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9. ABSTRACT
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This summary is useful for rural development planners in education, health, and agriculture. It examines the conditions under which communications technology and methodology would be effective in producing changes in rural health and agricultural practices in less developed countries. In this study, 123 persons from international agencies and university communities were interviewed and it is concluded that planning an effective communication component is necessary for development projects to affect the practices of poorer sectors of rural populations. The greatest problem in rural development has been the lack of active participation by local people; development projects most likely to affect the health or agricultural practices of the rural poor are local, flexible, action-oriented, and participatory, and they are based on an understanding of local culture. Strategies and approaches for effective use of communication technologies are discussed as they relate to key areas for assistance or support to developing countries. These are: the development of human resources, institution building, research, and developing a system for storing and retrieving information about rural development directed communications. The detailed studies are presented in Volume I: "A Knowledge Base for Action", and Volume II: "An Action Focus."

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Effective Communication with the Rural Poor Executive Summary

Heli E. Ennis de Sagasti

September, 1975

This report has been prepared by the Academy for Educational Development under contract No. AID/ta-BOA-1060, Task Order No. 3, for the Office of Education and Human Resources, Bureau for Technical Assistance, Agency for International Development. The principal reports on which this executive summary is based consist of two separate documents.

This report is the product of a study with the primary purpose of analyzing the effectiveness of communication technology and methodology in affecting the health and agricultural practices of the rural poor in less developed countries.

It is one in a series of studies and activities supported by the Office of Education and Human Resources, Bureau for Technical Assistance, which respond to current objectives of AID to focus its development programs on the most needy people and countries.

In the course of the study, 123 people of international agencies and university communities were interviewed, the theoretical and research contributions of several behavioral sciences reviewed, hundreds of reports of development projects studied, and a number of projects in less developed countries personally visited.

**1. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH THE RURAL POOR
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**2. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH THE RURAL POOR
A KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR ACTION**

VOLUME I

**3. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH THE RURAL POOR
AN ACTION FOCUS**

VOLUME II

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH THE RURAL POOR

The final report of the study is presented in three separate but closely related volumes.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This volume is prepared for those who want a quick overview. It is divided into the following sections:

- I The Study
- II Summary of the Findings
- III Basic Conclusions
- IV Strategies and Approaches
- V Policy Recommendations

VOLUME I: A KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR ACTION

Volume I establishes a knowledge base for effective use of communication methodology and technology for development action. The emphasis is on the contribution of the behavioral sciences. The knowledge base is tested in against some of the key information needs of planners.

The volume is divided into eight sections, each section corresponding to one specific planning problem.

VOLUME II: AN ACTION FOCUS

Volume II is future action oriented. It develops approaches, guidelines, strategies and makes policy recommendations for planners and decision makers in development communications.

It is divided into the following sections:

- I Introduction to the Study
- II An Analytic Approach to Health and Agricultural Practices
- III Planning Effective Development Directed Communications
- IV Recommendations and Basic Conclusions

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I THE STUDY

I THE STUDY

1. Background

The present report is directed to those involved in education, health or agriculture policymaking or planning for rural development.

It is the summary volume of the three volume final report of a study commissioned by the Technical Assistance Bureau, Office of Education and Human Resources, AID.

This study was carried out between September, 1974, and September, 1975. While the responsibility of one professional, it benefited from the contributions of experts from a wide variety of fields and countries.

2. Focus

The project focused on answering the following question:

Under what conditions will communication technology and methodology be effective in producing specific changes in rural health and agricultural practices in less developed countries?

On a general level, the study is directly related to:

- the development activities of the past few decades, and especially to the more recent emphasis on rural development;
- the emphasis among some in the development community on the use of communication technology and methodology to promote rural development.

More specifically, the study responds to:

- the focus on more equitable sharing of the benefits of development programs, with subsequent interest in reaching and benefiting the "rural poor" in less developed countries;
- the difficulties that development programs have encountered to date in reaching and affecting such populations, and the resultant search for appropriate methodologies.

In its attention to communications, the study is based on the belief that rural development requires a combination of circumstances of which

one is the presence of appropriate information in the environment. It is argued that in the majority of situations such information: (a) does not already exist in acceptable form; and (b) will not come to exist automatically with the provision of certain other products or services.

Appropriate communications activities will therefore have to be planned and carefully implemented for other project components to be acceptable and influential.

3. Basis

The basis for the study is found in both behavioral science theory and development practice.

While the study places emphasis on taking advantage of the contributions to development action of the behavioral sciences, and especially Social Psychology, Behavioral Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology, there is constant concern in bridging the gap between theory and development practice, and speaking in terms of the needs and interests of planners and decision-makers.

The basis for the study is also found in existing development experience. Hundreds of reports of both past and current development projects (both those by project participants and outside social scientists) have been studied. Projects in less developed countries have also been personally visited and planners and administrators interviewed.

II SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

II SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The major findings of the study are summarized. In order to make reference to the main documents easier, the discussion will preserve the order of presentation which exists in Volumes I and II.

Volume I: A Knowledge Base for Action

This volume draws together and applies to planners' and decision-makers' problems a diverse array of existing knowledge in the behavioral sciences. Where possible the findings of one field are compared with those of another, and behavioral science theory and practice is compared with the conclusions arrived at in development practice.

The selected questions which are used to test available information are listed:*

1. Under what circumstances and in what degree can we expect change in practices or behavior from programs which plan the use of the mass media alone without planning an interpersonal or group communication link-up?
2. Does the relative effectiveness of the mass media use alone, in comparison to use of the mass media together with personal influence, differ from one topic area of decision to another; to what extent are we able to predict such differences?
3. Under what conditions do organized listening or viewing groups contribute to the effectiveness of mass media such as radio or television?
4. Under what conditions can we get the co-operation of persons or groups whose decisions are vital to changing practices or behavior in the total program population in a given instance?

*Any attempt to summarize the answers to these questions would result in a misleading simplification. No summary is therefore provided in this volume.

6. What is the role of incentives of cash or in kind in influencing rural people to change or modify health or agricultural practices?
7. What do we know about ways of effectively using communication technology and methodology in the absence of other inputs?
8. Under what conditions will change in health or agricultural practices be maintained?

In spite of an attempt to fill knowledge gaps by drawing from a wide range of materials and research traditions, it is clear that at this stage our knowledge about effective use of communication methodology and technology for influencing the health and agricultural practices of the rural poor is incomplete.

The main point which emerges from a discussion of the several questions is:

Our knowledge about communication technology and about communication processes in developed countries is considerable. Where we fail is in our understanding of the human element.

The general result: an unrealistic assessment of the difficulty of affecting change in practices among traditional rural people and an inadequate focus on the role of communication methodology and technology in the production of change.

Volume II: An Action Focus

This document is divided into four major sections. All sections are closely interrelated, and applicable to the question of effectiveness of communication methodology and technology in affecting the health or agriculture practices of the rural poor in less developed countries.

The report is based on a synthesis of field experience and behavioral science theory to develop appropriate approaches, analytic methodologies, strategies and policy goals.

Section I

The first section is introductory. It deals with the antecedents, the focus, and basis of the study in more detail than does the present volume.

Section II

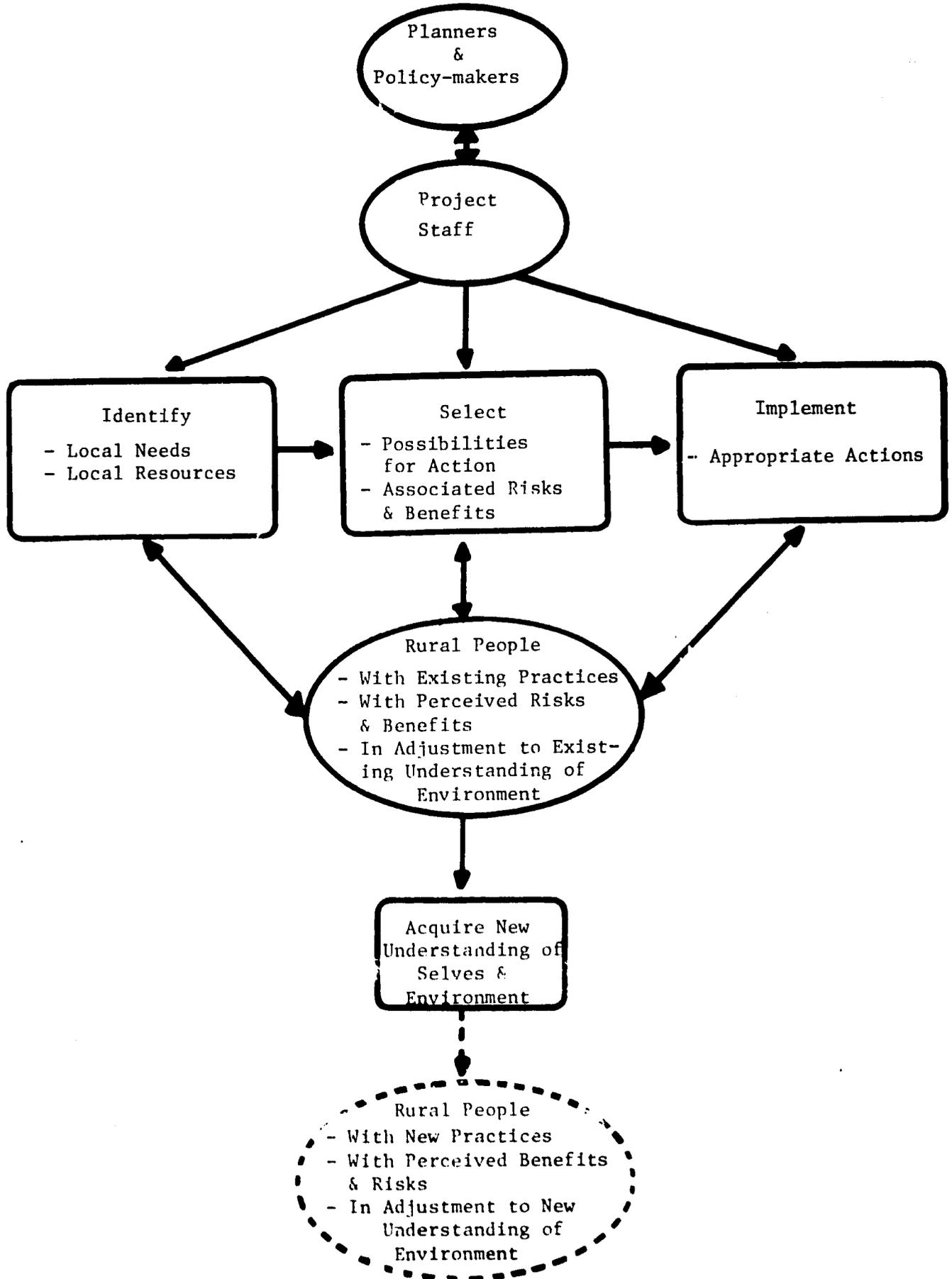
An attempt is made to develop a meaningful analytic approach to health and agricultural practices and the change of such practices. The guidelines provided could be used by those involved in rural development project planning, implementation or evaluation. It is appropriate in its language to professionals from a wide range of disciplines.

The approach is directed toward the definition of various degrees of ease or difficulty in changing different practices, or the same practice under different conditions. It stresses the nature of the practice, and the perceived magnitude of risks and benefits involved in change.

Key questions suggested and discussed as a guide to planners are:

1. What are the kinds of risks perceived in adopting the new practice?

THE IDEALIZED PROCESS OF BEHAVIOR CHANGE AMONG RURAL PEOPLE



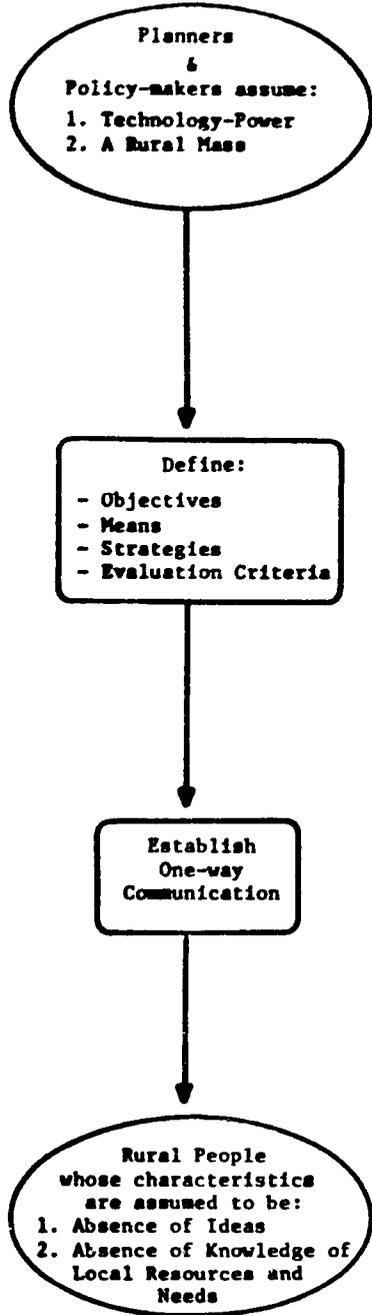
2. What is the total magnitude of risk perceived in adopting the new practice?
3. What are the kinds of benefits that are perceived to result from the new practice?
4. What is the total magnitude of perceived benefits?
5. What is the degree of certainty of perceived benefits?
6. What is the degree of monopoly control of benefits?
7. What is the duration of the gestation period between the taking of risk and the appearance of benefits?
8. To what extent is the new practice compatible with existing practices?
9. To what extent is it familiar?
10. To what extent is the new practice dependent on certain physical inputs or services?
11. To what extent is the new practice divisible?
12. To what extent is the new practice reversible?
13. To what extent does the new practice require repetition?
14. To what extent is the new practice visible?

Section III

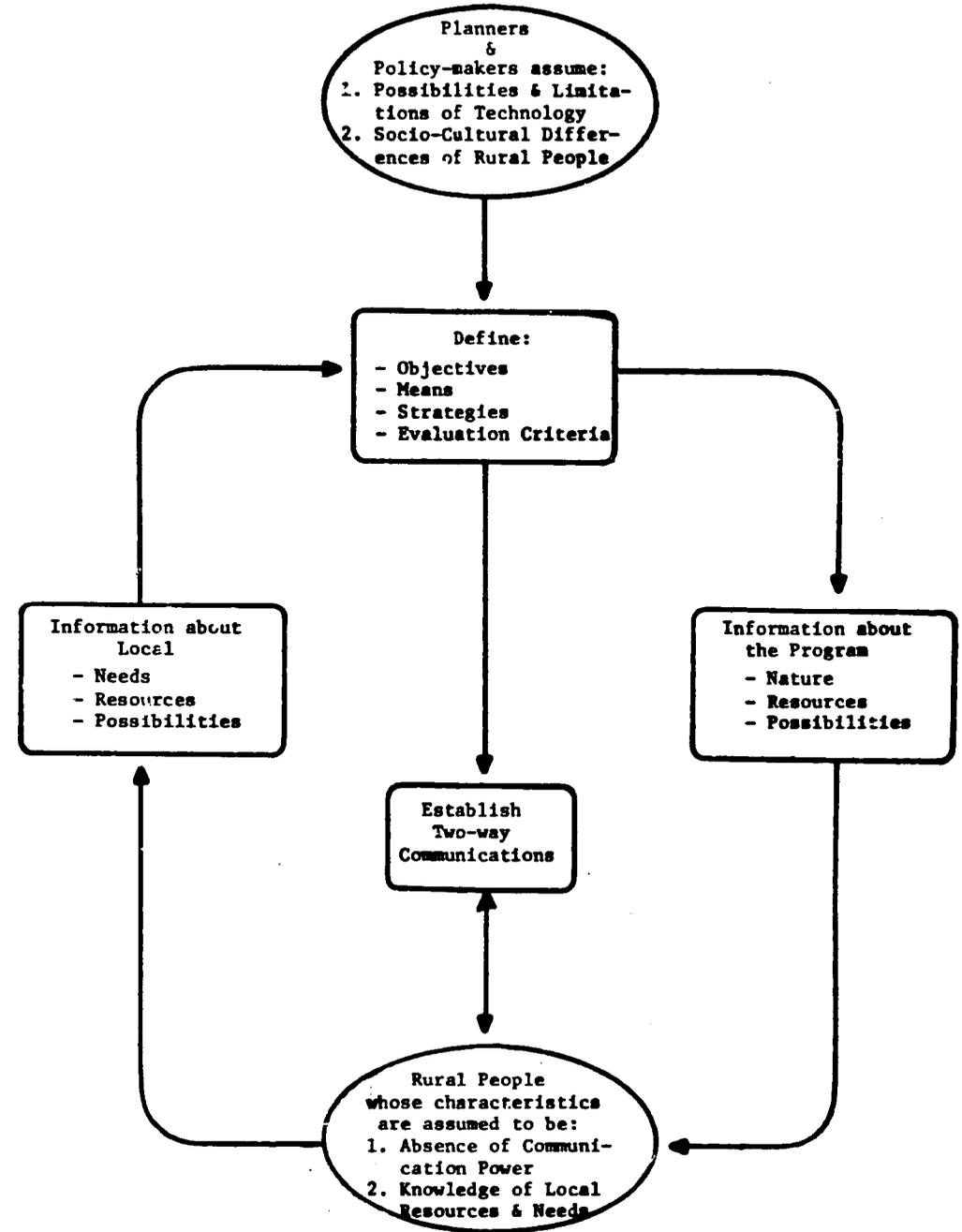
The third section focuses on communications. It deals briefly with the question of the effectiveness of current uses of communications for rural development, to turn to a more prescriptive discussion of how its effectiveness can be improved in reaching and affecting the rural poor of less developed countries.

It is argued that predominant current approaches to development communications do not reach and affect the practices of the rural poor because they are based on an inadequate understanding of rural people and inappropriate conceptualization of the role and nature of communication processes.

ADDITIONAL APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS



DIALOGUE APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS



What is needed for effectiveness is a model of communications use that is appropriate to the population we are trying to reach. A dialogue-model of communications is proposed. This model of purposive use of communications in development has three main dimensions which are outlined.

1. The development and maintenance of continuous dialogue between relevant groups:
 - Between the rural people and the development project staff.
 - Between different members of rural families, groups, organizations, institutions in a given community.
 - Between different communities or regions.
 - Between the rural people and regional or national level decision-makers.
 - Between different development projects.
 - Between the different members of one development project or program.

2. A multi-purpose locally-oriented use of communications to support and maintain the action-objectives set by development projects. The main activities involved in such a use of communications are:
 1. Training activities
 2. Publicizing activities
 3. Motivational activities
 4. Diffusion activities involving technical information
 5. Information retrieval activities

3. Alternative uses of communication technology to enhance and support dialogue and action.
 - 3.1 The predominant nature of existing uses of communication technology is uni-directional, technically oriented, massive and

channel focused. Some promising recent trends help modify this situation.

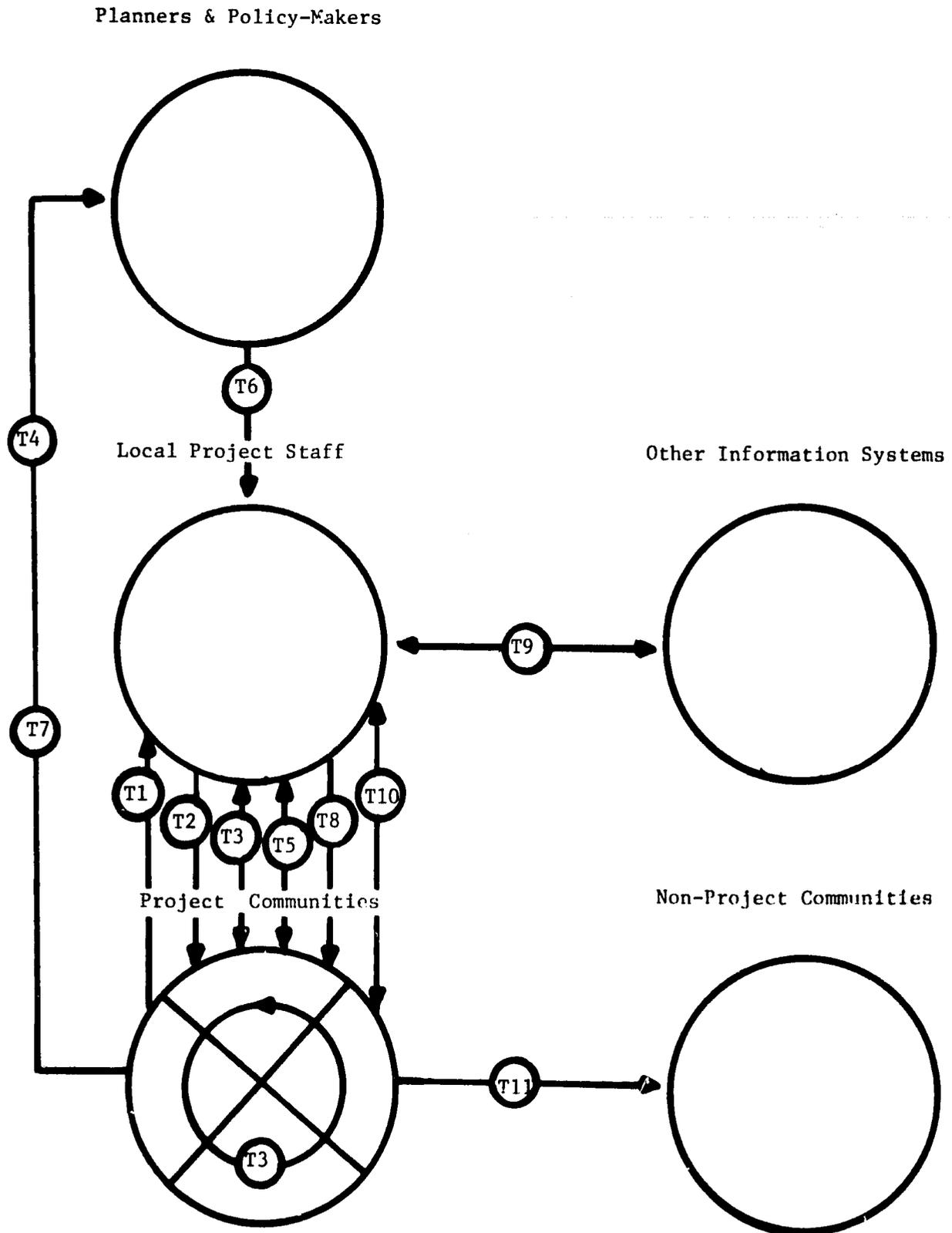
If no major re-orientation of strategies is possible in projects, current uses of communication technology could increase their effectiveness with poorer rural populations in less developed countries most through:

- personalization and familiarization of the media message
- attention to accurate timing of media messages
- attention to simplification of the messages

3.2 Ideally, what is needed to increase its effectiveness with the rural poor, is a re-orientation of communication technology use in rural development programs. Eleven innovative uses of communication technology are proposed in agreement with a dialogue-model of communications and an action-model of change of practices. The uses of communication technology suggested for consideration by decision makers are:

1. Use of communication technology to analyze the local situation prior to the implementation of a project.
2. Use of communication technology to create initial interest in a program or project or issue and promote discussion on it.
3. Use of communication technology to assist in definition of needs and solutions by the local people and between local and project staff.
4. Use of communication technology to publicize the needs of rural peoples to those who can do something about them.
5. Use of communication technology to promote general up-and-down flow of information during a project's operation.
6. Use of communication technology to motivate staff and supplement their knowledge.

INNOVATIVE USES OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY*



* T1-T10 = Communication Technology Uses Proposed (pp. 72-3)
➔ = Predominant Direction of Information Flow

7. Use of communication technology to provide rural peoples with increased communication power.
8. Use of communication technology to train and organize rural people for self-help action.
9. Use of communication technology to promote interlinkages between different information systems at the local level.
10. Use of communication technology to identify existing communication problems in the development project, and where possible, assist in the solution of such problems.
11. Use of communication technology to promote communication between different communities.

III MAIN CONCLUSIONS

III MAIN CONCLUSIONS

There are certain basic themes or conclusions which have recurred throughout the reports of the study. These are outlined below:

1. In most cases the planning of an effective communication component is necessary for development projects to affect the practices of the poorer sectors of the rural population in less developed countries.
2. The single greatest problem in rural development, as in the use of communication methodology and technology to support such development, has been the lack of active participation of the local people. In communications this has meant an overemphasis on the transmission of information by project managers and staff to the rural people, rather than on transmission of information from rural people to each other and to project staff and development decision-makers.
3. The development projects most likely to affect the health or agricultural practices of the rural poor are local, flexible, action-oriented, and participatory, based on an understanding of local people and their behavior.
4. There are various degrees of ease or difficulty in changing different practices or the same practice under different conditions, resulting in the task of development directed communications being both different and more possible in some situations than in others.

5. The greatest improvements in the use of communication technologies for rural development could be obtained not through development of more sophisticated technologies, but through expanding the uses of existing communication technologies to focus on the promotion of dialogue between different groups and at different levels in the development hierarchy.

6. The greatest immediate contributions to our knowledge about effective use of communications in the service of rural development is not likely to come from academic behavioral science research but from careful analysis and comparison of development experience.

IV STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

IV STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

1. General Considerations

Given the partial state of our knowledge about the human element involved in development, and in particular, about the behavior of rural poor in less developed countries and how and when such behavior changes,* it is recommended that rural development projects consider:

- 1.1 The need for some kind of a compromise between political and administrative pressures for quick and massive results and the time it takes to plan and implement effective programs built on adequate understanding of local capabilities, needs, and existing patterns of behavior, to produce appropriate and maintained changes.
- 1.2 The need for flexible planning of rural development programs which: a) allow more general objectives of national or regional plans to be made specific at the local level in response to existing socio-cultural and situational differences; and b) allow such objectives to be modified or revised in response to feedback from the field.
- 1.3 The need for participation of the local people in the decision-making about specific development actions to be taken by them, in order to ensure appropriateness and responsiveness of development plans to rural people's needs and possibilities.
- 1.4 The need for the provision of more effective and continuous feedback mechanisms from the field to both correct any problems that might arise, provide general monitoring of the program, and add to the sum of our knowledge about effective development through evaluation of development actions.
- 1.5 The potential of innovative uses of communication methodology and technology in facilitating continuous two-way communications between local people and development project managers and staff, which would help promote both participation in decision-making and feedback about effectiveness of programs.*

*See Volume II, Section III for discussion of this issue.

2. The "Dialogue for Action" Model of Development

A "dialogue for action" model of rural development is offered for consideration. It is a suggestive model that has been specifically formulated for affecting the health or agriculture practices of the rural poor in less developed countries. It is a local level approach which focuses on the maintenance of two-way communications to define, promote, support and interpret specific practical actions.

Communication methodology and, if indicated, communication technology, play a major role in enhancing the effectiveness of development action in the model.

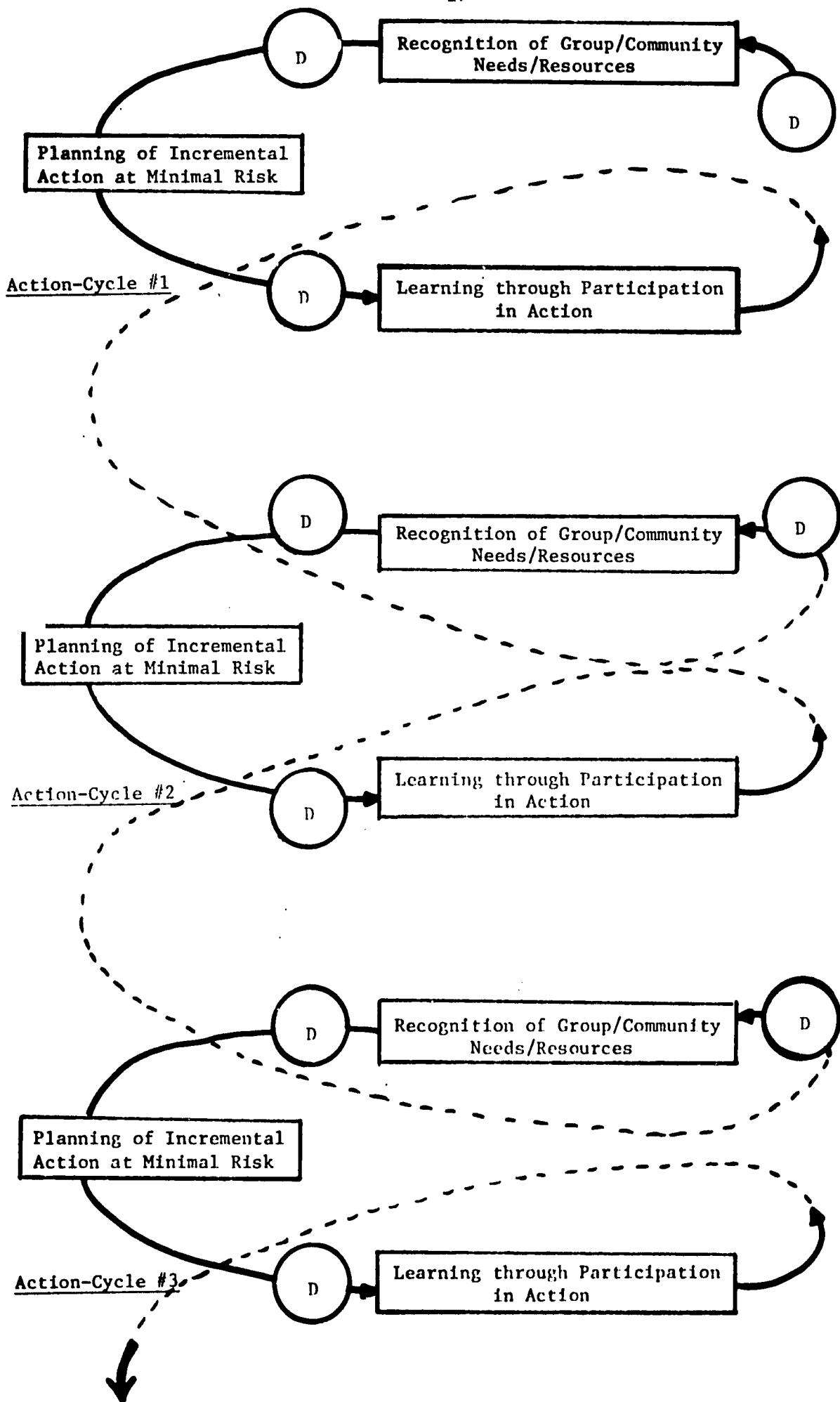
The key components of this model are:

1. Incremental action
2. Minimal risk
3. Recognition of group/community needs and resources
4. Learning through participation in action
5. Group focus
6. Two-way use of communications

2.1 Incremental action

The stress is on the incremental achievement of specific practical actions. Essentially this means, where possible, the below:

- 1) A general movement from a small and relatively easy or small risk change to a larger and more difficult change.
- 2) The basing of initial actions and, where possible, subsequent actions, on a state of readiness and commitment for change on the part of the rural people.



THE DIALOGUE* FOR ACTION MODEL FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT
(*D=Dialogue)

- 3) The building of each successive change on the achievement of the preceding one.
- 4) An emphasis on making benefits as immediate, significant, frequent and visible as possible.

This component is based on the belief that real change, that is, appropriate and lasting change, can only take place when people are ready for it, and committed to it.

In most cases the kind of people we are talking about are not ready for large changes, except perhaps in certain crisis situations where their whole life-style is threatened. A gradual process of preparation for change, and development of confidence in one's ability to change and in the change agency is therefore indicated.

It is important that the first specific change proposed should meet the criteria of:

- 1) high priority in terms of the people's felt needs
- 2) minimal risk
- 3) high degree of participation by the local people
- 4) high visibility of benefits
- 5) short gestation period between the taking of the risk and the appearance of benefits

Benefits should not only be viewed solely as the final result of an action but as continual supporters and maintainers of action. Where benefits are not fairly immediate or visible at any stage of the

*These issues are discussed in Volume II, Section II.

total program of changes in practices or behavior, other visible benefits might be purposively built into the program. This can be done through various means such as competitive awards, bestowal of prestige through attention, and so on.

2.2 Minimal risk

Both perceived and actual risk is seen as minimized four main ways:

- 1) building larger changes on the achievement of smaller changes
- 2) a group or community action focus
- 3) reliance on local resources wherever possible
- 4) participation by local people at all levels of the plan

The incremental approach to action, above discussed, serves to minimize perceived, and at times actual risk, through beginning with relatively small actions and moving to larger ones.

- 1) This process of small but gradually increasing changes will help to cut risks through:
 - minimizing fear of change through a gradual process of change.
 - development of people's understanding of their reality and confidence in their own ability to act to improve it.
 - establishing mutual understanding and appreciation between rural people and project staff.
- 2) Actual social risk is also minimized by a group or community focus, which ensures that social censorship of actions taken will be less likely or less drastic than where "isolated indi-

viduals" are the focus.*

- 3) Risk is also minimized by reliance on local resources wherever possible. In many cases such a reliance on locally available materials or products will be less costly for the rural people and will therefore minimize actual economic risk involved in adopting a practice. It will also minimize perceived risks providing greater familiarity. Both perceived and actual risk will be minimized in such a reliance on local resources because there will be greater chance of such resources continuing to be available upon the withdrawal of the project.
- 4) Finally, participation by local people at all levels of the plan will ensure that actions are in agreement with their perceived needs and possibilities, thus limiting perceived and actual risk.

2.3 Recognition of group/community needs and resources

Both in terms of cost and effectiveness considerations it is important, where possible, to use any locally existing resources. It is also generally accepted in theory that programs and projects should respond to felt needs. But it is clear that this is often inconsistent with development practice where plans are formulated at a higher level, with often little understanding of local people's needs or resources, and with difficulty in responding to the wide variety of needs in a given area.

* This is discussed in Volume II, Section II.

Ideally programs would be flexible enough to allow increased specification of more general national or regional project objectives as they come closer to the local level (adapting to local needs). Failing this, projects can try to establish what amounts to a compromise between the people's perceived needs and the constraints under which rural development must operate.

The incremental action approach to rural development provides such a possibility for compromise or partial response to people's needs in allowing at least the initial action to meet unplanned for, but priority needs, of people.

It may mean that the initial action will have minimal value in terms of development and/or the project's objectives. For example, it might mean facilitating the painting of the church, improvement of the graveyard, or treating a relatively minor but visible skin infection before resorting to the program objective of infant gastroenteritis, family planning, or promotion of miracle rice. But in the long run such confidence building action should make the major program objective much easier to achieve and to maintain.

The degree of response to local needs that is possible, will depend on the nature of the people's needs in a particular situation, and the given objectives and flexibility of the program or project.

2.4 Learning through participation in action

A sole focus on the achievement of specific limited actions would have little long-term value. It is important to plan for the

conceptual linkage of each specific action not only to the preceding and following one, but to a general philosophy of change to provide learning. In practice this means the conscious promotion of self-awareness and responsibility for action on the part of the rural people. Thus knowledge-change precedes, parallels, and follows actions taken, and communications planning is essential.

Such self-awareness and sense of responsibility is only possible through the rural people's participation in development actions. On the other hand, if they are not involved in decisions, and they simply become passive objects of change, the learning and resultant appreciation of change will be minimal.

Self awareness and a sense of responsibility takes time to develop. They will not occur overnight, even if people do participate, but it is worth the effort.

Participation is not an either/or issue. There are various kinds and degrees of participation. The ideal situation of maximum participation would mean active involvement of local people in:

- 1) initial planning and decision-making about objectives and solutions.
- 2) in the implementation of the project
- 3) in the evaluation of the project

The degree of participation possible in any given local situation will at a minimum depend on:

- the general political context in which the program takes place: obviously some political systems permit a larger participatory role of the mass of the people than others, depending on whether a system is willing to risk greater power for the peasants, by allowing their voice to be

heard or whether it is only willing to allow a facade of social change to quiet the discontent of the poor.

- the specific nature of the program itself and the extent to which it has been pre-structured, and the extent to which such prestructuring has responded to felt priority needs of the rural poor in question.
- the participatory potential of the local people involved, which will depend on such factors as existing appropriate organizational structures, previous history in participation, certain socio-cultural factors which either facilitate or discourage participation.

2.5 Group focus

The present approach proposes more attention to the existing groups and the community in development. It emphasizes linking onto local organizations and encouragement of group discussion, decision and action.* The main argument is that:

- 1) the group or community approach is more in agreement with the socio-cultural reality of rural areas of less developed countries, than the individualistic approach.
- 2) the group or community focus helps facilitate participation of local people in decision-making, action and communication processes.
- 3) group change is stronger than individual change through minimizing counter-change pressures in the community by establishing pro-change social unit, which will serve to both effectively implement and effectively maintain change.
- 4) the group focus provides a wider scope for action than does an individual focus, allowing for pooling of human and material resources and exchange of resources.

Thus attention should be given to promoting dialogue within and between groups to promote collective action. Main areas are:

- 1) within groups or communities to encourage definition of needs and solutions, implementation of plans and evaluation of actions taken.

*This issue has been discussed, for example, in Volume I, Section III.

- 2) between communities to motivate each other for action to pool resources for action, exchange resources for action.

2.6 Two-way use of communications

The question of dialogue between various groups and at different levels is discussed in detail in Volume II, Section III.

In the "dialogue for action model" of rural development two-way communications are seen as creating the necessary informational environment for action. They help define the action to be taken, help promote actions on the part of the indicated individuals, provide support for action at various stages to ensure that actions are appropriately carried through and maintained for the necessary period of time, and interpret action by linking actions to each other and to a general philosophy of change, resulting in self-awareness and learning.

In this sense communications facilitate incremental action, minimal risk, recognition of group/community needs and resources, and initiates and maintains in operation a group focus. It is of central importance in the effective implementation of the other components of the model.

V POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

V POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations made in the area of communications for rural development are addressed primarily to external assistance agencies, but many of them could also have direct implications to less developed countries. They are based on conclusions reached in the study, and especially directed toward increasing development benefits among the rural poor.

1 Key Areas for Assistance to Less Developed Countries

1.1 Development of Human Resources

It is suggested that one area in which the resources of external assistance agencies can be most usefully employed is in increasing the supply of rural development staff in less developed countries, especially at local and regional levels.

Contribution can be made by: a) helping less developed countries define priority training objectives; b) helping less developed countries achieve their training goals through assistance in the definition of subject matter, methodology and delivery systems for training; c) providing technical advice to less developed countries in the implementation of such training programs in different situations.

Key areas suggested for focus as appropriate in a given situation are:

a) Training of rural people

- 1) Training of multi-purpose village level workers, selected from rural populations, who could act to promote certain kinds of self-help community action, especially in preventive health.

- 2) Training of community level primary health workers selected from rural populations to recognize and meet the most common health problems in isolated rural areas, and to act in a referral capacity on a permanent attention basis.
 - 3) Training of rural leaders in basic communication skills which would help them take a more active participant role in development projects, and to initiate development action.
 - 4) Training of women as agricultural promoters in countries where women play an active role in agriculture.
 - 5) Training of rural people with some secondary education to become intermediate level communication technologists to provide technical support for rural development programs.
- b) Training of national and regional level specialists
- 1) Short-term training of professionals in nutrition and health in basic social science based communication principles and methodologies, and basic uses of communication technology.
 - 2) Graduate training of development communication specialists to have a sound grounding in behavioral sciences and especially anthropology, and in institutional communications, but be practically oriented toward application of communication methodology and technology to development problems.

1.2 Institution Building

Certain centers are suggested as of priority importance for improving the effectiveness of rural development projects and especially of the communication component of development actions. External assistance agencies can provide help to less developed countries in the form of financial and technical assistance for the strengthening or establishment of such centers. Three specific kinds of centers are proposed for consideration.

1) Regional or sub-regional information centers

Small information centers can be established for directly serving the information needs of rural people in different regions of interested countries. They can function for:

- Training of rural local level workers . For example, primary health workers, multi-purpose workers, intermediate level communication technologists, etc.
- Learning and problem solving by rural people . People could come to the center with their problems instead of waiting for an extension worker or health specialist to come to them. Learning would be visually oriented to circumvent problems of illiteracy. The focus would be on social, political and organizational information with emphasis on helping the rural people to understand their rights under the law, as well as their duties.
- Referral of rural people to the right sources for information or services, where these were beyond the scope of the Center.
- Feedback to decision-makers on the needs of rural peoples to facilitate the development of programs, projects and services to meet those needs.

2) Regional level development communications centers

Such centers could be of considerable value in enhancing the use of and the effectiveness of communications in rural development projects. They could be modeled on the UNDP Development Support Communication Service Center in Bangkok, but on a more limited scale:

Main functions of such Centers could be:

- Training of various levels of field workers and professionals from different backgrounds in communication methodologies and basic use of communication technologies.
- Assistance to development projects in the planning of the communication component of projects.

- Design, production and distribution to rural development projects in the region of appropriate communication materials (such as video-tape recordings, films, slide sets, printed materials, graphics, etc.)
- Distribution to development projects in the region of communication equipment as needed (projectors, tape-recorders, cameras, etc.) on a loan basis.
- Establishment of an information bank of materials as these are developed for projects for future use or adaptation in other projects in the same region or lending to other regions of the country.
- Provision of feedback from rural populations to government planners and decision-makers on needs of populations and effectiveness of projects.

3) National or international health education and communication support centers*

This Center would focus on centralization of information with respect to projects of community participation for health and the role of communication and education in such participation. The Centers would have four basic interrelated functions:

1. Training activities of the center

Two basic types of training are envisaged.

1.1 Professional training of specialists in education and communication for community participation.

1.2 Short-term training of personnel from health and other related professional backgrounds (e.g. agriculture, education, behavioral sciences, etc.) for:

- Understanding of the importance of health problems of the community and the implication of such problems for socio-economic development.
- Development of their abilities and skills as promoters of social and economic well-being of the community through influencing others in their area to consider

*The collaboration of Dr. Nilo Vallejo of PAHO is acknowledged in the development of this institutional outline.

health problems of the community and the implication of such problems for such social and economic well-being.

- Facilitation of their own effective collaboration in the planning and implementation of education and communication components of health programs as these become relevant within their areas of professional activity.

2. Research and technical assistance activities of the center

These two functions are treated together because interrelationship is considered of fundamental importance. The Centers would carry out operational research associated with activities of technical assistance to less developed countries. Such research would involve:

- 2.1 The elaboration of a common culturally appropriate philosophy with respect to education and communication for effective community participation in health in the country or countries.
- 2.2 The development of policies with respect to the above.
- 2.3 The development of materials for actions undertaken with respect to the above.
- 2.4 The development of evaluation models for establishment of the effectiveness of actions undertaken related to the above.

3. Health information diffusion activities of the center

The Centers would also engage in the establishment and operation of a clearing house for the training, research and service institutions and organizations of the country. This clearing house would be responsible for dissemination of information with respect to community participation experiences in other parts of the world as these become relevant and are needed by the less developed countries.

1.3 Assistance in Research and Development

It is suggested that short term assistance and advice can be profitably provided by external assistance agencies to less developed countries through the below kinds of activities:

- 1) Assistance and advice to interested LDCs in the evaluation and co-ordination of their development communication system and help in strengthening the system at key points where this is needed.
- 2) Assistance and advice to interested less developed countries in the linking of the formal educational systems to development priorities and activities, especially in health and agriculture.
- 3) Assistance and advice to interested countries in the definition of appropriate areas for action and elaboration of procedures for low-cost community self-help action for improvement of rural people's health, especially in those instances where there is inadequate access to or underutilization of health services.
- 4) Assistance and advice to interested countries in the use of communication technology and methodology for the identification, and where possible solution, of problems of underutilization of existing systems of health services by rural peoples.
- 5) Collaboration with interested less developed countries in setting up of well worked out low-cost field models demonstrating the use of communication methodology and technology for the promotion of dialogue for effective rural development or for spreading the effects of development. It must be stressed that the emphasis here is not on pilot projects to test basic ideas, but on models to demonstrate already tested methods and for adapting such methods to a particular context and to an area in which the particular less developed country has shown interest.

2 Key Areas for Support in Developed Countries

2.1 Research

It is suggested that the greatest immediate contributions to knowledge will come from studies of accumulated development experience, where such experience is submitted to adequate analysis. Support of research for the promotion of effectiveness of development directed communications in rural health and agriculture in developed countries such as the United States is recommended in the following priority areas:

- Cross-cultural study of pilot projects in less developed countries to determine reasons for success in influencing the host country's policies and actions or reasons for their failure to have any such long term effects.
- Cross-cultural study of effective rural community participation in different socio-cultural contexts, at planning, implementation and evaluation stages of projects, to establish guidelines for planners of such actions.
- Cross-cultural study of the experiences of less developed countries in the promotion of self-help community action in order to establish guidelines for planners of such actions.
- Cross-cultural study of health services in LDCs for identification, analysis and classification of those situational, psychological and socio-cultural factors which have lead to the utilization or underutilization of systems of health services in rural areas.
- Cross-cultural study of the experiences of various developing countries in the interface of modern and indigenous health systems and their resolution of the issue, with special attention to identification of types of traditional healers who can be effectively incorporated into the health system, and those who can not be, and to most effective forms of collaboration between indigenous and modern health systems.
- Cross-cultural study of the degree to which agricultural information made available to male farmers is transmitted by them to the female members of their families and to their children.
- Cross-cultural study of the image of the farmer and of agricultural work in less developed countries as this is projected in public communications channels.

- Cross-cultural study of the role of women in rural areas in less developed countries, with special attention to their role in action and decision-making in agriculture and health.
- Development and testing of methodologies for effective and innovative use of communication technology in the promotion of dialogue between various levels in the development hierarchy and between various groups and communities at the local level.
- Elaboration of effective methodologies, other than surveys, for the identification of local needs, existing health or agricultural practices, the related beliefs and values, and inter-relationships of behaviors, with special attention to provision of understanding of the perception of benefits and risks on the part of the rural poor.
- Development of low-cost "rule of thumb" evaluation procedures based on observation of behaviors or events, which could be effectively used by rural communities themselves for self-evaluation of community action, or by local level field staff with low education levels.

It is suggested that priority support be given to problem-oriented interdisciplinary research teams, involving behavioral scientists from various disciplines, and where possible and relevant, specialists in agriculture or health.

It is also suggested that provision be made in the funding of research for making the results of such research available to interested organizations and decision-makers at appropriate levels in less developed countries.

1.2.2 Development of a Knowledge Base

It is suggested that a permanent system for storage and retrieval of information about rural development directed communications be built. This could be a center based either in a developing country or in a developed country. Activities might include:

- 1) Development of a retrieval system for the collection and evaluation of relevant experiences in development directed communications in rural areas in less developed countries.

- 2) Development of methodologies which would help in the improvement of the use of communications in rural development.
- 3) Promotion and assistance in the inclusion of relevant aspects of behavioral science based development directed communications in the education and training of both health and agricultural personnel in less developed countries.
- 4) Diffusion of needed information on development directed communications to key policymakers and planners in either health or agricultural sectors in less developed countries, especially focusing on the exchange of related experiences between less developed countries.
- 5) Organization of annual or semi-annual international conferences for key educators and key policy makers and planners of less developed countries to discuss matters related to development directed communications and its inclusion in their decision-making.