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DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPING SOCIETIES

Facing the Realities

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Abstract / Helping a people to understand and accept the rationale for changing existing conditions that are considered no longer conducive to their well-being requires the full and active involvement of the people in the planning and execution of the advocated change. Otherwise, the change agent will not understand the people's worldviews, and the people will not have the opportunity to learn. Research and practical field experiences have shown that the neglect of this basic fact has led to the failure of many a well-intentioned development or social change project. The neglect of such a vital aspect of the development process should, in the 21st century, be seen and treated as a thing of the past. This article is an attempt to provide some simple but basic facts about the importance of target group participation and its many advantages in the development process.

Keywords / barriers / commitment / communication / development / involvement / motivation / participation / target group

The greatest threat to successful development projects these days is not so much the difficulty of getting target social systems to accept and be involved, or of getting the necessary resources, but the unwillingness of development agents and controlling authorities to 'Know their Audiences' before planning advocated development projects. (Moemeka, Closing remarks at the end of UNDP Training Seminar, Turin, Italy, 1996)

Since the late 1970s, after Rogers (1976) identified the key characteristics of the new development paradigm, there has been some definite shift in development perspectives both from the 'right' and from the 'left'. Neither the early 1960s dominant paradigm (both economic and communication) which was predicated on the trickle-down perspective and which placed complete emphasis on economic/industrial growth and the provision of supporting information, nor the mid-1970s humanistic and basic needs perspectives, which tended to attach exclusive importance to cultural and human contexts, was any longer seen as a sufficient and satisfactory approach to development and social change. Based on earlier warnings about what development *is not* (Hoselitz, 1952; Hagen, 1962; Hedebo, 1982) many development communicators who believed in the economic-only development paradigm and those who strongly supported the humanistic perspective, for example, Inayatullah (1967), Beltran (1974), Rogers (1976) and Hornik (1988), began to see the wisdom in combining the two paradigms. The rationale was that not only does a combination paradigm help

to maximize the advantages of each and minimize their dysfunctions, but it also creates a symbiotic relationship which yields a much higher benefit for the target social system. The physical (economic) and the sociocultural (human) aspects of life are complementary in the process of development unless they are effectively integrated into both the planning and implementation of development programs (a task which communication is well suited to perform) they would each be a drag on the other (Moemeka, 1994: 17).

Participation and Involvement

In spite of conclusive evidence of the importance of *not ignoring* the human component of target social systems and of the intractable nature of the sociocultural variables that affect and guide the people's lives, many development projects in developing societies are still planned and executed without the participation of the target social system.

A case in point is what happened in Turin, Italy, 18–22 April 1996 at a training seminar on advocacy skills for country representatives of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Africa and the Middle East. I was invited as a consultant. To my utter surprise the training program was planned to revolve around *how the representatives can use advocacy to win the concurrence of government officials* in their country of duty for suggested development projects. When, in my presentation, I raised the issue of involving the grassroots population and the ultimate beneficiaries of projects, the supervising UNDP officials were offended. For them, the important people to discuss with were those who have the power to make decisions that affect the country, not the beneficiaries of project outcomes. Such reaction rightly reflects the overall policy of the UNDP (an organization charged with the sole responsibility for development in a developing country) which appears to have realized the importance of target audience participation only in 1993 when it said 'People's participation *is becoming* the central issue of our time' (Diouf, 1995: 8).

The implication of this line of approach is, of course, not new. It is 'faith' in the trickle-down theory – the driving force of the old dominant paradigm of development communication under which local elite's and development agents' interpersonal systems were used along with mass communication to advocate and seek support for social change and development. The result was directed social change and development initiated, planned and implemented by foreigners without consultation with, and without the involvement of, the beneficiaries. It is such *externally imposed* development efforts that led Chambers (1983) to assert that 'foreigners continue to perceive problems and prescribe solutions on behalf of Third World countries and their people'. Chambers calls such foreigners 'rural development tourists' who spend more time hobnobbing with the urban-based bureaucratic elite than with the poorest of the poor in rural villages.

The very minimal impact of the dominant paradigm is very well known and need not be repeated here. Suffice it to say that from the Northwestern territories of Canada to Sri Lanka, and from South Africa to Afghanistan

many development projects have failed outright or dwindled in effect soon after implementation because the target social systems were not involved either in the planning or the implementation of these projects. Experts in the field, doing practical work, have all along decried such absence of target audience participation in development projects. Ascroft and Masilela (1994: 268) had this to say:

Those of us who have been actively involved over the past two decades in executing development projects or evaluating them on behalf of UN Agencies or bilateral aid donors, cannot have helped but remark the paucity of instances where participation in a project decision by representative samples of beneficiaries is actually an integral component of a project.

Such exclusion or ignoring of the expected beneficiaries of development project outcomes leads to a situation in which *ethnocentrism* and *cultural pride* (both of which are strong barriers to change) can thrive. It is a shot-in-the-dark approach to planning and implementation. This was starkly brought home to a government veterinarian in the Benin Republic, who was sent to help improve livestock rearing in Parakou village in the Republic. He began his assignment with an aristocratic, ethnocentric, know-better-than-thou, arrogant attitude – condemning existing practices, and telling the people what to do. The villagers flatly rejected his advice, in spite of the fact that their sheep and goats were sickly and thin, and in spite of the fact that the advice he gave was right. Then he changed his approach. Instead of throwing information at the people, he learned to communicate with them; instead of talking at the people, he learned to talk with them; and instead of pushing solutions, he learned to listen to their views. Before long, the villagers began to implement the better practices that he suggested. These practices were the same ones that he unsuccessfully tried to ‘ram down their throats’ initially. This time, they were presented in ways that did not insult the intelligence and cultural norms of the villagers (*Connections*, 1995: 2)

Whether or not the development agents mean it, non-involvement of target social systems in the development process is always interpreted by target groups as a superiority complex on the part of the development agent. It is seen as denigration of the people’s abilities, and creates resentment which may lead to seeing the advocated change as an imposition from the outside. Furthermore, ethnocentric behavior on the part of development agents leads to ‘call-up’ of cultural pride on the part of target social systems. This manifests itself when the target social system sees the way a new idea is introduced as ‘putting down’ its long-cherished beliefs and values and traditions, and especially if the development or social change agent focuses attention solely on pointing out the disadvantages of existing methods of doing things, and carefreely emphasizes the superiority of the advocated change, instead of giving ‘due’ credit to the old methods (after all, it has all along sustained the people) while carefully showing how it no longer is adequate to meet the ensuing expectations which the new method can adequately meet (Moemeka, 1993: 10). Avoidance of such destructive ethnocentric behavior is assured only through *knowing the audience* or entering into the sociocultural contexts of the target social system.

Development communicators cannot truly understand their target social systems without entering into the sociocultural contexts of those systems. And they cannot honestly claim to have entered into such sociocultural contexts if they do not adequately understand the target group's characteristics, needs and aspirations, as well as the group's potentials and resources. This means knowing the right answers to such basic questions as who has to be reached, who needs to know what, how and when and at what cost in terms of time, energy and resources; who controls whom (who listens to whom); what are the physical, economic and communication environments in relation to the proposed project or projects? Without such relevant information, planning of any development project for any target group would amount to shooting in the dark.

It was to avoid such blind actions, which were rampant before 1976 and which would appear to still be the unfortunate norm, that UNESCO suggested five major activities that could help in identifying the information needs of development projects and existing recourses of targeted countries before planning projects (UNESCO, 1976: 5-10). These guidelines, which were suggested for application to countries, also apply to target groups and communities:

1. The collection of basic data and systematic analysis of the country upon such bases as population densities, geographic and political limitations to communication, variety of social structures, ecology and agriculture, industrial, manpower and economic capacities.

Particularly important here are data on the system's development goals and objectives, hierarchy of authority, decision-making processes, leadership types and styles, levels of education, political climate, major occupations and relationship with surrounding social systems.

2. The production of an inventory of the present communication resources including modern and traditional media and analysis of the variety of present communication structures. Such an inventory should include study of the audience, its communication consumption patterns and so on.

Here, the emphasis is on the relationship between the people and the existing communication systems. To establish this relationship, relevant information is needed on:

- a. what traditional communication structures and modes the social system has and how they are utilized;
- b. how available and accessible mass media facilities are;
- c. who uses what medium, when and for what purposes;
- d. what utilization capacities – receiving sets, literacy, purchasing power, leisure time and so on – obtain in the social system.
3. Critical analysis of the present communication policy (or lack of it) including such considerations as ownership, structures, political control and decision-making.

The demand here is for data on policy decisions as to what medium/media to establish; where to locate them and why; staffing;

freedom of action for media personnel, availability of financial resources for maintenance and operation, ethics and equity in the distribution of communication content; openness to feedback; and audience participation in the communication process.

4. Critical analysis of communication needs of the society especially in relation to the existing social and communication structures and the uses to which communication is put.

This is intended to find out if existing communication systems are appropriate and adequate for achieving identified objectives, and whether there is need for new communication infrastructure that could be used to make the existing systems more efficient. Also important here is the need to ascertain the policy objective with reference to communication content and how this affects and is affected by existing socio-cultural situations.

5. The analysis of the communication components in all aspects of national development plans and programs in order to ascertain the communication requirements of the programs, and be in a better position to reconcile the needs with the means and capacities available.

This activity seeks to determine the level of consistencies that exist between infrastructure and institutions, as well as the consistencies between project goals and national goals. This examination is intended to help point out any weak points that may exist in the linkages among different levels of development communication objectives – project level, local level and national level.

These UNESCO guidelines make it clear that effective and efficient development communication planning involves the organization of human resources and activities for the efficient use of communication resources and for meeting laid-down communication policy goals. This is to be done in the context of each social system's development goals, subject to prevailing social, cultural, economic and political realities. The guidelines are geared towards meeting the *information need* of development projects; they do not constitute the *communication need* of development projects. Information is provision of facts and figures; communication is exchange of ideas and opinions. Before one can effectively communicate, one needs relevant information. But the information itself does not constitute communication. And injection of new ideas and information cannot alone help solve social problems. As has been noted (Moemeka, 1993: 78):

Effective development communication is not merely concerned with providing information on development activities. Besides creating opportunity for the people to know about the technical nature of ideas and how they work and with what effect, development communication plays the more important role of creating an atmosphere for understanding how these new ideas fit into the real social situation in which the people live their lives.

There has to be exchange of ideas using available and relevant information as the necessary raw material. The importance of the UNESCO guidelines is that they open up an important communication path between the target

social system and the development communicator, and more importantly, provide the necessary and relevant information required in order to communicate effectively with the target social system about the change being advocated.

This is the starting point of what Rahim (1994: 135) calls the dialogical model of development, which demands a thorough knowledge of social situations of target social systems. He points out that this model requires detailed information on significant social groups and communities and their structural relations; economic, social and cultural activities and events constituting their normal life patterns; agents and institutions through which they represent and communicate their worldviews and values; their regular and occasional communication links with each other; and sociolinguistic peculiarities of their verbal and non-verbal behavior. This is 'entering into the people's sociocultural context'. This entrance is made faster and easier if target social systems are seen not only as the objects of development, but also as the subjects, and are brought into the development process from the onset and allowed to participate effectively. As Pearce and Narula (1986) have pointed out, participation is a key factor in development and social change. Not only is participation necessary for the purposes of ensuring good relationship between the development agent and the target social system, it is also very important for:

- Increasing the development agent's knowledge of the social, cultural, economic and political contexts of the target social system;
- Improving the self-confidence and self-worth of the people;
- Raising the people's level of awareness and improving their understanding of their sociocultural situation;
- Providing a non-formal education training opportunity for the target social system; and
- Ensuring that any differences between the goals and expectations of the development agent and the felt needs and expectations of the target social system are openly and intelligently resolved.

Of the four types of participation identified (Moemeka, 1987) only the *active* (physical), in which target social systems actually take part in development planning and execution, and the *radiational*, which occurs after the project has been completed (when people who did not actively/physically take part in either the planning or the execution of a development project begin to implement the demands of the completed project because its benefits have become obvious), are beneficial in development. In this article, however, we are referring only to active/physical participation which occurs when donors and controlling authorities, the local elite and the target groups work together from decision-making to planning and to implementation. When the people's participation is only on the level of being present at meetings to listen to what is being planned for them and what they are required to do, participation is only passive, or at best, vicarious. This is what Ascroft and Masilela (1994: 262) were referring to when they point out that,

Decision-making will fail to be participatory so long as one set of participants – the development benefactors – consider their knowledge systems to be overwhelmingly superior to those of all others, not on the basis of careful systematic evaluation but on an opinion born of superiority complex.

Motivation and Commitment

While the UNDP, and many other UN agencies as well as many government agencies and officials, have yet to understand fully or have refused to acknowledge the importance of target audience involvement/participation, the Food and Agricultural Organization has made it a crucial part of its planning and implementation of development projects. In a policy statement, the director-general Jacques Diouf said:

Development programs can only realize their full potential if knowledge and technology are shared effectively, and if populations are motivated and committed to achieve success. Unless people themselves are the driving force of their own development, no amount of investment or provision of technology and inputs will bring about any lasting improvements in their living standards. (Diouf, 1995: 8)

This is a carefully worded statement which does not only talk of audience participation, but also of appropriate balance between knowledge and technology, and of the importance of target audience motivation and commitment. People can participate in a development process and still have fears and doubts about the project or about their own ability to handle it. Development involves change, that is, the creation of a new order of things. Will the people have the confidence to accept the advocated change? Will they be willing to follow it through? Do they feel that they have the knowledge and skills to implement the change? And if not, are they willing to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills? If there are possible barriers (there usually are many) will the people be willing to work towards overcoming such barriers? These are questions that revolve around the issues of commitment and motivation. How the questions are answered depends on how the development communicator/agent handles those characteristics whose presence tends to enhance the change process and those whose presence directly and negatively affects the process (Moemeka, 1993: 1–13).

As Niccolo Machiavelli (1513) noted in *The Prince*, 'there is nothing more difficult to plan, more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to manage than the creation of a new order of things'. This is acknowledging that change endeavors have always faced, in addition to problems inherent in change itself, problems that are not inherent but have substantial impact on the outcome of change endeavors. Unless these hurdles or external factors are recognized, managed and/or guarded against, no change program can truly succeed. These factors or hurdles are closely related to the building up of motivation and commitment on the part of the target social system. They can help or hinder the process of ensuring that an advocated new order of things is accepted as a 'good fit' to a target social system.

Enhancing Factors

The following are the most important of those factors or characteristics whose presence always works in favor of development and social change.

Relative Advantage

This goes beyond comparative advantage which is the positively advantageous benefit of an advocated change over the old order of things. Relative advantage examines the difference in benefits in relation to how well it fits into the social system. It emphasizes quality over quantity. A difference may be small or even non-existent; but if the new order – the advocated change – serves the cause of, for example, social justice, fair play and equality or equity, it could be considered relatively advantageous. This is what happened in the Philippines in the 1970s when, in spite of its economic disadvantage to the nation, land redistribution to the peasantry was carried out. Relative advantage is the single most important motivating factor in social change and development. Without it, nothing else could count significantly. If, in the context of the target social system, the advocated change does not offer better opportunity than the existing order, the target group may not see any reason to change. Advocated changes that have the potential for a significantly positive impact on the target group are not only accepted; they also induce involvement and commitment on the part of the people.

Compatibility

This is the degree to which the advocated new order of things is consistent with the target social system's needs and aspirations in particular, and with sociocultural contexts in general. 'Consistency' here does not mean 'going along' with existing order. It means, instead, providing alternatives that are valid within the system. This could mean changing an existing value because of its adverse effect, teaching a new way of doing things, restructuring old and non-facilitative political relationships, or eliminating an antisocial behavior pattern. All these are compatible with the deeper values of beneficial social order, productive knowledge and good government. This means that compatibility in social change always calls for consistency with fundamental or basic values, not necessarily with secondary or peripheral values deriving from them. In fact, the very idea of change is incompatible with the existing order of things, but not necessarily with fundamental values. For example, the demands of a social change project may be incompatible with people's right to smoke, but provide opportunity for strengthening the fundamental value of living a healthy life and breathing clean air. Because other motorists have a right to a safe highway (individual freedom), my right to drive as I like (personal freedom) is curbed by law. Social change is directed at making target groups and individuals understand and accept the rationale behind such laws. Understanding and acceptance are easier

and more successful if the change advocated is compatible with the fundamental aspirations and values of the target social system.

Simplification

This refers to the degree of lack of complexity involved in understanding the demands of an advocated change, and in the process of implementing such demands. If the process involved in the change is difficult to understand, the target system may not be easily persuaded. On the other hand, if the group understands the change but finds that it would be difficult to execute, it would not be too eager to initiate the process of change. Simplification demands appropriateness in the structure, language and procedure (operational strategy) of the advocated change in relation to the level of the target social system's capacities. The structure of the project, the language of presentation and the procedure for execution of any social change or development endeavor must be at the identified level of intellectual capacity, skills, ability and comprehension of the target social system, otherwise motivation and commitment would not be forthcoming.

'Triability'

This is the degree to which the processes of an advocated change can be implemented on a trial basis. Advocated changes or development projects that can be tried out first before full implementation are known to have stronger appeal to target groups than those that cannot. 'Triability' removes the fear of uncertainty or the fear of large-scale failure, and tends to reassure target groups that they have the opportunity to revert back to the old order if the trial shows that the project will not succeed. Success of the trial helps to build up the people's confidence in both the project and the development communicator, and therefore serves as a bulwark against rejection. This characteristic provides a strong impetus for implementing social change or development projects for, more often than not, trials – even when they are not completely successful – are generally followed by full-scale implementation. It therefore is a good tactic to 'hasten slowly'.

Communicability

This is concerned with the degree to which it is easy to disseminate and discuss the facts of a social change project. If people are bashful of, or are constrained by cultural demands from open and free discussion of the issues involved in a change program, then it is not likely that such a change will come about easily. There will be little motivation and commitment. In order to build communicability into a change program that is constrained by culture or social inhibition, the communicator must first deal with the restraining hurdles, creating a conducive atmosphere for open discussions and dialog that will enable the scales to 'fall from' the people's eyes. Then

they must find relevant and alternative ways of circumventing the constraints. This means that dealing with the constraints must replace the original change project in urgency, for unless the constraints are removed or circumvented, the change will almost certainly fail to take off. The easier it is to talk about different aspects of a social change, the easier it will be for the people to understand its ramifications and to be committed to it.

These characteristics are individually important in any development program. It is not that they are (with the possible exception of relative advantage) absolutely indispensable. But ignoring any of them when considering how to ensure the people's motivation and commitment, may constitute a serious handicap to success. It is important to note that, although the characteristics have been recognized as objective criteria that enhance the acceptance of and willingness to be committed to development projects, the target social system may not perceive them as such. Therefore, the critical factor in their utility is the people's perception. Unless the target social system perceives each of them as enhancing, they will not have the impact described above. The closer the perception of the majority of the target group members is to the objective facts about the characteristics, the greater the chances of taking advantage of them. It follows, therefore, that apart from ensuring the presence of the characteristics in the implementation of advocated projects, there is the very important task of creating the communication environment in which the people can positively perceive the characteristics as enhancing.

Hindering Factors

On the other side of the coin are those factors which, by their very nature, tend always to work against the introduction of new ideas or implementation of new programs. Because change involves an alteration of the status quo, it always faces resistance – mild or strong. Whether people will mildly or strongly resist change is, first and foremost, influenced by their worldview or their articulation of social reality. Those who see reality as a 'fixed entity' that cannot and should not be changed (covering laws) are almost always opposed to any alteration of the status quo. They do not like to 'rock the boat'. Those who see reality as individually determined or created (interpretive rules) based on predispositions, are less close-minded to change, but do exhibit a very selfish perspective. They would argue in favor of advocated change but only if the expected outcome of the change contains ingredients of personal gain. Those who believe that no single factor can fully explain reality, that is, that which is real or good or true is usually the result of the unique combination of interdependent variables (open systems), are most open to change. They generally take a retrospective look back, a circumspective look around, an introspective look inside and a prospective look forward at the social situation vis-a-vis the advocated change before making up their mind. It is an important duty of the development communicator to harness these different worldviews to

advantage – encourage the open-minded and re-educatively lead the others to accept. But no development communicator can identify who in the target group belongs to which category without adequate knowledge of the target social system.

The open systems group is the very desire of any development communicator or social change agent. It is not that target group members in this group do not ever resist change; they sometimes do, but such resistance, in the face of pressure to alter the status quo, is caused by a number of factors that derive from the sociocultural and environmental realities of the target social system. Zaltman and Duncan (1977: 66) identified four broad areas from which such resistance can emanate. Called 'barriers to change', they are cultural, social, organizational and psychological. Each broad area is made up of a number of resistance factors that are generally rationalized within the context of individual social systems. Cultural and social barriers are relevant in this discussion.

Cultural Barriers

These are hindering cultural factors brought to the surface as a result of lack of correspondence or symmetry or relevance between the culture of the target group and the demands of an advocated change. The perception of such incongruences could be individual or group based and tend to be rooted, in general, in the prevailing sociocultural and economic situation, and in particular, in cultural values and beliefs and in cultural ethnocentrism. Economic and sociocultural barriers find expression in numerous types of resistance which, invariably, have *solid justifications* in the context of the target social system. Okediji (1972: 4) lists a few examples of such resistances: resistances rooted in ideologies that run counter to population control and beliefs about the negative and positive aspects of specific methods; resistances rooted in the traditional heritage of a people; resistances rooted in economic well-being; resistances that are anchored in the personality needs of the individual with particular reference to sex-role images and sexual relationships; and resistances that are anchored in health conditions, the relationship between high fertility and high infant mortality. Knowledge of the possibility of such resistances existing within target groups and of how to effectively deflate their impact cannot be gained while sitting in the glittering offices of the North or the air-conditioned offices of the South.

Cultural values and beliefs: The target social system's values and beliefs can be strong behavior instruments for resistance when the advocated change or the way it is advocated and the expected outcome are very different from what the people expect or have been used to. For example, a change program calling for hard work in a cultural environment in which there is an 'ascribed' lack of work ethic; a change endeavor calling for family planning in a social system in which children are seen as 'wealth'; or a plan to

introduce a labor-saving machine into an organization which had been based on labor-intensive operation, will each evoke resistance of some sort – some mild, some strong. But such resistance almost always fades away in the face of a well-planned and executed development communication effort geared towards re-education and carried out within the target social system on a dialogical basis. The examples given above may be what the people *want*, but they certainly are not what they or their social system *need*. A communication strategy that carefully explains the difference and subtly shows how the pursuit of *needs* is more fundamental than the pursuit of *wants* would go a long way to winning the people over. But as an Igbo (Nigerian) adage says: 'You cannot stay at a distance and physically help someone else to properly put on a necklace.'

Cultural ethnocentrism: The adverse effect of ethnocentrism has already been mentioned above. A more detailed explanation is needed here. Differences in cultural background between the development communicator or change agent and the target social system can create very non-conducive ethnocentric attitudes and behavior, sometimes unintentionally. However, whether or not intentioned, such differences can lead, unless taken care of early, to a variety of disabling situations:

- A feeling of superiority, especially on the part of the development agent;
- A superiority complex that could 'push' the agent to want to 'lead from the front', that is, assume a 'know-better-than-thou' attitude, instead of 'leading from behind', that is, provide the necessary cues and information that would facilitate the people's decision-making process, boost their sense of self-worth, build up their motivation and increase their desire to be fully involved;
- A target social system that resents the agent, simply because he or she is not their own 'kind', and one that may therefore perceive the advocated change as an imposition from the outside.

Such attitudes and behavior are, of course, the result of two underlying problems – lack of knowledge of the target social system and lack of participation by members of the social system. They manifest when the development communicator or change agent fails to learn from the people, and fails to create opportunities for them to be physically and actively involved in the conceptualization of, discussions on and planning and execution of the advocated change. The tendency for development agents to be satisfied with passive or vicarious participation in the client system often leaves differences in cultural perspectives between the agent and the target social system unresolved, with adverse attendant results. Such unresolved differences which a 'distant' development agent may not be aware of, have been known to create differing underlying perceptions about the real nature of development problems and about how they can best be solved, leading to expression of strong opposition even to ostensibly advantageous change projects.

Social Barriers

Social interrelationship, in-group solidarity, fear of isolation and fear of group conflicts are examples of social barriers that frequently cause resistance to change or development. When an advocated change project is perceived as having the capacity of adverse impact on existing social relationships within the target social system or between it and other social systems, it will face some resistance. The stronger the solidarity of a group, the greater the chances that the group as a whole or individuals within it will resist any new order that threatens that solidarity, even when there are obvious advantages to the new order of things. And because of fear of isolation or the desire to belong, conformity to group norms is valued both by the individual and by the group. Any change being proposed that is not compatible with existing societal or group norms is, therefore, likely to be resisted.

Also relevant here is the impact of the power structure within the target social system. This is particularly important with regards to *referent* and *reward* power. If those to whom the social system looks up for guidance or depends upon for socioeconomic and political well-being are not in favor of a change project, the target system will tend to resist the change effort. In general, when those who have power are threatened by an advocated change, they tend to use their power to sway opinions to their side, thus creating in the target social system the need to resist the change. 'The more a reference group is threatened by a possible change, the more active it will be in expressing its opposition to the target or client group' (Zaltman and Duncan, 1977: 73).

The UNDP policy referred to above was presumably predicated on the need to 'get the yes' from government officials who have power, in the hope that such a 'yes' will trickle down to the grassroots. This, of course, is a false assumption that equates the *power* of decision-makers with the *influence* of opinion leaders. Government officials are decision-makers who mostly have *coercive* power; target group spokespeople are opinion leaders who mostly have *referent* power. While the former imposes power and generally 'wins' compliance; the latter exudes influence and induces motivation and commitment. Only those who can motivate have the power to sway opinions on change and development one way or the other.

Resistance can emanate from either the development communicator/agent or from the target social system. But from whatever source it may come, resistance is not necessarily a destructive factor in the development process. In fact, it is regarded as a healthy phenomenon to the extent that it acts as a smoke detector, drawing attention to issues and problems that would otherwise escape early or any detection, and cause greater problems later. As a result, the presence of resistance does create opportunities for discussion and for thrashing out differences, and so helps to put change programs on more solid grounds. This is not saying that resistance cannot act as a hindrance to development efforts. It can, and does, in fact, do so, especially if it is strongly expressed and is supported by a majority of the

people in the target social system. But, in general, most resistance, without necessarily meaning to, ends up acting as a help rather than a hindrance, provided it is well handled.

In order to turn resistance into positive use, the development communicators must understand the rationale behind the resistance. But they most certainly will not be able to do so unless they have first entered into the sociocultural contexts of the target social system. In other words, development or social change communicators *must know* the target system well enough, before they can hope to understand the reasons for any resistance to change in that system, and be in a position to turn resistance into advantage.

Conclusion

Participation/involvement and motivation/commitment are the necessary precursors of 'knowing what to do, knowing how to do it, and being willing to do it' – all of which, along with 'having the resources to do it' constitute the indispensable requirements for successful efforts in development and social change. Without the former, the latter cannot occur; without the latter, no development or social change activity will succeed. Whether or not there will be participation and involvement and motivation and commitment is determined by how the development agent or communicator and the controlling authorities see and treat groups or communities targeted for development. The past and present practice of seeing and treating them as mere *objects* of development who only need 'to be told what to do', should give way to seeing and treating them as *both subjects and objects* of development who must physically participate and be actively involved in the process of their own development, from the planning to the execution stage. For this to happen, development agents or communicators must 'know their target audiences' and understand the sociocultural contexts of the people. This means that in the 21st century, those in charge of planning and implementing development activities should be people who understand the social structure in which they work, and understand how change can take place in it – not merely how messages can be disseminated. This is a necessity because:

The goal of development communication is to smoothen the path to arrive at development objectives (increased production, better health, nutrition and social services, higher standard of living, clean environment, social justice, etc) by creating an enhancing atmosphere for the exchange of ideas that would produce a happy balance between physical output (material advancement) and human inter-relationships. (Moemeka, 1987: 132)

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