

Communication for Social and Behaviour Change Learning Module Series

MODULE 1 MODULE 2 MODULE 3 **MODULE 4** MODULE 5 MODULE 6 MODULE 7 MODULE 8 MODULE 9



MODULE 4



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Developed 2013; Updated 2019.



MODULE 4



MODULE 4

Media and communication for development in India



The use of communication for national development purposes has a long history in India. The importance of the role of communication for national development was understood even before the country's independence in 1947. In this unit, students learn about the history of communication for national development in India and contemporary approaches applied in development efforts by government agencies and NGOs. This module introduces students to the various conceptualisations of media and communication and their role in the process of development. The module will discuss the historical, socio-cultural, economic, psychological, political and ethical aspects of media and communication. It will also explore the use, impact and influence of media and communication as instruments for achieving human rights, community empowerment, behaviour and social change in various development contexts in India.

Key competencies

After this module, students should be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

- Knowledge of key experiences and programmes in C4D in India
- Critical understanding of fundamental issues and trends in media industries
- Develop coherent arguments about challenges and opportunities for media coverage of development and social issues
- Ability to explain opportunities created by the availability of digital technologies

Unit 1 Communication for development in India

Unit 2 Print media

Unit 3 Audio-visual media: radio, television and film

Unit 4 Community media

Unit 5 Digital media

MODULE 4

UNIT 1

Communication for development in India

General introduction

The purpose of this unit is to provide students with an overview of key experiences of using media for development in India. India has been the cradle of C4D theories and practices, and remains a laboratory for new experiences and ideas. The vast range of programmes and related results offer plenty of evidence to refine models and test propositions.

Although development issues had been prominent in the media since independence, there have been several landmark events that illustrate the potential of various approaches in communication for development as they are used to tackle a range of social problems.

The Satellite International Television Experiment (SITE) launched in 1975 not only signalled India's developmentalist approach to media, but it also reflected the potential of putting technologies in the service of social goals. The purpose of the project was to bring television, which until then remained largely consumed by urban classes, to 2,400 villages across the country. The programming of SITE was educational for children and adults, and it largely dealt with social issues considered to be priority for human development: family planning, hygiene, nutrition and agricultural production.

Since the launch of the television soap opera *Hum Log* in 1984, India has been at the forefront of entertainment-education research and programme implementation. Among other issues, the television programme dealt with gender equality and family planning. Consistent with subsequent findings in the field, studies found that people who were exposed to the programme showed higher levels of knowledge and attitudes toward gender equality. Since then, there have been dozens of interventions premised on the principles of entertainment-education. Other television and radio programmes have been used with similar goals to change attitudes about gender roles and perceptions about family size and reproductive health issues. Television series such as *Jasoos Vijay* has also been successfully used to improve HIV-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviours among at-risk populations.

Also, India has a rich tradition of social marketing practice. Social marketing techniques have been used to promote a range of products and behaviours including contraceptive products, smokeless tobacco, HIV treatment, family planning services, latrine use and vaccination. Approaches have ranged from traditional top-down models of social marketing campaigns to participatory programmes that foreground dialogue and peer education (like the Avahan campaign to promote safe sexual behaviour among truckers).

India has also been home to numerous experiences and dedicated projects aimed at strengthening women's empowerment. From the Chipko Movement to resist deforestation in the Himalayan region to the Sonagachi programmes working with sex workers in Kolkata, there has been no shortage of experiences showing the use of multiple communication strategies to increase women's participation and self-efficacy. Among many other experiences, it is worth mentioning the initiatives taken to strengthen poor women's access to employment and rights (such as the Self-Employed Women Association), microcredit programmes and projects to tackle domestic violence. These programmes show the need for comprehensive and strategic approaches that integrate various communication approaches in order to promote change. Most fundamentally, they indicate the centrality of safe spaces for women to discuss common issues and actions, and nurture local knowledge to identify problems and solutions.

Questions for discussion

- What are examples of communication for development programmes in India?
- What have been the communication and social goals of programmes?
- How did Indian experiences contribute to refining arguments and adding to the body of evidence in C4D?
- Based on the Indian example, what are the differences among various C4D approaches?

Reading list

Required readings

Basu, Ambar and Mohan J. Dutta. 2009. Sex Workers and HIV/AIDS: Analyzing Participatory Culture-Centered Health Communication Strategies, *Human Communication Research* 35 (1): 86-114.

Dasgupta, Satarupa. 2009. Sonagachi Project: A case study set in India, in Thomas McPhail, Editor, *Development Communication*. Wiley.

Narula, Uma & Barnett, Pearce. 1986. *Development as Communication: A perspective on India*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Saini, G. K. and Mukul, K. 2012. What do social marketing programmes reveal about social marketing? Evidence from South Asia, *International Journal of Nonprofit Voluntary Sector and Marketing*, doi: 10.1002/nvsm.1436

Singhal, A. & Rogers, E.M. 1988. Television soap operas for development in India, *Gazette* 41, 109-126.

Papa, M.J., A Singhal, S. Law, S. Pant, S. Sood, EM Rogers, and CL Shefner-Rogers. 2000. Entertainment-education and social change: an analysis of parasocial interaction, social learning, collective efficacy, and paradoxical communication, *Journal of Communication* 50 (4): 31-55.

Vilanilam, J.V. 2009. *Development Communication: Implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in India*. SAGE.

Supplemental readings

Joshi, P.C. 2002. *Communication and National Development*. Anamika Publishers and Distributors, Delhi.

Neurath, P. M. 1962. Radio Farm Forum as a Tool of Change in Indian Villages, *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 10 (3): 275-283.

Rogers, E., Braun, JR., & Vermilion, MA. 1977. Radio forums: A strategy for rural development. In Spain, P., Jamison, D & McAnany, E., Editors, *Radio for education and development: Case studies*. World Bank Staff Working Paper 266. Washington DC: The World Bank. 361-381.

Singhal, Arvind, Hua Wang, and Everett M. Rogers. 1988. The rising tide of entertainment-education in communication campaigns, in Charles Atkin and Ron Rice, Editors, *Public Information Campaigns*, 3rd edition. SAGE.

Singhal, A. 2005. Dissemination vs. Dialogue: A False Dichotomy. Mazi 5. December Issue. *Communication for Social Change Consortium*. Retrieved from <http://www.communicationforsocialchange.org/mazi.php?id=5>

Case studies

Development Communication Division, Doordarshan, <http://www.ddindia.gov.in/devcom>

Media Matters 2012. Exploring and demonstrating participatory communication and action with a rights-based process oriented approach. Retrieved from <http://www.mediamatters.org.in/>

Avahan experience. http://www.aidstar-one.com/focus_areas/prevention/resources/case_study_series/avahan_project_india

Learning activities

The learning activities should be aimed at developing the following competencies:

- Explain various approaches in communication for development in India
- Compare the practical applications of various theories and models
- Apply lessons from past programmes to the design of new interventions
- Argumentation skills
- Collaborative work

Lectures, small group discussions and presentations

1. Group discussion of specific programmes – goals, tactics, outcomes and comparative analysis of experiences.
2. Analyse replicability/scaling up of specific programmes by discussing opportunities and obstacles found in original experiences.
3. Discuss case studies by examining theoretical premises, use of various communication tactics and expected/actual results.

Unit assessment/evaluation methods

- In-class exercises
- Case study analysis
- Assignments: Oral and written presentations

MODULE 4

UNIT 2

Print media

General introduction

This unit presents a historical overview of the press, news and journalism in India, particularly around development and social change issues. The print media in India is one of the largest in the world and has been experiencing significant changes in the past decade. Since its inception in the 1780s, the press has played a major role in development and has had a strong streak of social reformism. It represented opposition to colonial authorities. The English-language press was in the hands of elite family-owned business and the vernacular press also showed a similar pattern. Early newspapers deliberately tried to spread ideas of nationalism and patriotism while, at the same time, connecting citizens to a broader world of international affairs. The process of independence and decolonisation can not be understood outside the central role of newspaper in disseminating nationalistic views and providing platforms for opinions and information. Newspapers were essentially conceived as institutions for political debate and mobilisation.

After independence, the press adopted a pro-development stance that was associated with industrialisation, social welfare and addressing a range of social ills. These goals dovetailed with the development and socialist agenda of the Jawaharlal Nehru government.

Like the rest of the media, the press and journalism has undergone important transformations in the past decades. The liberalisation of Indian media brought about major changes in ownership, financing and content. These transformations have pushed the press in a commercial direction. The commodification of news has transformed the content. The changes underlie the expansion of newspapers and news companies throughout the country. In recent years, there have been growing competition and number of dailies, particularly at the regional level which has given way to the multiplication of non-Hindi language newspapers and broadcast news. Likewise, newspapers publish editions in several languages to broaden their reach. The multiplication of television channels increased news offerings, topics and covering styles. Tabloid topics, human interest news and lifestyle topics have become favourite strategies to attract audiences and advertising. Certainly, these changes reflect broad transformations in Indian society: increased literacy, the rise of rural middle classes and consumerism.

Just as it happened elsewhere, the proliferation of new information technologies makes it possible to gather and report information utilising multiple platforms and formats. The use of hidden cameras, I-witness news, phone cameras in contemporary Indian news have expanded the range of materials available on news sites. Many news organisations have set up sections for diaspora audiences in both India and abroad. Simultaneously, economic and political conditions have fostered a newspaper boom in India in recent years, as measured by the number of publications and readers.

These changes have fuelled a sense that, despite unmistakable commercialising tendencies, Indian journalism is becoming more oriented towards people rather than politicians and economic elites. Citizen news and citizen journalism have found increased room in the press. This opens novel opportunities for news focused on human development issues that foreground local voices and entertaining and diverse formats. If traditional news tended to be stale and rely heavily on government sources, today's news has the potential of featuring citizens in diverse positions, including as producers and voices, and cover social justice matters—poverty, rights, violence, gender discrimination, corruption, trafficking, sanitation, land access and so on. At the same time, development initiatives face the fact that the media is highly politicised and drives the development agenda, since the main political parties have economic and political control over what the media says.

Questions for discussion

- What have been some of the major transformations in contemporary journalism in India?
- How have transformations affected news content in positive and negative ways?
- What new opportunities exist for the coverage of social justice and development issues?
- What journalistic techniques are suited for the coverage of development issues?
- What factors explain the diversification of news offerings?
- What are some of the ways in which journalists can be partnered with in relation to C4D initiatives?
- How do journalists deal with ethical questions when reporting on sensitive issues such as HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence?

Reading list

Required readings

Jeffrey, Robin. 2000. India's Newspaper Revolution. Palgrave.

Nair L.R., 1967. Private Press in National Development: The Indian Example in D. Lerner & W. Schramm, Editors, Communication and Change in the Developing Countries, (pp. 168-189). Honolulu: East West Centre Press.

Vilanilam, John V. 2005. Mass communication in India: a sociological perspective.

Thomas, Raju G. C. 2006. Media, in Stanley Wolpert, Editor, Encyclopedia of India (vol. 3), pp. 105-107.

Case study

Sunday Dare. The Rise of Citizen Journalism in Nigeria – A Case Study of Sahara Reporters. Reuters Institute Fellowship Paper University of Oxford. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/Publications/fellows_papers/2010-2011/The_Rise_of_Citizen_Journalism_in_Nigeria_-_A_Case_Study_of_Sahara_Reporters.pdf.

Learning activities

The learning activities should be aimed at developing the following competencies:

- Explain trends in contemporary press and journalism in India
- Undertake critical analysis of news coverage
- Identify opportunities for coverage of human/social development issues
- Explain use of new technologies for social news
- Develop argumentation skills
- Take up collaborative work

Lectures, small group discussions and presentations

1. Conduct content analysis of news coverage of development issues by selecting one story or groups of stories on a given topic. Students should examine newsworthiness of the subject, use of sources and frame and discuss the implications of the findings for news-making strategies.
2. Discuss the impact of commercialism on the coverage of development issues. What are the positive and negative consequences?
3. Analyse examples of digital news about development/social justice issues and discuss their implications for innovative strategies for news advocacy.

Unit assessment/evaluation methods

- In-class exercises
- Case study analysis
- Assignments: Oral and written presentations

MODULE 4

UNIT 3

Audio-visual media: Radio, television and film

General introduction

India has a rich history of audio-visual media. Radio was introduced by the British in 1936 and TV came to India in 1959. The state owned these media after independence. Educated in classical Indian and European thought, political elites disdained popular culture and mass entertainment and envisioned state-controlled media as channels for enlightenment and education. Indeed, Jawaharlal Nehru and other foundational leaders believed that television was a distraction and an unnecessary waste of resources. Elitist and paternalistic notions of culture defined the programming of All India Radio as well as early television. This approach was embedded in high-culture conception of media technologies, as they were throughout in Europe, and just like in much of the developing world, where expectations were rising about the social, nation-building contributions of the mass media. Media content, filled with programmes about state policy, scientific issues and stories about rural India, reflected a top-down vision which were equally modernist and socialist.

The big push for television was given by former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi with limited broadcasting in a few cities in the early 1970s. Content was still defined by a developmentalist vision and political interests. Government interests in shaping television as a medium to reach the rural population with development messages caused an interesting situation as only urban, well-to-do classes were able to afford TV sets. The media remained firmly within the orbit of the state, and consequently, the political designs of government officials. Concerns about public unrest informed the control of the media to prevent further conflict. The establishment of Doordarshan in 1959 was a landmark in Indian's broadcasting development. A sensitive and persistent subject has been the relationship between the institution and the government. A 1978 law formally declared the separation of the national broadcaster from direct government control, though government influence continued to remain strong. Critics objected that, despite social promises and rhetoric, Doordarshan remained an official mouthpiece, tightly linked to the political goals of public officials.

National television became a reality only in the late 1980s when satellite transmission made it possible to reach much of the territory. Despite the commitment to social development goals and state monopoly, television was gradually opened to advertising. Programmes developed in Hindi language was resented in some non-Hindi-speaking regions. These issues reflect the tensions between different forces in Indian broadcasting: centralism and localism, politics and entertainment, social development and commercialism, highbrow and popular cultures, state control and participation.

These tensions became more acute during the liberalisation of the economy in the early 1990s. This process refers to a set of policies aimed at reforming state monopoly by deregulating licenses and opening the system to the private sector. These changes were triggered by the 'onslaught from the skies' as satellite television became available in the sub-continent. It accelerated the growth of private stations and entertainment programmes as well as the importation of foreign programmes and formats. The coming of cable and satellite television radically changed the media landscape in India, although the transformations were initially taken up by the English speaking, wealthy urban elites. Another manifestation of these changes was the sprouting of illegal cable networks in cities that mixed domestic and international content. Consequently, the diversification of programmes eventually expanded the range of options beyond Doordarshan. Expectedly, the globalisation of content raised questions about national cultures and criticisms from several political quarters.

Having existed since 1959, state monopoly was terminated in the 1990s. Doordarshan's monopoly was effectively terminated in 1995 by a Supreme Court decision. This decision put an effective end to the original developmentalist and pedagogic goals that had guided the media since independence. Subsequently, the private sector grew in terms of station ownership and production. New stations had a demand for local content, particularly the kind of entertainment shows that Doordarshan had traditionally avoided. The success of ZEE TV and STAR TV, as well as the blossoming of production companies were indicative of the rapid transformation of Indian media. Simultaneously, Doordarshan reacted by multiplying its offerings. Also, the emergence of regional networks offering programmes in many languages became extremely popular and added further layers to the television culture in the country. The availability of more networks diversified news offerings. News genres that were absent in state television (crime reporting, celebrity news, and other tabloid topics as well as exposes on corruption) became common. As advertising and competition became ruling principles of private television, news content was geared towards getting mass audiences. These trends illustrate the affirmation of globalisation, localisation, and regionalism in both the economics of the industry as well as programming flow. This boom also affected the movie industry – Bollywood and regional film industry. The old dream of a single national audience has been definitively put to rest.

While some observers criticized these trends claiming they signal the domination of commercial interests, others have underscored the increased complexity and consequences as central characteristics of the new media order. Commercialism means that television's growing focus is on urban, moneyed interests at the expense of India's staggering large numbers of poor, rural populations. This pressure condemns population groups that are not deemed of interest to advertisers—the poor, elderly, workers and peasant communities and their vast demands (from economics to education to invisibility). Rampant commercialism explains the narrow focus of the media on Indian society. It is important to also recognise increased diversification and hybridisation of media flow that have brought significant changes, namely, the end of nationalistic, state-controlled programming that ignored the heterogeneity of Indian cultures. Also, the growth of alternative/grassroots media added more political and cultural layers to the media ecology.

Finally, the increased penetration of cable and satellite television on private channels in multiple languages featured content that was relevant to 'rural' populations, and presented social issues such as child marriage, female foeticide, gender-based violence, and women's empowerment, rather succinctly. Television broadcasters have understood the importance of incorporating socially relevant themes in TV serials. Talk shows and debate shows are accessible platforms where issues and questions from audiences are responded to, bringing them in contact with representatives; *Krishi Darshan* on Doordarshan for example, which first aired in 1967, discusses agricultural topics with rural communities. This is a significant development as channels and advertisers have realised that there is huge market potential among the massive rural middle class. For instance, in the 2019 general election, parties have prioritised using television as a platform to advertise, to maximise reach.

The proliferation of television viewership has only seen an increase in the last decade with the digitization of signals. Cable providers, now growing in number, are facing competition from video streaming services. Despite this, total television viewership in the country has increased by 12 per cent from 2016 to 2018, as reported by the Broadcast Audience Research Council India.¹ Out of 298 million households in India, 197 million have TV sets. The threat to television brought on by the digital medium may see its effects sometime in the future but currently, mobile phone is a popular platform that serves as a crossover between the two. Since its introduction to the market in the late 90s, the population that uses mobile phones has quickly swollen from 30,000 to beyond 1000 million (TRAI Report, June 2018). This can be explained partly due to the decrease in tariffs resulting in it being the cheapest and most accessible means of communication, for the provider as well as the consumer. Nationwide, the concept of

¹<https://qz.com/india/1341882/tv-viewership-rising-in-india-despite-netflix-hotstar/>

using mobile devices to get access to education has pushed for the need to improve internet and data connectivity. The government has taken several initiatives to expedite this process, such as the National Optical Fibre Network and Digital India that aim to improve India's internet-dependent infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. With more than 1000 million mobile phones in circulation and this number growing exponentially, audio-visual content on smartphones platforms garnered a massive audience. Smartphones provide access to news, entertainment and social media through a highly personalised, simple tool. More generally, they offer spaces for immediate and constant communication.

Questions for discussion

- What factors contributed to major transformation in the structure of broadcasting media in India?
- How did recent changes affect programming content?
- How do we assess the impact of the break-up of state monopoly for development issues?
- How do globalisation, nationalisation and localism affect media content?
- What opportunities exist for addressing social/development issues in broadcast media?

Reading list

Required readings

Athique, Adrian. 2012. Indian Media. Polity

Mody, Bella. 1979. 'Programming for SITE', Journal of Communication 28: 90-8.

Vilaniyam. John V. 2005. Mass Communication in India: A Sociological Perspective.

Case study

Kyunki Saas Bhi kabhi Bahu Thi. http://books.google.co.in/books?id=agw0m5m9oS8C&pg=PT453&lpg=PT453&dq=selections+from+shoma+munshi&source=bl&ots=tQr8nxYo3-&sig=YwDpq_74Ca-7NkzKIDdGIsQbwI0&hl=en&sa=X&ei=X-TNtUv8H4GRrQedm4HwDw&ved=0CEUQ6AEwCQ#v=onepage&q=selections%20from%20shoma%20munshi&f=false

Learning activities

The learning activities should be aimed at developing the following competencies:

- Explain trends in contemporary radio and TV media in India
- Critical analysis of TV programming in India - news and non-news coverage
- Identify opportunities for coverage of human/social development issues
- Explain use of new technologies for social news
- Develop argumentation skills
- Hone collaborative work

Lectures, small group discussions and presentations

1. Discuss major changes that have transformed the structure of the broadcasting media in India, and their implications for communication for development.
2. Identify opportunities and obstacles for news coverage of development issues in the Indian press.
3. Analyse strategies for disseminating information about development issues through old and new media.

Unit assessment/evaluation methods

- In-class exercises
- Case study analysis
- Assignments: Oral and written presentations

MODULE 4

UNIT 4

Community media

General introduction

Community media has a long history in India. Developments in the late 1990s - early 2000s have transformed the media landscape in ways that fostered opportunities for grassroots mediated communication. A 1995 landmark decision by the Supreme Court ruled that airwaves were 'public property' amidst growing demands for public access to official information. The Community Radio Bill was passed in 2002, but critics argued that it was incomplete, as it only agreed that certain educational institutions were qualified to apply for licenses. The 2006 decision by the government to liberalise the policy on community radio was responsible for an unprecedented growth in community radio. Soon thereafter, there was an explosion in the number of community radio stations across the country. Numerous organisations, such as non-profit organisations, civil society and voluntary organisations, educational institutions, state agricultural universities, and others, applied for licenses. Typically, these organisations operate with very modest budgets and are staffed by local residents. Anecdotal and research-based evidence suggest that these stations have effectively expanded the range of issues and perspectives covered. Women particularly play a critical role in many of these experiences by producing content and running stations.

Broadcasting messages, creating opportunities for discussion and the drive for change at the community level is a shared goal of electronic and folk media. The Radio Rural Forum in 1956.² was a venture into addressing rural development across villages in India.

²Community Radio project by UNESCO

The experience of community radio illustrates the significance of storytelling and folk media for development. As a combination of entertainment and education, storytelling has a rich tradition in India. Music, drama, dance, puppetry and other expressive forms have been historically used to tell local stories for recreation, community-building and transformation. Traditional communication forms have not been superseded by modern, mass and digital platforms. Indeed, not only do old communication traditions persist, particularly in rural areas, but also there have been examples of integration/ hybridisation of old and digital storytelling in novel formats. Traditional and folk media facilitate the expression of local experiences, challenges and aspirations. Various programmes have extensively relied on folk media to promote dialogue and foster critical examination of local conditions and resources.

Using folklore as a means to communicate is especially dominant in rural areas, and delicately consolidates ideas of tradition with modernity. Folk media has been successful in changing unscientific attitudes like superstitions, and transmit information that can inspire attitudes, behaviour and participation. State Directorates of Public Relations and NGOs have taken note of this. Finding origins during the Freedom Movement to arouse anti-colonial sentiment, performing arts are presently being used to promote developmental messages. The UNICEF-assisted 'Zilla Kala Sanskruti Sangha' (ZKSS) programme set up in Odisha aims to use folk art and theatre to generate awareness about social concerns like maternal and child health, immunization and sanitation. The movement aims to mobilise communities through folk groups trained in social and behaviour change communication. It engages rural communities with critical thought through thousands of performances each year.

Sources: http://www.caluniv.ac.in/global-mdia-journal/COMMENTARY-DEC%202013/Commentary_6_Baishakhi_Nag.pdf

Questions for discussion

- What is the relevance of community media for development?
- What are the key differences between community media and other media?
- What are the challenges for the survival/sustainability of community media?
- What are the limitations of community media?
- Why is storytelling critical for communication for development?

Reading list

Required readings

Khanna, Aparna and Seth Mridula, Aggarwal Raina and Chaturvedi Nadira. 2012. Storytelling through Grassroots Comics for building Life Skills: Exploring the scope for Adolescents with special needs, *Indian Journal of Adult Education* 73 (1): 47-56.

Manashi, Mohanty and Pritishri Parhi. 2011. Folk and Traditional Media: A Powerful Tool for Rural Development, *Journal of Communication (India)* 2 (4).

Mills, Sandra. 2009. Theatre for transformation and empowerment: a case study of Jana Sanskriti Theatre of the Oppressed, *Development in Practice* 19 (4-5).

Pavarala Vinod and Kanchan K Malik. 2007. Other Voices: The Struggle for Community Radio in India.

Thomas, Pradip. 2007. The right to information movement and community radio in India, *Communication for Development and Social Change*, 1 1: 33-47.

UNESCO. 2011. A Report on National Consultation on Community Radio Policy. Retrieved from http://portal.unesco.org/geography/en/ev.php-URL_ID=14792&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

Case study

Speak out India <http://www.comminit.com/global/content/speak-out-india>

Learning activities

The learning activities should be aimed at developing the following competencies:

- Explain the uses of community radio and folk media for development
- Critical analysis of storytelling formats and content about development issues
- Identify opportunities for discussing development issues using community media
- Develop argumentation skills – present evidence-based positions, address and respond to alternative arguments
- Undertake collaborative work – teamwork skills – listening, contributing, integrating insights from fellow students/workers

Lectures, small group discussions and presentations

1. Review of a community radio experience – goals, mechanisms, sustainability and replicability. Analyse opportunities and obstacles of community radio for promoting development issues.
2. Analyse lessons from readings for the design of a communication programmes that capitalise on community and folk media. What are the strengths and limitations of these media for development?
3. Discuss the challenges for community radio in contemporary India, and ways in which development programmes can strengthen them in ways that they also contribute to other social justice goals.

Unit assessment/evaluation methods

- In-class exercises
- Case study analysis
- Assignments: Oral and written presentations

MODULE 4

UNIT 5

Digital media

General introduction

Mass media (radio, television, newspaper and magazines) has historically played a major developmental role in India. Recently, new communication technologies have also become available for development and social justice in the country. In this unit, students are introduced to the issues inherent in the use of traditional mass media and new communication technologies in development in India, as well as a critical appraisal of the socio-cultural and political context within which they function. This unit critically examines the theory and practice of digital technologies and their use in development efforts and social change. Students will learn the pros and cons of using new communication technologies in development projects, especially aimed at helping marginalised peoples, in rural areas and cities. The unit will deal with telecommunications, software, mobile telephony, e-governance, ICT4D, software patenting, public sector software and cultural piracy and offer an entry point into an understanding of the contested nature of the digital via an analysis of theory and practice.

One of the most remarkable characteristics of the media landscape in India is the coexistence of age-old and state-of-the-art digital technologies. Unsurprisingly, despite continuous growth in the number of computers and mobile telephony, social access to digital media is strongly determined by socio-economic position, including income, gender, caste, class and residence. These divisions shape a persistent digital divide between the technology haves and have-nots. Major barriers to the uptake of technology among low income populations that need to be dealt with include: (i) limited physical access to digital devices, particularly for women (ii) perceptions regarding women's use of information and communication technology (ICT) such as the belief that mobile phones are linked to promiscuity³ (iii) low digital literacy and (iv) infrastructure and internet connectivity issues. However, the digital landscape in India is changing. For example, the urban-rural divide in mobile phone subscriptions has significantly reduced over the period 2014-18.

³ <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/uneducated-unmarried-women-have-less-access-to-mobiles-study-5349570/>

According to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI), in June 2018, there were 1146.5 million mobile phone subscribers in India of which 633.6 million (55.3 per cent) were urban users and 512.9 million (44.7 per cent) were rural users.⁴ Additionally, there have been numerous initiatives to further reduce this gap and utilise ICTs for development goals. Therefore, while the issue of accessing technology deserves attention to moderate early claims about technological possibilities, it is also important to recognise significant changes in Indian society in terms of the availability and uses of ICTs within specific segments of the population.

The Prime Minister has also supported the use of digital technology through his 'Digital India' initiative, which aims to empower Indians with access to digital services, knowledge and information. For example, creating a cashless economy through apps like Paytm which enables cash transfers using mobile phones to improve financial inclusion among low income populations.

Digital media can be divided into three broad categories:

1. Information and Communication technologies (ICTs): ICTs can be defined as a set of technological tools that can be used to transmit, store, create or share information. ICTs include computers, the internet, radio, mobile phones, etc.⁵ In recent years, there has been increased push towards using ICTs for social and behaviour change communication. In healthcare, for example, ICTs have been used for both demand and supply-side interventions. Supply-side interventions involve using mobile phones for providing consultations with doctors via call and remote diagnostic tools. On the demand side, ICTs can be used to: (i) send reminders to improve adherence to treatments (ii) improve awareness of health issues and (iii) train healthcare providers.
2. Social media: Social media refers to the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration.⁶ Major social media platforms include Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. Social media platforms have a large reach and the potential to provide information in real-time to close the intent-action gap. Social media platforms enable communication between multiple interactants in one digitally shared space. For example, healthcare providers have started using WhatsApp groups to discuss cases and receive advice in real time.⁷

⁴TRAI (2014-2018). Telecom Subscription Reports.

⁵<http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/information-and-communication-technologies-ict>

⁶<https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/social-media>

⁷<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/how-brazilians-use-whatsapp-to-connect-on-zika>

These platforms also facilitate discussion and provide social support on key issues (e.g. discussions around quitting smoking), can send infographics to describe symptoms of diseases like Zika, chikungunya, dengue, etc. For example, Facebook and Twitter played a major role in curtailing an Ebola outbreak in Nigeria through social media campaigns that helped disseminate accurate information on the outbreak, as well as correct hoax messaging.⁸ Data from social media platforms can also help design effective communication. For example, analysing online conversation to understand how audiences interact on a particular topic; gauge their interests, influencers, behaviours and receptiveness of the content. The consolidation of social media has produced more complex, multidimensional, and participatory information and communication. In doing so, it has challenged traditional divisions between senders/receivers and producers/audiences. Finally, it has ushered in novel communication patterns that have reshaped the way people exchange information.

3. Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms: OTT platforms are those which distribute content via the internet and bypass cable/linear distribution. OTT platforms usually feature content such as TV shows and movies.⁹ India is at an inflexion point in terms of growth of OTT platforms as data prices are falling, and smartphone penetration is increasing along with an increase in the supply of content. India's OTT market is estimated to reach \$5 billion by 2023, driven by rising affluence, increasing data penetration in rural markets and adoption across demographic segments including women and older generations. This points to the potential for OTT to take off among several segments of India's population.¹⁰ OTT platforms, therefore, are becoming increasingly important as a channel for disseminating communication materials to large numbers of people at low cost.

From this unit, we can see that digital media platforms can be extremely helpful for social and behaviour change communication. However, it is also important to note here that they cannot be seen as a panacea, but rather, as valuable tools that, if intelligently used, have the potential to contribute to addressing problems. As of now, the ICT solutions are being used for providing information about health issues and educational opportunities, reminding patients about health services/medication intake, announcing business opportunities for small business, etc. While there is potential, some of the challenges of using ICT based tools are: 1) the variance in access to the technology, i.e. the internet or mobile phones; 2) the complexity of the medium (feature phones, smartphones), 3) some technology related concerns such as connectivity, types of phones with the users, language ability of the phones and 4) the issue of the cost of data and usage of phones.

⁸Fayonin, A. (2016). 'Engaging Social Media for Health Communication in Africa: Approaches, Results and Lessons'. *Journal of Mass Communication & Journalism*, 6(6), 1000315.

⁹<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2018/01/23/how-ott-will-innovate-in-2018/#111f60cb526>

¹⁰Google-BCG (2018). Entertainment Goes Online: A \$5 Billion Opportunity.

Questions for discussion

- What factors explain the growth of digital media in India?
- What causes the persistent digital divide? How has the divide been successfully addressed?
- What new opportunities are presented by digital media to address development challenges? What can digital media do that traditional media cannot?
- What are the comparative (dis)advantages of digital media compared to “old” communication approaches and technologies?
- What initiatives have made progress in terms of using ICTs for development goals?
- What are the barriers to effective use and implementation of ICTs, social media and OTT platforms to address development challenges?

Reading list

Suggested readings

Ernst & Young (2017). Digital opportunity: Indian Media and Entertainment

Rodrigues, R. et al. (2012). "Supporting Adherence to Antiretroviral Therapy with Mobile Phone Reminders: Results from a Cohort in South India". PLoS ONE, 7(8), e40723.

Khanna, Aparna, Soni Jasleen and Singh Anjali. 2011. Gaming Practices and Opinion of Youth about the Efficacy of Mobile Phone Games on HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis in Delhi (India), Conference proceedings of the 5th International Entertainment Education Conference, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, November 17-20.

Case studies

Chamberlain, S. (2014). 'A Mobile Guide Toward Better Health: How Mobile Kunji Is Improving Birth Outcomes in Bihar, India'.

USAID-E2A (2015). 'Assessing the effects of mCenas! SMS education on knowledge, attitudes, and self-efficacy related to contraception among youth in Mozambique'.

Pande, Arun, Sanjay Kimbahune, Pankaj Doke, Priyanka Chandel, and Sylvan Lobo. 2012. GappaGoshti™: Experiences in Rural Social Networking, <http://www.its2012india.com/topics/Service%20Adoption%20Social%20Networking/GappaGoshtiExperiencesinRuralSocialNetworking.pdf>

Learning activities

The learning activities should be aimed at developing the following competencies:

- Explain trends in access to ICTs in India
- Critical analysis of the uses of ICTs for development/social justice goals
- Identify opportunities for new ideas that capitalise on the potential of ICTs
- Develop argumentation skills
- Hone collaborative work

Lectures, small group discussions and presentations

1. Discuss case study to understand impact of ICT programmes and their lessons for other development goals.
2. Compare two experiences that use mobile telephony for development – goals, implementation and outcomes.
3. Design a programme that uses ICTs for development based on experiences/lessons learned from past programmes.

Unit assessment/evaluation methods

- In-class exercises
- Case study analysis
- Assignments: Oral and written presentations

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