

# Media and Development Communication: A Perspective

Malik Zahra Khalid

Media Education Research Centre: Kashmir University

**Abstract-** Development has become the global 'civil religion'. Since the past 40 years- a battle cry for all nations rich or poor, strong or weak. It is a long and complex evolutionary process- more a process of social change rather than merely generation and accumulation of material resources. Scholars have proposed various theories and models while development agencies set various goals for the development of nations and some of the theories have failed to yield results and new theories that emerged have tried to offer solutions to speed up development. Development implies change and this is one sense in which the term development is used; to describe the process of economic and social transformation within countries. The paper is an attempt to develop an understanding about the process of development communication and the various approaches that have been used in order to assess the role of media in the process of development.

**Index Terms-** Communication, change, development, media

## I. INTRODUCTION

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

Various means of communication have been used for communication purposes. From paintings to stone writing to printing press to the modern computer based technology, the media have been used to efficiently transmit knowledge and information to people. Communication is used as an empowerment tool in order to facilitate the participation of people in development activities. The term 'Development Communication' can be divided into two components- Communication and Development. In this scenario, communication implies the utilization of different types of media in the context of development. Communication also signifies the understanding or sharing of information to further the process of development. Development refers to the change of society for the better. It can be about social or economic change for improvement or progress. Hahn-Been Lee says, development is a process of acquiring a sustained growth of a systems capability

to cope up with new continuous changes towards the achievement of progressive, political, economic and social objectives. Development is seen as a process of change to be set in motion and guided toward the objective of eradicating the hunger, disease, injustice, exploitation and related ills that afflict vast section's of the world's population.

## II. PRE-REQUISITE OF DEVELOPMENT

As development is a continuous process, the existence of certain pre-requisites for development has to be ensured by:

- i) A stable political system: If a society aspires for a planned development, it must have the basic infrastructure laid down in an acceptable political order and a well defined constitutional system. Without such a base no society can move in the direction of nation building and socio economic progress.
- ii) Stable Administrative System: Unless a society has a well regulated system of public administration, it cannot undertake any programme of development for improvement in the environment of society. A system of public administration must have a sound base of rules and regulations.
- iii) A well grounded Cultural System: Development cannot take place in a society which has heterogeneous groups of people come together suddenly for any reason. There must be historically minimum cultural affiliation linguistic or otherwise, binding the people together for common understanding the heterogeneous elements of society would always be clashing among themselves and instead of paving the way for the development of civilization they would be tending to destroy or retard its development. An environment of integrity-social, political and cultural is essential for economic development.
- iv) A system of planning: For a concrete programme of development and for achieving the desired objectives of such programmes, it is necessary for a society to improve the concept of planning. Without a system of sound planning and the necessary machinery for the implementation of plans,
- v) People's Participation: For development of society, it is extremely necessary that people as a whole must be active or indirect participants in the process of development. Since in modern civilization, people are conscious of their existence and role in society in different walks of life, any administration which wishes to ignore their participation is likely to fail in its objectives. No democracy can function without establishing a healthy contact with the people through its administration.

In human development report (1995) the three key concepts have been defined to measure development:

- i) The Human Development Index(HDI): It measures the average achievement of a country in basic human capabilities. The HDI indicates whether people lead a long and healthy life, are

educated and knowledgeable and enjoy a decent standard of living. The HDI examines the average conditions of various segments of society which have to be calculated separately.

ii) The Gender Related Development Index (GDI): It measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as HDI does but takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men. The methodology used imposes a penalty for inequality such that the GDI falls when achievement level of both women and men in a country goes down or disparity between their achievement increases. The greater the gender disparity in basic capabilities the lower the country's GDI compared to HDI.

iii) The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM): It examines whether men and women can actively participate in economic and political life and take part in decision making. While the GDI focuses on expansion of capabilities, the GEM is concerned with the use of these capabilities to take advantage of the opportunities of life.

According to Human Development Report 1995, the four essential components of the human development paradigm are:

i) Productivity: People must be enabled to increase their productivity and participate fully in the process of income generation and remunerative employment. Economic growth is therefore a subset of human development models.

ii) Equity: People would have access to equal opportunities. All barriers to economic and political opportunities must be eliminated so that they can participate in and benefit from these opportunities.

iii) Sustainability: Access to opportunities must be ensured not only for the present generations but also for future generations. All forms of capital, human and environmental-should be replenished.

### III. DEFINING DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

When we refer to development communication, it is about such communication that can be used for development. It is about using communication to bring change or improve the way of living of the citizen of a country. The messages which are designed to transform the behavior of people or for improving their quality of life can be termed as development communication and these messages used to change the socio-economic condition of people.

Though communication for development or development communication grew out of agricultural communication, the term comprehensively includes not only agriculture but also population, nutrition, health, education, housing, employment and so on. Because all these areas require communication inputs to expedite the process of development, development communication has vast scope for its reach and utility in development. Nora Quebral (1975) defined development communication as "the art and science of human communication applied to the speedy transformation of a country from poverty to a dynamic state of economic growth and makes possible greater economic and social equality and larger fulfillment of human potential". Everett M. Rogers, an influential scholar defined development communication as "it refers to the uses to which communication is put in order to further development. Such applications are intended to either further develop in a general way, such as by increasing the level of the mass media exposure among the nations citizens, in order to create a favorable climate

for development, or to support a specific definite program or project." Roger's definition essentially emphasizes the creation of climate for development which includes physical climate and psychological climate.

Development communication through dissemination of information plays a key role in bringing about a social change among the receivers. Primarily, development communication performs two key functions: transforming role as it seeks social changes for a higher quality of life: socializing role as it seeks to maintain some of the established values of the society. These roles expedite the process of development. The purposive and positive nature of development communication enhances the ability of contemporary society to usher in an environment of change and progress.

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

The term development has been interpreted in various ways by sociologists, communists, development planners, etc. To some it means modernization, to others social change, and to others it means enhancing quality of life or Sustainable Development. The term 'development' suggests some amount of improvement, self reliance, upliftment and progress and also self awareness and independence to an extent. Development implies change and this is one sense in which the term development is used; to describe the process of economic and social transformation within countries.

### IV. APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION

The western model for development predominated in 1950s and 1960s. Rogers (1960) called this the "dominant paradigm" of development as it exercised a dominant influence in the field of development. The emphasis of this model was that development could be achieved by increased productivity, economic growth and industrialization, through heavy industries, capital intensive technologies, urbanization, centralized planning. Development was measured by gross national product (GNP), total or per capita income. There was a shift from a static, agricultural, primitive and rigid society to a dynamic, industrialized, urbanized and socially mobile nation.

The early generation of development communication studies was dominated by Modernization theory. This theory suggested that cultural and information deficits lie underneath development problems, and therefore could not be resolved only through economic assistance (a la Marshall Plan in post-war Europe). Instead, the difficulties in Third World countries were at least partially related to the existence of a traditional culture that inhibited development. Third World countries lacked the necessary culture to move into a modern stage. Culture was viewed as the "bottleneck" that prevented the adoption of modern attitudes and behavior. McClelland (1961) and Hagen (1962), for example, understood that personalities determined social structure. Traditional personalities, characterized by authoritarianism, low self-esteem, and resistance to innovation,

were diametrically different from modern personalities and, consequently, anti-development.

Scholar's like Daniel Lerner and Wilbur Schramm involved in third world development proposed new theories. Daniel Lerner (1958) book 'The Passing of a Traditional Society' and Wilbur Schramm's (1964) book 'Mass Media and National Development' were influential in the modernization process. Daniel Lerner's passing of a traditional society (1958) illustrates the major ideas of early mass media and modernization approach. Modernization, according to Lerner was westernization. However, since many third world leaders denounced west for political reasons, the process of change was termed modernization. Lerner's model recapitulated the development of Western Europe and North America from a feudal and traditional stage to modern military industrial societies. His social development model consisted of following components:

- a) A core of mobile individuals whose psychological orientation made it easier to accept rapid changes in their personal lives and overall social system
- b) An omnipotent mass media system that reinforced and accelerated societal and individual change by disseminating the new ideas and attitudes conducive to modernization
- c) Co-relations between important indices of urbanization, literacy, media exposure and economic and political participation to establish a modern Western type society.

According to Lerner, traditional society was non-participant. People were deployed by kinship into communities isolated from another and from center, without an urban-rural division of labor. Thus people developed few needs that required economic interdependence. Their world views were limited to their physical horizon and their decisions involved other known people in familiar situations. On the other hand modern society was participant and functioned by consensus, Here people went through formal schooling, read newspapers, were paid in cash for jobs, used cash to consume goods in a fair and open market and were free to vote in elections and express opinions on matters external to their personal lives. Lerner identified and explained a psychological pattern in individuals that was both required and reinforced by modern society: a mobile personality. This person was equipped with a high capacity for identification with new aspects of his/her environment and internalized the new demands made by larger society. In other words, this person had a high degree of empathy-capacity to see oneself in other fellow's situation. Lerner stated empathy fulfilled two important tasks. First it enabled the person to operate efficiently in modern society which was constantly changing. Second, it was an indispensable skill for individuals wanting to move out of their traditional settings.

The second element in Lerner's model was the mass media. They performed a special function: by exposing individuals to new people, ideas and attitudes, they accelerate the process of modernization.. In short, the mass media had the potential to blow the winds of modernization into isolated traditional societies. He identified four indices for modernization-urbanization, literacy, mass media exposure and political participation. People had to be mobile, empathetic and should participate in development.

In this approach mass media were considered as ideal vehicles for transferring new ideas and models from developed nations to

the third world and from urban areas to rural countryside. The mass media were entrusted with the task of preparing individuals in developing nations for rapid social change by establishing a climate of modernization.

Research in this tradition generated high expectations from the mass media. They were considered as 'magic multipliers' for development benefits in third world nations. Information, therefore, was considered the missing link in the development chain. The quality of information available and its wide development was a key factor in the speed of development (Schramm, 1964). Adequate mass media outlets and information would act as a spur to education, commerce and a chain of other related development activity.

Laxman Rao (1963) also suggested that communication was a prime mover in the development process. He selected two villages in India for his study: Kothooru- a village on the verge of modernization and Pathooru- a village isolated and steeped in traditional customs and beliefs. Rao suggested that laying of a new road to Kothooru from a nearby city started the process of modernization. Among other things this road brought new people, ideas and mass media while at the same time allowing the villagers to visit urban centers. All of this new information opened up people's minds. They were not only ready for change but demanding and expecting it. The new ideas were first available to the elite and then trickled down to others. Melkote and Steeves (2001:116) observed that the quality and quantity of information that triggered change in Kothooru, the new road and mass media brought in modern ideas from outside. There was a great spur to education.

Diffusion of innovations theory has important theoretical links on the role of media in modernizing traditional societies. Evert Rogers whose work has been central in this area identified the following elements in the diffusion of idea or an innovation: the innovation, its communication, the channels of communication and the social system within which and for which the process occurs. Adoption was defined as the process through which individuals arrive at the decision to adopt or reject an innovation from the time of first awareness. The five stages were awareness, interest, evaluation, trial and adoption. Diffusion studies indicated differences among adopter groups in terms of their personal characteristics, media behavior, and position in society. Early adopters were young, had higher financial status and were equipped with greater mental ability than late adopters.

The diffusion of innovation research established the importance of communication in the modernization process at the local level. In the dominant paradigm, communication was visualized as the important link through exogenous ideas entered the local communities.

Over time, diffusion theory proved to be inadequate as a guide for communication. Hence it has largely been replaced by social marketing which provides a model for the strategic, scientific determination of message and media strategies to disseminate ideas to promote social cause. Social marketing has been one of the approaches that has carried forward the premises of diffusion of innovation and behavior change models. Since the 1970s, social marketing has been one of the most influential strategies in the field of development communication.

In the third world context, major themes have included family planning, equal status for women, responsible sexual

relationships, adult literacy, responsible parenthood and HIV/AIDS prevention and control. Until the 1970's communication models in family planning or other health related areas reinforced the active source and passive receiver stereotype. The incorporation of social marketing techniques in the 1970's emphasized the challenges of changing the knowledge and values as well as the behavioral pattern of receivers.

Environment, education programs have become increasingly popular in the last two decades often as part of social marketing campaigns. In this approach environmental- education content is embedded in entertainment campaigns in media such as radio, TV, records, videos and film theatre. Singhal and Rogers points out that entertainment, education programs either directly or indirectly facilitate social change.

**Communicating for Sustainable Development:**

Communicating for sustainable development encompasses social, environmental and economical development planning including concerns for equity. The communication strategy for sustainable development should be based on grass root approach so that societies and local communities become more sustainable and prosperous. It should help people to develop and restore the sense of belonging to a local community where people are interested in working together for their own development or towards a common goal or sustainable development. The strategy should encourage participation of the community groups where they express their views, needs and problems.

Sustainable development is mainly development on the values of the people. Values of the people can be assessed from inter-cultural dialogue. Such dialogue provides insight into the crisis of values which may be giving rise to current ecological and economic crisis. The inter-cultural dialogue may also lead to development practitioner to acknowledge and strengthen the value of indigenous knowledge and ways of living such as knowledge regarding indigenous technology, arts, irrigation, practices, and medicines and so on. Many indigenous principles and practices are directly linked to the maintenance of ecological support systems.

Information systems play a very important role in promoting sustainable development as communication regarding our national priorities in the environment and society is basic to decision making for sustainable development. In developed countries such information is managed by specialized organizations using sophisticated technology so that it is available and useful for decision making. In developing countries this infrastructure is lacking. Therefore, no up-to-date systematic national statistics is available and there is often a disparity of access by various groups within developing societies. The issue of technology transfer is linked to these concerns. The problem is most acute in coping with global concerns and with the effects of advanced technologies. For example, the production of hazardous substances. In order to promote sustainable development this information disparity needs to be recognized and steps taken to level them. Thus providing the required infrastructure for information systems for access to very advanced environment and development information in the first and foremost step in the direction of promoting sustainable development.

Education both formal and informal should also incorporate component of sustainable development in their curriculum-both

theory and practical's. It should help in raising people sense of autonomy and responsibility. This can be done by providing community based learning experiences.

Hasnson and Gabriel suggests the following requirements for any education program:

- understanding and supporting the various structures of teaching and learning evolved by such society in order to cope with development processes.

- helping to establish the accountability of organs of power at all levels and working with groups and local communities, particularly in determining what local needs are.

- creating institutions and networks of educational and practical exchange between groups from various regions and experiences and

- ensuring that there are opportunities for continuous review and monitoring of all programs with the widest possible feedback from those directly involved. (41)

The communication strategies used for distance educating people for sustainable development which combines task oriented educational workshops, film, video, radio, theatre, magazines and other communication media. This can arouse self awareness and self consciousness which ultimately leads to action.

Communication participation is very important for promoting sustainable development. People will have to care for the environment and make it way of life. They can contribute in pollution control, improvement of environment and economic use of natural and community resources. Government and development agencies should also support community participation for sustaining development. Communicating for sustainable development leads to problem solving and strengthening and rediscovering an art of living which is in harmony with nature,

## V. CONCLUSION

The communication needs as identified by UNESCO (1978) in the "New Paradigm" are open dialogue which reflects diversified views and experiences. Secondly, multi directional communication flow is necessary. This multi directional flow calls for top down as well as horizontal communication and bottom-up communication. The horizontal communication is across society horizontally – from person to person, village to village and rural to urban. UNESCO further contends that for participatory rural communication, media should be made available in rural areas. There should be linkage between development initiatives and communication channels.

The communication strategy urged in this paradigm used mainly interpersonal channels with support from mass media-both cosmopolitan and indigenous media. The functions of communication were not only to disseminate information but also educate them for development by persuasion through mass media. Interpersonal channels were utilized for communicating feedback on development activities.

Globally the development communication scenario has changed in the last four decades, which have shifted to the availability of new communication channels, the characteristics of the audience, and development demands. The communication strategies are planned according to the focus of development. The new

channels of communication technologies have even changed the nature and scope of interpersonal communication.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Douglas Daetz(1974), Development Planning: The System Approach, Stanford Journal of International Studies, VOL IX, Spring.
- [2] Dissanyake Wimal, Development and Communication four Approaches: Media Asia, 8 (4).
- [3] Everett Kleijans (1975), Communication and Change in Developing Countries. Papers of the East West Communication Institute, No 12, Honolulu; East-West Centre.
- [4] Galtung Johan(1971), A Structural Theory of Imperialism in Journal of Peace Research, No 8, (2).
- [5] Inayatuallah(1967), Towards a Non Western Model of Communication. In D. Lerner and W. Schramm (ed.) Communication and Change in Developing Countries: Ten Years and After, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press
- [6] Lerner Daniel (1958), The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East, Glencoe III, Free Press McClelland D.C..
- [7] Melkote, Srinivas. (1991). Communication for Development in the Third World, New Delhi: Sage Publications,
- [8] Narula Uma(1983), Dynamics of Development in Indian Society; Awareness, Motivation and Participation; Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst,.
- [9] Narula Uma and Hanson Janice(1990), New Communication Technologies in Developing Countries, New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
- [10] Narula Uma(1994), Development Communication, Haranand Publication, New Delhi .
- [11] Nordenstreng and Schiller H(1979).. National Sovereignty and International Communication, New Jersey, Ablex Publishers.
- [12] Quebral Nora C. (1975), Development Communication; Where Does it Stand Today, Media Asia, Vol. 2 (4)
- [13] Rogers E.M. (1983), Diffusion of Innovations, New York, Free Press.
- [14] Rogers Everett. M.(1976), Communication and Development: Critical Perspectives, Beverly Hills, Sage Publications.
- [15] Schramm Wilbur(1964), Mass Communication and National Development, Stanford University Press.

#### AUTHORS

Malik Zahra Khalid, M.A, M Phil, Department of Media Education Research Centre, University of Kashmir, Pin 190006, India. Email: [zaramlk94@gmail.com](mailto:zaramlk94@gmail.com)