UNIT 10 : COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES FOR EMPOWERMENT

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10.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- Understand and define the concepts of development, growth and empowerment.
- know the importance of communication in empowerment and the various tools used for it.
- Distinguish between the diffusion and participatory models of development communication.

10.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit will introduce you to the concept of development and empowerment. We shall explore the inter-linkages between development and communication, and see how communication tools and strategies can help in the execution of developmental programs. The unit tries to bring out how various communication strategies are employed by different organizations and groups in order to bring about development among different sections of people. It highlights the fact that communication strategies, in order to be effective developmental tools, have to take into account the spatial and temporal context in which it has to be employed.

LET US KNOW

Dependency theory:

One of the most important scholars of the *Dependency School* is A.G. Frank. In his essay *'Underdevelopment of Development',* Frank argued that the development of the 'core' is dependent on the perpetuation of underdevelopment in the 'periphery'.

10.3 DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

10.3.1 Defining Development

The term development is defined in the dictionary as '*a process of growth or advancement'.* In general, development refers to the improvement in the social and economic conditions of a society, or a group of people within the society. The quest for such improvements, i.e. developing more and more becomes the central problem that every society wants to solve. However, what is understood by development, and its scope, varies from context to context, and discipline to discipline. In social sciences particularly, the term is variously understood by different scholars.

The initial concept of development emerged from the point of view of the Western- Northern hemisphere nations. These countries were seen as developed and the oriental and southern hemisphere was seen as underdeveloped. The process of development meant to emulate the Western 'developed' nations. Gradually, there were other schools of thought that emerged with their own ideas of development. Important among these was the Dependency School, which emerged in Latin America. The Dependency School scholars opined that for the third world nations,

development was not a gift of the First world. Rather, the development in the first world was dependent on the exploitation of resources from the underdeveloped nations. Similarly, many other theories of development emerged that called for a concept of development that was not simply westernization, but one that was contextualized, took into account the local culture and needs, and included the participation of the local population in the formulation and execution of developmental programmes.

10.3.2. Growth and Development

The above theories spoke about who the agent of development is. What really constitutes development is another important theme in developmental studies. For a long time, the concept of development was seen as synonymous to economic growth. This understanding of development is borrowed from classical economics and its idea of the trickle-down effect. It was believed that the better the capitalist growth in a country, the more accumulation of wealth, the better the country's position on the developmental scale. Even if the fruits of economic growth do not reach all members of the society equally, ultimately they would trickle down to even the poorest of the poor. Thus, development was believed to be nothing other than economic growth.

However, gradually it was seen that simply economic growth was not enough to guarantee the development of a society. Many countries, in spite of having a high rate of economic growth, continued to have pressing developmental problems. In India, for example, though the GDP rate has been high, a large part of the population still lacks basic amenities. Thus, it was suggested that a more holistic understanding of development was needed, that included the social, cultural and political dimensions in development. Thus, concepts such as Human Development, Sustainable Development, Needs-based approach, Rights-based approach to development became important.



LET US KNOW

Human Development Index: Like the economic development of a country is measured by the GDP, the Human development of a nation is measured by its Human Development Index (HDI). It includes per capita income, Life expectancy and education. It was developed by Indian nobel laureate Amartya Sen and Pakistani economist Mahbub- ulHaq.

10.3.3. Empowerment

The concept of empowerment is closely related to the concept of development. In general, empowerment is understood as "the process of gaining freedom and power to do what you want or to control what happens to you". In a society, the lesser privileged groups do not have the access to the fruits of development, or the ability to make use of them. Empowerment means to give such access and opportunities to the marginalised groups in a society, so that development is not only limited to some privileged groups. A major goal of human development, therefore, is the empowerment of the marginalised sections of society, such as poor, oppressed castes, women, and others. The various agencies of development (the government, Non-Governmental Organisations, International Organisations such as The United Nations and its various organs, formal and informal local organisations working for development) have a major task of empowering these sections through various developmental policies and programmes.

10.3.4. Participatory development

We saw above that with the evolution of development theory, the notion of development changed from being simply synonymous to westernization, to a process that is contextualised and takes into

account local needs. Now, in order for development programmes to cater to the specific requirements of a particular community, it is necessary that the local population of that community participate in the development process. Thus, scholars began to call for an alternative to the mainstream approach of development where the government (or private companies or organisations outside of the community) is seen as the agency of development, and the local population merely as the recipients. This alternative mode is called Community Participation in Development, or simply Participatory Development. This involves the participation of the local people in the formulation, execution and evaluation of these policies and programmes.



ACTIVITY 1

Find out more about various measures of development and about their components.



ACTIVITY 2

Find out about some Participatory development programmes in India. To what extent do you feel they have been effective.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS- (A)

Q1. Define development.

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Q2. Growth includes only economic dimensions, while development also includes the social and cultural dimensions. True or false.

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Q3. Where did Dependency Theory originate?

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Q4. What is participatory development?

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10.4. COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

An important part of the development process is communication between the agencies of development and those at whom development programmes and policies are targeted. In order to bring about social change, developmental programmes have to include a dialogue between the various stakeholders in it. Whether it is the agencies spreading information regarding the development policies or it is the people communicating their specific needs to the policymakers, communication is a key part of development and empowerment strategies.

The branch of study that studies about the various communication strategies for development is known as Development Communication. Thomas McPhail defines Development Communication as "the process of intervening in a systematic or strategic manner with either media (print, radio, telephony, video, and the Internet), or education (training, literacy, schooling) for the purpose of positive social change. The change could be economic, personal, as in spiritual, social, cultural, or political". The United Nations FAO in 1984 declared that "Communication for development is a social process, designed to seek a common understanding among all the participants of a development initiative, creating a basis for concerted action". Today, the link between development and communication is well recognized, and various developmental agencies are actively involved in devising various strategies to make communication between the development providers and people for whom it is intended, a smoother process.

10.4.1. Media for Development Communication

Technologies of mass-media such as newspapers, television, radio, etc. have been used by developmental agencies in different ways in order to communicate for development purposes. We are all familiar with various advertisements given out by different departments and organs of the government in order to spread awareness regarding specific programmes and policies. Besides this, there are often specific shows on the television or radio, or even entire channels dedicated to communicate regarding a particular development goal. Krishi Darshan on Doordarshan is one such programme. Besides these, another, and often more effective, strategy used is to incorporate messages regarding empowerment and development within fictional stories. These circulate the necessary information to the people, by retaining their interest in the story without simply droning our drab or dull facts.



LET US KNOW

Krishi Darshan was launched on Doordarshan on the 26th January 1957 disseminating agricultural information to rural, farming audiences. It was the longest running show on television when it was pulled off air in April 2018, to be re-launched on specific channel catering to farmers, DD Kisan.



ACTIVITY 3

Have you seen a street-play or theatre dealing with development issues? If yes, what were the themes being discussed?



ACTIVITY 4

What other tools of communication do you think can be used for development purposes? How?



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS- (B)

Q1. The discipline that studies media intervention in the development process is known as .....

Q2. Which is a more effective means of development communication in rural India where most of the population is illiterate?

a. Newspaper advertisement b. Pamphlets c. Street-Play

10.5 APPROACHES TO DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION: DIFFUSION AND PARTICIPATORY MODELS

Communication for empowerment can happen in two ways. Firstly, where information regarding development policies is simply circulated from a central agency to the people at whom the policies are targeted. This kind of communication strategy mainly has one primary agent of development, and the people are merely at the receiving end of all the information circulated by it. This is known as the **diffusion model.**

The diffusion model of communication is based on the belief that there is one informed source from which information has to be passed on to the unaware receivers. It is thus a unidirectional approach to communication, and mainly centres around information circulation and awareness generation through the tools of mass media, such as television and radio channels, newspapers, etc. A major problem with such an approach is that it places the responsibility of underdevelopment on the ignorance of the people regarding the developmental strategies.

The second model of communication for empowerment is the **participatory model.** As discussed above, the participatory approach sees people not as passive recipients of development, but as active agents in the process. Thus, a communication strategy, which is participatory, does not have a single centre circulating information regarding development. Rather, it is a model of communication with multiple channels, where the local

population are as much a part of the communication channel, communicating with the agencies about their local needs and knowledge. Such an approach treats the people as the nucleus of development.

10.5.1. Community radio

A good example of participatory media at the local level is the Community Radio. This is a radio service that serves a particular local community or area, and is owned, operated and influenced by the members of that community. It broadcasts content that is specific and relevant to that particular community, but is often overlooked by the public or private broadcasters.

The feedback from many projects shows that Community radio is one of the most impactful methods of development communication. It is also cost-effective, given the easy access and the low-cost in setting up the transmitters and radio units. Since the late 1990s, the UN is working on promoting Community Media Centres (CMCs) and aims to integrate Community radio and Telecentres in multipurpose communities. India still has not realised its full potential in Community radio. We have less than 200 Community Radio stations operating in the country. But the ones that are functioning have proved to be effective and the government is looking to having many more in the near future.

10.6 DIGITAL REVOLUTION AND COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

The advent of the internet has proven to be a huge support for development communication. The internet not only enables to communicate with several people at the same time, but provides access to a global repository of knowledge. Most importantly, the internet is a multi-channel communication network, which allows people to communicate with various development agencies, with an immediacy that is hardly there in most other media technologies. Social media and micro-blogging websites make it easy

to interact with various stakeholders of a development goal in an easy and cost-effective manner.

Today, most organizations use some form of communication tools on the internet through websites, blogs, advertisements, interaction with stakeholders and customers on social media sites, etc. The internet makes it easy for developmental agencies to reach people and take feedback, and empowers the local people to directly interact with development providers. Further, it also enables people to mobilize with others in similar situations and effectively demand for their rights.

However, while the internet is a very effective tool in communication for empowerment, unfortunately it remains inaccessible to many. Poverty, lack of connectivity and basic infrastructure, and absence of digital-literacy in many parts of the country, make the internet still a less used media tool in India. There is a huge gap between people who have access to internet and facilities it provides, and between those who don't. This is known as the **digital divide.** The government of India has various programmes trying to address this problem.While the rapid growing telecom network, and the availability of low-cost smart phones has bridged this gap to some extent, it remains substantial. Therefore, the other media techniques that we discussed above, such as radio, television, newspapers, street-plays, wall paintings, and other still remain important tools in communication for empowerment in India.



ACTIVITY 5

Do you have a community radio in your university or neighbourhood? Find out about a community radio channel near you.



ACTIVITY 6

What are the various programmes of the government in order to bridge the digital divide in India? To what extent do you feel they have been effective?



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS- (C)

Q1. Which are the two approaches to development communication? Which is more effective?

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Q2. What is community radio?

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Q3. Because of presence of the internet, communication through other traditional media is no longer relevant in India. True or false.

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10.7 LET US SUM UP

- In general, development refers to the improvement in the social and economic conditions of a society, or a group of people within the society.
- The initial concept of development emerged from the point of view of the Western- Northern hemisphere nations. These countries were seen as developed and the oriental and southern hemisphere was seen as underdeveloped.
- Gradually, there were other schools of thought that emerged with their own ideas of development. Important among these was the Dependency School, which emerged in Latin America.
- In general, empowerment is understood as “the process of gaining freedom and power to do what you want or to control what happens to you”.
- Participatory Development. This involves the participation of the local people in the formulation, execution and evaluation of policies and programmes.

- The branch of study that studies about the various communication strategies for development is known as Development Communication.
- The diffusion model of communication is based on the belief that there is one informed source from which information has to be passed on to the unaware receivers.
- The participatory approach sees people not as passive recipients of development, but as active agents in the process.



10.8 FURTHER READING

1) McPhail, T. L. (2009). *Development communication: Reframing the role of media*. UK: Wiley Blackwell.

2) Servaes, J., Jacobson, T. & White, S.A. (Eds.), (2006) *Participatory communication for social change*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

10.9. ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

A.

Ans to Q No1: Different scholars define development differently. But, in general, development refers to the improvement in the social and economic conditions of a society, or a group of people within the society.

Ans to Q No2: True **Ans to Q No3:** Latin America

Ans to Q No4: Participatory Development refers to an approach to development in which the local community is involved in the formulation, execution and evaluation of developmental policies and programmes.

B. 1. Development Communication 2. c. Street-plays.

C.

Ans to Q No1: Diffusion Approach and Participatory Approach. Participatory Approach is more effective.

Ans to Q No2: Community radio is a Radio service which is owned, operated and influenced by members of a community and which caters to the specific issues of the community.



10.10 MODEL QUESTIONS

Sort Questions (Answer each question in around 150 words)

Q1. Highlight the various approaches to development.

Q2. Explain the importance of communication in empowering the marginalised sections.

Long Questions (Answer each question within 300-500 words)

Q1. Describe some methods of development communication.

Q2. Discuss participatory mode of development communication with an example.

Q3. Discuss the importance of internet technology in contemporary development communication.