

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMMES IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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### ABSTRACT

*The popular literature in development communication is found in innovation diffusion studies. Most diffusion programmes are supported with media plan. This study attempted objective evaluation of the communication strategies for the campaign on agricultural improvement practices in five developing countries namely: Pakistan, India, Philipine, Senegal and Mexico. The literature on the agricultural information systems addressed the organized mobilization of the peasant farmers to adopt modern agricultural practices. The multi-step-flow theory of information diffusion in large clientele systems was used to evaluate the communication strategy that supported the campaign program in the five countries. This approach paved the way for the understanding of innovation diffusion process in complex target populations. It was recommended that the traditional mass media of communications alone did not effectively support the diffusion process. Rather, the use of a combination of the mass media and some variations in the use of interpersonal network led to effective diffusion process.*

*Keywords: communication strategy, programme evaluation, agriculture, developing countries.*

## INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) disbursed funds from its budgets to sponsor agricultural development projects in some Third World Countries. In the cases where the USAID did not directly provide financial aid, it provided technical assistance. This was in countries where funds were provided by indigenous government or foundations. The donor-sponsors applied educational technology and development communication strategy to deliver projects in the various beneficiary countries. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Tajikistan was mandated in the framework of Enhancing Agricultural Governance to elaborate a communication strategy...(<http://www.undp.tj>, 2010). This study was conceived after a careful study of the agencies reports on the implementation phases of these projects.

The official source consulted was the comprehensive reports published in the USAIDs project profiles prepared by Clearing House on Development Communication. During the close study of these project profiles, a focus on the campaign communication strategy was maintained. This communication strategy also needed to reach other stakeholders, such as the civil society, including the "intelligentsia" specific relevant university faculties, local active NGOs, etc. (<http://www.undp.tj>, 2010). This approach facilitated the choice of design and methodology for the study. A systematic analysis of each country's project implementation report was undertaken to gain a close acquaintance with the peculiar circumstances of each nation's project profile. Through this process, objective comparisons of the experiences of each national campaign programme was accomplished and this assisted the conduct of the study in a meaningful way. The case study evaluation of the campaign communication strategies was sampled from the projects implemented in five aided recipient developing countries, which included Pakistan, India, Philippines, Senegal and Mexico.

The research literature on farm practice improvement is dominated by the effort of agronomists, scientist, mass media specialists and rural sociologists. The review was confined to sources published by the Clearing House on Development Communication, Washington D. C., United States. The citations reflected the development communication literature that was

consulted by the reference authors who analyzed the agricultural campaign programmes under study. Dey (1977) contended that the use of electronic broadcasting medium of agricultural communication was a novel approach, far from the culture of the Indian people. He did not say if the novel method failed to persuade the target audience. According to Cisneros (1976) agricultural communication for the peasant farmer had consistently used the same media approach. He proposed variations in the use of media channels for the diffusion, of campaign messages in Mexican agricultural communication.

Agricultural development communication in Mexico should adopt media-mixed strategy that integrates the regular mass media with interpersonal channels (Sanchez *etal.* 1974). Bordenave (1977) in his opinion explained that the agricultural campaign communication should be integrated with the overall national development plan. He emphasised that the implementation of agricultural modernization practice in isolation did not fit into the development needs of the target audiences. Cassire (1977) expressed the view that Radio Communication for the support of agricultural modernization in Senegal should be adapted to the circumstances of the traditional sector where the target population is resident. The use of radio broadcasting for the diffusion of agricultural campaign messages was insufficient for the peasantry in Senegal, but the use of mixed media that integrates the traditional interpersonal networks (Sock, 1976).

For an agricultural communication strategy that interprets the visual media for the illiterate members of the target population, Myren (1974) rejected the over-burdened confidence in the radio channel of communication for a divergent rural audience. Smith (1976) opined that the principle of agricultural information management system was the valid strategy for the evaluation of the communication strategy in the Pakistani campaign. He explained that agricultural management information system was a novel approach to the control of national campaigns. Agricultural communication strategy used in Philippines for small price farmers should integrate a system of getting feedback from the target audience. The integration feedback is a two-way communication system that facilitates objective evaluation (Gonzalez, 1977). From what is known in the reports of the project profiles of developing countries, the implementation of the

communication strategy has been in the center of the program performance indexes. In this line of reasoning, the success or failure of most programs depended on the performance of the campaign communication strategy. The choice of packages of mass media channels of communication; the content and strength of the campaign messages; the diffusion strategy; the monitoring effectiveness and the receptivity of the messages are usually dependent on the campaign communication strategy. Recently, pre-program research input has been receiving attention. The use of theory in the campaign communication planning has also been getting the attention of the change agents who are directly involved in the dissemination of campaign information.

An effective post-implementation programme evaluation is likely to consider the components of the pre-programme planning strategies in such issues as research needs, the use of theory and media use effectiveness. This study concentrated on the analysis of the performance of the campaign communication strategy in the overall success or failure of the programs under evaluation. The objective of the communication strategy is to provide the Independent Commission with approaches, methodologies, activities, outputs and outcomes for them to effectively raise awareness among farmers and the rural population about the Government agricultural reforms and to ensure that a sustainable mechanism is in place for this awareness to continue well after the implementation. This communication strategy also needs to reach other stakeholders, such as the civil society, including the "intelligentsia" specific relevant university faculties, local active NGOs, etc. (<http://www.undp.tj>, 2010).

The use of communication strategies in most development campaign programmes is related to the increasing awareness of the role of information and education in the delivery of national development projects. This study was designed to examine and objectively analyze the performance indices of the already implemented national development projects in selected developing countries - Pakistan, India Philippines, Senegal and Mexico. The conduct of the study which was limited to the first phase in all the countries focused on the outlined work parameters as follows:

1. The characteristics of the target population
2. The features of the campaign communication strategies used in each of the nations

3. The selection and nature of the channels of communication media packages used in the campaigns under evaluation
4. The use of the communication channels by the change agents
5. The content of the diffusion messages that were beamed to the target population.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study sample consisted of five agricultural modernization campaign programmes that were purposively selected from five developing countries, which included India, Senegal, Mexico, Philippines and Pakistan. The imperatives for purposively sampling technique were considered because only the countries where the programmes were actually implemented were considered to be relevant for the study. There were only a couple of them, which did not constitute a significant population to justify a random sampling method. They were adjudged to be in the category of finite population (limited population) as different from infinite population (unlimited population). Kirlinger (1973) noted that finite populations did not require randomization procedures involving the selection of only units that can be randomized. With the approach, not every developing country had a chance of being included in the sample. Thus, a non-random strategy facilitated the sampling process.

The programmes under evaluation were implemented in the societies that exhibit diversity on the variables of geography, climate, culture, language, economy and politics. These diversities enhance validity as the sample was not taken from one sub-region of the world where local conditions would have been undoubtedly similar. Furthermore, the use of separate scales for the measurement of the effective use of the mass media on one hand, and that of the interpersonal networks on the other, helped to strengthen the validity component.

There were altogether five agricultural development programmes on the sample of this study. The programmes were implemented in five developing countries. Each country succinctly defined its target audiences and also spelt out the objective of their campaign for agricultural modernization. All the five countries devised varying proportions of mixed-media packages to implement their communication strategy. However, all the countries resourcefully applied different variations in the use of

interpersonal communication networks. This evaluation was limited to the three months of the first phases of the programmes in each country. Thus, the unit of analysis consisted of the five-nation agricultural improvement programmes.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 as presented, contained a catalogue of the overall programme plan packages by the countries studied. Each programme has a unique title that identifies its programme apart. Perhaps for the benefit of doubt, each programme clearly defined its target audience, programme objectives and communication strategies respectively.

Table 2 showed a content analysis of the mixed-media packages by numerical score indicators. As presented, each country organized a package of channels of communications that was used to implement its overall campaign communication strategy. As observed, there were differences in the contents of the different mass media packages used by the programmes of different countries. Due to these differences in contents, the mixed-media programme packages were noted by numerical scores. As noted, Philippines excelled within the quantitative value of the content (that is the number of items) in its media package.

Table 3 showed a quantitative content analysis of the overall mixed-media packages by scores and corresponding percentage values. As observed, there were some differences in the numerical values of the contents of different media packages used by different countries. Philippines excelled in the numerical value of the content of its media package. The content analysis of the overall quantifiable variations in the use of interpersonal networks in a multiple-step-flow information diffusion process is revealed on table 4. The interpersonal communication channels are known to be important in the less developed nations, especially when campaign communication design is involved. The table showed different variations in the use of interpersonal networks in the desire to maximize their potential in covering the widely dispersed locations of the rural communities. The use of these variations was rated by the programme communication strategy of each country. Philippines excelled in the overall variations in the use of interpersonal networks; followed by Pakistan on

this scale. Mexico, India and Senegal programme communication strategy were in the third, fourth and fifth positions respectively.

The study attempted objective evaluation of the communication strategy used to support the implementation of agricultural improvement programmes of the five countries in the sample. The results presented in this section were a summary of findings from the systematic analysis of the media selection packages that were used by the enumerated programmes in the designated developing countries.

Apparently, there were similarities and some differences concerning the proportions of mixed-media packaging. The use of radio communication for the campaigns was a common feature in all the programmes of the five nations. This contrasted with TV that did not feature prominently relative to the use of radio. Thus, TV was barely used to supplement other channels of communications in the mixed-media packages of all the programmes of the five countries. The same was true of newspapers. Newspapers played a minor role in the campaign communication of all the programmes in all the nations concerned. Understandably, TV and newspapers are elite media of communication to which the target populations in all the nations - peasant farmers, had no access. The consistent radio patronage in the experiences of all the programs was borne out of the fact that almost every ruralite in the agricultural sector under study had a transistor radio that receives the extensive short-wave bands.

On the other hand, almost all the programmes made use of varying proportions of interpersonal networks to support the radio-media diffusion of the campaign messages. In some countries, there were observable variations in the use of interpersonal networks. Programmes in some countries obviously excelled in the use of these variations of interpersonal networks. Philippines and Pakistan were cases in point. In contrast, some programmes excessively relied on radio forums relative to the slight attention given to interpersonal networks. India was a case in point.

Other than the agricultural information dissemination for the peasant farmers, there were many components in the programme plans of some countries. These were seemingly ambitious as they attempted a large-scale mobilization of the citizenry for a comprehensive development strategy. However, the report of the evaluation study concentrated on the communication strategy that was used to support the delivery of the



programmes in the designated countries. The programme of each of the countries in this report used a media plan package. The content of these packages differ in some ways. Some of them exploited radio channel of communication. Others used a greater mix-media strategy. Two of the programmes maximized the use of interpersonal variations to accomplish extensive diffusion of the campaign messages.

One of the components that have been missing the attention of the campaign communication planners is the use of organized interpersonal networks which may include specialized crop farmers associations; farmers cooperative societies, farmers credit union, and farmers community insurance clubs. Low literacy target populations require these agriculture-based trade associations to facilitate the diffusion process.

## CONCLUSION

The programme evaluation study in this report revealed a number of issues that are worth the attention of researchers, sponsors as well as campaign communication planners. The study draw conclusion on a number of matters of learning experience. The programmes that were evaluated exhibited the crawling pace of subsistent agriculture in the countries under study. The communication strategy that is confined on the traditional mass media of communications did not effectively support the agricultural modernization campaign programmes of these nations. The communication strategy that utilized extensive variations in the use of interpersonal networks proved to be more effective than the strategy that confined to the traditional mass media of communications. The programmes that featured large-scale mobilization of the entire national population made it difficult for the manager of the programmes to implement the communication strategy plan.



**Table 1:** Analysis of Overall Programme Plan Packages by Countries

Country	Program Title	Target Audience	Programme Objectives	Communication Strategies
India	School-On-The-Air	Indian Peasant Farmers	To improve knowledge of agricultural science	Radio, printed matter
Senegal	Radio Educative	Senegalese Farmers	To provide agricultural information on essential food production practices	Radio, printed matter, film, interpersonal networks
Mexico	Puebla	Mexican Farmers Compesinos in Puebla Valley	To provide agricultural information systems to increase corn production	Print, film, demonstrations interpersonal networks
Philippines	Masagana	Rice producing Filipino farmers in the provinces	To provide essential information to the people on the concept of modern agricultural practice	Radio, comics, booklets, flyers, bulletins, vernacular, newspapers, magazines, posters, Television, interpersonal networks.
Pakistan	Shadab	Pakistani farmers living in 60 villages	To stimulate increase in agricultural production through agricultural information systems	Print and interpersonal networks

**Table 2:** Content Analysis of Mixed-Media Packages and Numerical Score Indicators

Country	Content of Media Package	No. of Items in Content
India	Electronic media (radio) printed matter	2
Senegal	Electronic media (radio) printed matter, film, interpersonal networks	4
Mexico	Print media, film, demonstration farms, interpersonal networks	4
Philippines	Electronic media (radio, television), comics, booklets, flyers, bulletins, vernacular magazines, newspaper, posters, interpersonal networks	10

**Table 3:** Quantitative Content Analysis of Overall Mixed-Media Packages and percentage indicators

Country	Quantitative Content Value	Percentage of Overall Media Packages
India	2	9.10%
Senegal	4	18.18%
Mexico	4	18.18%
Philippines	10	45.45%
Pakistan	2	9.10%
Total	22	100.01

**Table 4:** Contents Analysis of Overall Quantifiable Variations in the interpersonal Networks in a Multiple-Step-Flow Information Diffusion Process

Country	Quantifiable Overall Variations in the Use of Interpersonal Networks	Quantitative Content Value in the Use of Interpersonal Variations (Each Group of Personnel = 1 pt)	Percentage Value in the Use of Interpersonal Variations %
India	Literature Former Opinion Leaders Training delivered by All India Radio staff to local groups Interactions with staff of Department of Agriculture Interactions with All India Radio Staff Professional Media Experts	1 1 1 1 1 (5 points)	15.62%
Senegal	The use of diffusion volunteers Official change agents from Government Exchange of correspondence between individual and government Media professionals	1 1 1 1 (4 points)	12.50%
Mexico	Official change agents team Mass media specialists Direct participation of agronomists Department of Agriculture Staff Educators Anthropologists	1 1 1 1 1 1 (6 points)	18.75%
Philippines	Information officers for info. dissemination The use of comics as instructors The use of disc jockey dancers The program administrative staff Who conduct interview respond to queries Freelance research personnel Freelance news reporters Rural development agency staff Department of agriculture liaison staff	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 (9 points)	28.12%
Pakistan	Government and agency representatives at the Markaz Members of farmers cooperatives Project manager and assistants Support groups like youth clubs Participants at Agricultural Fairs Farmers representatives at meetings Use of teachers Agricultural staff collaboration	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 (8 points)	25.01%
TOTAL		32	100%

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