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Summary Report

SPECIAL ADVISORY SERVICES PROVIDED BY UNESCO,
THROUGH RCA/LA, TO MEMBER STATES IN 1990

Luis Ramiro Beltrán 

Quito, Ecuador

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Bolivia

1. Consultant Alejandro Alfonzo April 90
IPDC Advise to Ministry of Information to help define basis for a communication policy.
2. RCA/LA Luis Ramiro Beltrán Jun/Jul 90
Reg. Prog. Advise to Ministry of Information to follow up on consultant's recommendations.
3. RCA/LA Luis Ramiro Beltrán August 90
UNDP Advise to Minister of the Presidency of the Republic to help define minimum urgent needs of State radio and television stations.
4. RCA/LA Luis Ramiro Beltrán October 90
UNDP Advise to Minister of the Presidency of the Republic to stipulate in detail terms of reference for a task force in charge of preparing a preliminary design for a national radio, television, and film agency.
5. RCA/LA Luis Ramiro Beltrán May 90
IPDC To lecture at an internal communication seminar organized by the Municipality of La Paz to discuss bases for a communication policy laid out by Venezuelan consultant Alejandro Alfonzo, recruited on his recommendation by said agency.
6. RCA/LA Luis Ramiro Beltrán August 90
UNDP To provide guidance to local consultant Raúl Rivadeneira recruited, on his recommendation, by the Municipality of La Paz to turn the broad policy bases discussed at the seminar into specific strategies for action.

Venezuela

1. RCA/LA Luis Ramiro Beltrán January 90
in collaboration with UNICEF Reg. Prog.
RCA/LA Diego Echeverría To take care of a request for assistance from the Minister of Welfare by helping her staff define the communication needs in a process of major institutional evolution.
2. RCA/LA Luis Ramiro Beltrán April 90
assisted by consultants José Reg. Prog.
Antonio Mayobre (Venezuela) and Raúl Rivadeneira(Bolivia) To follow up the previous mission before the Minister of Welfare by defining mass media message strategies to build an image favorable to the creation of the Ministry for Social Development.

Colombia

1. RCA/LA Luis Ramiro Beltrán April 90
in collaboration with UNICEF Reg. Prog.
RCA/LA Diego Echeverría and consultant Patricia Anzola To assist the social communication staff of the Ministry of Communications in writing its chapter for a law seeking the overall reorganization of said agency.

Costa Rica

1. Consultant Jorge Rivera Jul/Aug 90
Reg. Prog. To formulate a blueprint for a Central American communication training program to be established by Costa Rica's National Association of Journalists.

B O L I V I A

1. Advise to the Ministry of Information

The request for this service did not originate through RCA/LA. It had been sent on August 12, 1988, directly to headquarters by the National Commission and RCA/LA knew nothing of it until the Director of IPDC, Claude Ondobo, notified him, in February 1989, that US\$8,000 were available for a consultant to provide advise for policy formulation for a one-month period. This was to cover only the State-owned media, not those of the private/commercial sector.

With the concurrence of the Minister of Information, Mr. Manfredo Kempf, the RCA/LA recruited the services of Venezuelan consultant Alejandro Alfonzo, outstandingly qualified in communication policy and planning. Since the request had been filed by a previous government, the RCA/LA had to give considerable guidance to the new Minister before he could best use the consultant's services. Likewise, the RCA/LA provided close orientation to the consultant himself.

The Ministry did not have in its staff any officer competent in policy and planning matters. Thus, the consultant had to work pretty much by himself. He was, however, assisted in securing interviews and obtaining documents. In the absence of appropriate information he had to start his services by a diagnostic survey of the Ministry itself and of its decentralized agencies, the government radio station, Radio Illimani, the government television channel, Canal 7, and the government printing house, Imprenta del Estado. He found all of them seriously lacking even the basic human, financial, and physical resources to operate effectively with reference to their stated institutional objectives. He also found the State totally lacking a general policy or specific plans to operate its media. Consequently, after defining the nature of policies and briefly reviewing the chief Latin American experiences with them, he proposed in detail some general policy bases. Furthermore, among several concrete recommendations for remedial actions (in the short run and in the long run), he recommended the establishment of a development-oriented national broadcasting institute. This was to absorb the present radio and television organs while the printing house, already virtually on the verge of collapse, was to be liquidated.

The consultant's report*--a 140-page study--was delivered to the Minister by the RCA/LA on May 11. Treating the document as classified he said he would study it with his chief aids, then react to it and contact the RCA/LA.

2. Advise to the Ministry of Information

Six weeks later the RCA/LA visited Minister Kempf to learn about his analysis of the report. He thanked him for the study--which he regarded thorough, insightful, and valuable--but admitted that he had not had sufficient time to go in detail over each of its recommendations. The sudden substitution of his Vice Minister and strong political demands from his political party had prevented him from arriving to decisions as to which of the consultant's recommendations were

*ALFONZO, Alejandro. Bases para una Política Estatal de Comunicación para el Desarrollo de Bolivia: Informe de Asesoramiento al Ministerio de Informaciones. La Paz/Caracas, April 1990.

acceptable and viable to secure improvement of the deplorable situation encountered. The Minister said that, as soon as he was able to complete the analysis and arrive at decision point, he would request further assistance from the RCA/LA to help him implement the recommendations of the consultant with some adjustments.

The RCA/LA spent the rest of the time assigned to the Mission working closely with the manager of the State television firm, Canal 7, Mr. Antonio Eguino and, to a lesser extent, with the director of Radio Illimani, Mr. Fernando Lozada, both very competent professionals doing their best under impossible conditions of work. He checked the information they had given to the consultant and suggested up-dating, expanding, and clarifying some parts of the information. On the other hand, he learned through them that the government now had practical and exclusive access to satellite communication and that an old offer of the Japanese government for a 7-million dollar grant in TV equipment could be confirmed as far as a SONY visitor had informed recently Mr. Eguino.

3. Advise to the Minister of the Presidency of the Republic

On return to La Paz on August 1990 the RCA/LA briefly met with Minister Kempf amid rumors that his Ministry was to be one of the two suppressed in an imminent reorganization of the President's Cabinet. Strongly committed those days to the national convention of his political party, the Minister had given no additional consideration to the consultant's report. A few days later the Ministry of Information was indeed eliminated and its responsibilities were transferred to the Ministry of the Presidency of the Republic.

The Minister of the Presidency, Dr. Gustavo Fernández, is de facto the super minister of highest confidence of the President of the Republic. He had inspired the institutional change in order to put political information--the main, if not the only task, of the now defunct Ministry of Information--right next to the axis of government authority. Before the move that Ministry was powerless and isolated while the Presidency itself had to improvise interventions in handling government information. The change did away with this duality that caused confusion and lack of effectiveness. This did not, however, mean automatically an improvement of the State mass communication organs now directly responding to the Presidency through Minister Fernández. He also absorbed most of the Ministry's staff members as components of a then vaguely defined National Secretariat for Information, which for a while was left to work by itself merely keeping active routine functions.

The RCA/LA conferred with Minister Fernández to find out what might have happened in the transition with the UNESCO-IPDC consultant's report. He found that he had carefully read the whole report and made numerous notes on the margins as well as underlined several paragraphs, especially in the propositional part. He confirmed the recognition of the government to UNESCO's assistance and expressed his appreciation of the consultant's report. After introducing to the RCA/LA some of his chief aids in charge of information the Minister went over the report's section on the State radio and television organizations. He concentrated on those recommendations for urgent remedial action, leaving for a later moment that relative to the creation of a new national broadcasting agency. Following this logical line of reaction he asked the RCA's immediate cooperation to check the consultant's recommendations with all those concerned

and to help prepare a blueprint for emergency solutions to the most critical problems. The RCA/LA did so without delay mostly by discussing in detail the situation and the solution proposals with the director of Radio Illimani, Mr. Fernando Lozada, and the manager of Canal 7, Mr. Antonio Eguino, and by reviewing the pertinent documentation. He also verified some data and collected a few opinions from some non-government specialists. As a result of it all he helped write Mr. Eguino, more than Mr. Lozada, a revised version of the blueprint for the Minister. Later he briefly discussed it with the Minister and recommended the obtention, before the year's end, of no less than 900,000 dollars to undertake the minimum physical adjustments required to somewhat improve and expand the transmissions of both the radio and the TV. Since two years ago the Bolivian government got access to satellite communication through a transponder in "Domsat-Vista" satellite; this includes option for one television channel but the government needs to spread the network of parabolic antennas and rapidly augment and refine the presently very poor television contents. The proper use of this technological device would give the government a clear advantage in instantaneous nation-wide and international communication. The RCA/LA stressed before Minister Fernández this exceptional circumstance.

4. Advise to the Minister of the Presidency of the Republic

On a new request from Minister Fernández the RCA/LA returned to La Paz on October 1990 to provide further advise. He found the Minister had tapped UNDP for financial assistance and had obtained also a favorable response from the government of Spain, who promised both financial and technical assistance to take care of the most urgent needs defined in the previous mission. He also learned that the Minister and Mr. Eguino were soon to pay a short visit to Spain to secure some minimum equipment and some technical assistance for the very near future.

On the other hand, the Minister was at that point in time most concerned with organizing the handling of political information, a task semi-paralyzed since the elimination of the Ministry of Information. He was having staffing problems as the level of professionals he needed could not be recruited with the salaries normally paid in the public administration. On his request the RCA/LA provided him with three names of professionals who, if available and properly paid, could well run the National Secretariat for Information in the position of top-level deputy in charge of operations.

The RCA also recommended the hiring of a few local consultants for improving public information, especially through TV. Honored by the Minister's confidence he helped him realize that, on the one hand, it was indispensable to insert the Secretariat's staff directly into the Ministry's structure and even into its physical location and, on the other hand, that it was convenient to clearly separate political information from development-oriented communication; State radio and television would no longer be responsible for government propaganda. They were instead to operate as public service institutions in support of national development through educational, cultural, and community programming. The Minister took well these suggestions and gave his aids instructions to proceed to a reorganization of the services along such lines.

It soon became evident, however, that the present radio and TV facilities of the government were totally unfit to undertake such a large and different

assignment. Here then the Minister and RCA/LA discussed the chief recommendation of consultant Alfonso: the establishment of a national broadcasting institute, embracing radio and television and, upon suggestion from the RCA/LA, also motion pictures. The RCA/LA explained the Minister that such a major job had to be performed in three main stages: preliminary institutional design in the short term; final design, in the intermediate term; and implementation, in the long term. Accepting the notion and aware of the lack of adequate government staff for the job the Minister asked the RCA/LA to define the terms of reference for a task force to do the preliminary design as rapidly as possible. The RCA/LA readily complied with this request after brief consultations with a few specialists. On October 18, 1990, he delivered to the Minister a report* containing the terms wanted in detail and a budget estimate of about US\$50,000 for a three-month design operation, which was to include some external assistance. The Minister expected to obtain this amount from UNDP/Bolivia and would hope the group would start working no later than at the outset of 1991. He would expect UNESCO's continued assistance to these operations.

5. Advise to the Municipality of La Paz

The Mayor of the city of La Paz, Mr. Ronald McLean, called the RCA/LA in May 1990 to ask him to visit him soonest and even if only for just a few days in order to advise him in the formulation of an overall communication policy for the municipal government he presides. Unable to rapidly undertake such assignment but conscious of the importance of responding to such an unusual request he suggested the Mayor to recruit instead Venezuelan consultant Alejandro Alfonso. After he formulated the basis for said policy in draft form the RCA/LA would include La Paz in one of his coming trips and be available for analysis and discussion. The Mayor agreed and organized an internal three-day seminar, which he himself was to attend full time accompanied by all chief officers concerned with improving communications between the City Hall employees and the numerous and diverse segments of the population of the Bolivian capital city.

The seminar took place in a resort location one hour away from La Paz. After the consultant made a summary presentation of the main points in his report reactions from the staff accounted for a useful discussion. At some points, however, discrepancies were evident between them and the consultant. Having previously studied the report in detail and having taken careful notes of the discussion the RCA/LA made then a summatory and analytical intervention which sought to iron out the differences and brought into perspective the essence of the quite sensible recommendations of the consultant. He congratulated the Mayor for his consciousness about the importance of organized communication for a successful municipal administration. He explained the differences between policies, strategies, plans, programs, and projects. And then, combining the best points of the consultant with the outstanding remarks of the staff members, came to a condensed list of immediate actions to refine the policy and, derived from it, formulate concrete message strategies for different purposes and diverse audiences.

The Mayor expressed his recognition to the consultant and to the RCA/LA for their contributions and confirmed his will to go ahead with this exercise.

*A copy of it was sent to headquarters with L. R. Beltrán's memo 789 of November 5 to Hancock.

6. Municipality of La Paz

The lack of personnel specialized in policy and planning of communications and the demands of service on his staff made it indispensable for Mayor McLean to recruit some external assistance to perform the transition from broad policy to specific strategies. On suggestion from the RCA/LA he thus recruited the services of local consultant Raúl Rivadeneira. Under close guidance from the RCA/LA Rivadeneira obtained--through interviews and systematic documentation analysis--a clear and reliable picture of the situation and, on the basis of it, came to formulate a set of concrete message strategies for the several audience segments concerned and in direct relation with the Municipality's aims and programs. There were not, at this point in time, strategies for educational communication in support of those programs. They were rather public image strategies as the Mayor felt it urgent to improve the perceptions of his constituency about the services provided to it, as well as to raise the civil spirit so as to secure compliance and cooperation.

The RCA/LA assisted the consultant in situ in the final period of his effort by editing with him the draft of the report and by helping explain the recommendations to the Mayor and his chief aids. Moreover, Mr. Rivadeneira used a methodology derived by the RCA/LA for strategy design, which they had applied in a previous mission before the government of Venezuela. This methodology was also partly used by the RCA/LA in providing assistance to the government of Colombia. Actually he had developed the basis for the methodology many years ago while assisting the Bolivian government when he worked for another international organization.

A grave accident put the Mayor later away from office for two-three months and this added to other factors delaying the application of the strategies. In October, however, the Mayor called again on the consultant to clarify some matters, up-date some information, and discuss the steps required for aid application, which was hopefully to start in December 1990.

V E N E Z U E L A

1. Assistance to Ministry of Welfare

The deep economic crisis affecting Latin America reached even the previously affluent Venezuela. To face the big challenge poised by fast deterioration of the living condition of the masses under the burden of a hug foreign debt, the government established a multi-institutional Presidential Commission to Confront Extreme Poverty. It is presided by the Minister of Welfare, Mrs. Marisela Padrón, which will soon be substituted by a Ministry for Social Development, the first of its kind in the region. Unusually perceptive of the importance of communication for such major undertaking, Minister Padrón contacted the UNESCO/Caracas office to obtain assistance in the field of social communication.

The request was transferred to the RCA/LA and he answered it without delay. In January he spent a couple of days in Caracas--working in coordination with UNICEF's RCA/LA--conferring with the Minister and all her department heads, including the director of the information and advertising department. Through

lectures by them, dialogue and documentation review he became familiar with problems and opportunities in the institution in process of transformation. He then reported to the Minister about it, stressing the inadequacies found in three main areas: educational communication in support of technical programs, internal administrative communication, and public information.

The Minister put the highest priority in the latter area as she felt most urgent for the government to secure among the public an image favorable to the imminent creation of the Ministry of Social Development. Thus, she requested from the RCA/LA technical advice soonest. The RCA/LA gave Minister Padrón assurance that an advisory mission would be placed next to her by UNESCO no later than March.

2. Assistance to Minister of Welfare

The previous short mission had been of a preparatory nature for this next one. The RCA/LA himself undertook in April the two-week assignment in collaboration with two top-level consultants that he recruited: José Antonio Mayobre (Venezuela) and Raúl Rivadeneira (Bolivia), the former specialized in international information and the latter in political communication.

The objectives of these missions were two. First, to formulate concrete mass media strategies for helping build a public image favorable to the establishment of a Ministry for Social Development. And then, to suggest organizational and financial measures enabling Minister Padrón to put the strategies into practice.

Both objectives were satisfactorily attained through intense work of the RCA/LA and the consultants in close contact with the Minister and her chief aids. Using, with adjustments, a methodology devised long before by the RCA/LA the mission started by systematically detecting the key image elements present in the institutional literature and in expression by the Minister and key officers in interviews. Out of the total of elements detected 12 were selected as principal and embracing others. Six major strategies were subsequently devised in detail putting together given messages for certain audiences through some media. The advisers stressed that, if these strategies were to be effectively applied, rapid and substantial changes had to be made in the information/communication structure of the Ministry in terms of staff, organization, and funds. Thus, they rounded up their report by recommending such changes in a brief manner.

The mission's final report was delivered to the Minister by the RCA/LA shortly before a meeting adjourned at the Caracas UNESCO office. In opening this meeting the Minister kindly expressed her satisfaction with the mission's work and commended UNESCO for the excellence of the report.

Implementing the strategies, the Minister said in private to the RCA/LA and the Director of the Caracas office, would probably involve UNDP support either within a present grant or by means of an additional one. This financial assistance would provide her the basis to apply the strategies, which--after study by her staff--she approved without objections.

C O L O M B I A

1. Assistance to the Ministry of Communications

At the end of March the Minister of Communications of Colombia, Mr. Enrique Danies Rincones, requested with urgency from the RCA/LA short term technical assistance. This Ministry is responsible mostly for physical communications, including telecommunications, but also performs a few functions of social communication. Furthermore, among the decentralized agencies it supervises the national institute for radio and television (INRAVISION) and the production firm Audiovisuales are included.

The assistance wanted was advise to reformulate the structure and functions of the Ministry's social communication central organ. This was urgently required as an element of a draft for a general law for the overall reorganization of the Ministry as a consequence of the recent approval of a new legislation on telecommunications. The submission of the law to the Congress was imminent.

In conjunction with UNICEF (Regional Communication Adviser Diego Echeverría and consultant Patricia Anzola) the RCA/LA had to assist essentially two of the numerous working groups contributing to drafting the law. One was the Working Group on Communication and Development, and the other the Reflection Group. The smallest portion of the time of the RCA/LA was given to the former of these groups through one long session which were preparing a series of workshops for public consultation as the Minister wanted to listen to the people's demands. The adviser's main role was that of comparing the efforts described in the sessions with similar experiences elsewhere in Latin America, so as to obtain guidance from them. This exercise was to culminate some two months later with a national workshop to conjugate the recommendations to be produced by all groups across the nation. The organizers invited the RCA/LA to attend the forum in the capacity of key-note speaker. He explained them that at the time of the event he had to be in Bolivia. They then invited him to participate nonetheless through tele-conferencing that they would arrange. He accepted with thanks and committed himself to making a brief general presentation on development communication and to answer questions on the particular and present Colombian exercise.

The Reflection Group was a very small one composed of the Chief of the Division of Audiovisual Media and Advertising, Mrs. Alida Becerra. It was to this officer to whom the RCA/LA advise was directly and mainly addressed in collaboration with Echeverría, Anzola, another local short-term adviser, and the UNICEF officer in charge of Tiaison with the Ministry for a project supported in it by said UN agency. Most of RCA/LA's time was devoted to this group.

The first part of the task was mostly in charge of Mrs. Becerra and Dr. Anzola; it was a diagnostic description of the present social communication structure and functions. The RCA/LA shared some self-criticism of it, added some observations, and asked for several clarifications. In essence, the organ was low in hierarchy, ill-manned, unplanned, and poorly funded. More important than that, however, proved the fact that the structure was arbitrary and the functions were somewhat accidental and not subuded to priorities. Part of the duties were somewhat police-like, as indicated by cases of radio monitoring/fining and film censorship. The relationship of the organ with development concerns was, instead, minimal.

The next step consisted on systematically and rationally designing a totally new structure that would perform a set of clearly defined functions in accordance with given priorities and, derived from it, a staffing pattern and a basic budget would be proposed. The RCA/LA contributed decisive guidance in the conduct of this exercise drawing from his experience and specifically from a part of a methodology he had devised long ago and applied in Bolivia. The group accepted well the instrument and use it efficaciously to build the blueprint. The stringent time limit (the RCA/LA had to proceed to a UNESCO meeting in Caracas) prevented from reaching down to the level of individual job descriptions for the new positions proposed. But the RCA/LA recommended for it two especially competent specialists: Colombian Andrés Novoa and Venezuelan Alejandro Alfonzo.

The "Reflection Group" expressed its recognition to the UNESCO assistance and so did the Minister Danies when the RCA/LA visited him to summarize for him the job performed.

C O S T A R I C A

1. Advise to National Association of Journalists

Costa Rica's Colegio Nacional de Periodistas asked the RCA/LA to assist it in shaping up a training program on development communication for said country and the rest within the Central American sub-region. In the impossibility of undertaking personally the assignment the RCA/LA recruited the services of a qualified consultant, Jorge Rivera, who is fully familiar with the communication situation in Costa Rica as he had been a resident of it.

The consultant conferred in San José with the executives of the organization, Mr. José Luis Valverde and Mrs. Adriana Núñez, and met also with the Executive Committee and the Program Committee specifically in charge of the project. He also read carefully the pertinent documentation provided to him. The result of it all was to find that the organization was mixing the idea of building a sizeable physical set up to host a permanent training center with a sketchy plan for defining a training program (with or without a physical center). He also found that the program's functions had only been enumerated, that no courses had been defined, and that only a very long list of possible subject matters existed.

The organization's executives accepted the reasoned criticisms of the consultant and on that he sat to blueprint in some detail a possible program without any regard for the physical project that apparently would take several years to implement and would cost some two million dollars... not readily at the access of the Colegio.

The proposed program has these essential features:

(a) It would have in principle two sub-programmes: one for up-dating, refining, and supplementing the knowledge of professional communicators in exercise, and the other for teaching the rudiments of educational communication to non communicators working for development agencies.

(b) It would operate through three modalities: in-class room, at the distance, and a combination of both.

(c) It would lead, through short-term and intensive workshops throughout the subregion, to a diploma, not to academic titles.

The consultant recommended to begin operations as soon as possible with four of such workshops, which he defined in detail. Finally he proposed an organic structure to be in charge of the program, recommended the appointment of a full-time director for it as soon as possible, and suggested the need for additional external assistance to lay out in detail the rest of workshops for the initial two years or so.

In acknowledging receipt of the mission's final report, the Colegio executives expressed to UNESCO their recognition and regarded Mr. Rivera's contribution "a brilliant performance."