

COMMUNITY TELEVISION SCOPING STUDY

INTERVIEWS WITH **JOURNALISTS**

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▪ **Mass Broadcasts**

- Do you think that mass-media such as radio and television could be used to communicate information with content that would promote development? What do you think is the reason that this is not being done right now?

All of the media ought to do this, not just the mass media but also the alternative media ought to commit themselves to development. There's no question about it, all of us in this country want change, and it's essential that we take this step. And in the communications media it's even more important, because right at this crucial time for making an important step forward in the advancement of some of the integral aspects of this country, the media have this powerful tool of dissemination, and I think that they should definitely do it [promote development]. They just need to go through a sensitizing process, because right now they're still resistant to listen to us.

And that's because right now a superficial form of journalism predominates, since in various sectors, especially the people with power and the communications media, there's not a clear interest in modifying or trying to change the status quo.

▪ **Local Broadcasts**

- Are you aware of any instance in which some NGO or governmental media are using communication to promote development?

To some measure I think that Radio Progreso is enacting a good initiative, and in one way or another Catholic Radio has made a few starts and is presenting some different things. Unfortunately stations that are doing this have a small range. But I think that if all of the small media could dedicate themselves to this kind of communication, well then the mass media would feel obligated to modify their programming.

- You've just said something important, which is that it's the local media that are opening up this space—to what do you attribute the fact that the mass media (radio, television), aren't taking this step towards using communications to promote development?

I think that there's more awareness in the local media because they've always lived there, and collectively they share in the public and private spaces of the society, and so they care about it and try to improve it, and they understand the importance of the media in making new proposals for the development of the community.

As such, the mass media have greater interests which don't exactly have to do with the development of the nation, because our society is thinking in terms of personal rather than collective well-being, and for the communications media personal interest outweighs collective interest, and that's the crucial point that keeps the mass media from taking this step to use communications to promote development.

▪ **Development Education**

- Do you think that using communications to promote development is important for community development in Honduras? Why?

If we want to have a long-term, positive vision for this country, a vision of the country the way all of us would like it, talking about communication to promote development means talking about all the concepts related to changes of behavior, new ways of thinking, new perspectives, not only in the field of economics—because the problem is that sometimes development is understood only in terms of economics—but rather in all the areas—intellectual, political, social, cultural—in which life for all human beings could be improved.

Personally, I think that if we really want to commit ourselves to changing our country we ought to support using communication to promote development. Journalists and social communicators are the fundamental factor in achieving the changes of behavior that can contribute to the development of this country. If this concept is not clearly understood, there's little that can be done, because there are many ways of spreading knowledge and promoting positive changes, but one of the most important is through the communications media.

- Do you know of any instances in which communication is being used to promote development?

Yes, I do, but I think that I really believe that these have just been baby-steps, because like I was saying, the very concept of communication to promote development is distorted right now, it's a new topic that up until now is just starting to be fleshed out, understood, and discussed; it's like topics of freedom of expression, the ethics of which just five years ago no one was even talking about, and if they did it was in a mistaken and erroneous manner. It's the same way with communication to promote development, it's much more recent. Although the idea was born back in the 1950s, ideas about how to use communication to promote development are just starting to be suggested now. Here [in Honduras] the process of talking about communication to promote development in a systematic manner, from back when communication for development was thought of just in terms of dissemination until now, when communication to promote development is understood to be an integral concept in the lives of human beings, has only been going on for about three or four years.

There are a few instances in which this is being done [i.e. communication is being used to promote development], but it's being done in an independent and separate manner, it's not very well articulated and I think that there's a lot of ground to make up in this area.

▪ **Finance**

- In Latin America, radio has been used more often to promote development—to what do you attribute the fact that television hasn't taken the same steps?

Radio appeared before television, and also since it's easier to buy a radio than a television, at that time people were accustomed to listening to the radio, the radio was a part of their lives and moreover it helped them to think, to learn how to create mental images and to imagine situations.

Television is more direct, its production is more costly, and since the economic situation, including for the media, isn't very strong in these countries, television stations aren't inclined to think about alternative programming, because although they might be attracted to educational programming, they don't think it will pay for itself because they don't think people will watch it.

With the radio it's easier, because everyone listens to it, it's more accessible, and moreover it gives more time for one to think, it's more collective, a family can gather around the radio because they're not occupied with both seeing images and listening to people talk at the same time.

I think that the radio has more advantages, although we ought not write off television, because right now even in the most isolated parts of the country it's got a greater reach, but if you want to start a systematic effort, it ought to be with radio.

Eliu Martínez

Journalist working with Sultana Radio and Channel 28 (*local cable TV, Sta. Rosa de Copán, located in western Honduras*)

▪ Mass Broadcasts

- *Do you have any experience in practicing communications for the development of the poorest sectors?*

I worked for 15 years on a Radio Show called “La Finca” (The Farm) sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture. The show was aimed towards local farm families, providing advice for improving the use of farm land and home life.

- *Do you believe that mass broadcasting (television, radio, satellite) can be important for development? Why?*

Radio and TV are important, although radio is more important because it is more popular, and has greater “penetration” [in remote regions]. At least 95% of the population has a radio, and the other 5% doesn’t have one because they lack the financial means. Radio is much more accessible; in urban areas there are 2-3 radios per family. Radio has a great potential for transmitting educational programs, depending on the interest and the sector people are interested in.

- *Do you know of any experiences in radio or television that broadcast specifically for the development of the poorest sectors of the country? (Any NGO or government institution that carries out educational or development programs?)*

There are none in the western region of the country, although the Ministry of Education does transmit a basic mathematics and education program through radio called “Educatodos” (Education for all). Also, Plan en Honduras (Foster Parent’s Plan International – an int’l NGO) has trained 17 youths in radio communications and they produce many programs in which the kids write the script and talk to community people. They use a computer with a software program called Editpro, so that mistakes can be edited out and the programs turn out perfect. This broadcast has had great impact. Unfortunately it takes a lot of money to mobilize kids from the rural area to the city.

- *Why don’t mass broadcasting networks transmit more content oriented towards development? What are the primary obstacles?*

Honduras has laws that obligate [broadcasters] to assign air space oriented towards educational purposes. However, since all the broadcast networks are privately owned, their only interest is in business; they’re not interested in promoting educational programs which they would have to finance on their own.

- *Currently in Latin America, radio has had a broader range/scope for the development of poor and isolated communities. Do you think television could have this scope?*

It’s much cheaper to buy a radio, and the other limitation is the lack of electricity in more remote regions. For a TV to operate without electricity, you’d have to purchase a battery which costs nearly \$100. There are currently 3 local channels in Santa Rosa, which is an open air channel broadcast through closed circuit or cable TV.

The percentage of TV viewers is lower due to costs. A radio can cost from US\$4.00 – 5.00, whereas a black and white TV set can cost US\$ 55.00, and a color TV can cost from \$160 – \$500, a price which a poor family can’t afford.

- Do you consider that the current digital technologies could help facilitate television broadcasts in taking that step towards “communications for development” in the coming years?

Innovation in the last years with technology is especially noticeable in urban areas; there are more internet facilities available and the cost of research is lower. The major problem for poorer people is money - it's possible but someone has to finance it. The intellectual capacity of many people in the rural areas is lost due to the lack of opportunities.

▪ **Local Broadcasts**

- In Honduras, are community based radio and television broadcasts allowed? Are there any experiences that you know of?

No one [institutions or NGOs] has organized to buy and set up a radio broadcast station. Currently they are all privately owned commercial entrepreneurs.

- In your experience, does local cable television provide benefits for the development of the population that receives this service? Please give specific examples of these benefits.

The question is: “who controls these programs?” If the owner cares about rural or marginalized people improving their well-being, then the station will transmit messages that will provide helpful insights for people. Depending on who is conducting the program, even though the program may not be educational, the program can always be transmitting [educational] messages.

- Do you know of any NGOs or government institutions that are making use of these means (local cable TV) to promote local development?

Plan Int'l has a campaign for children's rights on radio and TV with good results. The National Radio station has hygiene, health, and English classes. The Maduro Foundation¹ has a program that focuses on learning mathematics. The Ministry of Agriculture produces radio shows that showcase their activities and financial supporters, but it's not truly educational; the educational part isn't valued. They're interested in public relations.

- How effective is local cable broadcast? Do you have any idea of the percentage of the local population that tunes in? Is there a demand from the local population for this type of local programming?

I don't know the percentage of the population tuning in, but there is a lot of interest. There are 80 channels transmitted by the local cable company, however with regards to local programming, people are mostly interested in local news shows, to find out what is happening in the community and the region.

- What would local cable broadcasting need to have a higher level of outreach?

Basically, the poorer people would have to be given access to TVs, maybe through free distribution.

▪ **Participatory or Educational Video**

- Do you know of any experiences, either with NGOs or government institutions, that have made use of video for the empowerment or development of communities?

¹ The Maduro Foundation was established by Honduras's current president, Ricardo Maduro, as a means to promote basic education for the poorest sectors of Honduras.

In 1978 there was a drought that lasted 11 months in the Department of Lempira (southwestern region). The World Food Program sponsored the making of a documentary which had a great impact, as the documentary caused a huge response from international donors, and the Lempira Sur Project was organized and lasted 12-14 yrs. So this is an example of a video that was made and used during a period of crisis; it demonstrates how fabulous this media can be when channeled in the right way.

- **Regulations**

- In Honduran laws and/or regulations, are there any obstacles or restrictions for the installation or use of information and communication technologies?

The National Commission for Telecommunications (CONATEL) regulates what may or may not be transmitted; whatever broadcasters want to transmit, regardless of it being commercial or service oriented, needs to be approved by them and if it doesn't pass their standards, it may not be transmitted.

- **Finances and Technology**

- How much does it currently cost to operate a radio or television station?

Radio is fairly low in cost. The radio station I work with has 2 operators, 2 newscasters/announcers, and a computer. It costs about US\$1350.00/month with a total of 8 people on staff. TV needs a lot more personnel.

- What type of technology do you have and what is the range of transmission?

Most of the technology is computerized, and used for producing spots and local news reports. The computers have diverse [software] programs for editing. The range of transmission is very expensive; we cover a range of 150 km.

We actually get quite a large number of viewers from the villages because electricity has been installed. The number of TV antennas has tripled from a decade ago when only 14-15% of the population had access to TV.

René Pauck,

Producer of documentaries and video to promote development

René Pauck became the head of the Department of Film within the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and Information in 1977. She has produced commercials and documentaries. She has fifteen years of experience in producing documentaries for promoting development and video for development. In the 1980s, she worked as a war-correspondent camera-person.

▪ **Video for Empowerment**

- Do you have any experience with the use of video for the empowerment or development of the poorest communities?

Definitely, in the first job that I had in Honduras I tried to use video to promote development or to help the poorest and most backward communities in this country, and especially with women. We were working with the female gender, although at that time we didn't say it outright, the project that I did had to do specifically with helping the development of the organizations of housewives, and using video as the means and strategy of communication so that they could have access to communication and get some benefit from it, and so they could make their struggles known—perhaps not to the whole country, but definitely to their community.

We called this the closed circuit of communication. What was being done was that with very simple equipment, some small productions describing the reality of the national situation or some struggle that women were dealing with, and this little montage, which really at that time wasn't a montage but rather was just filmed one take after another, trying to make the interviews follow a rough outline, and we put some images in it and it was very artistic, and this production was brought around to meetings of the women's groups to stimulate reflection as part of a workshop. There were two goals for including these videos in the workshops, that of using them to stimulate reflection on the situation of the country or to stimulate reflection on a specific problem of the community.

The problem with the project was that the financing for it was cut off and so did the project, and the people who could have kept it going, the National Development Council, didn't take up the idea again.

- Were there any obstacles to achieving your goal in this experience of participatory video?

You have to realize that when these videos were made, the villages weren't participating. A theme would be chosen and images that seemed likely to stimulate reflection upon later showings and to convey a message were filmed. But after that came the interesting part, because people would watch the video and discuss it and comment on it, the video was a sort of provocation to get the people thinking. And while this was happening, we would take two cameras and film these reactions and afterwards these were shown as feedback; in other words, afterwards the people watched themselves afterwards and were able to have another round of reflection, and all of the sudden you could measure the level of awareness of the participants and of their participation in the workshop.

We didn't encounter obstacles, but obviously if we would have had a more politicized message in that time which was the first phase of the military government, it would have been dangerous, but really it was only a reflection of the way life was. The community was working to increase awareness, and video was an interesting medium and a very strong way for them to be able to express themselves.

▪ **Development Education**

- Do you know of any NGO or government organization that is currently using communication to promote development, using video to promote community development?

Unfortunately I don't know many people who are doing this sort of work in a systematic way, because in the experience I had it was systematic, all the housewives' groups in different regions of the country had the same experience. The NGOs do have what you could call a very insubstantial communication strategy, focused more than anything on visibility, or they make a video about what they're doing more to get money than to really show the Honduran people what they're doing; even if that's the initial goal it's not clearly defined.

In my judgment there isn't any communications strategy among NGOs; there's a certain concern for being visible, a concern for [the idea of] having a strategy, but it's never carried out. There are institutions, like the Zamorano School of Agriculture, that have a system of video, radio, audio-visual materials production, magazines—this is a communication strategy, but I wouldn't say that it's promoting development but rather promoting image. Some of the products that are made could serve to promote development—bulletins, pamphlets, teaching materials that are part of the communication strategy for the education of the students, and also by way of extension for the *campesinos*.

- Do you know of any education-to-promote-development projects which could be substantially aided by television?

I don't know of any at the moment, but there were some interesting experiences in South America with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), which have been taken up again somewhat and which moreover serve as a model because [the projects] became very organized, but then they became very didactic, like "How do you plant a potato?" And they were circulated all over the place. And the funds came and went and the projects died. I don't know of anything like this going on right now...

▪ **Local Broadcasts**

...But I do know that right now there is regional cable television, small producers that supply the programs for these cable networks, there is this local presence with local production, but the only problem is that there's not any production that's aimed at promoting development. But, those are the areas in which it would be possible to use television or video to give information and feedback, to promote formation and development.

It would be possible to do things with small [video-recording] systems that are easy to transport, because ought to harness this local energy, local resources, local power, in order to put it to good use, replenish it. I think that television could play a fundamental role not only at the level of cable networks but also by means of the rapid diffusion of messages by way of simple mobile units.