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THE IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC IEC

PLANNING AND COORDINATION*

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Population communication seeks rationality in human behavior from two tightly related perspectives: the content and the form of messages. Content-wise, it proposes couples to decide on sound basis how many children to have and how often. Form-wise, it drives for efficiency: effectiveness reasonably divided by cost. In both cases it aims at substituting anticipation for intuition and planning for improvisation. It compares expenditures with benefits, efforts with outcomes and aspirations with resources, looking for sensible ratios.

As in other domains of the development activity, communication planning recurses basically to three instruments: policies, strategies and plans. They are all normative tools for shaping beliefs and behaviors but they differ from each other. Policies are sets of principles, norms and aspirations. Strategies are sets of provisions for goals and procedures. And plans are sets of prescriptions to conduct operations.

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Policies to govern population communications are rarely in existence. This is partly due to the lack, in the first place, of clear and stable overall population policies. Instead, strategic planning for population communication is increasingly being applied in developing countries as part of a process of securing rationality for health communication in general.

Strategic communication planning is seen as process composed of several steps. Namely

- (1) problem definition;
- (2) audience, identification and analysis;
- (3) statement of objectives;
- (4) production of messages;
- (5) testing and adjusting of messages;
- (6) media selection;
- (7) message distribution and
- (8) monitoring and evaluation of the message's influence on the behavior of intended audience.

The process - known as the "P" process at Johns Hopkins Univeristy - is deemed to unfold in a spiral fashion. Thus its last step, evaluation, refers the communicators back to the first step so as to continuously and cyclically refine their ability to help attain persuasion regarded beneficial for people by the development agencies.

The scheme is especially convenient in the case of opting for high intensity, long-term and multi-media campaigns. A complex and costly strategy such as a campaign is demands rigorous research, tight design much and close monitoring evaluation to a larger extent than non-campaigns strategies. Experiences in different parts of the world along the last 10 or 15 years have shown this strategy to be often quite successful if conducted from start to end in such a systematic fashion. Perhaps the best known of those experiences is the "Blue Circle" campaign of Indonesia. Started in 1986, it had^{as} its chief goal to involve the private sector in providing family planning services. This included thousand of doctors, nurses, midwives and pharmacists, as well as commercial firms and advertising agencies. The multimedia thrust achieved very satisfactory results in persuading urban couples to pay for non-government family planning services. Also very successful was a campaign in Turkey launched by the country's President himself and conducted 1988 by a private foundation. Television and radio were the media most used an message-treatment included drama, humor, interviews. Quality was comparable to that of the best known commercial programs. These campaigns were assisted by the John Hopkins University applying its 5- step " P" process of strategic planning. In both cases impact was high. Nevertheless, not even campaigns are impeccable or almighty and thus they should not

blindly be chosen as a sort of universal receipt for success.

Communication capabilities have been used in the service of population concerns for a least 30 years . However, it seems that creativity in the formulation of message and media strategies has experienced significant growth in the developing countries as of the early 80s.

We have profited here from direct testimony by the pioneer of TV "soap opera" utilization for development communication purposes. Indeed Miguel Sabido started with it in Mexico in 1974 applying it to literacy training and, two years later, he produced the first series of a *telenovela* addressed at fostering family planning. As stressed here by Dr. Rogers, Sabido later trained people in India to produce a soap opera series that was to prove most successful in 84-85. At about the same time a comparable TV melodrama reached about 10 million people in Bangladesh and Kenya made also an important attempt in this area.

Pakistan, Liberia and Senegal opted for the miniseries, whereas Mali and Ghana combined traditional theater with television. Nigeria, instead, established a charismatic TV "grandmother" through brief but frequent presentations and Egypt resorted to a "mother in law" and, on the other hand, to a "female doctor" impersonated by a famous actress. These were

all "micros" cleverly annexed to famous shows.

Turkey tried documentary programs, Indonesia trusted the production of several TV dramas to some of its most famous film directors, Guatemala just earned an international price for a feature film, and Zimbabwe made another on the consequences of unplanned pregnancy.

On the other hand, numerous countries have been using television spots ranging from 30 to 90 seconds. A few chose for it animation, like Peru with clay dolls spreading messages to prevent AIDS and Brazil with a ^{charming} ~~and clever~~ cartoon that, in addition to earning an award in Cannes, generated a very sizeable increase in vasectomy cases.

As has been reported here by Doctor Phyllis Piotrow, a pioneer in the use ^{of} songs was Patrick Coleman a specialist with the Center for Communication Programs of the Johns Hopkins University. In 1986 he helped call in Mexico a contest for composing songs with a family planning orientation for young people and chose to interpret the two winning ones Tatiana (Mexico) and Johnny (Puerto Rico) acclaimed popular singers. They placed these songs among the top 20 of the hit parade for several months. An evaluation found the musical message of sexual restraint had reached effectively most of the people in the intended audience.

At modest but significant levels Dominicans and Colombians have produced simple songs - merengues and cumbias - for AIDS prevention, which caught attention of many people. Several countries elsewhere in the developing world have successfully resorted to songs. Namely, Phillipines, Ghana, Nigeria, Indonesia and Gambia.

Outside the mass media system imagination has not been lacking either. Some communicators have shown themselves daringly creative. The highest expression of non-conventional strategy formulation was recorded in Thailand where MECHAI VIRAVAYDIA shocked everyone with his "inventions". For instance: packages of preservatives thrown from airplanes, slogans painted on the waterbuffaloes and massive vasectomy "festivals". This helped produce a very large increase in contraception adoptions in a matter of a few years.

This whole exercise of creating strategies falls under the innovative scheme started in Latin America by Sabido^{and} especially fostered by the John Hopkins University: the "enter-educate" a roach. As you know, this is based on the sound notion that learning should be made fun if it is to be effective. Another approach found useful is that of using real or veritable "public heroes" to carry the messages, especially to the young people. An

outstanding case of it is recorded in Hong Kong, where a legendary Kung Fu master recommends family planning as a manly responsibility. Brazil does likewise with sports and entertainment stars.

At a very different level^{OF} accomplishment, a strategy of cooperative institution building[Ⓢ] labelled the "trickle-up" approach[Ⓢ] is providing Bolivia with valuable support to the information education and communication activities of an alliance of 18 institutions[Ⓢ] (public and private) committed to reproductive health. With JHU support, a team has been trained to design, produce and evaluate many kinds of messages and is now doing a very good job.

What seems to have been the impact of these and other such strategies in terms of attaining the behaviors expected from the intended audiences? In general, many of them appeared to have been most effective in spreading knowledge, considerably effective in fostering new attitudes and moderately effective in securing practices. Therefore, population communication strategists in search for further improvements face the challenge of finding answers for question as these:

- Which are the most productive strategies to help bridge the large gap still prevailing between knowledge gain and practice adoption? And,

moreover, how can definitive continuity of the behaviors adopted be secured?

- Which may the most effective communication procedures be to overcome wrong perceptions, counterproductive beliefs and noxious rumors in reference to reproductive health practices?
- Is threat --the scare the audience treatment-- necessarily, universally and definitively inconvenient?
- How can the life saving characteristics of contraceptive behaviors be most effectively communicated?
- What can be the price of failing to make the audience aware of limitations or even disadvantages of some family planned methods?
- How can dialogue about sex and reproduction be most effectively stimulated in the couple?
- How can communication persuade health staff not to be indifferent, disdainful or even rude with people requiring their services, especially lower strata women?
- Under which criterion should multimedia campaigns be deemed indispensable and thus preferred over standard and steady communication procedures?
- How can evaluation methodology be further refined so as to better measure communication impact, specially in terms of a direct influence distinguishable from that of other factors surrounding it?

Attempting to answer such questions is of course desirable. It falls, however, within the implicit assumption that the traditional model of communication --that of unilinear and monological persuasion-- is the adequate one for family planning communication. Perhaps it is so indeed. But some wonder if the dialogical and two-way model proposed along the 70s, especially in Latin America, should not also be considered. Given that sexual and reproductive behavior are so intimate of the individual and yet so influenced by the social context, could the participatory approach to communication not to prove at least equally useful? Already more than a decade ago, some population communication specialists thought this desirable and possible. For instance Argentinean Luis Aller Atucha and Brazilian Marco Ruiz Schiavo argued that, instead of trying to induce people to adopt given family planning behaviors, population communication should inform the audience about their right to exert it, orient it as to the means for securing it, and help it make free decisions about it. Would it not be useful to do some research comparing these models in operation so as to learn well the pro and con of each?

If this hurried discussion leads to one conclusion is that effective communication is inextricably dependent of sound planning as there is no magic universal formula to have it be successful. Thus, we must forever devise given strategies for given cases. This is the major and constant

problem of our trade. But it is also the beauty of it.

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AD HOC ROUNDTABLE
"POPULATION AND COMMUNICATIONS"
2 – 3 December 1993

VIENNA INTERNATIONAL CENTER
Wagramer Straße 5
1220 Vienna, Austria

PROGRAMME

Thursday, 2 December 1993: UN/UNIDO BOARDROOM, Sector C, 4th floor

0900 – 1230 h

Mr. Peter **JANKOWITSCH**, MP, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Speaker of the VIDCs' International Advisory Council (Chair)

Ms. Brigitte **EDERER**, Minister of State for Integration and Development Cooperation, Austria
Welcoming Address

Mr. Jyoti S. **SINGH**, Director, UNFPA, and ICPD Executive Coordinator
Opening Statement

Mr. Charles F. **WESTOFF**, Professor, Princeton University
Lecture "Demographic Trends and Factors Influencing These Trends"

Discussion

PRESIDENT: H. E. Mr. Franz Vranitzky, Federal Chancellor of Austria
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Coffee Break

Mr. Everett M. **ROGERS**, Professor, University of New Mexico
Lecture "The Future of Population Communications"

Discussion

1230 – 1400 h

Lunch Break

1400 – 1600 h

Presentation on Traditional and Non-Commercial Media

Panel: Ms. Cecile **GUIDOTE-ALVAREZ**, Earthsavers
Movement, Philippines – on "Folk and Mass Media"
Ms. Sawsan **EL BAKLEY**, State Information Service,
Egypt – on "Folk Media in Egypt: A Non Traditional
Channel of Social Development"
Ms. Anamaria **DECOCK**, FAO Development Support,
– on "Traditional and Popular Media Resources"
Mr. Mark **ASARE**, Ministry of Health, Ghana – on
"Traditional and Modern Media"

Chair: Mrs. Sunetra **PURI**, Director, IPPF, International Planned
Parenthood Federation, U.K.

Discussion

Coffee Break

1600 – 1800 h

Presentation on Electronic Media

Panel: Mr. Miguel **SABIDO**, Writer and Producer, Mexico – on
"Drama and Films"
Mr. Roger **PEREIRA**, Burson Marsteller Roger Pereira
Communications Pvt. Ltd., India – on "TV Soaps – A
Vehicle for Developmental Communications in India"
Ms. Phyllis Tilson **PIOTROW**, Center for
Communication Programs, Johns Hopkins University,
U.S.A. – on "Songs"
Ms. Marina de **SOLANO**, Centro Orientacion Familiar,
Costa Rica – on "Interactive Radio"
Chair: Mr. Yasar **YASER**, Executive Director, Turkish Family
Health and Planning Foundation, Turkey

Friday, 3 December 1993: CONFERENCE ROOM II, Sector C, 2nd floor

0900- 1230 h

Strengthening Population Communications

Panel: Mr. Phil **HARRIS**, Special Adviser, Inter Press Service
- on "Broadcast policies and international
cooperation"

Mr. Steven W. **SINDING**, Director, Population Sciences,
The Rockefeller Foundation - on "Resource mobili-
sation"

Mr. Robert **LAMB**, Director, TVE International - on
"Marketing and Advertisement"

Mr. Luis Ramiro **BELTRAN**, The Johns Hopkins
University, Bolivia - on "Strategic IEC planning and
coordination"

Mr. Makane **KANE**, UNFPA, Senegal
- on "Community involvement"

Chair: Mr. Jyoti S. **SINGH**, Director, UNFPA

1230 - 1400 h

Lunch Break

1400 - 1600 h

Ms. Nafis **SADIK**, Executive Director, UNFPA, and ICPD
Secretary-General
Statement

Roundtable discussion on main findings and recommendations

Chair: Mr. Peter **JANKOWITSCH**, former Minister of Foreign
Affairs, Speaker of the VIDCs' International Advisory
Council

Coffee Break

1600 - 1730 h

Adoption of recommendations

Closing Remarks by Ms. Nafis **SADIK**, Ms. Brigitte **EDERER**,
and by Mr. Peter **JANKOWITSCH**