "project interface": information generated in the field or through research needs to reach decision-makers if it is to influence practice in a meaningful way.

Different participatory communication initiatives can make a real difference in this area, through producing and disseminating advocacy tools such as videos, through using mass media, and through other methods.

Using mass media

Mass media provide obvious channels for reaching large numbers of people. Radio and television are the most frequently used channels. It is tempting to use such methods indiscriminately: good use of mass media to reach a large audience demands careful thought and the conditions under which it is applies vary greatly between different countries. Most of the questions that need to be posed have been explained already in this guide, e.g.:

→ Do the majority of young men, women, girls and boys have a chance to access TV or radio?

→ If they do, then what time of day do they listen and what time of the month are they most likely to be able to afford batteries for radios?

→ If they do not, is it worth using mass media in order to reach intermediaries who might pass on messages? Can radio listening clubs be set up, or clockwork radios supplied?

→ What participatory content is there, and how can appropriateness be assured?

→ Do the mass media messages tally with other parts of a communications strategy?

→ Are the programmes or articles any good? Will they grab the interest of young people?

→ Is the right language being used, and even then do the accent, words and scontent betray and urban or middle-class bias?

→ Has an in-country study of mass media been carried out?

There are many examples of DFID using mass media. Used well, it can be an invaluable and cost-effective tool, but this is not always the case and the situation varies greatly between countries. Consultants are usually available, and in addition to major bodies including UNICEF and BBC World Service, some NGOs have a long background in using radio for development.

Different formats (see also part 3)

Drama:
Drama, especially in the form of radio soap operas or serials, can be effective in building up an audience and sustaining interest. DFID has been involved in radio dramas in a variety of locations. They require sustained expert input from development and radio specialists, as well as considerable participatory testing.

Involving the audience:
Although in many ways the ultimate top-down formats, television and radio can be made more involved through a variety of tried and tested methods. These include dedicated community radio stations, open interviews with different people, and audience competitions. See the next section in this guide; for more ideas, try the Health Unlimited manual "Health On Air", or various resources on community radio.

Combining mass media with other activities:
Media can be successfully combined with more conventional techniques, and tends to be much more successful when on-the-ground activity is coupled with mass media intervention. Clearly, this is not always possible, but synergy between different media is optimal.

Brazil
Pic: Susan Cunningham/Panos Pictures

Fig. 2.9   Action on Violence Against Women Programme, South Africa:

linking media campaigns with service provision and advocacy

DFID funds a £2 Million programme in South Africa which combines awareness-raising with attempts to improve service provision, in the field of violence against women. The project presents a rare opportunity to support an innovative mass media initiative, and simultaneously to link it with activity on the ground.

In the short term, the project supports a major media initiative on violence against women, to include radio and television drama serials, print media, outreach through schools and civil society organisations. It will also fund over a longer period of time the co-ordination of a network of women's organisations, to improve service provision across the country.

The radio and television drama serials are broadcast on national and regional channels at peak times. As with social applications of drama and soap opera on radio and television elsewhere, they have developed a keen following. They attract sponsorship from other sources, and the accompanying printed materials build on the same themes and characters. Leaflets and cartoon strips are distributed through schools and as inserts in newspapers.

It is expected that, initially, the project will lead to a successful campaign on violence against women in 1999, with full integration of relevant governmental and non-governmental services into the campaign. This is timed to coincide with the general election in South Africa. Over the full course of the project, service delivery will, it is hoped, be substantially improved. The media coverage will strengthen the activities of the NGO / Government network.

The project combines a media initiative with service delivery by:

– funding the media initiative as well building up an NGO / Government network

– encouraging the NGO / Government network to use the media initiative as a peg on which to increase the profile of their work, through campaigning, lobbying and further media activity.

Poster promoting Gune Yi radio, Senegal
Pic: Mary Myers

Fig. 2.10   Mass Media example B: Participatory input in radio, Senegal

In Senegal, Radio Gune-Yi produces a 50 minute weekly programme broadcast by children for children. Girls and boys are used as presenters, and a sociologist conducts field research to help identify pertinent issues prior to deciding the topics to focus on each episode. Indications are that about 500,000 children and as many adults listen each week. Its raison d'etre is that whilst 60% of the population are children, only 15% of programmes on the radio are child oriented. The programme is recorded in villages around the country, and includes a variety of different show formats. The programme intends to educate by example, through a process of self-discovery and confidence-building for children.

(Mary Myers 1997)

Influencing activities:
working with key stakeholders

Communications are not simply about reaching the poorest, even if DFID's aim is to reduce poverty. A rights-based approach places a stronger emphasis on influencing a wide set of stakeholders, in order to improve the lives of the poorest. Interacting with other organisations, extending impact, influencing the policy agenda, working with multilaterals, businesses and civil society: these are all areas of current attention for DFID. Good communications lie at the centre of these activities.

Influencing activities can use whatever communications channels are available. The channels and format will clearly vary depending on the partners involved and the particular circumstances. Partners might be poorer people themselves, as well as decision-makers. Good stakeholder relationships usually require communications inputs throughout the project cycle, and not just in the early stages when stakeholders are being consulted. Key figures at higher levels are sometimes best reached through mass media, especially newspapers, if personal contact is not possible. At the community level, meetings are likely to be more important in communicating with important figures, although radio and other media might also be useful.

Lobbying or awareness-raising work can help many projects, where influencing public opinion or the attitudes of elite groups will be beneficial. The World Bank has a development communications operation, which places a strong emphasis on direct communication with primary stakeholders, and on policy communication surrounding specific initiatives. If initiatives are to be taken forward, and sustained after the programme has been completed, then support from many quarters is often an essential component.

Examples:

Media work can communicate to key stakeholders the importance of a particular issue, such as the rights of younger people or the rights that people have to demand good services from the government. Programmes in Pakistan and Nepal are looking at these issues, to try to reform government through encouraging positive pressure from civil society.

If extension workers or service providers hear on the radio about a project that they have been instructed to implement, then it might increase the onus on them to carry out activities properly.

Many projects and sector programmes would benefit from a greater level of public awareness of their activities. Advertising is only one way to attempt this. It is often more suitable, effective (and cheaper) to attempt to place stories in the media, or to reach key

stakeholders through organising a variety of events. It is important to calculate a strategy for these activities, including finalising the target audience/s in question.

Most commercial organisations, many public organisations including multilateral donors, and a large number of NGOs employ dedicated public relations specialists. If DFID cannot be involved directly, then it might be able to work through an NGO or multilateral intermediary.

DFID experience can be used in lobbying for change. If a programme in one district has been successful, and could be expanded to other areas, then it makes sense to encourage key people to do so by ensuring that they are aware of the successful activities. Attempts to lobby for change can also involve demonstrating to elite groups the situation of the poorest. Recent surveys have revealed that most powerful people's knowledge of the lives of the poor in their own country is very limited.

Fig. 2.11:   Why engage in influencing work?

Before working to influence key stakeholders, it is important to be very clear about what the purpose of the engagement is. Unfocused media interventions can be counterproductive, and the precise aim of the intervention will affect the design of the actual messages to be used. Aims include:

– To encourage a positive change in national policy, often based on specific rights. This could influence policy-makers, or to encourage wider civil society engagement.

– To improve public relations, and increase awareness, prior to carrying out work that might otherwise be considered sensitive.

– To increase support and improve the likelihood of a project being sustained by a partner government during or after DFID involvement.

Finding partners and building capacity

Working with Government:

Finding partners can be difficult: in many cases few if any suitable organisations exist. Many government departments contain a communications division, but it is often of indifferent standard. It might be a government "information service" with strong political links, rather than a pool of development communications expertise. Many others have become backwaters that are beyond repair. Depending on the circumstances, it could be better to support non-governmental communications resources, which government campaigns can then tap into.

Many government service-based communications are being decentralised; localised communications initiatives are beneficial in many ways, but are rarely conducted with adequate human or financial resources. Interventions to build the capacity of decentralised communications can be worthwhile.

Strengthening institutions:

In many cases, it is both necessary and in the interests of long-term development to build the capacity of partner institutions. Institutions that appear to be fully capable of implementing programmes are often not able to conduct sensitive communications work. Government communications departments rarely have expertise in any participatory practice, and often have little expertise in reaching poorer people. Both NGOs and the private sector might have similar deficiencies; organisations such as those involved in social marketing have strengths in some areas, but often lack the skills required to work with the poor, rather than with those who have a disposable income, access to mass media, etc.

Linkages and co-ordination

Increased donor co-ordination would often be beneficial, as it would with many development activities. Still greater is the potential to encourage cross-ministry linkages. Where communications can be carried out through existing channels (often the education system but also other channels such as credit or women's groups), potential gains are great.

Fig. 2.12   Building capacity in a changing mass communications scene

The key decision makers in print and broadcasting organisations are increasingly being driven by commercial considerations as a growing number of developing countries are deregulating their media. This permits the issuing of licenses to private companies and community organisations to establish radio and television stations, which compete with each other and the state controlled and managed media. Ghana and South Africa are two countries where these changes have taken place rapidly.

Governments are increasingly asking their own media organisations to make a profit, or at a minimum to break even. This has them competing with the private broadcasters for audience ratings and advertising revenue.   In some cases, such as Jamaica, the government has sold state owned radio and television stations to private sector companies.

These developments have contributed to the growing fragmentation of peoples' media access patterns. People have many more frequency and channel choices. There is also increasing penetration of external media: cable television and satellite broadcasters, the internet and international editions of newspapers provide additional choices for those who can afford them. Advertising agencies, billboards, sponsorship of sports or cultural events, and other kinds of communication are also proliferating.

Strategic implications and action

The commercial imperatives mean that the free air time for development-based media that has been available in the past will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to negotiate. Programmes will not have automatic national coverage, and will reach a lower proportion of the public unless shown simultaneously on all channels. A communication strategy based on fully funding and producing mass communication products will be decreasingly cost effective.

Measures to improve this situation must aim to increase the developmental content of broadcasting in innovative ways. It will no longer be sufficient simply to produce material and expect the monopoly broadcaster to show it. Possible steps include:

– Conducting research to find suitable strategic partners

– providing accurate development information for journalists

– training broadcasters on development issues

– encouraging pro-poor legislation during broadcasting reforms

– developing networks to link broadcasters with development organisations.

(adapted from notes of a meeting convened by USAID and facilitated by The Communication Initiative partnership. More information available from http://www.cominit.com)

Evaluation

Some successful communications activities have demonstrated clear and immediate shifts in practice: examples exist of theatre exercises, and radio broadcasts, which have had an immediate and obvious positive impact.

The evaluation of communications initiatives can be difficult, however. Effect can be hard to measure, but methods do exist:

- Audience research methodologies can be applied in some cases to find out how many people received a particular body of information. Techniques include questionnaires and structured interviews, as well as more qualitative in-depth interviews.

- More commonly, a communications initiative is launched in order to achieve a particular aim (e.g. a campaign on violence against women), and indirect figures relating to the achievement of that aim can be used in evaluations.

- It is rarely possible to isolate all "background noise" generated from activities, events, or shifts in opinion for other reasons, and so it can be hard to tell whether a communications initiative was genuinely responsible for changes that might have occurred.

In practice, most communications initiatives are approached as part of a project rather than a stand-alone activity, and tend to be evaluated as such. Valuable information can be gleaned from informal and relaxed conversation with those receiving messages or through more participatory initiatives.
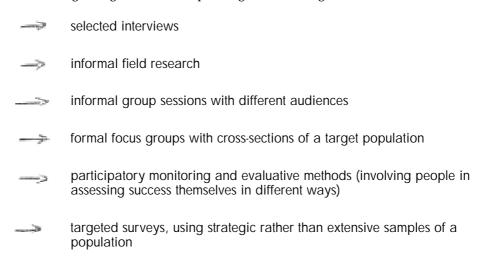
Participatory evaluation

Participatory communications approaches can be applied to evaluation: drama or other mechanisms can be used to give people a space in which to provide feedback on how a project has progressed from their own point of view. This can accompany more traditional evaluations. More radical is the idea, common to many process-led project methodologies, that the nature of evaluations themselves leads to a prescribed outcome which is defined by the donor rather than the primary stakeholders. This approach advocates a more liberal interpretation of what constitutes a successful project; the problems of applying such an approach within the prescriptive planning mechanisms of donor organisations are found in drama work just as they are in PRA.

Defining indicators for logframes

With simple messages, it might be possible to evaluate the extent to which a population has changed behaviour (likely to be fairly low), or is aware of a particular message (likely to be higher). This does, however, require extensive survey work that would probably build on an equally extensive baseline. More indirect indicators can be easier to work with.

Rather than using large-scale surveys, It can be better to rely on triangulation (i.e. cross-checking) of quicker evaluation techniques. These can be quicker and cheaper, and indicators can be based on verbal or other evidence of change, including records from clinics or elsewhere. If one method alone is not trusted, then standard practice is to check it through using another technique alongside. These might include:

→ selected interviews

→ informal field research

→ informal group sessions with different audiences

→ formal focus groups with cross-sections of a target population

→ participatory monitoring and evaluative methods (involving people in assessing success themselves in different ways)

→ targeted surveys, using strategic rather than extensive samples of a population

In recent years, much work has been conducted on different ways of evaluating and monitoring radio projects along with other media work. Participatory processes have been successfully employed to recover qualitative data, and other methodologies are well practised.

See also under drama evaluation in Part Three of this guide. For a more in-depth guide, look at "Media in Development: towards a tool-kit of communication monitoring and impact assessment methodologies" by Andrew Skuse, available from DFID's Social Development Library.

Fig. 2.13   Notes from a communications appraisal mission: the first seps towards devising a communications strategy for Safe Motherhood, Malawi (1998)
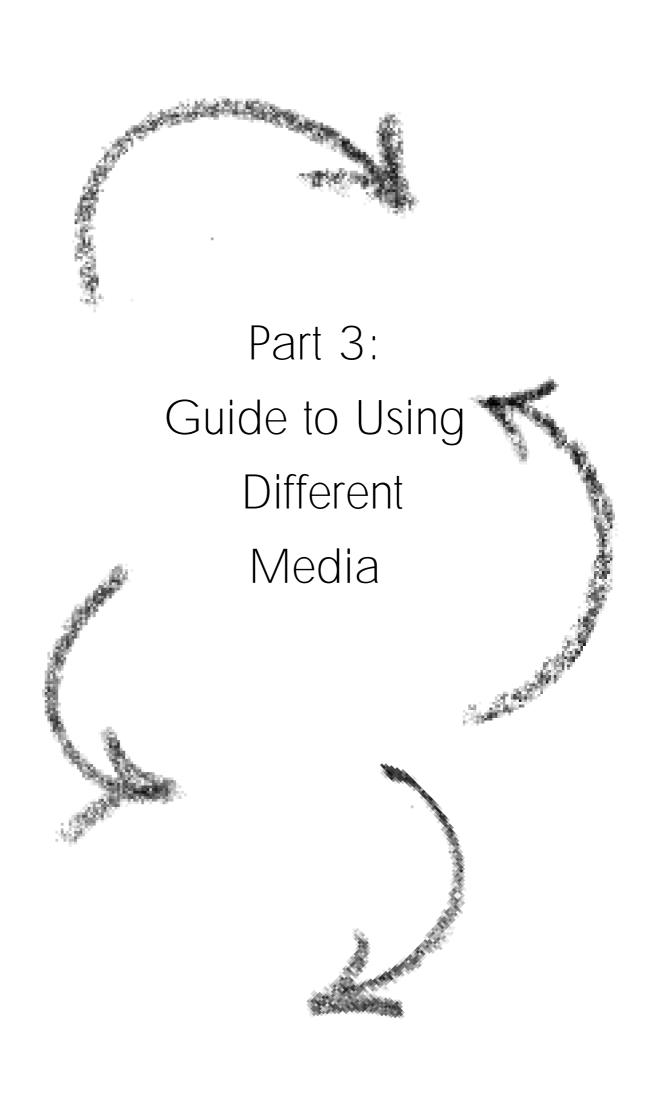
The following summary and recommendations provide an idea of communications issues identified at an early stage in a DFID programme to improve health services for mothers and their children in Southern Malawi. They do not define a strategy itself, but propose future activities.

"The project has the potential to integrate health communications with other activities from an early stage. There is scope for employing a variety of interventions, using different channels and media, and it will be necessary to select the best ways of proceeding. Skills are available locally, notably from the NGO sector. Channels for communication also exist, although external operational constraints mean that a communications strategy will be shaped by inevitable circumstances: low levels of radio listenership and uncertainty over the strength of village health committees are just two of several hindrances.

Appropriate message design and selection of media will be important. Printed and broadcast media are an addition to, rather than a replacement for, field activity wherever possible. Communications will need to be guided by people's needs, providing potential for direct input from users at several points: the planned needs assessment, message formulation and testing, and progress appraisal which should lead to improvements for subsequent actions. Further external input will be necessary in order to complete the planning stages of a communications strategy, quite apart from the actual implementation.

General recommendations for future action

A.   A system for receiving feedback on project initiatives from users (and non-users), and dealing positively with the feedback, should be implemented over time. The project leaders will have to concentrate on the most viable and useful channels for village-level participation which present themselves, both as part of a communications strategy and elsewhere. These include the needs assessment, involvement in message design, and appraisal feedback. The needs assessment ought to employ open methods of questioning in order to give an opportunity for frank expression.

B.   People with knowledge and experience of health communications in Malawi should be brought into the formulation of a communications strategy, at a future workshop and through other available opportunities. Further consultancy inputs will also be necessary.

C.   Materials should be pre-tested carefully, and defined through consultation with potential users.

D.   The project will have to consider which intermediaries and which categories of health staff have the capacity to act as facilitators of village communications initiatives. District health workers, and other government staff, will need guidelines and instructions if they are to play a role in the communications strategy without being overloaded.

E.   Training needs will have to be highlighted.

F.   Future links with health education in schools should be explored.

G.   As part of internal communications within the health service, a news-sheet of other initiative might provide useful regular information for health workers on what the project is doing and what they can expect. This will have to be tried on a pilot basis prior to implementation.

H.   Continued close co-operation between all members of the project team, and between the project team and other parts of the Ministry of Health and Population, will be essential for long-term success and sustainability."

Part 3:
Guide to Using
Different
Media

Introduction

This section describes different kinds of media. Inevitably, a lot have been left out of this section as there are many ways of communicating and full coverage of all is not possible. Three main sections follow:

⟹ a. Drama – Theatre and Video

⟹ b. Broadcast media – Television and Radio

⟹ c. Other media - covering Information and Communication Technology, Advocacy and Public Relations, and Networks

Fig. 3.1:   Generalised benefits and drawbacks of different media

This quick chart does not capture many nuances; the value and application of different media depend on how and where they are used. Scale runs from +++ (most likely to be applicable), to – – – (least likely to be applicable).

	Potential to Reach Poorest	Participatory Potential	Potential No. of People Reached	Cost-effectiveness
Leaflets, news-sheets, etc.	+	+	++	+
Interpersonal meetings	+	++	– – –	-
Video	-	+	+	– – –
Television	– – –	– – –	++	– – –
Audio Cassettes	+	-	+	–
Radio	++	+	+++	++
Slides, etc	–	–	–	–
Posters	+	–	+	–
Theatre, Puppetry	++	++	++	++
E-mail/ internet	– – –	++	++	++

a. DRAMA - Theatre and Video[1]

Performance and participatory development

Live entertainment has long been used in development as a way of encouraging "behavioural change". These performances seek to sell new or different practices. By making a message entertaining, large crowds can often be drawn to see characters facing the problems and practising the solutions regarded as the most pressing or appropriate. Audiences come away having seen characters with which they might identify washing their hands, planting trees or practising safer sex.

Interventions of this sort often result from sophisticated preliminary work: surveys or intensive interviews may be carried out, local artists or theatre companies are frequently employed to make performances more authentic, and appropriate media are used. This form of well-researched activity can be highly effective, especially if practitioners have a thorough understanding of the society in which they are working. However, the end product of drama in development is essentially a top-down form of dissemination, regarded as inadequate by many.
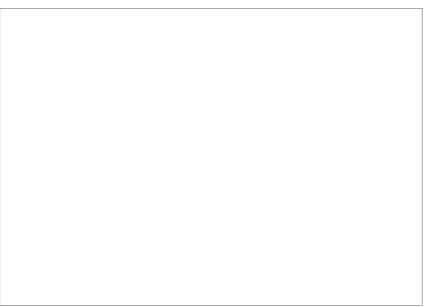
Participatory drama:

Participatory drama involves the audience in the drama itself. This gives people greater control, and enables them to explore their own realities for themselves. Rather than travelling theatre shows or video vans, this is drama in which the audience and the actors are not distinct.

The discussion over the relative merits of participatory approaches is by now well trodden. Participatory uses of theatre and video are based on the same principles as PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal). Participation fulfils a practical aim of improving project efficiency, and a more strategic aim of giving poorer people a channel to express their needs, and form their own responses around them.

Participatory performance work emphasises the importance of working with and from people's own realities, and using their own modes of expression. Local people replace outside scriptwriters, illustrators, editors, directors and actors to become actively involved in creating and exploring solutions to real-life dilemmas. Theatre for Development has many qualities which can be lacking in PRA, including creativity and a flexibility which encourages culturally appropriate uses of "indigenous communications". Although PRA exercises such as mapping include creative elements, it is often within a more prescriptive set of techniques.

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[1] Drama is here taken to include theatre and video, and other methods. Drama can of course be broadcast on radio or television, or produced as a film.

Travelling group perform educational show about landmines, Angola
Pic: Giacomo Pirozzi/Panos Pictures

Performance, Creativity and Empowerment

Participation is often regarded as a direct means to an end. Many drama practitioners state that a creative process is an important and valuable precursor to more analytical discussion and plans for practical action. Where PRA is expanded with techniques that expand its expressive and creative potential, the process can generate further insights and possibilities. It can also serve as a mode of self-expression which increases participants' confidence.

By representing their own dilemmas, people can immerse themselves in the emotions and real-life reactions that these dilemmas provoke. Through this process, practitioners hope to encourage the empowerment of those whose views and experiences often remain unsolicited and unheard.

The high visual and oral content of drama techniques gives people an opportunity for expression in a medium with which they might feel comfortable. Written exercises, and much of the drawing in PRA, can be exclusionary. Of course, it should be noted that drama can also exclude: there can be individuals or groups (especially older people) who will not feel able to take part.

Depoliticising issues

Pressures that restrict open discussion occur at all levels. In every society, some issues are kept out of the public domain. This occurs within the household, the village, the local area or the state legislature, and assists in the maintenance of the status quo.

Theatre can help bring issues into the open, through metaphorical references. Drama can be considered as a drawn out metaphor; those involved (both actors and audience) witness acts which mirror reality. The metaphor of drama means that much of the tension and unease created by commenting on people's surroundings is dissipated. Issues that are normally highly politicised can be breached in a way which would never usually be possible, and contentious topics can be raised.

The scope of drama for reducing tension can give a voice to people who never normally have a chance to speak. Those denied the freedom to complain publicly about their position can often demonstrate their views through satirical drama, poetry or song. A good facilitator will be able to encourage this process, which can lead on to constructive reflection and subsequent action.

Indigenous communication

Drama is a common feature of many societies, often conducted without the conventional Western divide between the audience and the actors. It is a medium used in different rites, ceremonies, and during more mundane events, as much anthropological literature attests. Villagers on a DFID project in Kenya, for example, have used theatre to explain how they felt about the plans currently being implemented. Drama is one medium in which poor rural people are often more comfortable than foreign or the urban development experts.

Drama can be adapted to different cultures. The actual form of theatre practised varies, depending on local tools, participatory input, and cultural norms. Examples include puppetry in areas of South Asia; shadow puppets in Indonesia; and many different uses of song, music, narration and drama across Africa. Appropriate formats can diminish the gap in understanding between project staff and the primary stakeholders/participants.

But the form of expression used can be contentious:

> *"… the dilemma arises as to whose artistic forms are used in this process. Verbal art, plays and songs are often part of the rich cultural life of communities: in rites and rituals, or in other forms of traditional ceremony or celebration. These 'indigenous cultural forms' offer, it would seem, an appropriate cultural medium for participatory activities. Yet it needs to be remembered that in some contexts traditional stories and songs serve to reinforce the existing order. Playing with these forms might not only rob them of their cultural meaning, but may also be counterproductive.*
>
> *Introducing new and different forms departs from the familiar and may seem artificial. There is also a danger that introduced formulas become mechanical and unrelated to how people in that community express themselves. PRA practitioners have seen how easily this happens. New forms may, however, offer a more neutral framework for expression and analysis. Appropriateness is a matter of context; what works in one setting might not automatically work in another." (Cornwall 1997)*

A balance needs to be struck. Appropriate cultural forms enhance communication, but risk becoming consensual. Maintenance a consensus reduces open expression and subsequent positive action. Also, all variants of Theatre for Development, PRA, or any other forum for discussion, be they "indigenous", "appropriate", or even wholly alien, run the risk of being dominated by the most powerful participants. The sensitivity and experience to negotiate such difficulties marks out a good practitioner.

Advocacy and Engaging in policy debate

Drama can be used in peer education programmes. Groups of villagers who have conducted participatory drama exercises on issues which affect their lives can perform with other communities in an area. This has been successfully practised in many places.

Drama can also be used as a way of raising issues with key stakeholders, including donors, politicians, or civil servants. A play is more likely to be noted than a written report, and can also generate additional press coverage. As a vehicle for fostering public debate on an issue (such as prison reform, female circumcision, environmental degradation, or domestic violence), drama can be highly effective. Its ability to depoliticise an issue is valuable here - whereas a direct appeal to key figures or to the press over an emotive issue like female circumcision could be controversial, a play which deals with it might be a more viable possibility.

> Theatre was used in a DFID-funded prison reform programme in Brazil. Prisoners acted out plays they had devised themselves in front of senior political figures, giving insight to prisoners and to the politicians alike.

> Video has been used in a DFID programme in Tanzania, to express the needs of farmers. Videos were compiled with concerted participation from farmers' groups, and then used in an advocacy role with senior political figures in Dar Es Salaam.

Puppet show about AIDS issues, Ethiopa
Pic: Giacomo Pirozzi/Panos Picturest

Using Theatre and video in Practice: Key Questions

Question: Is drama a tool for use in projects, or should it constitute a distinct intervention by itself?

Drama is used both as a component of particular projects, and as a separate initiative which stands on its own. Although most uses of drama in DFID are a small component of wider projects, there are some DFID and many non-DFID projects in which drama is the main activity. There are clear examples of stand-alone uses of drama for clear developmental goals. These frequently cover "community" or social development issues such as police-community relations, empowerment of women, and voter education.

Where drama is used as a component of a larger project, there is a risk that its role will be so clearly planned and defined that much of the benefit of an open forum for communication will be lost. In common with other "process-planned" initiatives, a looser structure will give space for the fulfilment of the most positive aspects of participatory drama.

Question: At what part of the "project cycle" can drama be used?

There are many different points at which drama can be used. As with PRA, it is perhaps most effective at an early stage, when results can be fed into the subsequent activities of primary stakeholders and the project managers. See fig. below.

Question: Is drama an alternative to other communications mechanisms, or something different?

Either: it can work alone, but can also be used in concert with other techniques. PRA and Theatre for Development have been combined in work with girls in rural Tamil Nadu, for example, in which PRA exercises were used as a precursor to role-play. The results of the role-play were then analysed through an application of further PRA techniques (Kirsty Smith, workshop presentation to DFID, 1997).

Fig. 3.2   Uses of drama through the project cycle

(Examples from sexual and reproductive health programmes, after Gill Gordon in PLA notes 29, 1997)

1.   Identifying problems: Role plays or stories related to sexual or reproductive health. Drawing or individual lifelines showing the major sexually related events, followed by role plays of good and bad events.

2.   Analysing causes and effects: Role plays of the circumstances leading to a sexual encounter, followed by analysis. Visualisation techniques can be used to explore in more depth. For example, impact diagrams can be used to look at positive and negative effects, and expenditure trees or pie charts to explore economic factors.

3.   Defining objectives: Role plays of good sexual health; "snapshots" or still tableaux, which show a situation at one point in time, of good and bad features. Snapshots can also show men's and women's perceptions of themselves and the opposite gender.
Example: men in Pakistan depicted women in tableaux as gossips, whores and cooks. Women portrayed themselves as factory workers and nurses.

4.   Finding solutions: Carousels, where people act as 'clients' seeking advice from 'consultants' on a problem, followed by brainstorming. Role plays and drama to rehearse and evaluate new ways of communicating about sexual matters, for example, saying no to sex or asking for condom use. Sharing successful strategies and offering support. Drama to predict the outcomes of a number of options.

   Example: in Zambia, young women acted the effects of high bride price. They were seen as chattels and could not return to their parents' home, even if they were being abused, because the parents would not be able to afford to pay back the bride price. The young women then replayed the improved situation after an uncle had negotiated with the in-laws to pay a token amount.

5.   Implementation: Transform the drama, songs and stories into performance for education and advocacy work at community, district, regional and national level. Video-tape local drama to show to planners and policy makers. Use the interactive drama techniques in schools or clinics, or in non-formal sittings with peer groups. The techniques raise awareness, generate discussion and enable people to gain skills and change their attitudes. Create comic books based on the stories and dramas created as part of PRA activities.

6.   Monitoring and evaluation: Role plays and drama show progress towards objectives. For example, changes in communication between partners or young people and their parents or teachers, or cultural or structural changes and the effect on the community or changes in health worker behaviour.

Question: How can drama be evaluated?

The evaluation of drama presents similar difficulties to other communications initiatives. (See the section in part 2 on evaluation.) Valuable information can be gleaned from informal and relaxed conversation with those receiving messages; more formally, log-frame OVIs (Objectively Verifiable Indicators) can be applied to projects involving drama just as they can other areas of work. (see figure below)

Fig. 3.3   Means of verification found on logframes of current DFID projects using drama

Audience observations

Group discussions as part of regular consultations

Quarterly reports

Diaries of performance

Completed scripts, etc.

Representative site surveys

Monitoring surveys

Project monitoring reports

Local clinic/services records

Training records

Community based surveys

Mid term reviews

Question: Is drama an appropriate format for serious topics?

It has been suggested that drama trivialises important issues. Some people may be reluctant to take part in role-play activities for this reason, and a superficial treatment of sensitive issues is likely to cause offence. These issues need to be taken into account when planning drama activities: experienced practitioners should be well aware of them.

Drama is also considered to be too "enjoyable" to engender any serious change. Perhaps some observers have not distinguished between entertainment and trivia - important issues can be approached in an entertaining manner without trivialising the subject matter. The "Enter-educate" school of communication places a high premium on making communication interesting. Empirical research conducted by groups including the Johns Hopkins University Centre for Communication Programs has suggested that entertaining messages have more, rather than less, impact.

Pitfalls to consider

Role-playing can lead to dramatic theatre rather than more common reality. This can be useful for showing extremes, but it might also reduce recognition of more usual or everyday situations. Good facilitation can help maintain the relevance of proceedings.

Open discussions in which issues are aired can lead to unfulfilled expectations. If participatory processes are not accompanied by an explanation of limitations, some people might hope for unrealistic outputs from a project. This is again a problem common to other approaches, which can be partially avoided by careful and honest facilitation.

Unless steps are taken, there will be no written record of drama activities. This reduces lesson-learning; it can be countered through video, audio tapes, photography or note-taking, which can be used in follow-up activities.

Drama can work as a tool within sectoral projects. But for maximum benefit, the drama intervention should be given as much institutional space as possible. If a drama process is applied in a narrowly defined format, the creative participatory procedures will be restricted and the potential benefits will be reduced.

DFID's Experience of Theatre and Development

In late 1997, a survey was conducted within DFID, documenting interests and experiences concerning theatre in development. This was followed up by a workshop in DFID's Victoria St. headquarters. Use of theatre is already commonplace in DFID projects, but most applications are in the classical "performance" format, rather than using more participatory methods (See Figs. below). Two main points emerged:

➡ theatre techniques are already common in DFID programmes.

➡ participatory methods could be implemented , in place of "performance theatre".

Fig. 3.4   List of recent or current DFID Projects using theatre

Civic Education and
Community Projects

Kenya Civil Society
Programme

Civic Education touring
theatre groups in Eritrea

Civic Education, Zambia

ACTIONAID Ruyigi (Burundi)
community reinforcement
work.

Police – public relations
projects in Botswana,
Swaziland, Malawi.

Prison improvement, Brazil

Wan Smol Bag, Vanuatu
(community theatre
development)

Awareness Community
Theatre Network (Papua
New Guinea)

Te Ibiwerere Drama Group,
Kiribati

Health

Dir District Development
Project, Pakistan - (drug
abuse)

Kenya Family Health Project

Save the Children AIDS and
STD project in Angola

Naz Foundation Sexual
Health education Street
theatre, India

Saude & Alegria project,
Brazil

Various health projects in
India, Ghana, Nigeria

Rural Livelihoods

Maharashtra RWSSP
water/sanitation, India
(puppetry)

Fisheries and aquatic
management - various

Community Forestry, Nigeria

SOS Sahel Sudan village
extension and afforestation
scheme (puppetry)

Other Projects

Puppetry for Early Learning in
Faisalabad, Pakistan

Mines Advisory Group, Iraq

Mine Awareness, Cambodia

Street Children Symphony
Project, Ethiopia

Sustainable Bee-keeping,
Africa

Fig. 3.5   Two DFID Projects using theatre

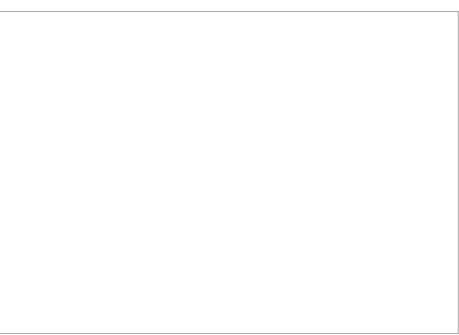a. <u>Wan Smol Bag Theatre Development Project in Vanuatu</u> seeks to build on the successes of their earlier work. The group's goal is to increase the adoption of socially and environmentally responsible practices by individuals and communities in the Pacific. Wan Smol Bag seeks to do this by widening debate on, increasing knowledge of, and encouraging positive attitudes towards a wide range of development issues. They cover a range of issues in areas including health and environmental conservation, as well as social issues such as discrimination and violence against women, disability and urban drift.

Wan Smol Bag works with other organisations to develop and present plays, train theatre groups and collaborate across a range of media, especially video. Emphasis is placed on community theatre and a tradition of oral cultures which embrace story-telling, song and music. The project also supports research, led by their community worker, to assess the effectiveness of drama in bringing about positive changes in society. DFID is providing Wan Smol Bag with £775,000 over a three-year period.

b. <u>The Naz Foundation's Sexual Health Education Through Street Theatre Project</u> aims to develop a model which will utilise mime, movement and the provision of advice and education in local city areas to develop awareness of HIV/STDs and encourage informed reproductive and sexual health practices to minimise rates of infection. The project is being developed in New Delhi, India, and attempts to create educational street theatre groups in Indian target cities.

Open discussion about sexual behaviours is often taboo and informed debate is practically difficult utilising the current models of education. This specific project will be exploring sexual behaviours, patterns of safer marriage, frequency of sexual partners, access to HIV/STD testing, and promoting safer sex practices through street theatre. The theatre format develops participatory educational performances and will enable audiences to get accurate information and access individual advice.

The Naz Foundation has utilised dance and movement as a medium of education in a number of projects; it has been demonstrated as a valuable educational tool that crosses class, caste and religion boundaries. In this project the Naz Foundation works to develop a culturally appropriate methodology of education on HIV/STD infection and reproductive and sexual health issues for grassroots involvement. Total DFID funding commitment is £17,385.

Television station interviewing and filming street child, Comores
Pic: Giacomo Pirozzi/Panos Pictures

Using Video

Video has typically been used in development programmes as a mass media dissemination tool. Its role has largely been to educate, helping to spread messages designed by professional producers. However, just as drama can be used in a more participatory manner, so too can video. This section concentrates on uses of video to encourage interactive communication.

Video and theatre are often combined. Experiences of using video vary considerably; after it first became commonplace in the 1980s, it was hailed by some as a cost-effective tool that could revolutionise participatory development. Since then, this early enthusiasm has been dimmed by a realisation that it has to be used with care, and by an awareness of its shortcomings as well as its benefits.

Benefits

✔ Unlike written material, video can overcome literacy problems.

✔ Increasingly, people are already accustomed to moving images, and video is as a result seen as less of an external medium.

✔ By handing over the camera, people are free to record what they regard as important. (The same effect can also be achieved with still cameras.) As part of participatory assessment or evaluation, this process can help project managers gain an understanding of the of participants' priorities. It can form a valuable part of PRA activities, and also provides a useful baseline to see how far work has progressed over time.

✔ Video can be valuable as a form of horizontal communication: videos of successful activities can be shown as part of "scaling up" exercises, to extend the reach of an initiative into new areas or other projects. Tapes can be used repeatedly, if needed. It is also valuable as a training tool.

✔ By making a video of events or features in a neighbourhood, a long-term record is created of people who would otherwise be unlikely to see themselves or their immediate surroundings in such a format. This presents several possibilities: images can be played back to the people concerned, giving them a new insight into their own surroundings; images can also be shown to policy-makers, as part of advocacy efforts on behalf of a community; images can also be shown to other groups, enabling the horizontal transfer of good practice. By seeing a familiar environment on video, people also gain a greater understanding of the way in which mass media are formulated, enabling them to interpret information which they receive in a more engaged way.

✔ Video can record people's activities; indigenous knowledge, for example of farming practices, can be recorded and exchanged in this way.

✔ Video can be used alongside other media, such as drama. Drama is often more effective at mobilising people or sparking an interest, while video may be better at relating technical information.

✔ Video is becoming cheaper. Professional equipment is more flexible and less costly than was the case only five years ago, and amateur "home" video equipment is now high quality and affordable.

✔ More formal videos can be used for promotional activities, where this is required. They require greater levels of expertise since a product of a low quality is likely to be counterproductive.

Drawbacks

Showing a video tends to create a passive audience. Good facilitation can counter this by breaking up the one-way flow of information, and good production will make such facilitation easier.

Equipment costs – especially for productions of a high quality – can mount rapidly. It is usually advisable to seek expert advice over what to buy, although in many countries there will be a limited range to choose from.

Equipment can break, especially in extreme conditions. Durable professional equipment is much more expensive than home video kit, and as a result is more likely to remain gathering dust in a safe place instead of being used extensively in the field.

Video is not always appropriate to the circumstances of a project. It needs careful planning, and can be time-consuming. It requires electricity: rechargeable batteries only last for a few hours each. Dust, heat and humidity can damage equipment, and risk of theft can be a serious concern. Video formats vary between countries, and a video recorded in one system cannot generally be played on another system unless it is re-recorded on professional equipment.

Use of video almost always requires an input from experts in the field. Results from applications of video without this expertise are usually disappointing. In finding suitable expertise, it will be important to asses whether potential consultants have experience in the right area of video work: in most countries, there are far more experts in promotional and commercial uses of video than there are experts with a background in appropriate developmental applications of video.

Video is still seen by many people - in head office as well as in the field - as a form of entertainment rather than of education. These barriers can be broken down in the field by careful introduction of video; in some cases, several videos have been screened over a period of time before beginning to use video to its full potential.

Although it is widely thought that "seeing is believing", video is still subject to constraints related to visual literacy and cultural differences. A European or North American approach to video production mat not be appropriate for audiences elsewhere, as visual techniques and styles differ. Just as reading from left to right is not the practice in the Middle East or parts of East Asia, so aspects of visual literacy which are easily taken as being natural in fact vary between cultures.

The negative aspect of people's increasing exposure to video is that they expect a high-quality product. With limited resources, and operating through participatory processes, this is difficult to achieve.

Participatory Video

Video opens up opportunities for people to have access to, and control over, the tools for communicating information. Video can be used in a variety of ways, and modern cameras are sufficiently simple to use for them to be used by almost any participant. Video can be used in participatory assessment exercises, and in evaluation. It can also form a component of approaches using techniques such as PRA or Theatre for Development, to bring up issues of importance. The fact that it is enjoyable to use adds immeasurably to its potential.

It is not difficult to videotape meetings, theatre or PRA exercises. Those present can often learn how to record and how to appear in videos in order to express their opinions. Video can be communicated to illiterate people, and also used in local processes of negotiation. Whereas in PRA - and even in Theatre for Development - those taking part can be left with little to show for their time, a process of video production leaves a tangible output in the form of a recorded tape.. In most areas, making use of the recording requires an additional input, as the resources for watching it are unlikely to be present. Employing video players and televisions to play back the recording to a community, or to other communities, reminds participants of their active role and provides scope for horizontal (i.e. farmer-to-farmer or similar) communication which extends the reach of the project.

Some participatory video methodologies begin by training members of a community, before handing over a camera for a period of time. The end product can then be edited professionally, and distributed as required. In other cases, video is used to record a theatre exercise, for use in future work with the same people or with other groups elsewhere. The video can be used as a tool in negotiating processes, giving a justification to people's claims if meeting officials working for donors, the government or NGOs.

Other uses of video

Many other uses of video exist, which are not fully covered here. They include:

→ Video for monitoring & evaluation

→ Video for training

→ Video for publicity/dissemination

Fig. 3.7   Case Study. Using participatory video in the Nepal Safer Motherhood Project

Video research was used as the most appropriate methodology for undertaking a study to identify the barriers to women accessing emergency obstetric care at target hospitals, and to investigate what types of services and treatment women experiencing problems in pregnancy or delivery were currently using.

The filming was planned as a participatory process, where communities could present their views, with the technical assistance and direction of the film crew and researchers. Local ownership was built by encouraging communities to comment on and help edit the videos. A process whereby communities could see the results of their work immediately offered a significant advantage over other approaches. Methodologically, it offered a number of advantages:

– The team decided that the needs assessments should be centred around an action research design.

– Film research combines data collection techniques such as focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews with a visual record of the issues raised, and of the contextual backdrop.

– The studies needed to be completed within a fairly short time frame. The filming process offered the most flexibility without compromising the quality and quantity of data produced.

The video could be used at different levels. It helps bridge the gap between providers and users, by explaining each others' positions, and could be used as part of training or participatory exercises. It also provides a very powerful advocacy tool, for use with senior officials and politicians who might not have grasped the reality of limited access to services.

Video Quality

It is important to consider what quality of video production is required. A video of the same standard as a good television production will require extensive expert inputs and near-professional equipment. However, such a high standard is not always necessary: for participatory video, evaluation, and some training applications, a product must be comprehensible but not necessarily of a professional quality. It is worth remembering that sound quality is almost as important as picture quality: if the sound is unclear, people find videos hard to follow and many members of an audience will rapidly lose interest.

Gender and video

As with other technologies, video is often seen predominantly as a male medium. Women may have little confidence in using or appearing in videos, and in some cultures it might be unacceptable to record women with a camera in any form. In most circumstances, though, the gender context of production (and eventual ownership) of video is an issue which should be taken into account, but which should not stop the use of video at all. When employed sensitively, video can empower women by reflecting differences between gender aspirations and activities.

Fig. 3.8   Further case studies of video in development

Video has been used in Tanzania to communicate the outcome of workshops in an integrated rural development project.

Meetings involving fishermen were played back to entire villages, and then shown to other villages after having been edited in the presence of the fishermen themselves. Additional material was added to the video, and it was then presented by the fishermen to several ministers in Dar Es Salaam. The ministers were incorporated in another video, which was then played to the villagers. Processes of this kind can give people a clear idea of the issues being approached through the project. They also strengthen civil society by making people aware of the ways in which government interacts with their lives (or fails to do so)

In rural Jamaica, video has been used as part of baseline surveys. Interviews were recorded on video, and the content analysed. They were considered to have communicated more information than conventional approaches might have done; they provided powerful testimony of the problems faced by smaller farmers, revealing in this way information which could be incorporated into project planning.

Later on in the same project, video was used to record and play back a drama-based investigation to women farmers. The comedy format meant that gender-related approaches could be raised without insulting anyone directly. Some women farmers commented: "so now me a know what a dis here project is about now!" (Maria Protz in "The Myth of Community", 1998, edited by Irene Guijt and Meera Kaul Shah).

Fig. 3.9   Video Equipment

You should normally seek professional advice before purchasing video equipment for a specific purpose.

There are various formats available on the market, and depending on the need, costs vary from £1000 or less to over £100,000. Formats include the basic VHS (and Video 8) used in most home videos. This is usually adequate for simple applications where quality is not important and copies of tapes will not have to be made.

When there is a need for high-quality copies, editing, or other procedures, then it will be necessary to move up to semi-professional equipment. This could consist either of Super-VHS, Super-8, or of basic digital equipment.. It will involve a jump in cost from £2,000 - £4,000 for the simple equipment, to around £12,000 - £50,000 for higher quality kit.. Beyond this price, it will be possible to spend any amount.

As well as cameras and monitors, other items which can add to the cost include tapes, microphones, lights, editing suites, sound mixers, tripods, and so on. Obviously, prices vary hugely and in many places much equipment is either not available, or cannot be maintained. Modern video equipment - especially digital - is surprisingly hardy, however.

Additional Information on Drama

Some Initial Contacts

Practitioners work in a large number of countries; the majority of them are highly competent, experienced, and committed. The following contacts in or near the UK might be useful. Some of the contacts might help locate local consultants for a specific project. If you are starting from scratch, try working down this list.

Centre for Development Communications, (David Pammenter, Alex Mavrocordatos and others) (King Alfred's College, Winchester SO22 4NR. Tel.(0)1962 841515 or 827508): Considerable experience in training and application of theatre for development. Will consider different assignments.

Pat Norrish, Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Research, University of Reading (3 Earley Gate, WhiteKnight Rd, PO Box 238, Reading, RG6 6AL, UK. Tel: (0)118 9318213. E-mail: p.e.norrish@reading.ac.uk) Theatre for development and other methods including electronic networking etc., especially in the NR / agriculture sector: experienced, many contacts in theatre, video, radio for development, etc.

Frances Harding, (School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh St, London WC1H 0NW. Tel: (0)171 637 2388). Experience and good contacts with theatre and video practitioners, especially in West Africa.

Andrea Cornwall (and others at Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University, Brighton BN1 9RE. Tel: (0)1273 606261. Fax: (0)1273 483038). Participatory theatre and other methods.

Paul Heritage, Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London. (Tel: (0)171 975 5555): participatory theatre in prisons and other settings, worked for DFID in Brazil.

Gill Gordon (Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1 OAP. Tel: (0)171 580 1122) Drama and participatory approaches in health programmes

The Mediae Trust: Development Communications agency, specialising in Video for training purposes (as well as Radio). **David Campbell** in Nairobi . (Tel. 254 2 44 2 660, E-Mail: Mediae@africaonline.co.ke) and **Kate Lloyd Morgan** in the UK (Tel / fax; (0)1993 709855, E-mail: MediaeTr@aol.com)

Further Reading

PLA Notes No.29: "Performance and Participation", IIED, London June 1997. If you have time to read one resource, then this should be it. Special issue of Participatory Learning and Action Notes series dedicated to theatre, video and other performance media in participatory development. (Note also Ch.1 On PRA and communication.). Available from IIED, 3 Endsleigh St, London WC1H 0DD (Tel (0)171 388 2117)

Also:

Nepal Safer Motherhood Project, "Using Film research for Community needs Assesment". Report compiled by Katy Pepper, 1998 (video also available)

Augusto Boal: "Theatre of the Oppressed". Pluto Press 1979. The key original work on theatre and empowerment.

Maria Protz: Video, Gender and Participatory Development. A useful summary chapter in "The Myth of Community", edited by Irene Guijt and Meera Kaul Shah, ITDG 1998. (The other chapters are also interesting, discussing contemporary issues in participatory development). Available from Intermediate Technology Bookshop, 103 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4HH (Tel. (0)171 436 9761)

Pilar Riaño (ed.): "Women in Grassroots Communication: furthering social change", Sage, California 1994. Useful chapters on gender and communications, on how indigenous dance, video, radio and electronic networks can be used to empower women. Good academic bibliography.

Rural Extension Bulletin (June 1998): Theme issue: Media, Communication and Development. University of Reading Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Department. Articles on uses of video, along with other media.

Matthijs de Vreede: "Video for Development", African Media Monograph Series No.8, African Council for Communication Education, Nairobi (no date). Basic explanation of possible uses of video, and potential pitfalls. Available from Intermediate Technology Bookshop, 103 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4HH (Tel. (0)171 436 9761)

The Current Scene In The UK & Elsewhere

The current situation regarding theatre for development and social action in the UK is worth outlining.

The British Council is interested in closing the gap between its cultural activities and its development activities. Theatre and other uses of "culture" for developmental purposes are therefore of interest to the British Council at present. Key contacts include: Simon Gammell (Head of Performing Arts Department in London) and Richard Edwards (Social Development Adviser in Manchester). The British council has commissioned a report on Arts and Development, compiled by Helen Denniston.

Two theatre academics, Paul Heritage (Queen Mary & Westfield College, University of London) and Jane Plastow (University of Leeds) have been organising a series of workshops for practitioners working in Britain and overseas. The emphasis of this initiative rests with the benefits of theatre as a stand-alone initiative, rather than as an aspect of a specific project. This is an ongoing series of meetings designed to cross-fertilise ideas, promote further action, and encourage donor interest. Frances Harding of SOAS is also active in encouraging cross-fertilisation of ideas.

Theatre is used in many different circumstances within the UK. Groups working in areas such as drug addiction rehabilitation, disability, community action, youth group movements, prisons, and so on have used drama in a variety of forms. There is a large overlap between the techniques practised in Britain and those practised elsewhere.

b. Broadcast Media - Radio and television

Television

In many developing and transition countries, including most of Latin America, Asia and Europe, a high percentage of the population has access to television. Television is widely regarded as the world's most powerful media, and yet it is not always appropriate for developmental aims.

Benefits of using television:

✔ Access to TV is increasing: Between 1965 and 1991 there was a 400% increase in TVs in developing countries – from 38.8 per 1000 people to 185 per thousand.

✔ It has a powerful effect: as a visual medium, it can convey complex ideas in comprehensible formats.

✔ It is a central part of many people's lives: On average Colombians view 23 hours of TV per week, Chileans and Argentines 17 hrs, and Dominicans 29 hrs. Popular formats like soap opera or serial dramas can be used to attract support for programming carrying developmental themes.

✔ TV can often reach key decision-makers successfully, and set national agendas.

✔ Private and state TV companies can act as partners in some projects.

✔ Training schemes can try to influence TV directly, by raising awareness of gender, poverty or other issues amongst broadcasters. This can result in improved programming generally.

Drawbacks of using television:

✗ TV is expensive to produce (often over twenty times more costly than radio).

✗ TV excludes vast numbers of women and men who cannot afford the time or the money to gain access to a television set: There were only 29.8 TVs per 1000 people in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa)

✗ Television is typically a one-way medium that provides little opportunity for input from anyone except a small group of people.

Aymara broadcast from Radio Pachamara , El Alto, La Paz, Bolivia
Pic: Sean Sprague/Panos Pictures

Radio

Why use radio?[2]

✔ radio reaches a wider audience than any other medium: for example there are an estimated 94 radios per thousand people in the least developed countries, ten times the number of televisions. In war-torn countries such as Somalia and Afghanistan, some 60% of the adult population regularly listen to the radio

✔ radio can motivate people by building on aural/oral traditions and stimulate the imagination better than video or television

✔ radio programmes are cheap to make compared to television and video

✔ radio receivers are widely available, comparatively cheap and portable making them convenient for listeners

✔ radio can reach people who are isolated by language, geography, conflict, illiteracy and poverty

✔ radio can help create a demand for services and convey vital information

✔ radio can facilitate assistance in the early stages of complex humanitarian emergencies when other forms of aid are not possible

✔ radio listening can be a group activity which encourages discussion of educational issues after the broadcast

✔ radio gives listeners the opportunity to make informed choices about decisions, and can give them greater self-determination over their lives

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[2] Adapted from Gordon Adam and Nicky Harford: "Health on Air" , Health Unlimited, 1998.

What are the drawbacks?

- radio is a transitory medium: information may not be retained by listeners who cannot ask for the information to be repeated or clarified

- radio is rarely sufficient on its own to teach new skills (such as mixing enriched weaning foods), and will require reinforcement on the ground by health workers or through the distribution of visual and printed materials

- in the wrong hands radio can heighten people's fears and prejudices, inciting conflict and hatred rather than resolving it. This was the case in Nazi Germany and has been seen recently in Rwanda and former Yugoslavia

- many people lack access to electricity and batteries are expensive, sometimes difficult to obtain and are not biodegradable

- radio is generally a one-way medium: unlike face-to-face communication radio offers no immediate opportunity to ask people questions about what they know or to check if people have understood what they heard. Nor can listeners respond instantly and ask questions to clarify issues

- currently, there is not conclusive evidence that increased awareness of public health issues results in significant behaviour change. A number of innovative research projects are investigating how audiences interpret broadcast messages and the influence they have on their subsequent lives. The projects are challenging the accepted wisdom that radio on its own cannot have an educational impact.

Applications of radio

Applications in development work vary. Short one-off programmes can be broadcast to highlight or explain particular issues, whereas series of programmes give a longer period for the introduction of a set of ideas.

There is a good supply of experienced practitioners who can assist in setting up radio programmes or community radio stations. In many countries, considerable local expertise exists, often as a result of training offered in the past by organisations such as BBC World Service. DFID's Social Development Division has a list of consultants.

Participation:
Fully participatory community radio stations are the clearest example of participatory radio, but other possibilities exist too. Individual radio programmes can be made with the direct involvement of poorer people. Interviews can be recorded, as can some other events.

Involving members of the audience in broadcasting itself, building up local content, and enhancing the relevance of programmes is not just good developmental practice - it can make for better radio as well.

Soap operas and serial dramas:
One of the most successful innovations is the soap opera for developmental goals. Soap operas with a purpose have a long history, stretching back to the first episodes of The Archers on BBC radio in Britain shortly after the Second World War. More recently they have been used in Kenya for broadcasting to farmers, in Afghanistan for general post-conflict information provision, and elsewhere. (See case study).

Good serial dramas and soap operas, on television and on radio, can make a considerable impact. Soul City's multimedia serial dramas in South Africa have been positively evaluated; a real difference in people's attitudes and behaviour on the health issues being covered through the serial was identified. Similar results come out of the BBC Afghan programme. One of the key components in each case is high quality staff, with media experience and close working relationships with development specialists.

Local and community radio:
Local radio can cover small areas, and involve women and men through interviews, phone-in programmes, letters, or recordings of outside events. Contrary to the beliefs of some radio specialists, most people are able to speak on radio eloquently after only minimal instruction.

Community radio is a growing field. Community radio provides a means to voice local concerns, as well as a way to reach people with messages. Countries including Mali and Bolivia have growing numbers of local radio stations serving rural and urban communities. Liberalisation of the airwaves in many nations, and the low start-up costs for local radio broadcasting, have encouraged a wide variety of ventures which broadcast for anything from two hours per week to ten hours per day. The participatory content of much community radio makes it a valuable medium for specific initiatives, and in its own right.

Few community stations are fully self-sustaining (exceptions do exist, especially in urban areas). Given the power that broadcasting can hold, it is not surprising that community radio can become linked to political groups. Care needs to be taken in setting up and running community stations to avoid these pitfalls

Listening groups:
Some development projects in a variety of sectors have encouraged the formation of radio listening groups, where people can meet to listen to a particular programme and discuss related issues. Such groups can often be based on existing structures, and are especially valuable where few people own radios.

Clockwork and solar radios:
The BayGen clockwork radio runs without batteries. Solar radios, and conversion kits to allow normal radios to run off solar power, are also available. The Clockwork radio is, however, much more expensive than battery-powered radios. Even if savings are made on

the cost of batteries over years of use, the one-off cost is a deterrent to most people which limits its use. It might be suited for radio listening groups, and a variety of other implementations.

Privatisation of radio

Over the past decade, radio and television departments in many countries have lost central subsidies and been forced to establish a more commercial footing. This is accompanied by a proliferation of channels in some places, but one casualty has been the free or reduced-rate air-time given to development communications. Innovative programmes might look at trying to work with communications facilities to re-establish developmental broadcasting. Private broadcasters, including FM radio stations in many countries, might agree to such arrangements, and might also benefit from training in development-motivated broadcasting. Many other donors, and other divisions of DFID, have worked in this way. (DFID projects to build broadcasting capacity include agricultural broadcasting in Bangladesh, and gender training for broadcasters in various countries).

Fig. 3.10 Radio training to sensitise Commonwealth media organisations to gender issues

DFID has funded The Commonwealth Broadcasting Association (CBA) "to support the services it provides to enable Commonwealth radio stations to produce gender sensitive programmes". Amongst other outputs, it has set up a gender training course for radio broadcasters, and produced a 'Gender Equality' guide to radio training. Radio was targeted because it is still a key means of communicating with poorer people, and generally receives less attention than television. Central start-up funding has been supplemented by regional funding to support the in-country gender training courses.

The initial step was to undertake a survey of the gender situation in 63 CBA member organisations. Amongst other issues, the survey showed that twenty-six broadcasting stations requested training. The training packages are aimed at sensitising both management and programme makers to gender issues. Seminars for senior and middle management cover topics such as the centrality of the role of women, the representation of women in the media and media gender language, the role of the media in lobbying for change and the need for an equal opportunities policy. Managers are provided with the gender tools necessary to implement change, and in discussion groups they plan how to implement gender policies. Programme makers receive training more specific to their own needs, including field trips to gender-sensitive development initiatives.

This programme could be criticised for concentrating on the training itself, rather than on building capacity within local organisations to conduct further exercises. However, local gender trainers are involved, and staff from the radio station's own training department attend the course when possible so that gender sensitisation can be sustained. In addition to the training, a funded consultancy to ZAMCOM in Zambia has supported the capacity of a local organisation to conduct further exercises. This consultancy provides an alternative model that could also be followed elsewhere.

Evaluation poses further problems for this initiative, although positive feedback indicates that gender training has made some difference. Training courses have been held in Jamaica, South Africa, Malawi and Pakistan. Further courses are planned for Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia and Zimbabwe, and in some cases further training has been requested.

Fig.3.11   Radio's Role In Conflict And Conflict Resolution

Innovative Broadcasting Partnerships: The BBC Afghan Education Drama

The BBC Afghan Education Drama (AED) Project was set up in October 1993 to provide key information in an entertaining way to a people in the grip of war. The Soap Opera "New Home New Life", is broadcast by BBC World Service radio three times a week in Pashto and Persian. The soap addresses the needs of the people who are trying to live peacefully in a country at war: subjects include health education, mines awareness, veterinary care, and drugs awareness.

Much of this subject matter is arguably contributing to peace building: by presenting a credible alternative to war, people are hopefully going to think about tolerating the warmongers rather more critically. But some story lines have tacked war related issues head on: the first of these involved the cooperation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which has supported the BBC AED project from the start with great enthusiasm.

Impact

Has the BBC soap opera contributed to lessening the level of violence in Afghanistan? Some evidence points that way: one storyline on a character quitting fighting and becoming a deminer struck a chord with listeners. Two thousand of them entered a competition asking for the three reasons why he quit the mujahedin, and 80% of the entries go all the reasons, which included the death of his best friend and a child being injured in a mine accident, correct. Other research also indicates that the peace building themes of the programme were in tune with the listeners' frustrations.

NGOs are invaluable in providing feedback to broadcasts: from the earliest BBC mines awareness "spots" - long before the soap opera - the UN demining teams were reporting back that they were greeted with much less suspicion in villages because their mandate has been effectively explained through the radio. The same applies to immunisation - vaccinators report that the huge increase in demand for immunisation is largely the result of sustained radio campaigns and "New Home New Life" storylines. This has also had a direct impact on conflict mitigation: three WHO/UNICEF national immunisation days over the past two years have all been preceded by information and social mobilisation campaigns in which the BBC played a leading role. The objectives were a big turnout and a ceasefire - and both were achieved on all three occasions.

Collaboration between NGOs and International Broadcasters

There is no doubt that in the case of the BBC Afghan Education Drama, the collaboration with aid organisations has been an important ingredient to the project's success. In terms of finance, even before "New Home New Life", the input of agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO the ICRC and the British ODA was vital in running quality drama-based series which involve careful needs assessment and technical research in the field, both of which are expensive. The soap opera costs annually about $650,000.

There are signs that the international aid community is realising that radio is the prime means of communication in regions of conflict, that it is excellent value for money, and that they should be forging closer partnerships with professional broadcasters who can produce the kind of programmes that people want to listen to, or train others to do so.

(Adapted from speech given by Gordon Adam, Director, Radio Partnership of the International Centre for Humanitarian Reporting)

Fig. 3.12   Brief Radio Guidelines

1. Consider making radio central to your campaigns. Radio is an extremely effective cost-effective way to reach large numbers of peoples, particularly where:

– The population is rural, scattered and non-literate

– transport is difficult and expensive

– extension workers are scarce

– at least 30% of the population is estimated to have access to working radios (percentages are normally higher than this)

2. Consider investing in the radio stations in your area. Radio stations need core funding, especially in the following areas:

– transport (vital for good rural programme-making)

– audience surveys (also important for responsive broadcasting)

– technical advice

– staff: salaries and training

– equipment

3. Buy air time. If you cannot invest in radio over the long term, copy advertisers and buy air time to convey your messages. Such sponsorship will help to make local radio more self-sustaining.

4. Work closely with the radio broadcasters.

– appoint a radio liaison officer (preferably with broadcasting experience)

– monitor programme quality for content

– monitor scheduling to make sure your target audience is really hearing your programmes

– Monitor and evaluate to provide feedback, and continually improve the quality of the work

5. Integrate radio with other media. Although radio can work on its own, it is more effective with other communications. This is especially so if messages link up so that radio campaigns reflect actual policy and practice on the ground.

6. Encourage debate and participation. Radio can be a two-way process:

– use radio to consult as well as to inform

– give logistical support to broadcasters to enable them to record the opinions of rural people and encourage villagers to make their own programmes

(Adapted from "The effective use of radio for mitigation of drought in the Sahel." Mary Myers, Gordon Adam, and Laurence Lalanne: Cranfield Disaster Preparedness Centre, Swindon, 1995)

Further radio sources:

One first point of reference:k

Gordon Adam and Nicky Harford: "Health on Air" , Health Unlimited, 1998

Also:

Commonwealth Broadcasting Association / Trish Williams, (1997) "Gender Equality: the guide to radio training." Practical guide to gender training for broadcasters, based on experiences under a DFID-funded programme.

de Fossard, E (1997) "How to write a Radio Serial Drama for Social Development: A Script-Writer's Manual." JHUCCP, Baltimore, MD USA

M Gallagher and L Quindoza Santiago (eds): "Women empowering communication: A resource book on women and the globalisation of the media", WACC/IWTC 1994. Useful for background information and examples from different regions.

Myers, M, Adam, G and Lalanne, L (1995) "The Effective Use of Radio for Mitigation of Drought in the Sahel". Cranfield Disaster Preparedness Centre, RMCS Shrivenham, Swindon, UK

Andrew Skuse (1998) "Media in development: towards a tool-kit of communication monitoring and impact assessment methodologies". Available from DFID's Social Development Library

UNDP: "Women and Media: toward developing a gender programme, Pakistan Workshop Report, 1996". Contains basis for Television gender training programme.

World Health Organisation (Vlassoff, C, et al) (1995) "Towards the Healthy Women Counselling Guide". UNDP/World Bank/WHO Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR)

C. Other Media

Networking

Networks exist for different reasons: to share information; to provide a focus for lobbying or advocacy; to benefit from different experiences; to provide a conduit for donor funds; as a forum with which government can negotiate. Donor networking initiatives have two main goals: first, to build capacity and encourage "empowerment"; and second, to provide a channel for service provision. This section is relevant to both goals. It does not deal directly with networking between or within donor institutions, although much of it will apply to these areas.

Networks and grassroots communication

At the grassroots level, communication tends to spread quickly from peer to peer. Development programmes have worked to harness that process, through working to animate community-level groups, or through targeting influential individuals. Peer-to-peer methodologies adopt similar principles, and have in places been very successful. This field is an important aspect of participatory communications methodologies. Perhaps the key factor involved is the balance between existing loose networks, and more formalised imported structures through which information can flow. Examples include village level networks in Bangladesh, and "Naam" networks in Burkina Faso.

A UNICEF study in West Africa revealed that programme interventions in this area need to focus to a much greater extent on putting in place the basic conditions for an environment conducive to further activity. This involves building personal and institutional capacity, to enable specific local structures or organisations to carry out networking activities, from peer motivation to high-level policy lobbying. The forms that grassroots network-strengthening interventions take will vary from place to place. The UNICEF Study concludes that they can be extremely valuable channels for carrying out health programmes. (UNICEF 1997: "Social Mobilisation at the Grassroots: Experience from West Africa.")

Women's networks

As with other networks, women's networks are varied in form and purpose. Networks can be developed for specific gender-related objectives: Women Working Worldwide network exchanges resources and support for groups representing women industrial workers; the South African National Network on Violence Against Women links different groups and provides a channel for donor funding as well as lobbying, including government as well as community-based organisations.

Other networks have more diffuse aims, and represent formalisations of "one of the few tools that are freely accessible to women, who are marginalised by the processes and decisions that shape their lives ...... the importance of networks cannot be under-stated; they often form the catalyst for women to organise into groups, and have the potential for influence and impact beyond the lives of the women immediately concerned". (Abantu, 1994 - in Oxfam's Focus on Gender, volume 6) Networks are an avenue to political change as well as improvement for participants alone. Although many networks are fragile, their reliance on the will or their members makes them more sustainable than institutions imposed from above.

Donor assistance to networks

The balance between donor and network is fragile. External support can massively strengthen networks, by offering assistance to formalise and improve without losing the original purpose. Assistance can include:

→ Resources to organise meetings

→ Capacity building or training in skills such as lobbying, communication, press relations, technology use, accounting, etc.

→ Provision of expertise where needed

→ Provision of technology and funds for running costs

→ Status, so that a network will be taken seriously by governments

→ Access to international debate and statutes in the United Nations and elsewhere

→ Linkages with other organisations

There is often a tension between networks and external donors. The two "partners" often have different agendas (see fig. below). These can clash, but are far from incompatible.

Donor interests	Network interests
A conduit for funding service delivery to reach across many small organisations	Accessing donor funding for capacity building and assisting members
A means of putting pressure on governments	Increasing capacity to lobby and influence
Linking civil society to government for mutual strengthening	Keeping independent of government, and receiving resources otherwise destined for government
Civil society strengthening	Sharing experiences and building a common space
A means of disseminating materials, information, resources	Gaining status and influence
Pushing through donor priorities and controlling outcomes	Maintaining self-defined aims
Sustainability	Sustainability of network
Value for money, positive evaluation results	Recognition for efforts, sense of making a visible difference

Women's group, Kosovo
Pic: Melanie Friend/Panos Pictures

In attempting to reach a balance between donor and network priorities, and in setting up networks anywhere, some generic guidelines can be identified:

1. External inputs:
The most important issue is the danger of external resources doing more harm than good. Openness and participatory planning processes can help in this. Centralisation is accelerated through funding provision, and can be destructive. It is important that responsibilities are delegated from a core group of people to bring in others.

2. Uniqueness:
Set models can rarely be transplanted: each network is different.

3. Definition:
Networks need to define their objectives, and their geographical or topic-based boundaries. They need to make sure that they do not duplicate or compete with other existing networks, but develop linkages with related institutions.

4. Broad involvement:
Networks must be based on more than one committed member if they are to survive. However, they need a core group of people who will maintain momentum. This core group should be open to a continual process of renewal, and should communicate clearly with more distant members. Tasks can be shared with a wider group of participants by delegating responsibilities.

5. Participation:
Networks are generally comprised of members of NGOs, research groups, community organisations, etc. As such, they need to encourage interaction with primary stakeholders to ensure that they remain in touch with beneficiary needs.

6. Internal Conflict:
Network members are often suspicious of each other or have different agendas: openness and good communication within the network helps dispel tension. Democratic and clear decision-making processes are vital to this.

7. Reward:
Continued recognition of the efforts that members are putting into the network is important to maintain enthusiasm. Yet it is inevitable that networks change through time. Spin-off groups are generated, agendas shift, and members leave or arrive; Much of the value of a network can be derived from informal linkages that are generated "on the margins".

8. Flexibility:
Networks need rules and accountability, but not too much rigidity - or their dynamism and flexibility will be lost. Capacity to adapt is vital to sustainability. Whilst objectives should be clear, there should also be scope for them to change through time.

9. Institutionalising experience:
If the network is to capitalise on experience, then learning needs to be institutionalised for the benefit of as many members as possible.

10. Funding:
Networks do not run by themselves, but need financial and non-financial inputs to be maintained. A diverse funding base is usually desirable for sustainability.

11.Legitimacy:
Networks need to build up a name, and contacts, so as to establish themselves. Publicity, a clear name and logo, high profile lobbying and media coverage will help build sustainability and influence.

Compiled from Starkey 1997; Sweetman (ed.) 1994; conversations with Jane Goldsmith, Cecile Jackson, Gill Seyfang, and others; personal experience.

Further sources

(For an electronic network case study, see end of section on Information and Communication Technology)

Paul Starkey: "Networking For Development". IFRTD (1997). Deals with networks for appropriate rural transport above other issues, but contains useful and clear information on networking in general.

Focus on Gender: "North-South Co-operation". Oxfam (1994), edited by Caroline Sweetman. Examples of gender networks between "Northern" and "Southern" partners.

UNICEF: "Social Mobilisation at the Grassroots: Experience from West Africa". (1997). Useful case studies of networks as part of child health programmes.

Information & Communications Technology (ICT)

Many international development organisations are focusing directly on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for poverty reduction. ICT is the name commonly given to the field formed by the convergence of telecommunications and computing over the last few years. This includes:

→ the internet

→ telecommunications reform and de-regulation

→ extension of telecommunications services to rural areas

→ community tele-centres

→ civil society networks on different scales.

The impact of ICT cuts across all sectors and areas of work, directly and indrectly. DFID has been active in a variety of different ways, and already works with organisations and governments on a range of ICT related activities where the potential benefits to poor people in developing countries are clear. For example, DFID is funding research into how ICT can help in poverty elimination, and is also supporting international efforts to tackle the Year 2000 "Milennium Bug".

ICT and civil society

ICT can be a valuable resource for large and small organisations. The realisation that electronic information can empower civil society has been fully recognised by some governments who fear such developments and have tried to censor content. E-mail and the internet can give people access to sources from other countries, and enable exchange of information between groups.

E-mail enables networks to function more efficiently. Key figures can download information and send it as printed copies to other members, or pass it by word of mouth, thereby reaching the majority who are unlikely to have access to a computer. ICT can also enable pressure groups, for example women's rights activists or internal gender units within a government, to tap into international literature and compare their government's record to their internationally recognised obligations.

Electronic networks can create forums for informal discussion specific to particular groups. These alternative media give women's groups in particular access to communication in a public space that would often otherwise be denied them. See case study for further information.

Sector Reform

In almost all countries, telecoms services have historically been provided by public sector monopolies. This has been changing: the commercial restructuring of the sector was largely pioneered in Britain in the early 1980s. Restructuring includes:

> liberalisation of telephone services

> privatisation

> independent regulation

This model of sector reform is strongly supported by the World Bank and other international agencies. Without reform, many poorer countries risk being increasingly bypassed by new technologies. Reform processes themselves give an opportunity to pass legislation which will encourage pro-poor telecommunications growth. From a social development perspective, the important point is to ensure that broad-based access is encouraged.

ICT and other applications

> General telecommunications reform can attract fresh investment, reduce call charges, and open up opportunities for access.

→ Regulatory mechanisms can improve the pressure for operators to extend services to rural areas.

→ Academics and institutions can benefit from access to material, and from access to a wider audience.

→ Individuals or small companies can benefit from access to markets.

→ Potentially, internet and e-mail can be used in improving government accountablity, and in engaging government in closer relations with civil society

→ There are many sector-specific applications such as tele-medicine, distance learning, natural resource management, and so on.

Governments, donors and ICT

There is considerable activity in this sector. Some activities are listed here, but there are many more. See the UNRISD web-site for more information:

(http://www.unrisd.org/infotech).

The most forward-looking governments in this sector have clear policies regarding ICT extension and telecommunications reform. Examples include wealthier developing or transitional countries such as South Africa, Botswana, Costa Rica and Estonia, but other poorer nations have focused on this area, including Ghana.

The World Bank, along with UNDP and others, have been organising the "Global Knowledge Partnership". The Partnership is based around seeking ways to encourage poorer nations, and poorer people, to take part in the opportunities being created by ICT.

The World Bank also works in this sector through its InfoDev programme, which aims to attract, regulate and channel private sector investment into telecommunications. It receives funding from DFID's Engineering Division, notably for work to deal with the "Millenium Bug" (which means that many computer-based systems might fail on 1 January 2000) in developing countries.

NGOs are also active in this area, as is The British Council. Grameen Bank in Bangladesh has developed the concept of the village phone, which provides an income for a women entrepeneur and gives a new service to previously remote villages.

Fig. 3.13   ICT and Social Development perspectives: questions to ask

The following questions are straightforward. They involve an application of advisers' and others' existing skills rather than an entire new body of knowledge.

– Pro-poor reform: In telecommunications reform programmes, how will attempts to extend access to poorer rural and urban areas be encouraged? Can CSOs be given discounted access by phone companies? How much will calls from outside the capital city cost? If the only internet server is in the capital city, then long-distance calls from other towns are likely to be too expensive to allow common use by NGOs or others.

– technologically led? Much high-technology equipment will suffer from neglect and failure to maintain it, as well as being vulnerable to theft. It might be more effective to communicate through other means.

– Strategy: are communications in general being approached in a coherent and strategic fashion? Can other aspects of a programme be incorporated into ICT proposals, or is it an unnecessary addition?

– Poverty focus: will a project benefit the poorest? Information can be brokered through intermediaries, so that the poor have a chance to receive and contribute to information transfer.

– Skills base: do adequate skills exist, and can the skills base be widened? Who knows how to use electronic media, and what training might be required?

– Institutions: How solid is the institutional base for the communications initiative? This includes the infrastructure which a project will depend upon, as well as the project implementing agency itself.

– Gender: is there a gender balance? Access to electronic communications is typically a male domain. Can women be equally represented?   This might involve training inputs, as well as a consideration of where connections are sited, who is involved in setting up the operation, etc.

– Participation: can participatory channels be opened up? Not only in setting up and running any scheme, but also in contributing to the production or exchange of information.

– Language: most electronic communication is in English. This might make written formats unsuitable.

– Information: what evaluations or knowledge is the initiative based on?

Fig. 3.14   Development-Gender Email Network, bridging communication gaps

This network was set up and is run from University of East Anglia. Similar projects could be organised from anywhere with reasonable telephone connections. It received DFID (Social Development Division) funding totalling roughly £25,000 over two years to cover start-up costs. The network's primary purpose is to overcome the communication gaps between academic researchers, policy makers, training providers and development practitioners in development agencies and NGOs both in the UK and internationally. This improves people's ability to access policy-relevant research and engage in a global dialogue.

The network has grown to an international membership of nearly 450 members, with 5 to 10 new members joining each week. These come from over 45 countries, and represent a diverse spread of gender and development policy, practice and research organisations.

The messages distributed by the network include current research briefings, conference and journal calls for papers and abstracts, publication announcements, summaries of discussions taking place on other electronic fora, job opportunities, plus information on current campaigns and protests. Discussions also take place on such topics as women and microfinance, gender impact assessment, equality and equity, anthropological approaches to gender, etc. Approximately 20-30 messages are distributed each week, and these are archived so that members may access past messages either on the world wide web or by email.

Effective network management

Unlike many email discussion groups, the development-gender network is moderated to ensure more effective communication and avoid inappropriate or repetitive messages being sent out. This provides subscribers with a guarantee that the messages they receive have been screened and are relevant to them. Analysis of the responses to an evaluative survey revealed a very high level of user satisfaction with the network (91% were satisfied) and with the way it is currently operating. Some lessons to emerge:

–   By collecting and sending out the introductory messages members write when they join the network, subscribers can make direct contact with each other. In this way, personal networking can develop alongside the email network. This 'external' impact is one of the network's most important aspects.

–   Members place a higher priority on an information-dissemination service than on a forum for discussion. People are more reluctant to write in than had at first been expected - perhaps because writing is still regarded as a formal discipline.

–   Members find that information on conferences and courses, and materials and literature announcements, are the most interesting and useful messages.

–   Moderation helps keep messages short and relevant, and encourages use of plain English. It also keeps the audience focused and specific, so that discussions do not wander.

Contact: "developmentgender@mailbase.ac.uk"

Further ICT sources

The best source is the **UNRISD web-site** (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development), which contains information on different donor initiatives, papers, publications, and other material. It has links to other sites as well. **http://www.unrisd.org/infotech**

Background documents:

Internet as a Tool for Social Development, by Paula Uimonen, (UNRISD 1997). This gives a fairly balanced overview of where the Internet is leading, and how it relates to Social Development.

Information And Communication Technologies (Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation briefing for DFID, May 1998). This gives a clear and concise overview of the telecommunications sector, and explains its relevance to DFID.

Global Networking for Change: Experiences from the APC Women's Programme. Association for Progressive Communications:. Survey findings, May 1997. Background and information on communications, technology and gender. Summarises results from a global questionnaire, and places them in a wider context.

United Nations: Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995. The PfA contains several references to ICT and gender equality, on which subsequent programmes have been built.

Public relations, lobbying and advocacy

The lobbying and advocacy activities discussed here involve communicating with specific groups of people as part of a broader strategy. If they are to be as effective as possible, they need to form a coherent approach. The audience must be defined and justified. Lobbying and advocacy might include mass media initiatives or rely on a variety of other methods. It is not possible to present clear guidelines for work in this area: the most appropriate activities to adopt will vary with specific circumstances, including existing personal or institutional contacts. This section covers sectoral and project-based activities, before covering specific issues and summarising what partners for work in this area might be suitable.

Sectoral approaches:
DFID is increasingly interested in partnerships with multilateral donors and other organisations, often through sectoral approaches. Many opportunities to lobby for change are not being fully exploited. DFID regional offices might benefit from working more closely with partners in conducting advocacy or lobbying work, including national civil society organisations, international NGOs, and multilateral organisations. The ground-work required to set up joint initiatives may be considerable, but they can expand the scope and variety of activities, within a sectoral approach.

Advocacy and public relations within projects:
The first question to ask is whether there is a need for this kind of activity. There will at times be no need at all. But influencing key stakeholders can encourage support, and build a consensus to encourage post-project sustainability. Small initiatives, like employing a temporary press officer to generate greater positive awareness amongst specific sections of the population, might be worthwhile if more fundamental steps are beyond the scope of one project.

Using positive experiences:
A powerful tool for advocacy is experience grounded in reality. Examples from DFID projects which have been successful increase the substance of any intervention. Advocacy initiatives could be built into large projects, or added on as an extension or expansion of activities. Experiences of poorer people, who have benefited from an intervention (or suffered from lack of positive action), add to any activity. Participatory appraisal, assessment, monitoring or evaluation can all produce testimonies which can be presented to key stakeholders in government or elsewhere.

The use of case studies also interests journalists and the public directly. Experience from field research or from completed programme activities can be used in advocacy and press work. Quotes from young people, life stories, photographs and interviews are often striking. Where this form of material exists, then it could be usefully employed.

Finding a focus:

Publicity, whether it is aimed at a general population or at key stakeholders, often works well when it has a clear focus. This might be an event, such as an International "day" (i.e. Children's Day), or a forthcoming international meeting (such as the Cairo +5 meeting in 1999). General elections also provide focuses for publicity, and might be a time when leverage on popular issues can be successfully exerted. Other focuses can be generated, such as the launching of a new development programme, a new radio series, or the arrival of a famous individual to publicise a cause (UN bodies use "goodwill ambassadors"). It is important to capitalise on the burst of interest an event might generate, using it as broadly as possible. It must also be remembered, however, that these events tend to pass by the poor completely.

Producing research, organising conferences:
Research findings can form the basis of advocacy initiatives. Conferences might present opportunities to raise the profile given to specific issues and attract the attention of key individuals. All too often however, neither activity forms part of a coherent approach: research needs to be disseminated, promoted and explained; conferences can absorb vast budgets with little end result.

Sowing seeds:
NGOs comment that successful lobbying occurs most frequently when the individuals targeted are made to feel that they own the idea being propagated. (This applies within DFID too.) By fitting into existing plans, following what organisations or individuals look likely to adopt anyway, and working in a flexible manner, more might be achieved than by pushing a particular agenda, which many will feel is not appropriate to their organisation or their country.

Partners for advocacy work:

Most initiatives will be conducted in co-operation with other organisations.

Civil society:
A vibrant civil society can press for improved services on its own account; a prolonged push from "below" might achieve more to create a responsive government than attempts to influence from "above" have managed over the past few decades in many areas. Initiatives in Nepal, Pakistan and elsewhere are working along these lines.

There is scope to engage with civil society in policy-based communications work. Although this might not be the best channel in all cases, it should be considered. Many civil society organisations have a wealth of experience to build on. In some places, networks of civil society organisations can form the basis for policy-based communications.

Non-governmental organisations:
Large NGO bodies conduct lobbying and advocacy work of their own. As an alternative to channels open to DFID directly, it might be worth increasing funding for activities which

NGOs conduct along these lines. NGOs can at times mobilise support from grassroots organisations and organise campaigns; they can operate with partner organisations around the world; they offer a largely de-politicised channel for interventions; and they often have a greater capacity than DFID to conduct advocacy and media work.

Inter-governmental organisations:
Communications activities themselves might benefit from co-operation with organisations who have more experience in that field. UN offices often have experience of advocacy activity, and of development communications in general. Co-operation with regional offices of multilaterals can in some cases lead to greater leverage and provide a clearer mandate for carrying out work which attempts to shift politicised agendas, and can be more effective than attempts to influence the multilateral from the centre.

Public Relations and advertising firms:
PR and advertising firms are likely to be effective in thinking through the target audience and channel of communication for an initiative, but they are unlikely to understand many aspects of development. If using PR firms, then their Terms of Reference should be clearly defined, with considerable prior input from development specialists. Without guidance, a PR firm could:

→ place a strong emphasis on advertising, whether appropriate or not

→ fail to reach the poorest

→ miss some of the finer points in the understandable need to be clear or "punchy"

→ lack experience in the intricate world of bilateral donors, multilaterals, NGOs, governments, pressure groups, etc.

→ Use images, sounds, text, etc. that appear very Western; this might not achieve the desired aim, and might act negatively by distancing the messages from the specific context.

Many big advertising agencies combine different services which were previously offered separately. They can often provide a package which will include public relations, marketing and advertising, as part of an overall strategy designed to reach specific sectors of the population.

The media:
NGOs and other organisations frequently develop a list of media contacts who are interested in an area of work. Good press officers should be able to develop such contact lists, although good relationships require careful nurturing.

A press officer should react to any inquiries, and proactively place items in the media. A majority of items in any news bulletin (including the front pages of newspapers in the UK or elsewhere) are sourced from press officers who contact journalists with a story. This process is the source of most knowledge which enters the public domain, in almost any country.

Working to a defined objective, a good press officer can use contacts to feed information into the mass media. Many officers will double as freelance journalists, part-time reporters, etc., and in-country expertise should be available in most regions. The principal tool of the press officer is the press release. Press releases tend to follow a set format.

International media contacts (CNN, BBC World Service, etc.) might be most useful in increasing the focus given to a particular issue; contact with national media (either directly or through news agencies) might generate higher levels of awareness in many areas.

Politicians:
Aid programmes tend to work with civil service counterparts. Most power rests with politicians: to encourage changes in policy, politicians are more important stakeholders than civil servants

Sympathetic politicians in any country do not crop up easily; contacts need to be developed. Some NGOs have contacts with politicians, and might wish to collaborate in this activity.

Further Sources:

ESRC (Economic & Social Research Council): "Pressing Home your Findings: media guidelines for ESRC researchers", 1993. Useful guide to seeking publicity in the written and broadcast media, intended for wider dissemination of academic research but applicable to other fields. Available from ESRC, Polaris House, North Star Avenue, Swindon SN2 1UJ (Tel (0)1793 413000).

Communications and Poverty Elimination in Practice

Appendix 1:
Further Resources

Relevant resources are also listed at the end of each section in Part 3, "Different Media". Many resources are available from the DFID Social Development Division library, London. Other sources include the library at the World Association For Christian Communication (357 Kennington Lane, London SE1, tel. 0171 582 9139), and Johns Hopkins University Centre for Communication Programs (http://www.jhuccp.org, 111 Market Place, Suite 310, Baltimore MD 21202-4012, USA tel. 410 659 6300).

Note the internet sites listed below under "Communications Initiative, and "UNRISD".

Gordon Adam and Nicky Harford: "Health on Air", Health Unlimited, 1998. Useful and comprehensive guide to using radio. It is specifically for health education work, but can be applied across a wider range of activities.

Association for Progressive Communications: "Global Networking for Change: Experiences from the APC Women's Programme. Survey findings, May 1997." Background and information on communications, technology and gender. Summarises results from a global questionnaire, and places them in a wider context.

Augusto Boal: "Theatre of the Oppressed". Pluto Press, 1979. The key original work on theatre and empowerment.

Sarah Murray Bradley: "How People Use Pictures: An Annotated Bibliography", International Institute for Environment and Development, 1995, London. Detailed list of sources, as well as some valuable notes on pictures and visual literacy. Includes international resource list. IIED, 3 Endsleigh St, London WC1H 0DD (Tel (0)171 388 2117)

Commonwealth Broadcasting Association / Trish Williams: "Gender equality: the guide to radio training", 1997. Guidelines for training media, from DFID project experience.

Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation "Information And Communication Technologies" (May 1998). This briefing for DFID, gives a clear overview of the telecommunications sector, and explains its relevance to development.

Communications Initiative Internet Web-Site: http://www.comminit.com A wide variety of valuable sources on communications for development; evaluation methodologies, case studies, etc. Updated regularly.

ESRC (Economic & Social Research Council): "Pressing Home your Findings: media guidelines for ESRC researchers", 1993. Useful guide to seeking publicity in the written and broadcast media, intended for wider dissemination of academic research but applicable to other fields. Available from ESRC, Polaris House, North Star Avenue, Swindon SN2 1UJ (Tel (0)1793 413000).

Esta de Fossard: "How to Write a Radio Social Drama for Social Development: a Script Writer's Manual", Johns Hopkins Centre for Communication Studies, Baltimore 1997. In-depth guide to script-writing which follows the "enter-educate" approach. Available from Johns Hopkins - see contacts list.

M Gallagher and L Quindoza Santiago (Eds): "Women empowering communication: A resource book on women and the globalisation of the media." WACC/IWTC, 1994. Useful for background information and examples from different regions.

Bob Linney: "Pictures, People and Power", Macmillan, London 1995. A guide to using pictures and art in development projects from a radical people-centred perspective. Includes useful information on how people interpret pictures according to their cultural background. Available from Intermediate Technology Bookshop, 103 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4HH (Tel. (0)171 436 9761)

Mary Myers, Gordon Adam, and Laurence Lalanne: "The effective use of radio for mitigation of drought in the Sahel", Cranfield Disaster Preparedness Centre, Swindon, 1995. A very useful guide to radio production in development, focusing on small scale radio stations in the Sahel but containing valuable information for other applications.

Nepal Safer Motherhood Project: "Using Film research for Community Needs Assessment". Report compiled by Katy Pepper, 1998 (video also available)

PLA Notes No.29: "Performance and Participation", IIED, London June 1997. Special issue of Participatory Learning and Action dedicated to theatre, video and other performance media in participatory development. (Note also Ch.1 On PRA and communication.). Available from IIED, 3 Endsleigh St, London WC1H 0DD (Tel (0)171 388 2117)

Maria Protz: "Video, Gender and Participatory Development" A useful summary chapter in "The Myth of Community", edited by Irene Guijt and Meera Kaul Shah, ITDG 1998. (The other chapters are also interesting, discussing contemporary issues in participatory development). Available from Intermediate Technology Bookshop, 103 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4HH (Tel. (0)171 436 9761)

Pilar Riaño (ed.): **"Women in Grassroots Communication: furthering social change"**, Sage, California 1994. Useful chapters on gender and communications, on how indigenous dance, video, radio and electronic networks can be used to empower women. Good academic bibliography.

Rural Extension Bulletin: June 1998 theme issue on media communication and development. Reading University Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Department. Useful articles on video, radio, and participatory media.

Andrew Skuse / ICHR Radio Partnership: "Media in Development: towards a toolkit of communication monitoring and impact assessment methodologies", 1998. A summary, with detailed appendices, of media monitoring for development.

Paul Starkey: "Networking For Development". IFRTD, 1997. Deals with networks for appropriate rural transport above other issues, but contains very clear and useful information on networking in general.

Caroline Sweetman (ed.): "North-South Co-operation". Oxfam 1994, edition 6 of Focus on Gender. Examples of gender networking between "Northern" and "Southern" partners.

Paula Uimonen: "Internet as a Tool for Social Development" UNRISD, 1997. This gives a fairly balanced overview of where the Internet is leading, and how it relates to Social Development. It is available on the UNRISD web-site.

United Nations: "Beijing Platform for Action from the Fourth World Conference on Women", 1995. The PfA contains several references to ICT and gender equality, on which subsequent programmes have been built.

UNDP: "Women and Media: toward developing a gender programme", UNDP Pakistan Workshop Report, 1996. Contains basis for Television gender training programme.

UNICEF: "Social Mobilisation at the Grassroots: Experience from West Africa", 1997. Useful case studies of networks as part of child health programmes.

UNRISD INTERNET SITE: http://www.unrisd.org/infotech This site contains useful information on the programmes, organisations and theory behind applications of information and communications technology to development.

Matthijs de Vreede: "Video for Development", African Media Monograph Series No.8, African Council for Communication Education, Nairobi (no date). Basic explanation of possible uses of video, and potential pitfalls. Available from Intermediate Technology Bookshop, 103 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4HH (Tel. (0)171 436 9761)

World Health Organisation: "The Healthy Women Counselling Guide", 1997. A package about women's health and development, which may also be useful for other sectors. It contains illustration materials and cassettes, as well as two short books: one dealing with women's communication needs, and one documenting experience of radio and illustrations in women's health programmes.

Jonathan Zeitlyn: **"Appropriate Media for training and development"**, Tool Publications, Leiden (Netherlands) 1992. Clear guide to communications for training and other needs in development. Available from Intermediate Technology Bookshop, 103 Southampton Row, London WC1B 4HH (Tel. (0)171 436 9761)

Willem Zijp: **"Improving the transfer and use of agricultural information"**, World Bank Discussion Paper 247. A guide to uses of Information Technology. This guide is being updated.

Communications and Poverty Elimination in Practice

Appendix 2:
Useful Organisations

Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Department
University of Reading Communications, especially in agricultural extension. Contact: Pat Norrish. Unviersity of Reading, Earley Gate, Reading, Berks RG6 2AH Tel: (0)118 931 8119

AMARC: World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters
UK Office: The Media Centre, 15 Paternoster Row, Sheffield S1 2BX. Tel: (0)114 279 5219. Email: amarc@gn.apc.org

BBC World Service
Departments for Training (Gwyneth Henderson),   Education (Jenny Stevens), International Broadcasting Audience Research, (useful country media profiles) etc. BBC World Service, Bush House, Strand, London, WC2B 4PH. Switchboard: (0)171 240 3456

Centre for Communication Programs, Johns Hopkins University
Key exponents of "enter-educate" communication methods; also has a large library resource. School of Hygiene and Public Health, Johns Hopkins University, 11 Market Place - Suite 310, Baltimore, Maryland 21202-4012 USA. Tel: 410 659 6300

Centre for Development Communications
Training and application of theatre for development contacts: Alex Mavro, Tim Prentki, David Pammenter. King Alfred's College, Winchester SO22 4NR. Tel. (0)1962 827508

Commonwealth Broadcasting Association.
BBC Yalding House, 152-6 Gt Portland St, London W1N 6AJ Tel: (0)171 765 5144/5151, Fax: Tel: (0)171 765 5152. Email: cba@bbc.co.uk

Health Images
Group of artists working in development. Contact: Bob Linney. Holly Tree Farm, Walpole, Halesworth, Suffolk, IP19 9AB Tel/Fax: (0)1986 784 402

Health Unlimited
NGO with radio experience (Contact Sarah Shuffell). Prince Consort House, 27-29 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TS. Tel: (0)171 582 5999, Fax: (0)171 582 5900

International Centre for Humanitarian Reporting
Organisation focusing on media issues in humanitarian work. Through the Radio Partnership, it encourages greater use of radio in development communications. 11 Avenue de Joli-Mont,1209 Geneva, Switzerland Tel: 41 22 920 1676, Fax: 41 22 920 1679. Email: info.ichr@itu.ch. The Radio Partnership can be contacted directly through its Director, Gordon Adam, in the UK. Tel: (0)1463 731 357,Fax: (0)1463 731 841, E-mail: 100305.2120@Compuserve.com

International Women's Tribune Centre
Global women's networkingorganisation. 777 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY10017, USA. Tel: 1-212-687-8633, Fax: 1-212-661-2704. Email: iwtc@igc.org

Mediae Trust
Radio, video and other media for development in Africa. Considerable experience in Kenya and elsewhere. Developing video training resources: Kate Lloyd Morgan, (0)1993 709855, Lynton House, 53 Woodgreen, Witney, Oxon OX8 6DB. MediaeTr@aol.com AND David Campbell, Tel. (Kenya) 254 2 442660, Mediae@africaonline.co.ke

Open Channels
Communications, media and reconciliation NGO. Sarah Hobson, Wadenhoe Lodge, Wadenhoe, Oundle, Peterborough, PE8 5SZ. Tel: (0)1832 720268 Email: Openchanls@aol.com

PANOS
Media NGO. Offices in Africa, Asia, Latin America. UK Office: 9, White Lion St, London N1 9PD. Tel: (0)171 278 1111, Fax: (0)171 278 0345. Email: panoslondon@gn.apc.org

Thomson Foundation
Foundation for radio and television. Bute Building, King Edward VII Avenue, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF1 3NB Tel: (0)1222 874 873/664 902, Fax: (0)1222 225 194. Email: ThomFound@cardiff.ac.uk

World Association of Christian Communication.
Well-stocked development communications library. 357 Kennington Lane, London SE11. Tel: (0)171 582 9139