

Developing Rural Development Communication Media: Bench Mark Survey Report

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a) Researchers' Identity

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b) Objectives

The objectives of the survey can be broadly stated as follows:

- i. To make a situational analysis of the project area in order to understand the socio-economic conditions of the villages and the people, rate of literacy, situation of health, sanitation, nutrition, maternity, child care and family planning;
- ii. To identify the existing communication channels, patterns of information flow and coverage of different media in the villages;
- iii. To assess the information needs of the villagers and to identify appropriate communication media to serve their needs; and
- iv. To develop a data base for action research, longitudinal studies and similar other exercises of the faculty members of RDA and other agencies.

c) Executive summary

The present survey was conducted in selected villages of Sherpur Thana under Bogra district as a part of an action research project on "Development of Appropriate Rural Development Communication Media". Besides, collection of information on existing communication channels, media

coverage and information needs of the villagers for the proposed project, it was also intended that on the basis of the survey findings a data base would be developed for other action research and longitudinal studies. The major findings of the survey are summarized below:

1. The total area of the survey villages varied between 0.40 Km. In all the villages there were mosques and village level organizations sponsored by various development agencies. The primary schools and high schools were located within an average distance of 0.53 Km and 2.65 Km respectively. Three of these villages namely Magurgari, Dakhin Aman and Hajipur had electricity. Depending upon the area of the village the total number of households varied between 82 to 245 with a population range of 390 to 1122. The average family size in these villages was 4.5.

About 35% of the population in these villages was within 15 years in age, 54% between 16 to 50 years and the remaining 11% were above 50 years age group.

2. The literacy rate by villages varied between 23% to 56% with an average of 41%. This was significantly higher than the average literacy rate of 24.8% for the whole country.
3. About 50% of the population in these villages were married, 56% unmarried. 3% of women were widows and 1% of them divorced. All the people of these villages belonged to two major religious groups; Muslim and Hindu with a proportion of 82% and 18% respectively.
4. The major occupations of the households were; farming (65%), day labour (26%), service (10%), skilled work (9%), business (6%) and rickshaw pulling (2%). Most of the households had more than one occupation. In four villages about 2% of the households lived on begging.
5. Both by households and by villages wide variation was found in size of land holdings. The range was found between 33.37% acres to 0.40 acre with an average size of around 2 acres.

The proportion of functionally landless families (0-0.50 acre) in these villages varied between 40% to 54% with an average of 54.8%

6. On an average 23% members of the households in the survey villages were directly involved in income earning activities.

From the estimated annual income of the households which varies widely, was noted. The highest was Tk. 9000,000 and the lowest Tk. 800. The majority (60%) had annual income between Tk. 15000 to Tk. 25000. The average was Tk. 17700.

7. Most of the households (75%) in these villages had not owned any livestock. The average number of cows owned by the remaining 25% households was 2, buffalo 1.65, goat 2.5 and sheep 1.37.

Poultry and ducks were owned by more than 90% households in all the survey villages with an average of 6 hens and 4 ducks per family.

8. About 60% of the households in these villages did not have clear idea about scientific methods of doing livestock and poultry management.

There were 36% households who adopted modern veterinary measures for their livestock and poultry, 25% adopted both traditional and modern methods and the remaining 39% of them adopted only traditional methods.

Of the households, who did not adopt any modern veterinary measures, 50% could not do it due to lack of money, 26% of them were due to non-availability of required services, 12% of them were due to lack of knowledge and interest.

9. Regarding improved agricultural practices 76% of the respondents did not have necessary knowledge about seed preparation. 72% about pisciculture, 13% about the use of chemical fertilizer and insecticide and 7% about modern farm implements.

The sources from which the villagers knew about different improved agricultural practices were; dealers (91%), friends and relatives (89%), contact/model farmers (31%), radio and television (9%), departmental personnel (7%) and training class (1%).

10. From the incidence of different diseases in the survey villages over the last one year it was found that 50% were the cases of diarrhea, 48% dysentery, 47% cough and cold fever, 33% gastric, 15% eye problems, 3% skin disease and 1% were rheumatism, mental disorder, asthma, syphilis, tetanus and paralysis.

It was found that cough and cold fever were more common among children within 5 years, diarrhoea within the age group of 15 to 30 years and dysentery, rheumatism, asthma, paralysis and eye disease among the people of 40 years and above.

11. It was reported that due to economic hardship 36% households could not arrange proper medical treatments for their family members and had to depend on indigenous medicine or spiritual method of treatments (Panipara, Tabij or Jhar-Fuk). Of the remaining 64% households, 48% had allopathic treatments in the Union, Thana and district hospitals or private clinics.

There were 39% households resorted to Kabiraji or Ayurvedic treatment, 34% took Homeopathic medicine and 27% had treatment from the village quacks. Many of the households took more than one method of treatment.

In most cases, the method of treatment was determined by the seriousness of ailments and the economic capability of the household. Those who were economically better off preferred to take treatments in the private clinic.

12. Except in cases of complications of women in these villages generally had not received any pre-natal or post-natal services from the qualified doctors. In case of a problem, pregnant women generally sought advice from their mothers, village Midwives or from other elderly female relatives and neighbors. The traditional village Midwives usually performed the delivery.

The number of traditional midwives in these villages varied between 6 to 12 within the age group between 20 to above 50 years. Only 6% of them had formal training on child delivery.

13. All the children up to 4 years in these villages were reported to have inoculation and vaccination under EPI programme. But 40% of the household heads still did not know the reason why their children were immunized, 56% had partial knowledge, 3% had full knowledge and 1% had misunderstanding.

In 95% cases, immunization was reported to be done as per required doses and in 91% cases as per required intervals.

14. There were 7% mothers in these villages who did not breast feed their children. 88% of mothers were reported to have breast fed and 5% did not give any information.

Depending upon the availability of milk in the breast and health of the mother, the duration of breast feeding varied between 1 to 5 years. The majority (64%) had breast fed their children for a period of two years.

15. There were only 7% of respondents who could name all the presently available contraceptive methods such as condom, oral pill, copper T, injection, tubectomy and vasectomy. The majority (73%) knew about condom, 60% oral pill, 46% tubectomy and vasectomy, 2% copper T and 1% injection. There were 24% respondents who did not still have knowledge about any contraceptive.

The number of fertile couples per household in these villages varied between 1 to 3 with an average of 1.2. Of these couples, 35% were

reported to be currently practicing contraceptive methods. Of the remaining 65% couples, 18% had not adopted because they thought that family planning was not permitted by religion, 14% temporarily discontinued for having children, 12% had problem after taking oral pill and as such they did not take any other method, 11% did not get the supply regularly and 10% did not find any method suitable.

16. Over the last one year a total number 149 children were born in these villages. The average crude birth rate was 25 per 1000 population. Of 71 persons who died in these villages during the same period, 14 (20%) were within the age group of 5 years and 57 (80%) were within 6 years and above. The annual crude death rate was 11.91 per 1000 population. The annual growth rate of population in these villages was thus 13.09 per 1000 population or 1.39%
17. No family in any of these villages lived on starvation. In three of these villages all the families took three meals daily and this proportion was 97% for all the villages. There were only 1% to 4% households in four villages that were reported to have two meals daily. There were about 4% children in six villages that had four meals a day.

The daily meal of most of these families constituted of rice and locally available cheap vegetables. Other than better-off families, items like fish, egg, meat and fruit were consumed only occasionally. Because of higher price, pulses were taken by very few poor families.

Wide variation was found in daily calorie intake by age, sex and economic condition of the households. The average daily calorie intake for the children upto 10 years was found to be 1577 KCal, this was 1882 KCal for the children between 11 and 20 and for the adult male and female (21 years and above) this was 1480 KCal and 1340 KCal respectively. For pregnant and lactating mothers, the average was 1700 KCal. and 1932 KCal respectively.

Five most nutritious food items perceived by the respondents were; fish, chicken, meat, milk and leafy vegetables. The least nutritious food items mentioned were; radish, brinjal, potato, aramantus and wheat.

18. Depending upon the economic condition and size of the family, the number of living rooms per household in the survey villages varied between 1 to 6 with an average of 2.46. There were 14 (1.05%) households in three of these villages who did not have their own houses.

Most of the houses (48%) in these villages had clay floors, clay walls and tin roofs. Of the remaining 52% houses, 22% had clay floors, clay walls and thatched roofs, 18% clay floors, bamboo walls and thatched

roofs, 8% clay floor, bamboo walls and tin roofs, 3% clay floors, tin walls and tin roofs, 1% clay floors, pucca walls and tin roofs, 0.79% pucca floors, pucca walls and tin roofs and only 0.03% with pucca floors, pucca walls and pucca roofs.

It was found that on an average 2.86 persons lived in one room in these villages.

19. The main sources of domestic water in these villages were; power-operated irrigation tube wells, hand tube wells, well, river and ponds.

Most of the households used tube well water for drinking (91%), cooking (75%) and cleaning (67%).

With the increase of power operated irrigation tube wells in the villages more people had been using water from this source especially in the dry months.

20. About 70% of the houses in these villages did not have any toilet, 19% had kuccha or service latrines, 5% open pit, 4% sanitary latrines and 2% had water sealed latrines.

There were 46% of respondents who did not still have knowledge about water sealed latrine, 24% of them had some knowledge and 30% of them had adequate knowledge namely about the sources of supply, approximate price and benefit of this latrine.

21. In all the ten villages there were at least some families who owned radio. The highest numbers of radio owning families (38%) were found in Magurgari and the lowest (2%) in Beriberi. The average was 18%.

In six of these villages there were some families with a proportion between 12% to 1% who owned television. The average was 5%. In one village there was a family who owned a video cassette player (VCP). A relationship had been found between the availability of electricity in the villages and the ownership of television.

22. There were 55% of households in these villages who had not listen to any radio programme, 54% of them had not watched television and 85% of them had not read newspaper. Only 1% of newspaper readers were the subscribers, 10% read in the shop and 4% in the village library or club.

Of the people who had contact with these mass media, 29% were the family heads themselves, 37% were sons, 17% younger brothers, 9% wives, 3% daughters, 2% grand sons, 2% fathers and 1% were sisters of the family heads.

It was found that the people in relatively younger age group with better educational background had more contact with mass media and the women had less contact in comparison to men.

23. The 8% of television viewers who had their own televisions watched some programmes almost everyday, 50% of them do almost every week and 42% of them do it occasionally.

Only 30% of respondents listened to radio programme almost everyday, 16% of them do every week and 54% of them do occasionally.

Among the newspaper readers about one half read regularly.

24. Of the different radio and television programmes, Bangla movies and dramas were preferred by 31% respondents, magazine programmes by 19% respondents, news by 18% of them, songs by 15% of them, English movies by 12% of respondents and religious programmes by 1% of respondents.

There were 82% of respondents who could not give any opinion on the presentation style of different programmes, 42% of respondents on the contents and 26% of them on the language.

Among others, 17% of respondents thought that the presentation style was satisfactory and 1% of them felt that in most cases this did not reflect the realities of rural life.

42% of respondents expressed that the contents of most of the programmes were good, 10% of them felt that these did not properly reflect the problems of the rural people and 6% of them suggested more programmes on life and culture of Bangladeshi people.

The majority of the respondents (40%) opined that the language of most of the programmes was good and understandable and 34% felt that this was at satisfactory level but suggested to minimize the use of regional dialects as far as possible.

25. Most (95%) of the respondents mentioned that when they heard any important announcement of public interests, they immediately transmitted it to their relatives and neighbors, 81% of them specifically mentioned about sighting of the moon, 66% of them about special weather forecast, 54% of respondents about development related information, 15% of respondents political news and 3% of them international event.
26. In all the survey villages, most of the information transmitted by electronic and printed media came to the villagers through personal

channels. The information generally flowed from the educated to the un-educated people, from the young to the old, from the newspaper readers to the non-readers and from the rich to the poor.

27. Besides electronic and print media, drum beatings, social visits, village markets, local fairs, exhibitions, Thana centre, meetings of different village level organizations were also mentioned by most of the respondents as important channels of local communication.

As a major sources of recreation 60% of respondents mentioned about Jatra and popular theatre, 38% folk singing team, 30%of them circus and 3% of them Puthipath. It was reported that over the last few years with the availability of increasing number of cinema houses younger people had been showing preference for cinema. In the villages where electricity was available video shows were also arranged occasionally.

28. During the last one year, 90% of households were visited by the people from other Thanas, 31% of visitors from Bogra town and 4% of them form other districts.

In different times of the same period, at least some members of all the households visited some places outside their own villages namely, nearest markets and other villages (100%), Sherpur Thana headquarters (67%), Bogra town (42%), other districts (24%), cities like Dhaka and Rajshahi (18%).

29. None of the households in the survey villages had any communication through telegraph or telephone. Only 15% of respondents had received letters from outside. Of them, 2% of them had received almost every week, 9% almost every month and 4% of them occasionally.

30. There were 42% households who were reported to have association with more than one organization namely cooperatives or Grameen bank (49%), village club (15%) and Union Parishad (3%).

Of these people, 41% of them had association as general members, 5% as managers or secretaries and 3% as the chairmen.

31. All the households sought advices from others on various personal matters namely buying and selling of lands (100%), marriages (97%), farming (44%), medical treatments (34%), litigation (25%), family disputes (13%) and calamities in the family (4%).

The sources of advice mentioned were; friends and relatives (100%), school teachers (50%), local leaders (36%), Union parishad chairman or member (13%).

d) Observations and Recommendations

It has already been stated that the primary objective of our survey was to collect relevant information from selected villages to get insights for planning an action research project on "Development of Appropriate Rural Development Communication Media". Here we would try to make a brief review of the implications of selected survey findings for the proposed action research project.

1. In all the survey villages there were village level societies or groups sponsored by various development agencies but it was appeared that other than carrying out routine activities these organizations could do very little to make the common villagers aware of various basic problems of life such as their rights and obligations as citizens of a country, their development needs and potentials, leadership, group cohesiveness, common interest areas and united efforts for solving local problems.
2. There are mosques in all the villages and primary schools within a reasonable distance. Most of these institutions could not be properly involved for community development activities like mass literacy, skill training, consciousness raising, health care, sanitation, nutrition, family planning, livestock, fishery, tree plantation and environmental issues.

The local school teachers and Imams, who play an important role as opinion leaders, can be utilized as local change agents with necessary training and other back-up services.

The mosques and primary schools can be developed as centers for community learning and dissemination of information covering various aspects of rural life.

3. In comparison to national literacy rate (24.8%) ,the literacy situation in these villages was quite high (41%) but this did not seem to make much impact on knowledge and outlook of the villagers about many important issues like modern farm practices, maternity, health care, livestock, poultry rearing, fishery, family planning and sanitation.

In order to make the formal education more life-oriented and practical for the rural people, deliberate curriculum planning for primary and adult education is very much needed.

Keeping this view, the needs of the vast majority of the rural population, appropriate folk literature and other educational materials can also be prepared by the experts covering different problem areas.

4. The major sources of information of the large section of villagers are still found to be the personal channels namely enlightened family members, neighbors, local leaders, school teachers and dealers of various commodities.

With necessary orientation and follow-up services these sources can be developed as effective rural information network. Extension literature and other promotional materials on different rural development issues can be delivered and used more effectively through these sources.

5. Although many of selected number of villagers had contact directly with newspapers, radio and television; important information transmitted through these media reached the villages within a reasonable period of time. Most of this information came to the villages through a process of two-stage information flow. The communication patterns observed in the villages is that information flows:
 - from the people having more media contact to those who do not have any such contact;
 - from the educated to the less educated people;
 - from the young to the old;
 - from more mobile to the less mobile persons;
 - from the rich to the poor;
6. In view of the above patterns of information flow, necessary efforts should be made to enrich the knowledge of these people with upto date information about different technologies and innovations which are relevant to the villagers.

The common villagers show preference for those programmes which have direct relevance to their life, which can give them entertainment and which reflect their culture, values and beliefs.

Contents, language and presentation style of a programme also plays an important role to make the message interesting to the particular group of audience.

As such to make the programme interesting and useful, the writers and poets who have more touch with the life and culture of the rural people can be invited to write scripts, features, songs and success stories for different mass media programmes for the rural audience.

For this purpose they can be given necessary orientation about the purpose of the message, how this is to be communicated and who are the expected audience. Regular evaluation and feed back system can also help to improve the quality of different programmes.

7. There are very few people in the villages who are regular readers of newspapers. They usually read newspapers in the local club, library, shop and other public places.

In order to promote newspaper reading habit of the villagers and to make the newspaper easily available more village libraries can be set up. The village youth can be motivated to take initiative for this purpose.

8. In the rural areas drum-beatings, interactions in the markets, village fairs, social visits also serve as important communication channels of various messages.

For creating awareness among the rural masses about different important issues and programmes, necessary planning can be made to use these channels more effectively.

9. The folk media like, Jatra, folk song, popular theatre, circus, story telling, Puthipath still serve as the popular sources of recreation of the common villagers. All these folk media can be developed and utilized to transmit various development messages to the villagers in attractive ways.

Folk poets and play writers can be involved in writing songs, success stories, plays in appropriate language and style covering various issues for use in the folk media for the rural audience. Video cassettes of all these programmes can also be prepared and shown through the television for wider of groups of audience.

10. Finally it is to be kept in mind that for development of effective model for any programme there is a need for careful experimentation and trial at the field level.

In order to develop appropriate communication methods for rural development, the need for such experimentation cannot be over emphasized.

The agencies which are engaged in carrying out research and experimentation in different fields of rural development should come forward to take up necessary experimentation and studies in this important area.

