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What is This?
Media and Development in the Middle East

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Perspectives on Development Communication

Like a heart attack, human needs are over-determined – they have more than one cause. And, for this reason, it is unlikely that they will respond to a simple intervention. Communication is just one variable among many that might have influence in a social, economic or political situation, so although there is strong evidence that the media have an impact, the causal relationships are complicated, making policy and strategic planning difficult.

In June 1999, Bhutan became the last country in the world to introduce television. Thousands of people signed up for a subscription to a cable service offering 46 channels, most of them entertainment provided by Rupert Murdoch’s Star TV network. Television, it was hoped, would teach people how democracies work in other parts of the world. The Government launched the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS) but just a few years later it struggles to find an audience in competition with Posh and Becks and Homer Simpson. Half the children watch television for up to 12 hours a day. The crops failed in one village, it was alleged, because the farmers were watching television. Crime and corruption are rising and television now stands accused of creating “a nation of hungry consumers from a kingdom that once acted collectively and spiritually.” Cathy Scott-Clark and Adrian Levy concluded their report in The Guardian Weekend (June 2003) with the observation; “Everyone is too polite to say it, but, like all of us, the Dragon King underestimated the power of TV, perceiving it as a benign and controllable force, believing that his kingdom’s culture was strong enough to resist its messages. But television is a portal, and in Bhutan it is systematically replacing one culture with another.”

While the introduction of television can have unpredictable and disruptive effects, it can also contribute to positive change. Access to preschool education in Egypt is limited and primary school dropout rates are high. Female adult literacy, although growing at 1% per year, is still below 50%. Alam Simsim, the Egyptian version of Sesame Street, was launched in August 2000 to encourage early learning through humour, music and daily life situations. The programme is broadcast twice a day, five times a week. A survey conducted by the Middle East Research Bureau in November 2001 found that it was watched by “more than 90% of children under age eight (more than 4 million children) in urban areas and 86% of children in rural areas.” The Sesame Street model has now been adopted in 20 different countries, “each one a unique series that reflects local culture and tradition and a curriculum that emphasizes local priorities”. Research in Turkey indicated that the programme had resulted in learning gains equal to an entire year of schooling” (Ward-Bren:2002).

When the contract carrying the BBC Arabic Service on Orbit was terminated in 1996 many of its journalists responded to the opportunity to set up Qatar-based Al-Jazeera TV, the pan-Arabic news channel that was to come to international attention following the terrorist attacks in America in September 2001. Al Jazeera now claims a market share in the Arab world of 35 million viewers (Thomas:2003). In a region where television is regularly censored, its editorial freedom is noteworthy. It gives airtime to Saudi dissidents and interviews Israeli officials. Guest protagonists from all sides of the political spectrum will tackle some of the most sensitive issues in the Arab world. In live shows they will shout at each other and gesticulate wildly, encouraging an active response from the audience by telephone and email. Polls by Zogby International indicate that its viewers are positively disposed towards
peace with Israel. “One reason for this may be that exposure to Al Jazeera’s coverage brings with it more information and a greater awareness of the nuances in the conflict” (Alterman:2002).

The media undoubtedly help shape public opinion and transform cultures. In the 1950s the connection seemed obvious. In a landmark study published in 1958, Daniel Lerner, a sociologist from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), theorized that the Third World could catch up with the West very quickly as a result of the media.³ The argument was that people would project themselves into the programmes they watched (a process he called “empathy”) and adapt their way of life to the models they were exposed to. The media would help develop Western tastes in developing peoples. Mass communication would transform the world. The understanding coincided with the post-war commitment to modernization with its emphasis on knowledge and innovations, encouraging social and political participation and were able to ‘compress time’ for the ‘poor people’ to catch up with the ‘rich people’ and eventually to increase the beneficial effects of development programs” (Guaybess:2002).

By the mid-1970’s Rogers had begun to look critically at the role of communication in the dominant paradigm and recognised that the benefits had not “trickled down” as expected. (Rogers:1976, MacBride:1980). “In many (perhaps most) instances, the effects of television are far too unpredictable for it to be an effective tool for social engineering” (Olson:1994). The questions soon gathered pace. Criticisms focused on the failure of the one-way, top-down, “big” project approach; the misfit between traditional societies and the model of industrial democracy that was being promoted; the sometimes adverse consequences of modernization; and the tendency to blame internal factors for failure. Some argued that poor countries were underdeveloped not for lack of resources but as a consequence of imperialism. Dependency was viewed as “the conditioning situation in which the economies of one group of countries are conditioned by the development and expansion of others” (Servaes, 1989 in Singhal & Sthapitanonda:1996). Developing countries needed to decouple themselves from their dependency on the West.

It was argued that Western television was a form of cultural invasion, propagating foreign views and undermining traditional values. Attempts were made to by-pass the information hubs of the Western world. Non-western news agencies were established with the goal of reversing news flow (see, for example, Bourne:1995). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) provided the environment for discussion and debate about international communication and the free-flow of information, leading to the call for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) alongside the New World Economic Order (NWEO). The NWICO condemned the virtual monopoly of the West in the international flow of...
information and sought to address the unbalanced distribution of the means of communication.

While economic concerns were taken forward through the establishment of the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), UNESCO was left to carry forward the communications agenda. An International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, better known as “the MacBride Commission”, was set up in 1977. Although it defended the idea of re-balancing the flows of information and proposed giving poor countries the means to be independent, to produce and to spread information, it had no teeth.

If the dominant paradigm of the 1950s and '60s was criticised for blaming internal factors for failure, the dependency paradigm that followed turned a blind eye to internal factors and concentrated on external causes of underdevelopment. Top-down communication strategies implicitly assumed that the experts (or the government) were correct and the people were passive receivers. Some persuasive messages were a direct threat to local communities, undermining indigenous knowledge and traditions. “The mere transfer of knowledge by an authority source to a passive receiver does nothing to help promote growth in the latter as a human being, with an independent and critical conscience capable of influencing and changing society” (Freire:1973).

An alternative paradigm, which focused on the people at the centre of development emerged. As Bernard Woods put it; “Development is about increasing the capacity of individuals, families, communities, local authorities, private organisations, central governments and nations to plan and manage their own resources and affairs.” The problem is not so much lack of information but inadequate communication. Important to the development process is the empowerment of the individual and community through the articulation of social relations between people. Empowerment is not something one can do for another person. It occurs in an environment where people have the freedom to express themselves (Woods:1993).

The emphasis on people and communities has, since the 1980s, produced a significant change in approaches to development communication. Development should be needs-based, endogenous (arising from the community in need), and promote popular participation, equal access and self-reliance (Singhal & Sthapitanonda:1996). This amounted to a re-definition of communication from the notion of dissemination to participation.

Alphonso Dagron provides a fascinating catalogue of projects around the world where participatory communication has played a key role in empowering communities for social change. (Dagron:2001) The report highlights action that communicates the lives and circumstances of the poor and excluded, in words and terms that they themselves use. As Denise Gray-Felder says in the introduction to Making Waves, “they are truly making waves by going against cultural norms, rebelling against forces that keep them down, broadcasting tales that were previously unheard by most”.

Participatory models of development involve the use of appropriate technology (small media) that can be used by the people. Just one report in Making Waves, using video to empower women to tackle issues of reproductive health and female circumcision in Egypt, demonstrates the gains that come from women using a simple video camera to report on issues in their communities. Participatory communication no longer puts the emphasis on source and media but on meanings and audience, utilising appropriate technology in local projects. The people are involved in decision making, implementation and evaluation. Participation is both a means and an end. As a means for change it gives the voice and organisational responsibility to those who have been excluded. As a goal it offers a vision of society “in which there no longer exists a monopoly over the means of political, economic, and social power by a particular class, sex, race, social stratum, or bureaucratic elite” (Kaufman:1997).

Although participatory communication may require the assistance of communication specialists (see Melkote: 2001), the mass media are not assigned a role in this paradigm. Until recently radio and television equipment was cumbersome, complicated and costly and was usually located in the cities. Low-power community radio has given people the opportunity to voice and produce their own programmes, focused on a wide range of local issues. Also, for the first time, development communication was no longer the exclusive domain of the professionals. “Participatory communication, in the ideal situation, is practised spontaneously by the people without mediation” (Chin:2000).
It is perhaps worth noting that these stages in the history of development communication are not mutually exclusive. Top-down strategies continue to be used effectively in addressing public health crises or environmental disasters. The messages offered by the commercial media sometimes conflict with development goals and without an alternative vision may undermine a project. So, although successes in participatory communication have proved difficult to replicate or scale up, there is an important role for large scale media in support of local development. We will explore the possibilities of convergence between diffusion theory and participatory communication later.

How the Media Work
But how do the media do it? This is a practical question. Most media practitioners are pragmatic. Over time they have built up a case file of successful approaches (“tricks of the trade”) with little attention to formal theory. But there is nothing more practical than a good theory. Miguel Sabido, who developed a successful way of using commercial soap operas for social development in Mexico in the 1970s, built his strategies on a solid theoretical base. He was convinced that “it is ridiculous to say that television can persuade us to drink Coca Cola, and the next minute through a soap opera, it can not teach us... If television can teach a consumption behaviour, it can teach a social behaviour as well.” His methods were built on “pragmatic theoretical viewpoints” – practical theory. “When there exists a theory based method of programme production, you can hypothetically do anything with communication. You can be Goebbels who had a method for Nazi propaganda. Or you can use this methodology to earn a lot of money. Or you can try and figure out the social uses of commercial television... We as producers need to work with our minds as academics do, seeking out theories to understand the possibilities” (Sabido:1999).

One of the most fruitful areas of media research in recent years has been in audience studies. In the days of “mass communication” audiences were conceptualised as anonymous and passive. The media could have powerful effects. Messages had more or less similar meanings for everyone in the audience. But empirical studies brought the notion of strong effects into question. Some people may respond as predicted but many either ignore, or appear to distort, the message. Lila Abu-Lughod observed this kind of selective television viewing in a study in Upper Egypt where villagers ignored aspects of the programme that didn’t match their experience. She concluded, “the villagers were an elusive target for the cultural elite’s modernizing messages” (Thomas: 2003).

The popular image of a television viewer as passive – all eyes and no brain – is not true, most of the time. Audiences are active and, often, unpredictable. Audience members use the media in a highly selective and intentional way to satisfy quite fundamental needs. These might include the need for information (seeking advice or satisfying curiosity), social integration (sustaining a sense of belonging, of relating to the topics of daily conversation), personal identity (reinforcing personal values or finding role models for personal behaviour) or entertainment (diversion or relaxation) (McQuail:1987).

While this takes us deeper into an important aspect of the motivation of viewers, it does not help us to understand how audiences make sense of what they watch. In a significant shift in audience studies, the question becomes: “at what point does a message acquire meaning?” Is it inherent in the text and fixed at the time of production or does it occur at the moment of reception? If so, audiences can be seen as producers of meaning, not just consumers of messages. In The Reading of Television, Fiske and Hartley (1978) argued that watching television involves the audience in a form of reading and that inevitably this means that it has many meanings (it is “polysemic”). Audiences are like poachers,4 stealing meanings from what they watch. Since it is possible to “read” television in different ways it is improbable that its effects will be uniform (Olson:1994).

The multiple meanings attributable to a television programme, however, do not result in anarchy because we belong to social groups (interpretive communities) who bring to their viewing “preferred meanings” that arise from their social and cultural situations. Such communities do not need to be physically together – they can comprise different people from many different places who share common values and bring similar cultural filters to their “reading”. Media audiences, therefore, need to be viewed in these social and cultural clusters, each negotiating what they view on the screen to meet their needs.

Television watching does not happen in a vacuum. It is consumed in the privacy of the
home and therefore subject to what David Morley (1986) calls “the politics of the living room”. Audience studies have entered this domestic space to build up an understanding of how people live with the media. Television consumption cannot be isolated from the use of other media and is often watched with other members of the family, whose reactions turn it into a communal experience. Television viewing often occurs alongside other activities such as housework or conversation, so exposure to the screen can be interrupted. In a pioneering and now controversial study in the early 1980s in the UK, Morley found that viewing patterns follow gender roles. Men experience the home as a place of rest from their daily work and give undivided attention to the screen. Women, on the other hand, are responsible for running the home and their viewing is often interrupted by domestic duties. He also found that men preferred factual programmes while women were attracted to fiction. Gender differences may no longer be so pronounced in the western world but the conclusion is still valid – television consumption occurs in a context “shot through not only with pleasure and gratifications, but also with power and conflict” (Ang:1995).

Although most of this research has been done in the West, there is an indication that similar patterns exist in the Arab home. Lila Abu-Jughod observed in Upper Egypt that while “television may have increased the number of ‘experiences’ shared across generations and gender . . . conflicts also arise between generations and gender as to which programs to watch” (Sreberny:2000). Entertainment (movies and soap operas) are usually ranked the most popular programmes with Arab women (Amin:2001).

By putting the audience at the centre of our reflection on the media we are attempting to correct a bias towards the message in earlier understandings of communication. But the audience does not have complete control. Messages are socially constructed. Television provides the ‘social text’ (Danesi:2002) from which people derive meaning for their daily experiences of life. What the media do is as significant as what they say – inviting their audiences to participate in a particular way of perceiving and living in the world.

Marcel Danesi compares this to the way in which, in previous generations, the Church provided the social text that centred on ‘Christian ways’ of doing things. “Living according to the text no doubt imparted a feeling of security, emotional shelter, and spiritual meaning to people’s lives” (Danesi:2002). As a substitute for the Church, the media are ubiquitous, intrusive and insistent, providing the script (or soundtrack) for modern life. Quoting J.G. Ballard, Danesi asserts that: “We live in a world ruled by fictions of every kind . . . we live inside an enormous novel.”

What is significant for development communication is the way in which the individual seeks coherence and continuity out of the multitude of representations to which they are exposed. Dissonant messages don’t fit the personal narrative and are ignored or excluded. Cunningham recognises that “religion, music, humour, costume, nonverbal codes and narrative modes are all elements in what Joe Straubhaar calls ‘cultural proximity’. Audiences will tend to prefer programming which reflects their own cultural practices and norms” (Cunningham:1998). In their natural state, the media reinforces the status quo. It does not seek to transform but to cohere.

Fundamental to the way in which television achieves this is the unique way in which it represents reality. Television seems, to its audience, to be so much more like real life than other forms of communication. Its images look exactly like the objects they represent. People and places are instantly recognised and unambiguous. Yet the image and the object are not the same, despite the feeling of immediacy. Time may have been manipulated to fit the schedule or narrative purpose and space has been framed to fit the screen. What is seen on screen is the result of conscious decisions by producers, directors and editors. But it is the appearance of reality that enables television to sustain the ‘social text’.

There is evidence that the role of television in a society changes over time and is affected by the extent of its “residential saturation”. Two significant conclusions have been drawn from research done in Brazil (Kottak:1991). In the more rural areas of the country where the distribution of receivers is limited, television encourages social contact as people gather in the home of a TV owner, or in a communal place, such as a bar, to watch. As set ownership increases, television begins to isolate people from wider community interaction, keeping people indoors with their immediate families. Although not mentioned by Kottak, it is worth noting that in mature television cultures, television further fragments the family as individuals acquire their own TV set and define
their personal space by the programme choices they make.

The Brazilian study also found that the effects of television were cumulative and that the length of time people had been exposed to television in the home, rather than the amount of time they watched every day, influenced a wider range of personal attitudes and social behaviour. "Initially, particularly among media-poor people, attitudes toward TV are overwhelmingly positive" but these "positive attitudes toward television tended to decrease with (higher) income and with years of exposure." (Kottak:1991). The study suggests that the introduction of television leads to a period of between 10 and 15 years of "maximum immediate receptivity" before a process of more selective viewing and discerning reading (Fiske & Hartley:1978) develops.

This enlightens the conclusion made by Jon Alterman in his discussion of the effects of television on Arab domestic politics. "In all of this discussion, it is important to be clear what our timeframe is. Media develops over time, and politics often take even longer to develop. When we talk about political and social change in the Arab world, we need to be thinking not in terms of weeks and months, but years and decades. Although television is made every day often for 24 hours, one cannot judge its impact week-to-week, or even year-to-year" (Alterman:2002).

It is clear that "television is not the magic bullet that most developers and the general public still assume it to be." Instead, according to Scott Olson: "it is more like a grenade, bursting little bits of social change like shrapnel into the cultural fabric, unpatterned and unpredictable, now and then a dud, sometimes exploding in the face of its master" (Olson:1994).

Sabido, the master of entertainment-education, suggests that television "involves more than just telling an interesting story. Rather, the programme producers establish a game of moral 'nintendo' with the audience . . . They play this nintendo by interacting with the soap opera in various ways, through crying, laughing, speculating, and commenting . . . The producers establish, and the audiences' accept, the informal rules of the nintendo game" (Sabido:1999).

Strategies for Development Communication

Slowly, according to Annabelle Sreberny, scholars are discovering the importance of the media as instruments of civil society (Sreberny:2000). Others agree. Communication can no longer "be treated like the fifth wheel on a car – nice to have, but something of a luxury" (Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada:1998). "Print and broadcast media are a vital means of transferring and sometimes producing, knowledge" (AHDR:2003).

The public media can have enormous impact. A televised report can trigger government action or public response. A report by CNN about female circumcision broadcast during the UN Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 pulled a huge audience worldwide and shocked the local community since the issue had not been discussed publicly before. The broadcast put the issue on the Government agenda and mobilised both Government and NGO projects to eradicate the practice (Amin:2001).

More than 20 years ago a British reporter told the world about the famine in Ethiopia. It stirred the conscience of the world and mobilised a massive response. It provoked a sometime pop-star, Bob Geldof, to write a new song describing the crisis for his band "The Boomtown Rats". The record made $8 million. With the money he hired planes and lorries to ship in food, shaming the British Government into action and confronting the European Union over the distribution of its vast grain mountains. What became known as Band Aid inspired the largest television event in history. It is estimated that one third of the population of the world watched Live Aid, an event that raised $100 million for the crisis.

While these stories illustrate the effects of the media in mobilising socio-political action, their impact was influenced by wider circumstances that would be impossible to replicate. We need to look elsewhere for insights on communication strategy. This section will examine several popular strategies of development communication and consider their relevance. Social marketing falls within the diffusion tradition and is therefore a legacy of the older modernisation paradigm. Nevertheless it continues to be practiced, sometimes with good results. We will consider the nature of persuasive communication within this discussion. The media have also been used extensively in education and there are important lessons to be learned from this experience. Although it also has a long tradition, educational-entertainment (or edutainment) has mushroomed as a strategy in the last decade and deserves careful considera-

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AHDR: African Human Development Report
Amin: Amin, 2001
 alteration: Alterman: 2002
Band Aid: British charity "Band Aid"
Fiske & Hartley: Fiske & Hartley: 1978
Kottak: Kottak: 1991
Live Aid: British charity "Live Aid"
Sabido: Sabido, the master of entertainment-education
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tion. We will also look at the ways in which the media can contribute to socio-political movements (or social mobilisation) before considering ways of integrating these strategies for effective development change.

**Social Marketing**

The media have been used by governments in developing countries to raise public awareness about a catalogue of development issues in farming, education, public health and the environment. The expectation has been that the communication of information and ideas will lead to changes in behaviour. Oral rehydration therapy campaigns have been successful in different parts of the world (Honduras, The Gambia and Egypt, for example) probably because the infrastructure and resources for change are readily available in most villages. All that is needed is salt, sugar and water. What was missing was the information on how to use them.8

Social marketing applies the standard techniques of commercial marketing to promote social change. Lessons from consumer behaviour are applied to development, using the methods of persuasion to influence behaviour. The method depends on research that segments audiences according to demographic categories and assesses prior knowledge, attitudes and opinions in the target group. Audiences move through a decision process, from ignorance to awareness and acceptance, usually supported by motivational components that stimulate desire for the change.9 Many successful social marketing projects use a multimedia approach, combining different media to maximise exposure to their message. One of the attractions of social marketing is its problem-solving, project management ethos.10

At the heart of most social marketing campaigns is the intention to influence behaviour - to persuade.11 Persuasive communication had a bad press in the early days of development communication and it continues to live off the legacy of diffusion theory - the idea that the media have strong and direct effects. But not all persuasion is manipulative or subversive. Early attempts to measure attitude as a predictor of behaviour were problematic. While it is reasonable to assume that individual beliefs influence personal behaviour, there are a number of factors that moderate the strength of the relationship, making it difficult to predict with certainty the outcome of changes in attitude. Behaviour also has an influence on attitudes. In certain circumstances individuals whose behaviour is inconsistent with their attitudes reduce the psychological stress not by changing their behaviour but by modifying their attitude. Other variables, including the source, message, receiver and environment (or setting) all affect persuasive transactions (Stiff:2003).

Several practical theories have emerged from research into persuasion. Using a biological metaphor, William McGuire suggests providing people with a message that contains weak arguments against a particular idea, in much the same way as an inoculation prepares the immune system for later infection. The expectation is that people will refute the weaker arguments with their own, stronger defence. Inoculation has been used successfully in political and health campaigns (Stiff:2003).

Social marketing is not without its critics. Commercial interests are accused of aggravating rather than alleviating problems. The promotion of powdered milk products, as a substitute for breast-feeding, had an impact in increases in diarrheal diseases and infant mortality because it failed to take account of problems that mothers faced in properly sterilizing the water or bottle, and in some cases led to adoption by poor people who diluted the formula because they could not afford it.

There are concerns that social marketing concentrates on short term campaigns rather than long term change. There is evidence that campaigns lose their impact over time. Anti drink-driving campaigns have been running in the UK for almost 30 years but the number of alcohol related road accidents has risen for the fourth year in succession. Research shows a 94% awareness of the message but “it seems that alerting drivers to the issue is one thing. Getting them to change their behaviour is entirely different and more difficult” (Foxall:2003). Twenty million people have died of HIV/AIDS in the past 20 years despite the fact that the message is out there and everyone has been exposed to it. “The message is just not getting through, and we don’t know what message is going to make people hear it.”12

Social marketing is also criticised for its focus on individual behaviour. Public service announcements have limited success because they fail to address the political, economic and social factors involved. Many development issues involve questions of social justice. Anti-smoking campaigns

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must address the vested interests and political structures that support them, and not just appeal for abstinence on health grounds. Social advocacy is a necessary complementary activity to social marketing.

**Educational Media**

The Arab Human Development Report (AHDR:2003) suggests that there is a clear relationship between the freedom of the mass media on the one side and increased demand for and supply of knowledge on the other. "The more freedom enjoyed by the media and the deeper their involvement in human development issues such as good governance, knowledge and women’s empowerment, the stronger the societal incentives for creating a knowledge society become." It is unfortunate therefore that there is very limited development programming on satellite TV in the Arab world. Indeed "Arab television at large is not a vibrant force for knowledge or culture.”

Early experiments in satellite educational television in India utilised television as a teaching aid for in-school teachers. The Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) was the first attempt (1975-76) to educate rural illiterates by satellite, a project that met with only partial success. The evaluation of the project identified three serious impediments – inadequate teacher training, the inappropriate language used in the broadcasts and “centralized production of television program materials for culturally diverse audiences” (Contractor:1993). Although these hypotheses could have been tested the experiment was not repeated.

Television is used as an educational medium around the world although most educational programmes are scheduled in the late night “graveyard” slots. Most of our ideas of learning are based on models of schooling linked to formal patterns of education. John MacMahon (1997) unravels some of the mythology surrounding formal education by reference to four theories of learning first suggested by Dennis Fox. Education is either about the transfer of knowledge; the demonstration of good practice (in television terms the classic example is in cookery or gardening programmes); the traveller, with the teacher as guide; or cultivation, the idea that neither the teacher nor the pupil know the outcome in advance but both work to nurture the potential for growth that emerges from the learning experience.

The first two models exhibit the tendencies of what Paulo Freire called the banking theory of learning in which the learner is a container to be filled with knowledge. Travelling and cultivating suggest a more active participation on the part of the learner. The partnership between programme-makers and learners can be either passive or active. Effective educational television in the future “will be about stimulating and cultivating the imaginations of individuals, groups and even cultures” (MacMahon:1997). The challenge will be to translate these imaginings into media presentations. Karen Brown of Channel 4 in the UK supports this argument. “Programme makers need to search out and nourish certain human appetites – curiosity, a sense of fun and play, and the power to reason. The best educational television leaves a space for the viewer to think, to be provoked, to answer back, to argue with the television set and to discuss matters with other viewers” (Brown:1997).

MacMahon draws on Hans Magnus Enzensberger’s distinction between repressive and emancipatory forms of broadcasting. In its present form, television inhibits communication by preventing reciprocal action between sender and receiver. Educational television in the future must overcome this problem.

But educational television, in the formal sense, must give way to a more popular format. Ramanamma states the obvious when he comments: “The government’s motive for introducing rural television programs was mainly to reinforce rural development. However, it was quickly realized that rural people expect to be entertained by television just as urban people do. In fact, for farmers and rural people the main motive for viewing television is to be entertained and not to get ideas or learn” (Ramanamma:1993).

**Entertainment-Education**

Jon Alterman, in his analysis of television in the Arab world recognises that television is fundamentally an entertainment medium. “The effect of increasing coverage of political matters on television appears to have been in large measure to reduce politics to entertainment” (Alterman:2002). He could have included education as well as politics in the assessment. Sari Thomas argues that “whatever their conscious motivation, when people watch television, they watch stories (drama or news) showing how “things” work. Tele-
vision especially provides a window on many matters with which most of us have relatively little or no real-life experience” (Thomas:1995). Few of us would equate watching television with listening to a lecture, “yet the two experiences may not be that far apart. In fact, the ‘educational’ material coming from television stories probably has more to do with the business of ordinary life – values and ideas involved in our everyday judgments – than does the educational material in most formal classroom situations.” Audience interpretations of television content, albeit in socio-cultural clusters (interpretive communities) are clear evidence of active learning on the part of television viewers.

This innate characteristic of television has been exploited in development communications for decades. In the UK, the first radio drama designed with educational objectives was launched by the BBC on January 1st, 1951. *The Archers*, a tale of rural life in England following the Second World War, was designed to promote agricultural innovations to farmers and to help city folk understand rural problems. It has continued as a daily programme for more than 50 years.

“Entertainment-education is the process of purposely designing and implementing a media (sic) message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, and change overt behavior” (Singhal:1999). *The Archers* was the first of what might be termed “paradigmatic” examples of the genre which includes Michel Sabido’s work in Mexico, the *telenovelas* of Brazil, and pioneering programming in Africa and India. The development themes have ranged from family planning to literacy and farming methods to health. Some projects have achieved such a high public profile that they are now able to trade on their “brand”. “Soul City, a multi-media entertainment and educational project, was launched in South Africa in 1994 to raise awareness of the HIV/AIDS crisis. Today, Soul City does not focus on one particular social issue, but instead uses the brand name to raise awareness on various topics, including mother and child health, HIV/AIDS, smoking, and gender-based violence. Messages are conveyed through a weekly prime time TV drama, a radio drama broadcast in nine languages, and color pamphlets inserted in 10 newspapers” (Japhet:2000).

One of the most influential pioneers of the use of soap operas in social change is Miguel Sabido whose productions in Mexico were built on the theories of Albert Bandura (social cognitive theory), Eric Bentley (theatre genres) and Carl Jung (archetypes). Bandura has shown how individuals not only learn through their own experiences but also by observing and imitating the behaviour of other individuals as role models. People have an appetite to learn and soap opera characters can teach. “Entertainment-education is premised on the idea that individuals learn behavior by observing role models, particularly in the mass media . . . This process depends on the existence of role models in the messages: good models, bad models, and those who transition from bad to good” (Waisbord:2001). Audience identification (what is sometimes called parasocial interaction) when combined with self-efficacy (an individual’s belief in their ability to deal with a situation) and collective efficacy (confidence in the community’s capacity for change) gives the strategy its potential for positive impact.

To succeed, entertainment-education must compete in production and entertainment values with existing programmes. Strong archetypal characters and emotive dramatic structure provide the basis for popular appeal. The format relies on people’s lingering interest in moral conflict, their inclination to gossip (to talk about the dilemmas faced by different characters in a programme) and unconscious emulation of role models (Sabido:1999).

Egyptian melodrama adopts many of these characteristics. Like soap operas in Latin America they are produced as a series, reaching a resolution with quite explicit moral lessons. Television drama is seen as a means to mould the national identity. Lila Abu-Lughod describes them as “a technology for the production of new kinds of selves” (Abu-Lughod:2002). They lead the viewer to see their own daily lives as a drama. “By attaching strong sentiments to everyday life, melodramas fashion ordinary characters whose personhood is defined by what seems a rich inner life and an intense individuality.” By placing strong emotion in the everyday interpersonal world, shaped by the educated middle-class assumptions of its producers, these formats influence the social changes (“the projects of modernity”) occurring in Egypt today.

Entertainment-education has a strong following and the recent surge of research and publication in the field is significant. But the evidence is mixed (Waisbord:2001). Behaviour changes resulting from programmes in Zimbabwe, The Gambia
and Zambia were statistically insignificant. Long-term effects are weak - there are concerns that audiences revert to their previous behaviour after the programme. Entertainment-education projects are more likely to be effective in stimulating people already predisposed to change behaviour but not others. Their success is dependent on the availability of local infrastructure to support changes in behaviour (Sabido:1999). An attempt to adapt a British soap opera idea to Kazakhstan floundered. Although the project had strong UK Government backing it faced enormous cultural problems and the final product was forced to compromise many key development goals (Mandel:2002). There are suggestions that entertainment-education may not thrive in a market-driven context. Success “has so far been in those countries where the electronic medium, particularly TV, had always been under government control and the viewers are left with no option to switch channels” (Bhattacharjee:2002).

**Social Mobilisation/Advocacy**

Entertainment-education remains a top-down process, requiring substantial professional skill and investment to succeed. It is not surprising, therefore, that it fails to attract those favourable to participatory communication. If television is to serve participatory goals it must be instrumental in mobilising local action.

Social mobilisation brings together a coalition of allies to raise awareness, assemble resources and strengthen community participation. Specific development agendas usually arise from problem assessment at the local level leading to collective decision making and strategic planning. Government agencies, NGOs and the media work together to stimulate and support the initiative.

Media advocacy is an important component of mobilisation, seeking to gain public support for change, often mobilising social institutions and political support in favour of a cause. The assumption is that the media influence public debate and as a consequence, shape political and social interventions. The intention is to inform public awareness and articulate public opinion in such a way as to ensure that policy makers will respond appropriately. The goal, therefore, is to influence news agendas and not just public opinion. Advocacy strategies need to consider the interests of stakeholders and the network of actors who will be affected by the change. Social problem-solving is complex and over-determined, and advocacy can play a catalytic role in coalition building and collective decision-making. Satellite broadcasts, therefore, can act as catalysts for change, provoke community dialogue and collective action. On-the-ground partners can assist in giving practical shape to the issues raised, mobilising grassroots community dialogue and collective action. Coordination between broadcasters, the NGO community and civil society institutions is required for success.

Ultimately the big media may prime local action. Other media function at the local level, including community radio, street theatre and, increasingly, computer aided networks. The mass media can help individuals, groups and communities to enhance their participation in development, providing relevant information, debating ideas and opinions, validating local cultures and encouraging people to participate.

New communication technologies have not only improved the ability of large-scale media to respond to local situations, they have also placed production capacity in the hands of local communities and civil society institutions. This will have profound effects on communication flows in the future. But effective development also involves social networks and interpersonal communication. The media can stimulate peer communication, “making it possible for messages to enter social networks and become part of everyday interactions” (Waisbord:2001).

Integrated strategies embrace top-down and bottom-up initiatives involving actors at different levels and making use of a "tool kit" of strategies. Socio-political change requires the political will and public resources to create the necessary conditions. Advocacy strategies are designed to engage policy makers and donors in the process. The strategies of social marketing can target different audience segments in the population. Creative educational methods are available to communicate the information and skills needed for change. Family planning programmes in Egypt successfully integrated mass media, entertainment-education and interpersonal communication, involving the participation of government, health organisations and religious groups to produce remarkable success. The birthrate dropped from 3.98% to 2.75% in ten years (Waisbord:2001).

Satellite television can contribute to this mix in two ways, either seeking intentional results by working in partnership with civil society institu-
tions and non-government organisations to create public awareness, mobilise resources and educate its audiences, or acting as a catalyst, stimulating independent initiatives on-the-ground (see Figuer
oa, et al.:2001). The potential for mass communication to provoke and inform conversation and action at the local level deserves greater attention in development strategy.

**Ethical Considerations**

Any development intervention is value-laden, carrying with it implicit or explicit assumptions about causality, human nature and societal reality. Any discussion of development, therefore, “must include the physical, mental, social, cultural, and spiritual growth of individuals in an atmosphere free from coercion or dependency”14 (Melkote:2001). This is easier said than done. The media can be accused of imposing change on a society, rather than collaborating in ways that strengthen and improve local conditions.

Who sets the development agenda and defines the strategy? Who is to judge the success of a project? Who will reap the benefits and who will bear the risks? No context will emerge from an intervention unaffected. Social relationships and culture, inter alia, are not static. Strategies for change may undermine the cohesion of a community leaving it fractured and vulnerable. It is impossible to restore the situation to some prior default position.

Ethical dilemmas occur at many different levels in a development intervention. At its most basic level a project must be clear on its moral imperative. Sabido is unequivocal on this issue: “one needs to turn to a very high moral authority that all stakeholders respect” (Sabido:1999). This might be a UN Charter or a national constitution. “Since the days of Moses and the Ten Commandments, there exists a certain common understanding of what people and nations consider as being good versus bad social behaviours.” Are the foundations of a project secure in the commonly held moral positions on the issue? If so, these “stakeholder values” need to be systematically incorporated in the project. If not, the project will need to argue its position against prevailing public policy or opinion.

Who “owns” the project? Is this the vision of the broadcaster, the NGO community, religious or other civil society organisations or the beneficiaries? What must be done to align these visions?

Inevitably the media must be selective, choosing their audience according to specific need or sponsor or commercial interest. Audience segmentation intentionally focuses its message to fit the “uses and gratifications” of a particular, relatively homogenous group. But this strategy can lead to the unintended isolation of those not targeted. This may lead to social or economic disadvantage. How will this bias be overcome?

There are many sensitivities regarding the actual content. Is the “solution” to a socio-economic need being sugar coated by the format in which it is presented? For example, have the issues been simplified in order to fit into an entertaining framework? Miriam Adeney suggests a checklist for those embarking on a development project: “Does the project fit with local concepts? With traditional knowledge? With local religious or contemporary secular ideology? With local social structure (including law and politics as well as informal groupings)? With local economic resources, infrastructure, and technologies? With local family and child-training patterns? With local communication styles and media? With local aesthetics? With local recreations and celebrations? With the specific pressures for cultural change that this society is experiencing? Naturally, a culture will include multiple, sometimes contradictory, formulations. Nevertheless, our humble attempt to adapt to its major themes remains important both pragmatically and theologically” (Adeney:1987).

The problems with persuasive techniques are clear. Is the audience being given a clear and balanced choice? Are the alternatives explicit? Are the consequences of each side of the argument known to the audience? And there are undesirable or unintended consequences – in attempts to reduce the birth rate, advertisements for condoms may also encourage sexual promiscuity, for example. Is this “price” worth paying?

In the end, when faced with the ethical dilemmas, development communication is also led to reflect on the integrity of the source (not just those appearing on screen but the organisation behind them and the institutions and agencies involved). Inevitably, any intervention for social change “represents” this institutional framework, and in Christian witness, particularly in the Arab world, reflects for good or bad on the church itself.

Adeney lays down the ethical gauntlet in the following terms. “Those who confront other cul-
tunes for the sake of changing them must also be contemplatives – humbly sensitive to the transcendence that largely eludes us, and to the paradoxes that so pervade our world. We are ignorant first of the complexity of the obstacles to changing the world. And second, we are ignorant of the ubiquitousness of recurring disasters. Rather than expecting success, rather than smothering the poor with cheap cheerfulness, we may at times need to sit in silence with them, to empathize, to share our mutual lack of answers. When we can do no other, we must weep with those who weep. But then we may discover that sometimes a crisis is not a crisis, and a failure is not a failure. John Sommer says that 'what might be seen by some outsiders as a disaster requiring external assistance may not be seen as a crisis at all by the local people’” (Adeney:1987).

Policy Implications

This paper has a number of implications for development strategy of consequence to all the actors in the field. At one level the media can create awareness and, if used wisely, may mobilise individual action. This may be a worthwhile and sufficient objective in many instances. There are many human needs and not all can be treated with sufficient depth to mobilise large scale response. However, it is unlikely that development will result from the response of individual, isolated viewers. Most people now agree that forms of participatory communication are important in achieving desirable development objectives. It empowers rather than persuades, fostering discussion and debate among its participants, enabling people to communicate with each other as well as access outside sources.

The Communication Initiative website, sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation (www.cominit.org), has promoted an integrated model of communication for social change. It recognises a number of possible catalysts for change – a crisis, internal stimulus, or change agent, for example, and the mass media. While recognising the possibility that these influences might have direct impact on individual or community development, it expands on the community dialogue and collective action that they might provoke. It is as catalyst for community dialogue that the media are best suited.

There is evidence from many parts of the world that television viewing is a communal experience, creating interaction between participants and their television and communication between themselves in different social configurations. These groupings can form “interpretive communities” comprising gender, age, family or neighbourhood clusters. Do we have sufficient information on the social and domestic viewing arrangements of the target audiences for particular programming? Might these be significant in leveraging development? In a new way, development communicators need to consider their role in facilitating these fluid “communities of reception” as they attempt to make sense of their world and change it.

This might be called “grassroots inquiry”, encouraging audiences to explore their experience, challenge what they take for granted and experiment with new ways of describing it. “In the redefinition of culture, the clue lies in the understanding of the communicative nature of culture, understanding culture as a process that is productive of meaning, not just as a ‘circulator’ of information. Thus, the receiver is not just a decoder to whom the TV broadcaster transmits a ‘message’ but also a ‘producer’” (Martin-Barbero in Tufte:2001).

The inspiration for this mediated activity comes from a vision that the media are able to release a new social imagination – a new way of shaping community life. For many, daily life is taken for granted, imprisoned by unquestioned assumptions and locked into unimaginative routines. Personal roles are clearly defined and positive change is a fantasy. Television (particularly the channels supplied by satellite) does provide an escape, but its dominant visions support a world order controlled by the economic and political establishment or organised crime.

But a different kind of television is possible. One that lifts the lid on human experience and explores alternative ways of being. In a culture suffering from a poverty of imagination, this vision of transformation could inspire significant positive change. It is a vision originally captured by the Old Testament prophets and sustained ever since by ritual and occasional public act. It is at first liturgical, “because scenarios must be tried in the safety of the community before one can go public in a hostile arena . . . This is experimentation which Wilder calls ‘guerilla theater’, in which the dismantling of the old assumptive world is under way” (Brueggemann:1987). It is not unreasonable to anticipate that this kind of tele-vision
could inspire the Arab soul and liberate the Arab mind.

Scott Olson argued that intentional occupations of television space for objective (explicit) ends almost always has devolutionary and deconstructive results. On the other hand, using ideas from de Certeau he suggested a subversive result from television – what he calls “subjective tactics” that are coincidental, unconscious and spontaneous. Changes in the cognition and psychology of the viewer, resulting from the unconscious use of television for uses and gratifications, can have profound social consequences. “These uses and gratifications include such needs as to acquire information, to experience love and friendship, to build self confidence . . . to be amused, to believe in romantic love, and to affirm cultural, ethical, and spiritual values. When television is used in these ways it allows the viewer to develop him or herself, usually to reaffirm self-image, but occasionally, when other factors warrant it, to change” (Olson:1994).

As a coincidental and unconscious process this is difficult to programme. But it does remind us that although television is not a magic bullet it can be nevertheless a powerful instrument for change. This is not a field for the novice. Only those experienced in its ways can shape its output to enhance the probability of a positive outcome.

On a practical level this vision is, inevitably, beset with difficulties. “The main difficulty we encounter in trying to engage in communication for development is that many communicators take as their starting point a very broad problem area of development (AIDS, for example) and then jump directly to ideas for possible communication activities (holding information sessions, conducting an awareness campaign, etc)” (Bessette:1999). Without a clear set of communication goals, specific plans dictating media choice or format are premature.

Communication goals will deal with questions of audience, their current knowledge, and their resistance or receptivity to change. In every case the key goal should be to enable individuals and communities to make sense of their experience and develop strategies for change. Bessette discusses “a number of critical factors or lessons that can be of benefit in making use of new technologies” (Bessette:1997). He identifies twenty! These principles can help us use communication technology to help “individuals, groups and communities, to facilitate their participation in development” – for accessing relevant information, producing and circulating local knowledge, enabling feedback in decision making, sharing ideas and opinions, mobilising people to participate, affirming cultural identity (validating and propagating the cultures of different groups within a community) and accessing knowledge.

In conclusion, we can note the following policy implications:

1) An orientation towards participatory development makes it clear that communication planning must start from a community based analysis of development problems and appropriate action, enabling people to take the reconstruction and transformation of their reality into their own hands. Nevertheless the “big” media may have a role as catalysts for change, stimulating community discussion and supporting local initiative. This needs to be clearly articulated.

2) “Communication succeeds when it is an integral part, from the very beginning, of a development programme, playing a full role during the identification of the problems and priorities, as well as during the detailed planning, implementation, and evaluation” (Fraser:1998). Often communication is not made an explicit part of a project, relying on the natural skills and resources of the participants. There is, however, a strong case for it to become a more intentional component of development interventions. Questions exploring the core messages that need to be communicated, aspects of the project that need participant interaction, and the way in which the media could facilitate this process would ensure more intentional communication planning. Eric Louw observes, “Once communication is seen as an important means of facilitating the participation of civil society in development (so as to enrich the policy and decision making processes) the conclusion is reached that communication/media should be integrated into all development projects” (Louw:1995).

3) It takes time to develop and implement effective communication strategies. It is worth noting that the UNICEF project Meena,15 was started in 1990 although its first broadcast didn’t occur until 1998. It involved two years of study, talent recruitment and pilot production, followed by five years of further research and development before release. It is important at the beginning of a project to ensure that the partners are committed long-term.
Communication interventions should result in sustainable development. There are two important questions here. Has the intervention contributed to building capacity on the ground to carry the innovation forward? And, will the social change it was designed to introduce continue beyond the intervention? What is needed to ensure that changes that are influenced by the media are sustained once the issue is no longer on the media agenda? There are numerous examples of media projects that failed to introduce sustainable change. Guy Bessette records the initial enthusiasm that surrounded the use of satellites as a way to meet the educational needs of developing countries (Bessette:1997). Huge efforts were invested during the late 1960s and 1970s to reach remote communities in Africa, Asia and South America with the technology. Yet the general view is that, for quite complex reasons, these experiments failed. He suggests that a number of factors are critical to project success and many are vital to sustainability. Here are a few key points:

- Empower local expertise – does the intervention include the transfer of knowledge and skills to the community?
- Give the target group a participatory role in the process – encourage community viewing and learning.
- Pay particular attention to involving women, since they are often responsible for introducing innovation in local practice.
- Provide opportunities for interaction and discussion as a way of helping people take their own decisions.
- Ensure that the content, cultural codes and technology are appropriate.
- Facilitate feedback on the content.

The alignment in values and programmes can be turned to strategic benefit through the building of partnerships between the media, NGOs and other civil society institutions. Television broadcasters are not development specialists. This expertise needs to be acquired, through freelance professionals, partnerships and co-production relationships. Although satellite television covers an entire region, reaching communities untouched by on-the-ground partners, there are significant benefits, where possible, to collaboration with existing agencies in strategic planning, programming and evaluation.

The UNICEF strategy illustrates another important policy issue. Effective development communication strategies involve a variety of media. As noted earlier, family planning programmes in Egypt benefited from the use of five tools, including the mass media, interpersonal communication and entertainment-education. And this commitment to multi-path communication needs to flow down to the grassroots. It is particularly important to foster horizontal rather than vertical communication, promoting the use of media that will stimulate group interaction. Knowledge does not come from a central source to the people, it emerges as people engage with one another, and outside sources, in discussion about their needs. Information is vital to development but the ways it circulates amongst the people is critical to its success in producing change (Bessette:1999).

Development broadcasting is a relatively new field of social action and there is a critical need for investment in capacity building and evaluative research. Formative and summative research should be built into every project. This should include an early assessment of the experience and competence of the project team with a commitment to providing professional training through strategic alliances or external consultancy.

Research and Evaluation

The development community is well aware of its accountability to stakeholders – governments, funders and those they serve – and they have developed elaborate strategies for needs assessment and project evaluation. Although media interventions in the development process have not received as much attention, there is a need for ongoing and rigorous assessment of both the human needs to be addressed and the impact. Different stakeholders have different research needs and these need to be taken into account in developing a research strategy.

Why undertake research and evaluation? To provide accountability to the various stakeholders, including the funders; to measure progress towards the communication goals and to improve the quality and efficacy of the initiative; to provide motivation and opportunities for professional development for the project team; to build credibility in the development community; and as a basis for wider replication.

Whatever form the communication interven-
t views

tion may take, its orientation towards the audience must be assumed and the importance of this assumption for research is enormous. A development communicator cannot know enough about the audience with whom they are engaged. Sometimes this knowledge is mediated through others – for example, the accumulated experience of the NGO community. It can be acquired, as well, through careful analysis of audience response and it sometimes needs to be gathered directly, on the ground.

It is helpful to distinguish outputs (for example, programmes produced and broadcast), outcomes (immediate benefits) and impact (long term sustainable results). Waisbord points out that we also need to consider delayed effects, indirect effects, and unexpected effects (Waisbord:2003).

Evaluation is often left to the end of a project, when it is too late to make corrections and there is no time or budget left. It would be more sensible to build into each project a pattern of ongoing evaluation, involving the project team in a form of action research, assessing the results of their work and using this to improve future practice.

Are the media a cost-effective way of achieving social transformation? This is a difficult question. Compared to what? One doesn’t ask about a hammer and screwdriver, which is the more cost-effective. They are used for different purposes. There are things that the media are already doing around the world to change the economic, social, political and cultural landscape. Television can inspire a new social vision, engage large numbers of people in conversation about their situation and encourage practical attempts at changes in personal behaviour and community practice. So the more appropriate question may be “do we want to do what the media can do?”

We may be surprised at the relatively low level of intervention that is required – in the same way that it often only requires a small quantity of a catalyst to initiate a chemical reaction, or, in the classic example used in complexity theory, how a butterfly flapping its wings in the Amazon basin can produce hurricanes in America.

References


Thomas, B (2003) “What the World’s Poor Watch on
Notes

1 This paper was originally written for the Swedish Mission Council, to provide a conceptual and strategic framework for their involvement in satellite television in the Middle East. It is reproduced, in edited form, by permission.

2 The contract was terminated because the BBC had planned to broadcast a programme (Death of a Principle) critical of human rights in Saudi Arabia (Sakr:2001).

3 Daniel Lerner’s work was based on empirical research conducted in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran in the late 1950s.

4 Poachers stole wildlife from the landowner (an analogy used by Michel de Certeau in The Practice of Everyday (1984) and referred to by Scott Olson (1994)).

5 James Carey (Carey:1989) argues this point from the perspective of the audience. The daily routine of media consumption does not change attitudes or behaviour but sustains a ritual that gives meaning to life.

6 They are “iconic”, resembling the object they represent, in the typography of signs proposed by Charles Pierce, the American philosopher (1834-1914).

7 The Brazilian study concluded: “Home exposure predicted more dependent variables (and predicted them more strongly) than did current viewing level. Thus longer home exposure was one of the top two predictors of the following 11 dependent variables . . . greater use of print media, reading widely, nonsexist job stereotyping, “liberal” (i.e., less sexist) views on social issues, having more household possessions, having a favorite performer of the same skin color, having less trust in government, assigning a lower value to local festivals, considering school learning less important, believing in less corporal punishment for children, and being less fearful about children. On the other hand, current viewing level (average daily hours) was one of the top two predictors of just seven dependent variables: reading widely, having visitors, having a favorite performer of the same skin color, having savings accounts, thinking that the town needs more police, thinking that TV has changed one’s life, and not considering TV to be addictive” (Kottak:1991).

8 Rasha Abdulla lists 14 factors that contributed to “the stunning success” of the ORT campaign in Egypt (Abdulla:2004).


10 For example, Oliveira discusses several methodologies, including the USAID Communications for Technology Transfer in Agriculture (CTTA) and the FAO “Strategic Extension Campaign” (SEC) approaches (Oliveira:1993).

11 This outline of persuasive communication draws, in particular, from Persuasive Communication, by Stiff and Mongeau (Stiff:2003).

12 The words of Pat Francis, director of Wola Nani, the South African HIV/AIDS action group, reported in “Missing the Message? 20 years of learning from HIV/AIDS” (Panos.org.uk) and headlined by Action, WACC, December 2003.


14 One could add “economic” to Melkote’s list for completeness.

15 Meena is an eight year old cartoon character who lives with her family in a small South Asian village. Meena has appeared in more than 30 animations that deal with topics including health and hygiene, the dangers of trafficking and children’s rights. See, for example, http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/files/ROSA_2004_800_Meena_Comm_Initiative.pdf