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9. ABSTRACT

Discusses the role of mass communications and interpersonal communications in rural development in order to understand the operation of radio forum systems and to suggest better ways to use mass media for development. The function, purpose, and basic elements of radio forums are defined. The basic assumption of mass media forum systems is that multi-channel communication is more effective than single-channel communication in reaching an audience with less cost. Findings indicate that radio forums have a significant impact on increasing the knowledge of illiterates. The document traces the development of radio forums in India in which 40 villagers took part, the Ghana radio forums project, and radio forum experiments in Ecuador, Brazil, Nigeria, and Tanzania. It gives 19 guidelines on the use of radio forums in rural development of LDCs. These include: (1) the forums' effectiveness in using local content in messages and the importance of a small amount of high-priority topics; (2) the need for forums to be aware of villagers' needs, vocabulary, comprehension, and concept formation; and (3) the functions of feedback for program producers regarding the usefulness of messages, the style of presentation, and logistic limitations. It also discusses the importance of the size of the forum, the trained leadership, and the caution that must be exercised in motivating audiences.

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RADIO FORUMS: A STRATEGY FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

by

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with Mark A. Vermilion

Institute for Communication Research
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The purpose of this chapter is to derive a series of generalizations about the role of mass and interpersonal communication in rural development from a review of past research and program experience with radio forums. We intend that these generalizations might not only provide useful understandings about the operation of radio forum systems in developing countries, but that they also represent a step toward the broader issue of how better to utilize the mass media for development purposes, whether the medium is radio, television, or print.

What Are Radio Forums?

A radio forum is a small listening and discussion group that meets regularly in order to receive a special radio program, which the members then discuss. On the basis of the program and discussion, they decide what types of relevant action to take. This sequence of activities is expressed in the motto of the Canadian forums: "Listen, discuss, act." Emphasis in radio forums is usually placed not only on creating knowledge of new ideas, but also in putting them into practice.

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We limit our discussion in this chapter to radio forums, although we acknowledge that this topic is closely related to other types of media forums (like television forums or print forums, which are widely used in the People's Republic of China) and to other types of radio listening groups (like the radiophonics schools in Latin America and the radio listening group campaigns in Tanzania, both of which are featured in other chapters of this volume).

The basic idea of radio forums for rural development grew out of early experiences with radio listening groups in England and other European nations and was first implemented on a national scale for rural development purposes in Canada in 1941. Rural radio forums then spread to India, where the concept was first tested in a UNESCO-sponsored field experiment in the mid-1950s, and later implemented on a nationwide basis. Since then, many countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America have been the sites of field experiments, pilot projects, and large-scale programs of radio forums for rural development. In a later section of this chapter, we shall (1) trace the historical development of radio forums in greater detail, and (2) draw some comparisons with other media forum approaches.

The basic elements of most radio forum systems are:

1. Organizers who establish the forums and help service them.
2. Written discussion guides that contain information and discussion questions that are distributed to forum leaders prior to the radio broadcast to which they pertain.
3. Regularly scheduled radio programs beamed at forum members who gather in a home or a public place to hear the broadcast and then discuss its contents.
4. Regular feedback reports (a) of decisions by the forum members, and (b) of questions of clarification to the broadcast programmers.

The basic underlying assumption of all media forum systems is that multi-channel communication is more effective than single-channel communication. When more than one channel acts in concert to convey messages about a common theme to the same audience, a kind of synergistic advantage is usually achieved. The communication effects attained by two or more channels together is greater than the effects of any single channel alone. This multi-media advantage is greater when the channels involved are maximally different from each other in certain respects, as when one is a mass medium and one is interpersonal.

We define mass media as all those means of transmitting messages that involve a means, such as newspapers, magazines, film, radio, television, etc., which enable a source of one (or several individuals) to reach an audience of many. Interpersonal channels involve a face-to-face message transfer between two or more individuals, who may be family members, neighbors and friends, and others.

Table 1 summarizes the main characteristics of mass media and of interpersonal communication channels, and of the two in combination (as in radio forums). In short, mass media alone can reach a larger audience at the price of a lesser message impact, while interpersonal communication provides a greater message impact at the price of a smaller audience. This inverse set of relationships lies at the heart of the particular advantage of radio forums (Beltran, 1969).

Advantages of Radio

In terms of mass media, radio is the main channel used in forum programs in most countries, but printed material may also be used in forum

TABLE 1

Main Characteristics of Mass Media, Interpersonal Communication and the Two Channels in Combination

Characteristics	Mass Media Channels	Interpersonal Channels	Mass Media Combined with Interpersonal Communication (as in Radio Forums)
1. Direction	One-way	Two-way	Two-way
2. Time to reach a large audience	Rapid	Slow	Rapid
3. Accuracy within a large audience	High	Low	High
4. Ability to overcome selective exposure and selective perception	Low	High	High
5. Feedback	Little	Much	Much
6. Ability to answer local needs of the audience	Low	High	High
7. Most likely main effects	Increased Knowledge	Attitude Change	Increased Knowledge and Attitude Change

systems, as in China. Radio forums have several advantages over other types of media forums. For example, illiterate people can understand the message transmitted via radio. Also, radio signals can be received despite geographical isolation or barriers such as mountains that impede television or surface-based mass communication (such as the print media) which require a delivery system to the local level. Only a small, cheap battery-operated radio receiver is needed in each radio forum and, in fact, most villagers in Latin America, Africa, and Asia now own radio sets. Radio has the advantages of time, cost, and localization (McManis, 1973):

1. Time--The broadcast signal is immediately received by listeners. The widespread availability of cheap transistor sets guarantees virtual coverage of most countries, even among the poorest villagers. Radio can reach all the population at the same time.
2. Cost--The outlay for radio is much lower than for television and for most other media, both for the program producer and for the audience members receiving the program. Jamison and Klees (1973) estimate that instructional radio is about one-fifth as expensive as instructional television. On the other hand, radio requires about 33 percent more printed matter (such as discussion guides and follow-up reading booklets) to equal the combined audio and visual impact of television.
3. Localization--Radio is a relatively inexpensive medium that enables each local station to serve a relatively limited geographical area with the same language, culture, and interests.

Radio Forums and Illiteracy

It is often said that illiteracy is a barrier to development in that adult literacy is a prerequisite to effectively changing the behavior of villagers and urban poor. If this is indeed so, the rural development potential for many developing countries is very limited, at least in the next several decades, because of their high illiteracy rates

and the general lack of success of most adult literacy programs. For example, in Pakistan today illiteracy rates are 90 percent of the adult population in many rural areas, and while the proportion of the appropriate age group enrolled in primary school nationwide is increasing, it was only 45 percent in 1975 (61 percent of the male children and 27 percent of females). Only about 20 percent of Pakistan's children are receiving primary education up to five years, a level generally considered necessary for attaining functional literacy. Pakistan has about 40 million illiterates, and approximately one million more are added each year. They are especially concentrated in villages. Pakistan's case may be a particularly bleak picture for adult illiteracy, but comparable rates are found in India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and many African and Middle Eastern nations. Public resources are simply unavailable (1) to provide elementary schooling to all children, which thus negates the preventive approach to future illiteracy, or (2) to train most adult illiterates to read and write.

We dispute the assumption that illiteracy is a complete barrier to rural development. The broadcasting media have the potential of "leaping the illiteracy barrier" in conveying rural development messages to village audiences, as has been illustrated in several developing nations in recent years. Radio and television, when coupled with some type of organized group reception at the receiving end, and backed up with the local availability of development inputs and resources (like new seeds and fertilizers, for example), can bring about development among illiterates as well as with literates.

The listening/discussing group, if composed of at least one or more literates along with a majority of illiterates, acts to pool the

knowledge and expertise of the group members in a way that closes the previously existing gap between literates and illiterates (Neurath, 1960).

Tables 2 and 3 present the results of the Poona field experiment on radio forums in India (to be described in great detail in a later section), which show:

1. When villagers were organized in forums, the impact of the radio broadcasts was much greater on the degree of knowledge gained.*
2. Illiterates gained slightly greater knowledge than literates when members of radio forums, but not otherwise.

The second research finding has not been widely studied elsewhere, and we cannot be sure that illiterates will consistently outgain literates; perhaps the Indian results are due to the relatively few illiterates in the typical forum (only about 16 percent of the forum members were illiterates), or to other idiosyncratic factors. But if the findings of the Poona field experiment are at all valid, they certainly indicate that illiterates as well as literates are affected by their knowledge of the content of the radio broadcasts.

Advantages of Group Listening and Discussion

What are the advantages of organizing the receivers of mass media messages in listening/discussing groups like forums?

1. Attention--They are more likely to attend to the message and focus their interest on the message content. Group pressure and the group leader's influence thus serve a control function in uniting and directing the members' attention.

*The knowledge scores were computed for each respondent on the basis of his answers to six sets of related questions, each of which was scored on a three-point level of correctness. One of the typical question sets was: "What damage do rats do? Do rats carry disease? If yes, what disease? What do you do against rats? When you kill rats, what do you do with the bodies?"

TABLE 2

Individual Knowledge Gain for Villagers in Forums
and for Non-Forum Villagers, With and Without Radio

Experimental Treatments	Average Knowledge Scores (on an 18-point scale) for Individual Villagers		
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain
1. Forum (n=20 villages)	6.4	12.1	+5.7
2. Non-forum with radio only (n=8 villages)	5.5	7.0	+1.5
3. Non-forum with no radio (n=10 villages)	3.9	4.6	+0.7

Source: Neurath (1960, p. 136).

TABLE 3

Individual Knowledge Gain for Literates
and Illiterates in Forums and Non-Forums

Experimental Treatments and Respondent Types	Average Knowledge Scores (on an 18- point scale) for Individual Villagers		
	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain
1. Forums			
a. Literates (n=266)	7.1	12.2	+5.1
b. Illiterates (n=43)	3.1	9.4	+6.3
2. Non-Forum			
a. Literates (n=194)	5.3	6.5	+1.2
b. Illiterates (n=60)	2.1	3.1	+1.0

Source: Neurath (1960, p. 155).

2. Media Integration--When multiple channels are utilized to carry a common message theme, they can be presented to receivers in a unified and integrated manner when the individuals are together in a listening group. Otherwise, each of the multiple channels is likely to reach a somewhat different audience, or to reach the same receivers at different times, thus losing some of the synergistic effect of the multi-media campaign.
3. Persuasion and Action--Attitude change is more likely to occur when participation and group influence are present. Group listening and discussion is more likely to lead to action than is individual reception.
4. Feedback--Group reception of the mass media facilitates the formation of feedback messages and provides a channel to convey them to the mass communicator.

ORIGINS OF RADIO FORUMS

The first experiences with radio listening/discussing groups were in Europe. The idea of linking radio with interpersonal channels originated in England in 1928, according to Cassirer (1959), and then spread to Norway, Switzerland, and Czechoslovakia in the early 1930s. Radio forums started in Germany around 1940. In 1929, a year after radio forums started in England, groups of American parents listened to regular radio broadcasts from station WEAQ at Ohio State University.

However, it is acknowledged that even prior to 1928, experience with media forums had already begun in Soviet Russia. "Study groups" were started throughout Russia, using print media such as newspapers, which were read and then discussed in the forums. These study groups were considered by Lenin to be a key tool in the "agitation and propaganda" apparatus of the Communist Party. The use of print forums spread from Russia to China, where they were used since the early 1930s by the Communist Party to train

cadres. After 1949, the techniques of using such study groups were perfected by the Chinese Communists for use with the mass public as part of political communication activities and for such development campaigns as pest eradication, family planning, and farm communalization. Hiniker (1966) estimates that perhaps 70 percent of the adult population in the People's Republic of China participated regularly in study groups in the mid-1960s.

Canada's farm radio forums began in 1940 when a special committee established by government and private educational agencies was set up to plan and put into action a system of radio forums. After a year of intense preparation, the first program was aired in January 1941 (Nicol and others, 1954). The Canadian system was the first truly nationwide network and the first to be aimed mainly at rural people. These are two reasons why the Canadian experience represents a working model for other countries, a model that was copied directly in India and in Ghana (as will be described shortly), and somewhat less directly in more than a dozen other countries. India, starting in 1954, was the first developing country to adopt radio forums as a strategy for nationwide rural development. A similar approach has been followed in the 1960s and 1970s, at least on an experimental basis, in Ghana, Nigeria, Togo, Niger, Dahomey, Malawi, the Malagasy Republic, Jordan, Pakistan, Indonesia, Japan, Costa Rica, and Brazil. UNESCO played an important role in the cross-national diffusion of radio forums from Canada to India, Ghana, and Costa Rica, and in sponsoring research on the effectiveness of forums in contributing to rural development.

By no means have all of these radio forum systems maintained their vigor over the years. The English forums died out after about a decade or two, and Canada's rural radio forums ceased in 1965 after 24

years of large-scale operation. So the Canadian forums were dying out at about the same time they were being widely copied in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The rural forums in Canada were mainly intended to encourage farm people to solve their local community problems, to break down rural isolation, and to develop community leadership, rather than to convey technical information about agriculture and other rural development topics. So when farm isolation and community inaction were no longer felt to be serious problems in Canada, interest in radio forums dropped off. In one sense, the forum system worked itself out of its original job.

THE POONA EXPERIMENT ON RADIO FORUMS IN INDIA

Probably no other developing country has paid so much attention to rural radio forums as a tool for modernization as has India. The most important evaluation of the Indian forums, which took place in the former state of Bombay (now Maharashtra), is commonly known as the Poona project, because this city was the headquarters of the five Bombay districts in which the research was undertaken. An independent research organization, the Tata School of Social Sciences, conducted the field experiment with UNESCO assistance.

Forty villages were selected for the experiment; 20 of them had radio forums, 10 had radio sets for about a year before the experiment started, and the other 10 were provided with receivers for the project. Personal interviews with forum members and direct observation of the operations of the forums during the broadcasting and discussion were the main methods used to collect the data.

Previously in this chapter, in Tables 2 and 3, we presented Neurath's (1960) main findings from the Poona experiment. The great difference in the increase in knowledge between the forum and the radio-but-no-forum respondents is a clear indication of the superiority of organized group-listening-plus-discussion over individual, unorganized reception. Also, the radio forums tended to bring into the open a good deal of knowledge that was latent in the villages. The peasants themselves provided the means to solve many of their common problems by discussing alternative ways of action to cope with the particular problem at hand.

India: After Poona's Project

The Poona project clearly indicated the superiority of the rural radio forums in India. Several factors accounted for its success:

1. The project was the center of attention of many institutions and influential officials.
2. The experimental treatments were brief, lasting only 10 weeks. This period may not have been enough time for the participants to become weary, as in non-experimental conditions, when the radio forums are expected to last for years.
3. The project had ample financial and staff support, with highly-trained personnel and financial resources that are usually scarce in developing countries.

Schramm and others (1967a and 1967b), in a thorough analysis of India's experience with radio forums, raised the important question of "whether the forum itself is a less potent tool than had been thought, or whether it is being used and supported less well than it should be."

In order to answer this basic question, he analyzed six studies done on radio forums in India after Poona. They agree overwhelmingly on the finding that radio forums are positive as a strategy for improving the

livelihood of the peasants. All the six reports cite notable accomplishments of radio forums in creating (1) interest, (2) learning, and (3) action by villagers.

In summary, the information available from the Poona project and from the other studies carried out in India tends to support the concept that the radio forums are a "potent tool" -- using the words of Schramm and others (1967a) -- for rural development in India and elsewhere.

In 1959, the Indian government decided to try to introduce the forums nationwide and set a goal of at least three forums (called "radio rural forums" rather than "radio farm forums") in each community development block -- one forum for each 200 square miles containing between 60 and 80 thousand persons. Results from the Poona project were summarized and applied in this national effort for radio forums.

By the end of 1959 the radio rural forums had become a national program which was incorporated a short time later in the Third Five-Year Plan. The final goal of 15,000 radio forums was set to be reached by March 1966.

Each forum consisted of between 12 and 20 members, the majority of them men. Special care was taken to include people from different castes, although this was not always possible. In some villages, success was attained in mixing Harijans (the "untouchable" caste) with non-Harijans. Farmers make up the majority of listeners.

Although the majority of participants were elders, some young people also participated. Established conventions were usually observed, such as the young people not contradicting the views of their elders in their presence.

The chairman was usually chosen from among the elderly, and not necessarily an educated villager. He was usually the sarpanch (village leader) or the school teacher.

The secretary convenor in India's radio forum system is a very important person to the success of the forum. His duties are to set up the meeting place, check on the radio set, seats, lights, and so forth. He is also to publicize in advance the content of the broadcast and the time of the program among the villagers. He keeps records of the weekly activities, such as a list of those in attendance, the discussions, and the conclusions reached. Usually he is an educated man, capable of writing and reading well, and often he is also the secretary of the panchayat (the village council) or the gram sevak (the village-level extension worker) or the teacher of the village.

Weekly or biweekly programs 30 minutes long are broadcast by all-India Radio for the forum audience. The emphasis is on the practical aspects of rural life: health, agriculture, and home improvement topics, intended to simulate discussion and action among the participants.

While radio is the core medium, it is supplemented by visual aides such as films, pictures, posters, charts, and a fortnightly guide for the forum programs. This guide included general background information, program schedules, and specific information to help convenors in guiding the discussions. In summary, while radio is the main channel, the Indian radio forums use a multi-media approach.

An important element in the Indian radio forums are the so-called "district organizers" who are a kind of regional supervisors. They develop the forums and help solve many of their practical problems.

The growth in numbers of radio forums in India has had its ups and downs. In 1965, there were about 12,000 forums enrolling a quarter of a million villagers (Schramm and others, 1967a, p. 53). However, these numbers have fallen off considerably in recent years, evidently in part because many of the members grow tired of the effort required for twice-weekly attendance, especially as the transistor radio revolution has led to each villager having his own radio set. Access to radio, once provided uniquely by the forums, is no longer a motivation for forum attendance.

Ghana Radio Forum Project

The government of Ghana established a radio forum project in 1964-65 with technical and financial assistance from the External Aid Office of Canada and from UNESOD. Eighty villages were selected, 40 experimental and 40 for control purposes. In the experimental villages, 20 had one forum per village and the other 20 had two forums per village. Each forum had an average of about 20 members.

The main objective was to determine the effectiveness of rural radio forums as a method of educating adults and stimulating village self-help efforts. Every four weeks the participants were provided with a "talk-back" program on which forum members asked questions and expressed their views, thus permitting live feedback.

There were 20 half-hour broadcasts, each on a Sunday evening at 6:15 pm., on such topics as: (1) government economic policy and programs; (2) education and cultural institutions; (3) agricultural marketing; (4) health and family living; and (5) citizenship and community self-help.

The radio receivers had a fixed frequency so the villagers could not listen to any other broadcasting station except Radio Ghana.

Overall, the data provided evidence that radio forums are effective for the conditions of rural Ghana and that radio forums are superior to the use of radio alone.

Abell (1968) concluded that the project in Ghana can be considered successful when evaluated in terms of its stated purpose of transmitting information and stimulating rural people toward increased self-help activities

Other Research on Radio Forums

A field experiment by Spector and others (1963) among Ecuadorian villagers showed that (1) radio alone was superior in providing information about four health and nutritional innovations, (2) radio plus visual materials was superior to radio alone for the purpose of teaching skills (such as how to construct a latrine), and (3) that the multi-media approach, when combined with interpersonal discussion, was superior in achieving the continued use of the innovation and in securing the desired consequences of the innovations.

A series of field experiments in Brazil, Nigeria, and India, in which radio forums were compared with other approaches to providing information for rural development by Rogers and others (1970) and Roy and others (1969) concluded: The efficiency (defined as a ratio of effectiveness to cost) of radio forums in diffusing innovations is much greater than for either (1) literacy-reading classes or (2) community newspapers, whether cost is measured (1) for peasant-receivers or (2) for change agencies.

Literacy should be viewed as a long-term developmental investment that is unlikely to pay off in increased knowledge or adoption of innovations in the short-term, such as one year. The community newspapers are essentially a single-medium approach; they do not achieve the effectiveness of a mass medium combined with interpersonal communication (as the media forum does).

A number of other studies on radio forums have been conducted in developing nations, with results generally similar to those reviewed previously in this chapter.

Radio Listening Group Campaigns in Tanzania

The experience of radio forums in Tanzania is discussed in detail elsewhere in this book by Dodds and Hall. For our purposes here, just the essential structure and philosophy behind the forums will be examined, and implications for use in other contexts will be discussed.

Tanzanian radio forums are unique in many respects from the forums of other countries. The reasons for this uniqueness are the historical/political framework in which the forums operate, and the actual organizational structure of the forums. Tanzania, like many other former colonies struggling to develop, has had to face the problems of minimal political integration, poverty, illiteracy, and poor health in the setting of a large rural population. What distinguished Tanzania from many other developing countries are the priorities that she has set for herself, and the determined cohesive efforts she has made toward achieving her goals. Three themes predominate in Tanzania: the establishment of democracy within a single-party system, economic development within a framework of

rural socialism, and the reform and expansion of the educational systems to suit the requirements of and to contribute to Tanzania's developing society (Dodds and Hall, 1974). It is with these goals in mind that Tanzania has very consciously adopted the use of radio forums.

From the start of the radio forums in 1969, the use of this multi-media approach was seen as a way to mobilize the population to take an active role in their own political/social/economic development. Non-government radio forums existed as early as 1967 (Dodds and Hall, 1974, p. 10). The theme of the first campaign, "To Plan Is To Choose," stressed the choice of rural socialist development and its implications to the people. The second campaign, "The Choice Is Yours" in 1970, had as its subject the importance of political participation among the masses, and was held to create interest and involvement in the 1970 elections. Celebration of a decade of independence and a review of the nation's development was the theme of "Time For Rejoicing" (1971). This was the first national-scale campaign, and the first one on which there is detailed evaluation. The "Man Is Health" campaign in 1973 dealt with national health and the "Food Is Life" campaign in 1975 dealt with food production and nutrition.

Each of these campaigns utilized a two-way flow of communication, an educational approach towards knowledge dissemination, and social mechanisms that encouraged group participation in action. In summary, one part of Tanzania's uniqueness in the use of radio forums is the cohesiveness and integration of the way in which the forums are utilized in relation to the overall priorities of the country.

The second characteristic that differentiates Tanzania's radio forums from those of most other countries is its organizational structure.

Two main features of this structure are its campaign (program) approach and the lack of a permanent agency to oversee all the campaigns.

The campaign, or program, approach refers to a specific term, single subject-area radio forum. A time frame is set by the agencies planning the campaign so that there exists a definite "beginning-end" time reference for all participants to relate to. This is felt to help concentrate energies and lead to group action. The same thinking is behind choosing a single subject-area -- it is thought that by concentrating on one issue intense interest will be created which can lead to mass action.

Tanzania does not have one single agency that has overall control of the organization and implementation of the radio campaigns. Instead, the campaigns involve several ministries. This lack of central control could potentially be counter-productive, but this does not seem to be the case in Tanzania. Usually one ministry will take the lead, and the campaigns to date have been for the most part smoothly organized. Coordinated efforts among agencies, the political party (TANU), and local personnel have so far made the need for a super-agency unnecessary.

The second aspect of Tanzania's uniqueness in the use of radio forums is the organizational structure, which uses the campaign approach and which attempts to avoid counter-productive bureaucracy by avoiding a permanent super-agency of radio forums.

The evaluations by Dadds and Hall (1974), by Hall (1975), and by the Planning and Research Department (1975) indicate that, on the whole, the campaigns have been successful.

1. An atmosphere has been created in which people in rural areas have been able to take control of their own health, development, politics, etc.

2. Large numbers of the rural population have been given access to specific and relevant information.
3. The methods offer a realistic alternative to much-criticized "traditional" student-teacher relationships.
4. Cost per participant is low.
5. Grass-roots political structures are strengthened.

There are cautions and potential problems that must be looked at, not only in the Tanzanian case but also in most others. One is the potential danger of a centrally planned campaign that does not allow for a real flow of feedback from the people, and the possibility that the campaign may not be relevant to specific local situations. If feedback did exist, and if the central planning mechanism had the capacity to adjust, this potential pitfall could be avoided.

Another danger can be avoided by strong pre-campaign preparation for a campaign. This is most important and includes the advance training of personnel at all levels. As Hall (1975) points out, existing structures such as agriculture or community development extension systems can be used, but training in new methods must still be given.

And finally, without good communication and coordination between all groups concerned in a campaign, the likelihood of success will be small.

The implications of the Tanzanian case for other countries will have to be looked at in light of each particular country's historical/political context. It can be inferred from the history of radio forum campaigns in Tanzania that if a country has a strong commitment to specified national priorities, and if these priorities are perceived by the broad spectrum of the intended audience to be in their benefit and under their control, then a radio campaign promoting these priorities has a good chance

of being successful, given all the other prerequisites for radio forums. In addition, evidence from the Tanzanian case suggests that a programmatic, non-institutionalized approach to organizing the forums may be advantageous over the continuous type of radio forums in achieving group action on specific development problems.

Emerging Guidelines on Radio Forums

On the basis of the extensive experience and research into the role of radio forums in rural development in the nations of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the following general guidelines have emerged which serve as conclusions for the present chapter.

1. Radio is the single mass media channel that most effectively reaches the widest audience of villagers at present.
2. It is possible to produce radio programming about development topics that is attention-getting and interesting to village audiences -- if it is planned carefully to meet villagers' needs, if it is presented in an appropriate message format (such as in the preferred language and the traditional/folk artistic and cultural forms, etc.), and if a variety of production styles (for example, dialogue, dramatization, popular music, and narration) are utilized.
3. Radio alone as a medium of conveying development messages should be supplemented by other media such as listening guides, workbooks, simple booklets, and various audio-visual materials -- a multi-media approach usually will out-perform any single channel.
4. Radio has a special advantage for maximizing audience segmentation strategies in that particular radio programming can be beamed at a special village audience in the appropriate language, at a convenient time of day for listening, using an attention-getting format, and utilizing localized message content.
5. Special abilities are required on the part of radio producers to reach rural audiences effectively, in that they must be

- knowledgeable about and trained to recognize villagers' information needs, appropriate vocabulary, speed of comprehension, and concept formation, as well as have subject-matter expertise (for example, agriculture, health, etc.).
6. Development communication should be viewed as a total process that includes understanding the village audience and their needs, communication planning around selected strategies, message production, dissemination, reception in listening groups, and feedback, rather than just as a one-way direct communicator-to-passive-receiver activity.
 7. Greater communication effectiveness can be achieved when a relatively small number of high-priority campaign themes are carefully selected and implemented in an integrated and coordinated fashion.
 8. The effectiveness of a development campaign through radio and supplementary media is maximized when some type of listening group or forum is organized at the receiver end of the communication process.
 9. Radio forums seem to be effective with illiterate audiences as well as literates.
 10. One of the important functions of forums is to provide feedback to program producers regarding the usefulness of the media messages, the style of message presentation, the utility of supplementary materials, and the logistic limitations to action (that is, adoption of the innovations featured in the messages).
 11. Listening/discussing forums are important in converting the members' knowledge into action through discussion and exchanges of experience; the objective of the groups is to achieve behavior change on the part of the villagers, such as adopting agricultural innovations, building latrines, getting inoculations, using family planning methods, etc.
 12. A variety of low-cost means are available for identifying, organizing, and maintaining radio forums. For example, (1) identifying existing leadership and "natural groups" in villages that can be converted to listening/discussing forums (with the provision of adequate incentives), (2) training and motivating in-place government employees like school teachers, agricultural extension workers, and family planning field workers to organize forums, and (3) using radio to urge people to form listening groups, as well as employing full or part-time organizers.
 13. Forums can be organized and maintained for time periods of different duration, depending on the nature of the campaign

theme being presented. For instance, a grow-more-what campaign might utilize listening groups for a series of four once-a-week meetings to be timed just prior to the planting seasons, while other forum systems are organized on a "permanent" basis to receive and discuss a weekly series of radio programs on a wide variety of development topics. In any event, radio forums, once organized, will not last forever; probably a forum should be expected to disband after one or two years of operation.

14. Radio forums are more effective if each group has a leader with minimum training in how to lead group discussion and how to use the supplementary print materials properly.
15. Forums should be relatively small in size, with from 10 to 20 members, so that each individual has an opportunity for participation and so that travel to the forum meeting place is convenient.
16. The concept of forums is highly compatible with villagers' experiences and cultural preferences. However, radio reception by a small, informal group of friends was more common in the recent past than it is now, as the ownership of radio sets by individual villagers has become more widespread.
17. A campaign approach to radio listening groups may be advantageous over institutionalized radio forums (1) when everyone has individual access to the medium (of radio), and (2) when segmentation of audience and content is especially appropriate.
18. Caution must be exercised that a radio forum system does not inform and motivate the village audience to undertake behavior changes that are then blocked by the unavailability of development inputs (like fertilizers, medicines, etc.), leading to widespread frustration. Possible ways to minimize this problem is to select forum campaign themes carefully so that they involve more readily available inputs, to coordinate the campaign with relevant government and private agencies that are expected to provide the inputs, and to use the forum system's feedback devices to identify input bottlenecks at an early stage.
19. Thus a radio forum system is not only a way to change the behavior of villagers, but also a means of changing government institutions in directions that better serve villagers' needs.

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