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## UNIT 4 COMMUNICATION SUPPORT FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

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In the context of rural development, communication can be defined as the process by which an idea or innovation or technology is transmitted from source to one or more receivers with an intent to change the behaviour of the receivers. The desired effect may involve alterations of the receiver's cognition, attitude and change in the overt behaviour. This process of definition of communication should be combined with feedback which provides greater equality to the participant in a communication event. Unless the communication mechanism allows for a dialogue between the development agent and the potential rural audience, it is likely that communication would become irrelevant. Therefore, proper planning-for communication and communication support services are required to implement rural development programmes effectively.

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### 4.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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This unit is aimed at familiarising you with the importance of communication in rural development (RD). An attempt has been made to give you an over-view of the communication problems, principles of communication planning, strategy development, management planning and organising development support communication. After going through this unit you should be able to:

- Describe communication support in the context of rural development (RD);
- List the problems and principles of communication planning;
- Identify and explain the steps in communication planning;
- Explain Development Support Communication services (DSC);
- Name the components of Development Support Communication unit; and
- Enumerate the functions of Development Support Communication sub-units.

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## 4.2 COMMUNICATION SUPPORT FOR RURAL DEVELOPEMNT

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Development workers require scientific and technical information. It is essential that they should have information support by way of gathering, collating, organising, storing and retrieving information.

In most of the cases, science and technological data is in the form of information. It has to be written in a way that is understandable by the target audience because the development workers require support for technical writing and editing.

To communicate effectively different media are being employed, depending on the socio- psychological nature of the audience. The development workers require support in terms of processing of messages relevant to media selected for communication. Therefore, audio-visual production support is envisaged in the context of rural development.

Besides information retrieval, technical writing and editing, audio-visual production support to rural development, it is also necessary to provide printing, photography, video and mailing services.

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## 4.3 COMMUNICATION PROBLEMS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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In India, rural development programmes are being carried out without a systematic and well planned communication support component which should be integrated into its activities. This is not to say, however, that there is no communication activity but most of the rural development programmes are beset with communication problems of different magnitude. Obviously, communication activities are being conducted without a cohesive and planned strategy because of the following problems:

Inadequate data about target group on social, psychological, economic, technical and communication related problems. There is a tendency among the rural development staff to report mostly positive information about the situation of target group and to avoid giving negative or unpleasant information. Thus, there is a lack of feed-forward information reflecting positive and negative feedback which is badly needed for communication personnel to respond to the development needs.

Inadequate quality and quantity of the extension communication workers pose problems to rural development. The staff is less in number although some of them have fairly good education, particularly technical knowledge but they are not trained as effective communicators. At present extension communicators discuss technical matters or technical messages during their meetings but not the communication strategy that goes with the technical messages. This again can be attributed to lack of orientation about the importance of communication.

There is no communication component that could have functioned as a support unit to the various rural development projects such as agriculture, health, nutrition, family planning education, co-operation etc. Most of these projects are planned and implemented by the line department separately and in a disjointed manner.

Hence there is a lack of coordination and linkages leading to problems of integration in terms of its communication strategies.

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## 4.4 COMMUNICATION PLANNING (CP)

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In essence, planning is a human process of defining problems, choosing objectives or goals, organising various ways to accomplish goals and measuring progress towards goals achievement.

### 4.4.1 Principles of Communication Planning

When we plan a comprehensive communication strategy to support rural development, it should be based on certain sound principles.

Following principles could be considered in communication planning (CP).

- A sound CP is based on the-analysis of the facts in the situation,
- Selection of communication problem based on the needs,
- Determination of objectives and solutions which are workable and offer satisfaction. A good CP has balance with flexibility,
- A sound CP has balance with emphasis, A good CP has a definite plan of work,
- Communication planning is a continuous process and is a teaching process as well as a coordinating process,
- A sound CP provides for evaluation of results.

To plan a comprehensive communication strategy to support rural development, an adequate and accurate set of baseline data is imperative. This is essential in order to determine the most feasible, efficient and cost-effective communication approach: A communication plan involves strategy planning and management planning. A strategy reflects the problems chosen and the way communication will be used to solve the problem and the latter is concerned with actions to be taken to implement the strategy. The first covers what to do and second how to make it happen. Therefore, communication planning can be divided into two parts. The first is the process of communication strategy development and the second is the process of management planning.

### Check Your Progress 1

**Note:** 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1) List three effects of communication.

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2) List five problems of communication in Rural Development.

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3) What do you understand by communication planning?

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4) List any five principles of communication planning.

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#### 4.4.2 Communication Strategy Development (CSD)

The communication strategy development lays the foundation for communication planning upon which all other activities are built. It involves following seven steps requiring careful consideration of each of them:

- Step – 1 Baseline data gathering and need assessment,
- Step – 2 Formation of communication objectives, goals,
- Step – 3 Planning analysis and strategy development,
- Step – 4 Audience analysis and segmentation,
- Step – 5 Media analysis,
- Step – 6 Message design and development, and
- Step – 7 Formative evaluation.

**Step 1 - Baseline Data Gathering anti Need Assessment:** The person in charge of communication support requires relevant baseline data in order to develop suitable CSD and in making decisions. Applied social science research data in areas such as religion and ethics, norms and values, leadership structure, exposure to media and: other socio-cultural, socio-economic as well as socio-psychological information on the audience are needed. The data so collected should serve as resource material to aid the CSD and the others for dissemination of materials on

rural development and related programmes and implementation. Medical practices and utilisation, innovative approaches in communicating to particular target audience, message treatment and analysis etc., are the examples of the former. For dissemination, materials included are those that are relevant and of interest to target audiences such as home and family management, health and nutrition, family planning, agricultural practices and on other economic considerations are obtained from various subject matter specialists. These are then processed and recorded and promoted to the target audience.

In the first step, therefore, there are at least four major components that require data collection.

**1) Target Audience**

- Size and location of the target audience to be reached.
- Socio-economic profile such as age, income, occupation, number of children etc.
- Socio-cultural profile such as religion, language, education, family patterns, traditional belief systems, habits, norms, values etc.,
- Information sources (what channels are available)
- Media habits.

**2) Knowledge, Attitude and Practices**

- Level of knowledge, attitude, practices of the specific target group regarding the recommended practices.
- Attitude towards programme approaches.

**3) Media Inventory and Impact**

- Availability and accessibility of the different communication channels.
- Inventory of hardware (media facilities and infrastructure)
- Inventory of software (slides, films, radio, tapes etc.)
- Media profile (leadership, listenership etc.)
- Cost analysis
- Visual and colour perceptions etc.

**4) Manpower Resources and Logistics**

- Manpower assessment
- Programme infrastructure
- Related service back-up facilities (health, agriculture, education etc.)
- Media production capabilities
- Manpower and communication materials production cost
- Distribution system.

**Step 2 - Formation of Communication Objectives or Goals:** Systematic communication planning should begin by carefully defining specific objectives in the light of assessment of interest trends or problems, social goals and values and awareness of the broader implications. Four principal questions should be asked to determine the programme objectives:

- Who: who are the specific target audience to be reached?
- Where: where is the specific group located?

- Why: why is the specific group chosen to be a target group?
- What message: what type of content of message should be communicated to this specific target?

The specific objectives should be defined as sharply as possible because only then can we hope to measure or evaluate how well these have been met.

**Step 3 - Planning-Analysis and Strategy Development:** After identifying the specific communication objectives to be accomplished and the needs gap at the general level of analysis, the next step is to translate these objectives and needs statements into a workable communication strategy. There are at least two inter-related aspects of communication strategy development:

- Choice of communication approaches.
- Identifying the type of messages to be conveyed.

In choosing communication approach or combination of approaches one will have to determine first, what effects s/he wants to get. Depending on the knowledge; attitude and practice level of a particular target-group regarding the recommended idea there are several communication approaches that can be utilised;

- To increase awareness and knowledge level: the information transmission approach.
- To provide or increase motivation: persuasion approach and dialogue approach.
- To provide specific technical knowhow: instruction approach.

It is often the case that those audiences who participate in communication activities are not those whose attitudes need change. Likewise with nutrition, health, agriculture, and education classes, those who attend are themselves well aware of such practices, but the less informed ones do not seem interested. Perhaps, a different communication strategy could be designed for late adopters that is most suitable to their desires and needs. In order to design an effective communication strategy one would need to know the factors that influence and motivate behavioural changes of the target group.

**Step 4 - Audience Analysis and Segmentation:** Analysis of the target audience is one of the most important factors in designing an effective communication strategy. Due to the different characteristics as well as needs of the target audience; audience segmentation is usually necessary. For each target group, a specific communication strategy is thus required. It is also important to assign priority as to which target group should be reached most urgently.

**Step 5 - Media Selection:** In selecting a particular media or channel for utilisation one will have to list the communication channels that reach the particular target or audience. Then, media must be evaluated in terms of its applicability to accomplish the specific communication objectives. The communication planners will also have to determine whether the media is available for use as well as the cost effectiveness. Another, important factor to consider is the coordination or integration of multi-media communication activities to reach a particular target group. In essence, it is not sufficient to say “use radio” for this advice needs qualification in many instances, such as, for what audience, under what

circumstances, for what type of message and, with what other media re-enforcement.

**Step 6 - Message Design and Development:** In this phase the message, theme, treatment and presentation should be decided. The main activity will thus be the designing of the proto-type communication materials which also require formative evaluation such as presenting of the prototype materials to the target audience. The pretesting results can guide the necessary revisions of the proto-type materials before it goes for the final, large scale production process.

**Step 7 - Formative Evaluation:** It is an evaluation that help communication planners in developing and improving communication approaches and materials. Formative evaluation has to be built-in at all steps of the Communication Strategy Development (CSD) and Communication Management Planning (CMP), as it provides feedback for modifications and helps to take up corrective measures of an ongoing communication programme.

### Check Your Progress 2

**Note:** 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1) What do you understand about the following terms:

a) Communication strategy

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b) Communication management planning

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2) List the steps to be followed in communication strategy development.

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3) List four major components on which data is collected in detail.

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4) Indicate the approach to be followed under the following situation:

To increase awareness and knowledge level

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To motivate

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To teach specific technical know-how

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### 4.4.3 Communication Management Planning (CMP)

The basic questions to be answered in Communication Management Planning (CMP) are, who will do what and when. It is also essential to organise a good management information system which can provide planners with routine information on personnel, finance and logistics. As the CMP is the key link between strategy and actions, careful considerations of the following steps is essential:

**Management Planning:** One of the most difficult problems that communication planners face is that of scheduling and coordinating large numbers of communication activities. Planners must arrange the communication activities in a logical way, estimate the time and resources required to complete the activity, and keep constant watch on the schedule as the activities unfold. There are at least 3 scheduling techniques:

- The monthly work plan
- The time effect chart
- The net-work scheduling (PERT)

Having a well-thought-out communication strategy, scheduling of activities and events of implementation is only a part of the planning process. Resources necessary to accomplish the activities must be budgeted. In establishing these estimates, it is essential to take into account the money and people required to complete activities within the estimate, thus balancing the three resources namely money, people and time and to come up with a mix which can be achieved within the resources available.

**Manpower Training:** When we design a communication strategy, the persons who will be implementation the strategy must also be ready and prepared to carry out the activities as planned. Therefore, an assessment of available manpower for the tasks to be accomplished is needed. After the selected persons have been chosen to carryout the plan, their tasks and the training needs should be identified and based on this, training for those who need it should be provided. By so doing, each person engaged in the implementation of the plan is prepared and well-equipped to handle the assigned task.

**Implementation:** At this step, all the necessary activities in achieving the planned communication objectives should be carried out. The personnel involved in the implementation of the communication activities should be constantly informed about the task to be performed and the problems encountered by them should be resolved expeditiously through careful monitoring of the activities.



**Summative Evaluation:** In progress assessment and decision-making, evaluation is an important means to make rational choice between alternative practices and to validate programme improvement. The purpose of programme evaluation in communication activities is that it serves as:

- an integral element in project management to monitor project performance or effectiveness,
- a device for improving resource allocation and programme management and,
- a means of policy formulation by having regular retrospective examinations of communication activities.

Programme evaluation is thus concerned with developing information to be used in modifying and improving communication strategy. Its focus is not only communication goals and strategies, but in addition, it also helps to analyse effects of outcome of the communication programme in relation to objective, inputs, outputs and cost. The results of summative evaluation should be considered as inputs for formulating new communication objectives and in designing new communication strategies.

### Check Your Progress 3

**Note:** 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

- 1) List three scheduling techniques.

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- 2) How is evaluation helpful in communication?

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## 4.5 COMMUNICATION SUPPORT

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Communication support can be broadly defined as an organisation’s planned use of information, and communication resources to help achieve its goals. Communication resource include: manpower, money, facilities, equipment, communication materials and media.

Communication support can also be defined as an unit of development organisation whose function is to facilitate communication by providing services such as technical writing and editing, graphic arts, photography, audio-visual production, type setting, printing, information management and retrieval and mailing services. The various components of communication support services can be defined functionally as follows:

**Writing:** Review and interpret research in the areas relevant to rural development such, as rural development planning and implementation, agriculture, health,

rural engineering, family planning etc.; rewrite to a level understandable by subject matter specialists, extension workers and farmers; it may even include news release.

**Editing:** Refine manuscript to conform to accepted standards and for a particular purpose, before printing.

**Photography:** Document research work and events with photographs and production of slides, movie or video films and other photo reproduction.

**Visual and Audio-Visual Production:** Develop and produce visual, audio-visual instructional materials such as charts, tape-slides and other teaching aids.

**Information Management and Retrieval:** Acquire research studies and technical information. Store in such a way which can be easily retrieved for dissemination.

**Graphic Arts:** Design page layouts for publications, produce graphs and illustrations for audio-visual aids and publications.

**Printing:** Produce multiple copies of printed materials.

Considering the communication planning and support services, an organisational structure could be built around these communication tasks. Such an organisational unit is popularly known as Development Support Communication (DSC) unit. In most of the United Nations Development Programmes, development support communication has become an accepted pattern. Presently, Development Support Communication has become an integral part of the rural development programmes sponsored by the United Nations.

A prototype organisational structure for a DSC unit suggested by the UNDP-DTCP is presented below:

#### **4.5.1 Development Support Communication**

##### **DSC Unit Head**

##### **1) Programme Section Functions**

- Developing DSC Plans with the agency staff
- Consultation with Technical specialists on contents of message
- Information data collection
- Media selection
- Creative design
- Writing scripts
- Pretesting materials & methods
- Monitoring and evaluation.

##### **2) Production Section Functions**

**Areas of Development  
Communication**

- Graphic art work
- Printing
- Photography
- Audio/Video recording
- Mass Production
- Storage of master materials equipment facilities and maintenance

**3) Distribution Section Functions**

- Inventory and Storage of internal and external DSC materials
- Library of communication and audio-visual materials and references
- Distribution

The DSC unit is concerned with both communication planning and support services. Its activities are primarily directed to the field services and staff training functions related to rural development agencies. The DSC staff cannot create the technical content of the messages in isolation. The content or substance of the programme comes from the agency's, technical or subject-matter specialists. Furthermore, an agency's training and field operation are normally controlled by other agency units.

Thus communication support staff cannot afford to work in isolation. They must plan and execute the DSC programme in close collaboration with the agency's planners, technical specialists, trainers, supervisors, field workers and other relevant staff.

**Check Your Progress 4**

**Note:** 1) Use the space below for your answers.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1) What do you understand by the term communication support?

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2) List the communication support services needed for production section.

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**4.6 LET US SUM UP**

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Hitherto, not much attention has been given to communication planning and support services. It is recognised that without proper planning for communication, rural development programmes cannot be implemented effectively. To benefit from rural development programmes people need to be informed, motivated and instructed about the technologies in ways understandable and acceptable to them for communication support plays an important role in establishing dialogue and in getting feedback. Neglect of communication support may spell disaster on the

development effort. We have dealt in detail various aspects of communication support in this unit. We tried to identify communication problems in rural development. Then we shifted to communication planning. Communication planning is a human process. It starts with analysing the situation, identifying communication needs, choosing objectives, organising various, ways to accomplish goals and evaluation. The process of planning can be divided into two major parts;

- 1) Communication strategy development involving several steps, and
- 2) Communication management planning.

Communication support is planned information support services, and communication research. The support services include technical writing and editing, type setting, printing, information management and retrieval and mailing services.

Both communication planning and communication support services can be organised in the form of an unit namely Development Support Communication (DSC) unit. The DSC unit consists of a unit head under whom sub-units like communication Programme Section, production Section and Distribution Section could be organised. Each of these sections have definite functions to perform.

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## 4.7 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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2. Gecolea H. Romeo, *A Primer on Development Support Communication*. UNDP Asia Pacific Programme for Development Training and Communication Planning, Bangkok, Thailand.
3. Roy, G.L., 1991. *Extension Communication and Management*. Nayar Prakash, '206, Bidhan Sarani, Calcutta, India.

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## 4.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

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### Check Your Progress - 1

1.
  - a) Cognition or knowledge
  - b) Attitudes
  - c) Overt behaviour
2.
  - a) Lack of data on audience and characteristics
  - b) Concentration on positive feedback
  - c) Lack of communication professionals
  - d) Importance given to technical subjects
  - e) Lack of communication support of RD
3. Communication planning is a human process of defining the problem, choosing objectives and accomplishing objectives and evaluation.

4. a) Analysis of situation
- b) Based on peoples needs
- c) Clear objectives
- d) Definite plan of work
- e) Measurable results

**Check Your Progress 2**

1. It reflects problems to be solved and the different ways communication is used in solving problems.
2. Action to be taken to implement the strategy
  - a) Baseline data collection and identification of communication needs,
  - b) Formulation of objectives,
  - c) Strategy development,
  - d) Audience, segmentation
  - e) Media analysis
3. a) Target audience
- b) Knowledge attitudes and practices
- c) Media inventory
- d) Manpower resources
4. a) Information transmission approach
- b) Persuasion approach
- c) Instruction approach

**Check Your Progress 3**

1. a) Monthly work plan
- b) The time effort chart
- c) The network scheduling
2. a) Monitor project performance
- b) Resource allocation
- c) Policy formulation

**Check Your Progress 4**

1. Communication support includes technical writing, editing, audio-visual production, graphics, type setting and printing, information retrieval and mailing services.
2. a) Graphic art work
- b) Printing
- c) Photography
- d) Audio/Video recording
- e) Storage of master materials
- f) Equipments and maintenance.