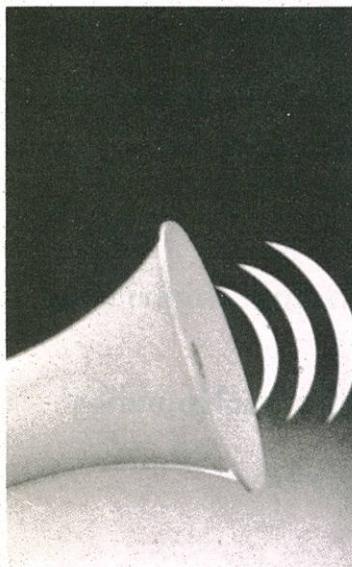


# THE COMMUNICATION PLANNING PROCESS

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The simplified approach to planning a communication programme which is discussed below represents an attempt to systematically analyze, coordinate and synthesize all factors involved in achieving a measurable change in the target audience's behaviour.

In any development project, attention is first given to the audiences and the desired behaviour, i.e. what would be the behavioural changes in the project audiences that will help them meet the identified needs. Then decisions about the messages that would help convert the audiences' existing behaviour to the desired (end-of-project) behaviour must be made, followed by the selection of a strategy and communication channels on the basis of obtainable resources. Finally the evaluation methodology must be planned. This measures whether or not, and to what degree, the desired behaviour has been adopted by the audience. the planning process therefore takes the form of a cycle, because the evaluation may lead to changes in our messages and strategy in order that the projects objectives are achieved.

We can now look at the components of the planning process in greater detail, not forgetting that they are all interrelated. Decisions made regarding any of the following components are likely to influence all other components.

## I. Identification and analysis of target audiences

Before the actual planning process starts, an appraisal of needs will have been conducted and the broad goals of the project must be formulated. After this it is essential that all



types and levels of project audiences be spelled out as precisely as possible.

It is very important that a programme planner gathers as much information about the audiences as possible before going to the next step. The first reason for this is that the project can only bridge the gap between the pre-project behaviour and the desired behaviour of the audiences if the communication is done in a two-way fashion i.e. planners take the needs of the audiences into consideration as well as the objectives of their organization. Secondly, data about the audience will provide baseline information against which any behavioural changes occurred can be measured.

Audience categorizing and analysis must be done in terms of their characteristics i.e. physical (age, sex etc.), psychological (attitude and belief etc.), educational (knowledge of the subject, communication style) and socio-economic (profession, religion etc.). If the information about the audiences is unknown, some type of study is needed, the results of which are feedback to the planner.

Both vertical and horizontal links should be described. "Vertical" in this case means the hierarchical orders of people involved in an organization. Very often this ranges from high level policy makers/administrators in a Ministry down to change agents or field cadre in the rural communities, and the project beneficiaries which are the ultimate target group. "Horizontal" means the parallel groups of persons in the equivalent organizations such as the policy maker and change agents in another ministry which are directly involved in the project activities.

## II. Formulation of the terminal behavioural objectives

This is not merely a re-statement the broad goal of the project but the listing of specific behavioural changes needed to take place within the audiences by the end of the project. It describes specifically, in observable and measurable terms, the changes in knowledge, attitude and practice of the audiences.

These objectives will provide a firm basis for the formative and summative evaluation of the project. In addition to this they will facilitate the selection and sequencing of messages that need to reach the audiences and simplify the selection of communication approach and media. In some cases they may also establish clear milestones for the project audiences themselves i.e. the audiences will know exactly what is expected of them and how to go about achieving these expectations.

Very often, development project objectives are written in terms of what the project (the planner) will do and not what the target audiences need to achieve. More often objectives are written in terms of procedural steps or work plan i.e. what has to be done, or in terms of general goals which only reflect broad government policy. However, to be useful in the ways described above objectives must be broken down into small specific tasks with measurable results; this means that they must describe what changes need to take place in the audiences behaviour

Objectives must of course also be consistent with the government policy and be realistic in terms of audiences' needs and resources available.



Step I and Step II are interchangeable. It is evident that planners cannot consider one without another. Therefore in many planning models these two steps are grouped together, or formulating objectives may come first in the process.

### **III. Selection and sequencing of messages**

Producing messages involves determining what subject matter is needed to achieve the projects behavioural objectives.

A planner generally starts off with identification of all the possible subject matter which relates to the desired objectives, and then later make a specific selection. Very often a planner needs to seek information from various sources such as subject matter specialists, research documents, etc. or undertake a topic study himself. Some of the guidelines in the selection and organization of messages are:

1. The selected subject matter must be essential to the development of required behavioural objectives i.e. it must cover all major knowledge and skills required of the audience, yet not provide unnecessary information.
2. It must be understandable and acceptable to the audiences i.e. not conflict with the audience's social customs and their educational abilities.
3. It must be organized in the best order for learning i.e. from simple to complex, starting with what the audiences already know, etc.

### **IV. The resources**

the planner must know what resources are available or obtainable to make his plan realistic. Therefore an inventory of what exists must be conducted and an utilization plan must be carefully drawn up.

Of the four types of resources - human, organizational, financial and time - the human resources seems to be most vital. Most successful development programmes use existing staffing which is strengthened to become capable of sustaining all activities on a long term basis. These various intermediaries between the planner and project beneficiaries are key human resources. It is important that they become involved and committed. They must be utilized in such a way that two-way communication between all groups is maintained.

the organizational resource are also very important; this includes physical facilities, equipment and materials. A planner must try to use or adapt existing resources though in some cases additional materials may be required.

The planner must also determine the financial requirements and draw up a budget for the project, however, this should be done after the communication strategy is selected.

### **V. The Communication Strategy**

This means analyzing the alternative methods of "how to get the job done" and selecting one of these alternatives in terms of channels, methods, and media. The strategy should include a combination of approaches to reach the target audiences, the selection of which obviously depends upon the previous steps discussed.



The selection of channels for approaching the audience is based on the information gathered about the target audience, their communication skills and practices and the available channels of communication in their community. In most cases a combination of channels are used, such as using individual contact, group methods, and mass media.

Once the channels are identified, the planner must think about the possible methods of communication, which largely depends again on the audience and the setting in which the communication process is taking place. The most effective results are usually obtained when the audience is actively involved in the learning process. Therefore the methods selected should include two-way methods such as group dynamics, radio farm forums, etc.

The choice of method generally influences the type of media materials which supplement the communication process. Media, if produced, should have a research base and must be pretested with a sample of the audience before mass production and distribution/utilization.

## VI. Evaluation

Evaluation should help the planner monitor the project, provide an assessment of the impact of various inputs in the project and give indications of the success of the project on a whole. It is therefore important to establish evaluation criteria before implementation begins, and ensure that a system for collecting and assessing this information is built into the project.

If the project fails to attain its objectives (i.e. the audiences did not do the thing they are expected to do) the information gathered must be used to analyze each step in the whole process to determine what went wrong i.e. whether the right audiences and their needs were identified, whether the strategy selected is appropriate, etc. Where the project monitoring system provides continuous feedback useful for project revision, a final evaluation of project impact may be taken at the end of the project.

Evaluation is often overlooked as it is thought to be costly and difficult. This need not be the case if it is planned from the start and project objectives are expressed in measurable terms. Also, in terms of helping achieve these objectives the benefits should far outweigh the costs.

Target Audience	Objectives (change needed)	Message	Strategy Channel + Media	Evaluation
Policy maker/high level administrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To approve and support the policy of the National Family Planning Programme (NFPP)</li> <li>- To follow-up on current progress in FP and participate in community level motivation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The National Policy on FP.</li> <li>- Population problem in Thailand.</li> <li>- The operation of NFPP:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Providing service</li> <li>2. Training</li> <li>3. Motivation</li> <li>4. Research and Evaluation</li> </ol> </li> <li>- Current movement and trends in FP.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conference/ workshop</li> <li>Periodical</li> <li>Newspapers</li> <li>Ratio-TV</li> <li>Orientation film for policy-makers</li> <li>Mass mailing</li> </ul>	Long term observation
Health personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To provide FP services</li> <li>- To motivate rural communities especially during MCH services.</li> <li>- To cooperate and assist in all phases of work of the NFPP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The National Policy on FP.</li> <li>- The role and objective of the NFPP.</li> <li>- The workshop of the integrated training/motivation programme.</li> <li>- Contraceptive methods (details of technical aspects).</li> <li>- How to motivate.</li> <li>- How to use simple AV materials for motivators.</li> <li>- Importance of health personnel as motivators.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In-service training sessions in the provinces supported by mobile units equipped with AV training materials.</li> <li>- Programmed instruction.</li> <li>- Follow-up newsletter and periodicals.</li> <li>- Incorporating FP into monthly regular meeting.</li> <li>- Personal contact and official letter from NFPP Bangkok.</li> <li>- Mass media.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pre-test, post-test at training session.</li> <li>- Short term follow-up at duty stations by trainers with the mobile units.</li> <li>- Long term supervision by provincial supervisors.</li> </ul>

Rural communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be able to explain the meaning and concept of FP.</li> <li>- Explain the different methods of FP including details on side-effects (as distinguished from rumours) and how each method is to be used.</li> <li>- Acquire a positive attitude toward FP and can explain the needs for FP to other villagers.</li> <li>- Select a suitable FP method and seek the service.</li> <li>- Successfully practice FP until additional children are desired.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Population problems in Thailand.</li> <li>- What is FP.</li> <li>- The benefit of FP as it relates to socio-economic conditions, family welfare, mental and physical health etc.</li> <li>- FP methods, good/bad points, side-effects, where and whom to seek services for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Pill</li> <li>- The IUD</li> <li>- Sterilization</li> <li>- Condom</li> <li>- Injections</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Questions/answers on rumours.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Person-to-person contact by trained health personnel Group meetings supported by AV aids from the Mobile Unit (when available) such as film, slide; exhibition, etc.</li> <li>- Home visit by health personnel.</li> <li>- Motivation kit can be used in absence of the Mobile Units. (containing wall charts on population problem, uterus models for loop insertion, sample of contraceptives, flip charts on MCH and FP posters and handbills).</li> <li>- Satisfied acceptors and local leaders.</li> <li>- Regionally-attuned motivation film.</li> <li>- Slides for movie theatres.</li> <li>- Radio</li> <li>- TV</li> <li>- Newspaper</li> <li>- Advertising billboard and exhibitions.</li> <li>- FP song contest.</li> <li>- FP picture contest.</li> <li>- Traditional media (if applicable).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Observation of the interest and questions during motivation sessions.</li> <li>- Follow-up survey and observation.</li> <li>- Clinical record.</li> </ul>
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