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THE MEDIUM, THE MESSAGE AND THE MOVEMENT

**A report on the training programme on
Communication and Development
(January 1989-June 1989)**

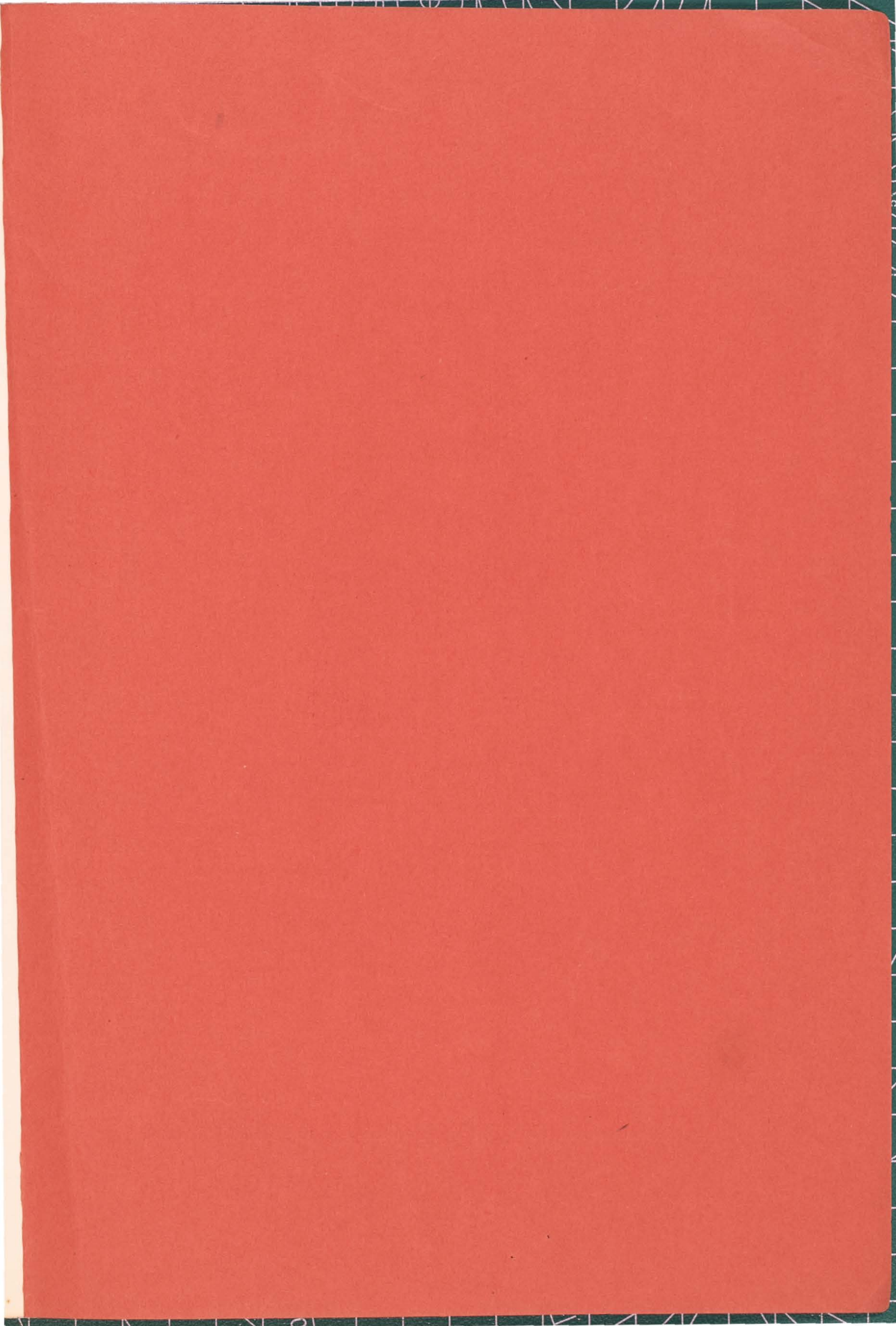


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CENDIT

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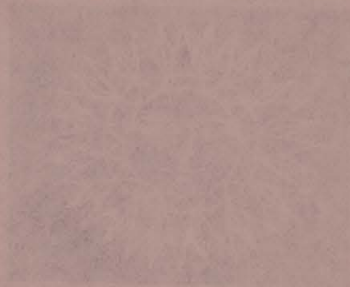
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THE MEDIUM, THE MESSAGE AND THE MOVEMENT

A report of the study of the relationship of
Communication and Development
(January 1972 - June 1972)



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INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the communication revolution, made possible by stupendous technological advances has, without doubt, changed the nature of social, economic and political perceptions. The role of information in making or alternatively holding back the development of regions and nations has become increasingly important. Above all it is now possible to convey information to large sections of people in a way that was earlier not conceived. And, if information is more easily accessed then it becomes equally important for people to recognise the need to be informed.

In a developing country like India mass illiteracy and distance from information generating networks has rendered vast sections of the Indian people socially immobile and fostered a 'culture of silence' which negates the aims of the country's development efforts and plans. These sections, which include the rural poor and women, have been bypassed by the development process in several ways. They have not, in any case, been called upon to become participative respondents in a process which is designed to alleviate their conditions, and they therefore remain removed from it and unable to question or doubt its effectivity and ability to deliver benefits.

At the same time, with the tremendous spread of television and the widespread reach of radio, the official media has laid the foundation for an effective flow of information to people in every corner of the country. This network allows for the transmission of simultaneous messages to the people and has the potential of transferring vital information related to the survival needs of the Indian people. Thus issues of common concern to disparate regional communities such as health, education and nutrition can be taken up by centralised media. Despite its impact and obvious advantages, this network provides for a one-way traffic in ideas. Information is generated by those who control it and have access to it and is passed on to those who have thus far been dispossessed and ill-informed.

The merits and demerits of this system of communication constitute the basis of a raging debate which occupies the minds of communication people not only within India but the world over. Aside from this is another, less explored area of communication which is now being considered and even used by countries where the need for intervention is seen as extremely urgent. It differs from the usual forms of mass communication in terms of approach and scale, and may be described as a **participatory form of communication**. This form is born of the smaller community and aims ultimately at meeting the mainstream to reflect and direct nationwide concerns.

Radically different from the mainstream process, participatory communication takes a fresh look at what sort of information is required by communities and how this information should be provided. It thereby creates "a mediated process of decision-making which involves the rural poor directly in discerning and prioritizing their own problems and finding the information and resources needed to solve these problems...it reinforces their existing indigenous knowledge and incorporates this knowledge into the development process in a way that is culturally sound"(1).

How does this approach differ from conventional media ?

The role and impact of these alternate forms of communication may be better appreciated in contrast to better known and more familiar forms of conventional media such as film and television. As a CENDIT study puts it "Other media such as film and television tend to create a distance from the viewer and the materials being transmitted - in film because everything is literally larger than life, in TV because the scale is so obviously beyond the dimensions of individual experience. By contrast video tends to maintain the balance between the viewer and what is being used". (2)

ON CENDIT AND ITS PHILOSOPHY

CENDIT is a non-profit organisation working in the field of communication. Since its inception as the Centre for Development of Instructional Technology in 1972, it has concentrated its efforts on a) the production and dissemination of audio-visual materials designed as communication aids to be made available to development-oriented organisations; b) explored new possibilities related to alternate forms of communications, and c) sought to transfer skills essential for the use of alternate forms of communication such as the audio-visual and video to people already directly involved in grassroot development activities.

This latter activity has been conducted through a variety of workshops aimed at training and introducing interested sections to relatively new and less explored forms of communication which could prove effective at the grassroots level and thereby further real development. CENDIT has also encouraged the use of its facilities by development organisations as well as individuals and evolved a system through which such people can work for periods of up to one year with CENDIT to gain the experience and confidence required to use various technologies involved in the production of such materials.

CENDIT has thus emerged as a valuable resource centre for non-governmental organisations interested in exploring new ways of interacting with and getting across to the communities they work with. Side by side with these activities CENDIT has also been developing computer software; has imparted training in computer application, and has conducted significant research aimed at improving production methods, developing appropriate technology and establishing workable communication patterns.

CENDITs efforts in creating, using and propogating the use of these forms of alternate media stem naturally from its basic philosophy which stresses that "Media materials must originate from the local environment and benefit from the beliefs and practices of a particular community in order to be effective, credible and relevant". (3)

(1). SEEING AND SHOWING OURSELVES: A guide to using small format videotape as a participatory tool for development-CENDIT.

(2). Stuart, Mary August, 1980:

Contained in this philosophy is the understanding and underlying belief that these efforts must empower those people whose problems are being addressed with the facility to create their own reflective media. Such a perspective cannot find fulfillment through either film or television for reasons already laid down. In addition to these reasons, by comparison with alternate forms of media, both television and film require a much higher financial input, which, in a developing country, puts these conventional forms out of the reach of the people and makes them accessible only to those who are, by virtue of their class and social status, distanced from the people their programmes are essentially designed to help. This distance or gap in turn creates content-related problems. The participatory approach suggested by CENDIT aims at closing this gap and therefore sees the role of the grassroots worker in the development of participatory communication as critical and conversely demands a distancing from the 'professional media person'.

ALTERNATE MEDIA

If the goals outlined so far are to be achieved the question that needs to be answered is: Which forms of communication are most effective and what skills do development workers require to make use of these communications avenues?

The Indian experience, based on the spread of television and radio, suggests that there is a growing acceptance of an audio-visual form of communication. As a natural consequence, although limited to the urban set-up, videos too have become increasingly popular items on the list of household consumer goods that families would like to obtain. But even where videos are still to become common, television has successfully ushered in an era of small-screen viewing highly conducive to the introduction of the video, and video materials.

Given this base situation, the major issues are then identification of the use to which the video and other related audio-visual forms of communication are put and secondly, what they should reflect.

The real value of a participatory approach to communication lies in its potential to become a true reflector of peoples' self perception and also of their determination to change.

According to a handbook dealing with the use of video produced by CENDIT on the basis of extensive research in the country, "There is a scarcity of information concerning the approach necessary to truly involve people in a participatory communication process. Video can attract wide participation at a grassroots level and can actively increase empowerment and confidence in people - a first crucial step in participatory rural development".(4)

(3). CENDIT, 1974, vol. I, p.2.

(4). Stuart, Mary August 1984; 6

An area in which this holds particularly true is that of non-formal education. With the growing realisation that unless active intervention is initiated immediately India will, by the end of this century bear the ignominious reputation of being the home of as much as 50 per cent of the world's illiterate population, it became necessary to use any form of communication that could accelerate the process of change and help to rapidly reach a large number of illiterate people who could not be absorbed quickly by mainstream educational centres. Non-formal education thus became the call of the nation which was and is seeking to halt the frightening trend of a further slideback into illiteracy. This approach digressed from the conventional and opened up to a variety of communication forms that would help educate people by reaching out to them rather than by waiting for them to voluntarily join educational institutions. Television programmes and videos specially designed as teaching aids for new learners gradually became a new area demanding attention.

EMPOWERING THE PEOPLE

By putting the tools and means of communication into the hands of the people they are encouraged "to actively create images of themselves and to see themselves". Infact "the beauty of video is that it serves the values by which change occurs most readily and most positively. It encourages the transfer of information and experience directly from person to person or community to community in such a way that the viewer identifies with the situations of others like himself..." (5)

This approach also serves to 'demystify and deglamourise' the visual media. However to allow such a people-oriented communication process to take root it is equally important, as was mentioned earlier, to decrease the involvement of professionals and to step up the involvement of grassroot workers and development workers and through them of communities themselves. For, in the actual process of media production, if a new set of producers with a clear vision of their own problems and a desire to search for the information and means by which to change their situations is introduced the product must be essentially real and therefore different.

Thus, given the changing media environment in the country and the urgent need to encourage real development (which involves the people directly and which is not planned and implemented in isolation of them):

- (a) The video is a much more accessible tool of communication (While some may argue that this is truer in terms of dissemination than production, its potential to reflect a truer image of the problems and needs of the people cannot be undermined).
- (b) That the demand and need for a new approach exists. The experience of the effectivity and ability of conventional forms of mass media in the country leave much to be desired as they have failed to initiate the kind of intervention that is urgently required. The proposed method of drawing people into the process of change and thereby recording their own progress would go a long way in making media an effective tool through which the country's goals can be realised.
- (c) Unlike other film media videos can be 'played back' as soon as they are made and this makes them a very exciting medium.

(5). Stuart, Mary August 1984:6

CENDIT'S EXPERIENCE AND THE EVOLUTION OF THIS APPROACH

Over the past 17 years, CENDIT has had the opportunity to interact with a large number of groups and agencies to whom development is the imperative. This interaction has taken many differing forms and has provided the ground for the genesis of CENDIT's views on and approach to alternate forms of communication. The process through which CENDIT can reach skills and information related to video to these agencies, has also evolved through a shared experience over the years.

CENDIT was formed as an institution that would fill a void by developing communication technology to aid development efforts. Over the years its own experience made it clear that there was a need to provide a wider section of committed workers with an orientation and exposure to new media of communication and video in particular. In order to do this CENDIT initiated a series of short workshops lasting from a week to ten days. These workshops have been conducted not only in CENDIT's Delhi office but at the state level in areas where interested development agencies operate. For instance CENDIT has conducted workshops at Sultanpur village in Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh, at Bolpur near Santiniketan in West Bengal, at Tilonia in Rajasthan and at Uslampati near Madurai in Tamil Nadu. At an average, 15 participants from each local group were involved in each workshop.

Structure

Short term courses and workshops though limited in scope and depth have proved an effective way of introducing various aspects of video production and thereby provided a glimpse of its potential to participants. The structure adopted for these workshops has followed roughly the same pattern for each of them. They set out to provide participants with an opportunity to:

- a) **View material** within a community with the local people in order to ascertain their reactions not only to the media itself but to its content and handling of issues.
- b) **Discover issues:** Through interaction with the community the participants were encouraged to identify issues of greatest importance to the local community as a first step on which to base their use of video.
- c) **Gather skills :** The participants were introduced to the basic skills required for making and producing video films and for handling the tools involved.
- d) **Making programmes :** They were then given an opportunity to make programmes of relevance to the local community.
- e) **Study impact :** Once the programmes were complete these were taken back to the people whose problems they reflected. Through the playback it was possible to study their impact and get a feedback on peoples responses.

Common to these exercises was the involvement of people at the community

level. Every programme created through the workshops necessarily featured the villagers themselves and, however simply, captured their gravest concerns while simultaneously providing valuable information related to these issues. The novelty and excitement generated among the local population through this method provided a new impetus to the learning process already initiated by the local development agency and helped motivate a deeper sense of involvement in solving problems related to their lives.

Thus each such workshop that CENDIT organises goes through the following paces with its participants:

- a) Research
- b) Production
- c) Feedback

Among the organisations that have participated and benefitted from the workshops held so far are the following;

Social Work Research Centre (SWRC), Tillonia
 Vikalp, Saharanpur
 Institute for Motivating Self-Employment (IMSE), Calcutta
 Society for Integrated Rural Development (SIRD), Madurai
 Media Exploration for Social and Cultural Advancement
 (MESCA), Bangalore
 Eklavya, Bhopal
 Programme for Community Organization (PCO), Trivandrum
 Pooshika, Dhaka
 Bhagvatula Charitable Trust, Yellamanchili
 Applied Socio-Economic Research (ASR), Lahore
 Jana Vigyan Samiti, Kanpur

The workshops were an eye opener for CENDIT. They successfully generated not merely an interest in and determination to use the video as a regular form of communication at the local level but motivated a desire among several participants to work with CENDIT in order to acquire greater skills and confidence. CENDIT thus gradually began realising the limitations of such short - term workshops. Although they serve the basic goal of exposing development workers to the use and potential of video, and thereby sensitise them to the medium, they remain only orientation courses. It was evident that if some agencies already using the media, or interested in using it were looking for help from CENDIT then the possibility of conducting longer sessions would have to be considered seriously.

It must be noted here that CENDIT has conducted these workshops not merely with non-governmental organisations but with government agencies as well with the same aim of sensitising those concerned with development in the country to the vast potential of using video. Specifically CENDIT has conducted, under the aegis of FAO, two workshops with agricultural extension workers introducing them to various aspects of video and film.

In addition to these short-term workshops was CENDITs experience in conducting longer sessions with women from South Asia on the theme 'Women, media and development'. The experiences of earlier workshops helped make these sessions more professional, better structured and, more ambitious. The workshops to which women from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka were invited began three years ago, and have become a regular annual feature at CENDIT.

The first workshop was conducted over a two-week period in 1986. The stated objective of the exercise was to bring women from the region together and offer them an exposure to various forms of communication with a special emphasis on video. Given the time limitation and other constraints on the content that could be successfully conveyed, the thrust was on giving participants a feel of what video could do to accelerate change with reference to the problems of women.

As with all new ventures the first workshop did not follow a predetermined methodology although the content was clearly defined. As a result a fair amount of time was devoted to sharing between members of the group in order to forge an understanding of the common, as well as the specific problems women in their countries face. This sort of exercise is essential if the approach to problems of women, the poor and other sections is to be sensitive. In the second week of the workshop participants went into a hands-on phase and handled video equipment.

The second workshop was more structured with experiences of the first helping to mould it and being incorporated into its design. The time devoted to it was increased by a week making it a three-week session. Held in Ahmedabad, this workshop allowed for a less hurried approach and led up to a production-oriented finale.

It was during the third workshop held in Bangalore in 1988, that an even greater improvement over the previous two workshops was clearly perceived. It was now possible for resource persons as well as participants to follow a more ambitious routine which saw the inclusion of more detailed and abstract concepts related to video production. Greater stress was also laid on finer aspects such as lighting.

Although a timetable was followed through each of these workshops, enough flexibility was maintained to ensure that no basic concepts were left unclear and that the members of the group remained on par. When necessary, therefore, resource persons would digress from theoretical explanations to demonstrate and discuss concepts which members of the group found difficult to grasp.

In the world of film and video, such workshops are an education not merely for participants but for resource persons as well. CENDITs experience has shown that while several professionals in the field are excellent producers, teaching is not always as simple as it appears. But, as an essential prerequisite for providing a wider exposure to the media it is important that more resource persons are drawn into workshops such as those conducted by CENDIT so that their skills and experience can inspire and involve more people in an appreciation of the media.

In the time period separating the Ahmedabad and Bangalore workshops, two workshops were held in Pakistan, to which resource persons involved in the Women, Media and Development workshops were invited. The first of these was conducted in Karachi in 1988 the other in Lahore in June the same year. Both were an outcome of the Delhi-based workshops as participants from that country returned home convinced that other women in Pakistan would benefit from such an interaction, exposure and training.

Apart from offering an orientation to alternate media, these efforts, in CENDITs view, have gone a long way in providing an essentially different forum for participants to share their experiences and look at their problems afresh from the point of view of communicating this experience through video. This, coupled with practical training, has also helped to demystify the medium and to thereby open up a new channel of communication between groups and with the communities they serve.

NETWORKING

As the next logical step to the process of participatory communication CENDIT proposed a Communications Resource Network at a meeting with the Council for Advancement of Peoples' Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), held in January 1987. Such a network, it was felt would ensure a better dissemination of existing materials including good films and educational programmes produced by independent media practitioners. The access to these materials would offer not merely an opportunity to share experiences and to take varied experiments conducted at a grassroots level to people facing similar problems elsewhere, but would provide a rich store of materials for groups to utilise in the course of their work.

Following a detailed discussion on this issue, a task group was set up to prepare a formal proposal and to initiate action to make such networking possible. The group later met in Bangalore and considered the question of linking the activities of groups all over India. As a preliminary step a list of films was drawn up which could form the initial core of resource materials the CRN would provide. A concept paper on networking was also prepared. At present CENDIT is seeking funding to get the project off the ground.

Why the CRN

Any attempt to foster development necessarily entails two forms of communication--inter-personal communication and mass communication. Messages, information and education aimed at creating awareness can be transferred through a variety of methods ranging from traditional forms of cultural activities such as songs, dances and theatre, to channels of mass-oriented communication such as television, radio and so on. Video can successfully combine the best of both forms if networking is efficient and has a far enough reach. The stated aim of every form of communication as envisaged and encouraged either by the individual field worker or the creative artist or even by government-backed networks is to stir the minds and hearts of people by opening up to them the world of information and thereby offering them the opportunity to radically alter their lives.

However, despite the common concerns of each of these sections and

institutions, the outcome of their endeavours leaves much to be desired. Development still continues slowly and its momentum has not kept pace with the growing problems and needs of large sections of the Indian people. There are also exist some problems that have for long plagued development-related communication, mitigating its impact. These include the wide gap that continues to exist between the efforts of voluntary groups and those of the government and, therefore, the disparity between centralised and decentralised communication; the absence of conduits through which development and communication experiences can be shared and, as a result, the lack of resource bases; the absence of agencies to ensure that materials produced for those whom development schemes address such as the rural poor, actually reach their target audiences and finally an insufficient feedback on the impact and effectiveness of development-related communication.

The CRN has identified 32 organisations which, it is hoped, would provide basic infrastructural facilities for dissemination of imaterials, production of new materials and for stocking existing materials.

Thus the CRN is an attempt to build decentralised infrastructural facilities and a potential base from which greater cooperation among communication practitioners in the field of development can be built.

A 20-WEEK WORKSHOP IN COMMUNICATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Against the background of CENDITs experiences and evolution over the years, the idea of holding a longer, more ambitious workshop for people committed to and working directly at the grassroots level began to take shape some years ago. The short-term workshops organised for different kinds of groups and sections provided CENDIT its essential experience of handling such workshops and also helped to further define the content and professional input that is required to make such workshops effective, interesting and valuable to participants.

After the suggestion to hold a 20-week workshop was first mooted, a small group at CENDIT spent long hours in consultation with other media practitioners and professionals to debate and discuss the modalities of such an ambitious scheme. That there was a need for such a programme was clear as the previous workshops had, on the one hand been successful orientation programmes for participants but had, on the other hand, also created a demand for a more structured training programme which would ultimately enable participants to handle equipment and actually produce programmes independently.

As mentioned earlier, several people who had joined the short courses had returned to CENDIT to gather more experience and expertise and had themselves suggested that a longer course should be organised. As for existing courses offered by film institutions and mass communication centres in the country, these training programmes were either of a duration too long to be attractive to a grassroots level worker or were post-graduate courses which laid their emphasis on the technical aspects of film production and did not cater to requirements of development-oriented people who wished to acquire video-related skills to make their work more effective.

There exist a large number of development workers who would not return to university at the expense of their work among the communities they are committed to and therefore in order to strike a balance between the need to provide professional guidance and training and at the same time orient this to development needs a proposal was finally drawn up to introduce a five-month workshop.

In many ways it began to take shape as an advanced course in media production. It took a year of planning and organisation to get the workshop off the ground. During this phase, apart from questions related to funding for the project, the issues considered seriously were:

- a) The content and aims of the course
- b) Identification of the right sort of resource persons who would be willing to devote enough time to make each aspect of the course a serious endeavour.

Selection and other modalities

The final proposal was submitted for approval to MISEREOR, a German voluntary organisation, almost a year before the workshop was held. MISEREOR approved the proposal and provided the funding to make it possible to hold the first such programme of its kind in the country. A delay in finalisation cut short the time available for other organisational aspects and the screening of applications had to be done rather hurriedly.

Once the modalities of the course had been worked out, the next major step was to determine the mode of selection for participants so that the group would consist of such people as would take their new skills back to the field of development. Without doubt this implied that the best suited participants would be representatives of organisations interested in, or perhaps even already using video as a means of communication. Such people, it was felt, would have something to go back to and their skills would encourage their organisations to invest in equipment if they had not already done so.

As a result a list of approximately 100 organisations was drawn up and letters introducing the details of the proposed course were sent off to them seeking their support. Some responses were most encouraging while other groups did not respond at all. The core advisory group at CENDIT handling the modalities of the programme suggested that the workshop be advertised in

other ways as well: through the print media and through posters put up at social organisations in and around the Capital. The organisers felt that a group of about twenty participants would be ideal. Having held specific programmes for women as a regular feature, CENDIT also felt the need to get a mixed group together.

Apart from individuals and organisations within the country, requests to participate were also received from some South Asian countries, specifically Pakistan, which were familiar with CENDIT's role as a communication and development organisation. However, for a number of reasons particularly the inadequate time to get permissions and visas the individuals concerned could not participate and had to withdraw shortly before the commencement of the course. After final screening a total of seventeen participants from all over the country were listed for the programme. A detailed list with their backgrounds is provided in this report. Some were nominated by development groups while others having experience of development work were not directly sponsored by any organisation. It must be remembered that the course, which was being organised in Delhi offered no residential facilities. Although only a nominal fee of Rs. 1000/- was being charged per participant for the course, arrangements relating to accommodation and food were an individual concern. CENDIT offered whatever help it could and subsidised the stay of participants.

For the future however, the selection of participants will follow, more strictly, the original criteria and it is expected that the experience of the first twenty-week course will encourage many more NGOs, particularly those which either have audio-visual/playback facilities/production facilities or plans to acquire the same, to respond more enthusiastically. It is also hoped that the organisations linked together through the Communications Resource Network will provide a substantial number of trainees.

Structuring of the twenty-week programme

Once the resource persons identified for the programme were approached the structuring of the course began in consultation with them. The programme, it was decided, would have four major components - Photography, Audio, Audio-Visual and Video. Contained in each of these four large sections would be the finer aspects of the course - theoretical, practical and aesthetic. The manner in which the programme was structured was largely determined by the three major goals it sought to achieve:

- a) To develop an understanding of the potential and use of different media for development work by social activists;
- b) To provide for interaction with external resource persons (implying those who were not directly involved with the teaching programme) such as film makers, and through this to view and discuss their work in the context of existing alternate material.
- c) To provide basic skills to participants through which they could put to use the new ideas introduced to them.

In this report we will be dealing with the following aspects of the course including the individual components -- photography, audio, audio-visual and

video:

- 1) CONTENT
- 2) METHODOLOGY
- 3) GROUP INTERACTION
- 4) INTERACTION WITH RESOURCE PERSONS
- 5) RESPONSES

CONTENT

The philosophy directing the course saw that "By making participatory materials (by controlling the media, the production process and the final visual products) people can profile and show themselves to each other and also to others. For poor, rural women, seeing themselves as they are helps to reaffirm that their work, knowledge and efforts are more crucial and valuable for development than when they see only pictures of what others are doing or think they should be doing. Pictures and other participatory visuals are evidence of the work people themselves do for development." (6)

When people learn to make their own visual images they are empowered to:

1) Correct a wrong image: While the mainstream media has often been criticised for its insensitivity to women's issues and problems, reflected in its either providing a warped image of women or by missing out entirely on a much needed portrayal of their position in relation to general issues, an alternate means for making and showing media materials allows for a reversal of this negative trend. Similarly other lacunae in coverage by mainstream media could also be handled differently and more sensitively through such an effort.

2) Right orientation: Given the fact that the people who control the mainstream media do not necessarily have the orientation and experience required to produce programmes truly sensitive to peoples' issues, the process being initiated could provide the right orientation and skills to a large number of development workers over the years and therefore help in the creation of appropriate materials.

The course was essentially designed to place significant emphasis on the potential of video. However in a departure from traditional approaches it sought to introduce participants to the elements of video production by following a linear progression, or a step by step approach. In other words the course did not presume that the participants would have any previous experience in the field and therefore led them through a sequence of interrelated aspects all of which combine to create the video. These include Audio (sound), Photography, Audio-Visual and finally the culmination of these three in Video.

RESOURCE PERSONS

The overall coordination of the programme was handed over to Dinaz Kalwuchwala, who is a film person in her own right. Dinaz has worked with ISRO in Ahmedabad and has also taught at the National Institute of Design in the same city. She has previously been a core resource person at other media workshops organised by CENDIT, particularly the Women, Media and Development series and her contribution to these has been greatly appreciated.

1. **Uma Shankar & Raju Sharma:** A freelance sound recordist, Uma Shankar handled the Audio section along with Raju a CENDIT employee.

2. **Partho Sarkar:** Partho is a freelance filmmaker and took sessions on light.

3. **Ranjan Dey, Gargi Sen and Sanjay Barnela:** Ranjan and Gargi are freelance media practitioners and former CENDIT employees while Sanjay works at CENDIT. This team of three handled the photography section with Rajan dealing with the physics of photography; Gargi with Design, and Sanjay with the chemistry.

4. **Arun Bidani:** A CENDIT employee Arun organised and handled the week-long film appreciation course.

5. **Viren Kanitkar, Nagesh Bhandari and Rajinder Shaw** come from Hyderabad where they work with the Centre for Development Communication (CDC). Between them they handled the audio-visual section.

These core persons were aided by the following:

Sujit Chatterji: CENDIT

Anjali Khosla: CENDIT

Rajive Jain: CENDIT

Balvant: CENDIT

Kailash: CENDIT

Bharti: CENDIT

Sushma Kapoor: CENDIT

(A special mention should be made of a former CENDIT employee Bindu Pandi who played an important role during the initial phase of organising the programme. Bindu died tragically in February shortly after the programme began.)

(6) SEEING AND SHOWING OURSELVES, A CENDIT Handbook

Visiting faculty

1. **Kamala Bhasin:** A media activist, Kamala dealt with the portrayal of women in the media.
2. **Avik Ghosh:** A founder member of CENDIT and now a member of the National Literacy Mission (Department of Adult Education) Avik Ghosh discussed communication theory and the role of sound with the participants.
3. **K.P. Sasi:** A film maker and activist K.P. Sasi showed his film entitled "In the name of medicine" and "Living in Fear" and discussed the problems of distributing alternative films with the group.
4. **Sanjeev Shah:** A film maker Sanjeev Shah shared his experiences in making his film on drought - 'Drought '87' with the participants who were shown the film.
5. **Shanti & Shashi:** Both activists working with Jagori, a womens' group, Shanti and Shashi showed participants how they used folk painting, backed up with narration to convey an idea.
6. **Suhashini Mulay:** A film maker, Suhashini Mulay showed participants her work related to adult education and initiated a discussion on developmental films.
7. **Gerson D'Cunha:** Gerson D'Cunha who has for long been associated with the world of advertising and communication and is now associated with the National Literacy Mission discussed social marketing approaches with participants.
8. **Manjira Dutta:** A film maker Manjira Dutta showed participants her film entitled "Sacrifice of Babulal" and initiated a discussion on independent film making.
9. **S.R. Joshi:** A social researcher from ISRO, S.R. Joshi discussed the value of research for communication with participants.
10. **Avinash Deshpande:** A media activist, Avinash showed participants a slide show during the audio-visual section.
11. **Sadanand Menon:** A cultural activist he talked about participatory communication.
12. **Sunil Gupta:** A non-commercial photographer based in London talked about his experiences and philosophy in taking and showing pictures.
14. **Ranjan Palit:** A film maker who showed his production "Voices of Baliapal" and discussed the issue of censorship.

Introduction to the programme

It was critical that the experience and knowledge related to video and other technical aspects of the course which were to be given to the seventeen selected participants went side by side with a growing awareness of the ultimate goal. A debate on communication, conventional and alternative was therefore essential if participants were to understand how a participatory process could help build confidence at the rural level and how it would encourage self-reflection, self-observation and self-analysis.

The introduction to the course was handled by Avik Ghosh who discussed communication theory with the participants. Kamala Bhasin also conducted an introductory session on women and media. Prior to these sessions the participants were given time to introduce themselves.

AUDIO

Sound plays an extremely important role in adding emphasis and heightening an emotion in both the audio-visual medium as well as in video.

To handle the audio component of the course, a freelance sound recordist, Uma Shankar, was invited to act as a core resource person along with Raju Sharma from CENDIT.

This section had two components. The first, a more difficult and for some a less interesting but nonetheless essential aspect was explaining some of the basic theoretical propositions related to sound. These included a compulsory look at the physics of transmission and recording of sound. It also involved therefore a study of sound waves and frequencies, terms which are much used but not so often understood. To make the explanations easier and to break the monotony of the theoretical lessons, Uma involved the participants in the creation of a very simple microphone. His own creation, the MIC that was demonstrated and put together with the involvement of participants, consists of two perspex doors which are hinged together and hold microphones in between. This elementary device which can be constructed at a cost of only Rs. 100/-, helped those unfamiliar with the concepts Uma was trying to get across, understand them while savouring the enjoyment of putting together something that could in the future be extremely useful to them. By contrast, the microphones commercially available on the market cost as much as Rs. 25,000/- and are a great deterrent to those who wish to use sound for simple effect along with another medium.

Software: The second aspect of this section devoted to the use, impact and recording of sound was a study of available materials. While audio-tapes still remain a relatively less explored medium of communication in the non-broadcast world, it is always useful to know what is popular, what is being marketed and what smaller groups have produced for use at the local village level through their experiments with audio recording.

As part of their learning process, participants were required to conduct a careful survey of the market in Delhi to ascertain the quality and scope (in terms of content), of audio-tapes easily available which include non-formal educational tapes for children.

Following this they were introduced to audio tapes produced by some voluntary groups such as those made by Jagori, a womens' organisation which combine songs with narration. Similar tapes have been made by a group in Punjab, while others have recorded skits, jokes, songs and even street theatre. The Womens' Action Forum in Pakistan too, has to its credit some interesting audio tapes.

All these and more were played to the group which then assessed them both in terms of professional quality and content.

In order to help participants appreciate and understand the need for good sound recording, Avik Ghosh was invited to share some of his experiences with the participants. Avik, who has several radio programmes to his credit played one which is entitled "India 2001" for the group.

Theory and practical exercises went hand-in-hand throughout this section. This enabled participants to judge their own progress and tackle the practical aspects of sound recording and use. This was organised through a series of exercises which each participant had to go through.

The first of the exercises was designed to familiarise the participants with the equipment they would be using on their own, and helped them learn how to interview people. They were asked to talk to people working at CENDIT and seek their opinions on topics such as "The Traffic" or "The Weather".

As a back-up they were provided copies of reading materials on techniques of interviewing to which they could refer.

Subsequently the participants later moved out of CENDIT to talk to people on the streets. One group for instance talked specifically to women hawkers.

After each such recording the exercise was played back to the group and they were encouraged to assess the effort. Several related aspects naturally emerged from these practical exercises. For example, during an exercise which took them onto busy streets their recordings could not but capture the sounds of everyday life--the traffic, voices, and the hum of city life. These sounds, rather than detract can add atmosphere to a recording, while at other times they may be undesirable.

Power of Visualisation: In order to enhance and build the participants power of visualisation, music was played to them in a darkened room and later they were urged to recount their visual associations with what they had heard. The exercise proved immensely enjoyable and a new experience for many.

Such activities also made the participants more acutely aware of the fact that:

a) People tend to associate certain emotions/scenes with certain sounds. This link is established through their past experiences and their socialisation.

b) It is therefore possible to create a mood. Infact this was one of the exercises they were asked to perform. With fear as the mood to be created it was left to participants to chose sounds which created such a mood. As an exercise conducted well into the audio course, the participants were able to work out detailed scripts incorporating design elements, timing and sound effects.

One group used the sound of ominous footsteps, leading up to the icreek of a door and then a sudden scream.

The other mood that they created was that of anticipation/waiting. One group chose to play music, at first softly as though audible through a closed door, followed by the sound of a doorbell and the evidence of the door opened being provided through a louder, less blurred rendering of the music. As the door closed the music retreated once again.

Sound Story

Participants were also asked to work out an appropriate end to the fable of the Tortoise and the Hare, bringing it into a modern-day context. The task entailed enacting and recording the story. Each group had therefore to practice the enactment/the reading prior to recording and for a short while the office turned with a make-believe zoo with sounds of animals floating through it.

Professional studio

In addition to their own efforts at mastering sound - related techniques, the entire group was provided an opportunity to observe the working of a professional studio. They visited Triveni studios in Delhi to witness the operations, look at the equipment and appreciate the quality of sound that can be recorded by a professional team.

The programme on sound was covered over two weeks and, although in certain respects it was theoretically demanding it ensured a clear understanding and appreciation of the complexities of sound and recording.

PHOTOGRAPHY

The core resource persons identified to take this section were Garg, Sen, Ranjan Dey, and Sanjay Barnela. Although the overall programme was essentially designed to provide skills and appreciation for video, it was felt that the best way to enhance this aim would be to take participants through all the paces that culminate in video production. In learning to shoot directly through a video camera the lay person runs the risk of never being exposed to concepts such as the Still frame and may lose out on an important aspect of video as a creative model. Through photography moreover the transition to video production could be made smoother. Apart from the evident advantages, photography in itself can be very successfully used by the social activist as it is a comparatively low-cost medium of communication.

Over the four to five weeks that were devoted to a study of photography the approach therefore was to see video as a series of stills in motion and therefore to use photography as a conduit through which principles of design such as the still frame, good frame, depth, and focussing could be taught. In many ways, as the experiment proved, it is easier to demonstrate some of these elements through photography than in the abstract.

The two major areas covered by this section were:

Hardware: This dealt with the technical inputs and other related aspects of photography including:

Light, Composition of Light, Refraction, Reflection, Camera, Lens, Wide Angle, Tele Lens, Normal Lens, Zoom, Filters, Close up lens, Flash/Added light, Developing Film - printing bromides, Chemicals, Enlargement, Depth of field (a problem which is related to both hardware and software)

Software:

The frame, Elements of composition - The vertical, horizontal and diagonal perspective, Light and shadow, Texture, Emphasis/subdual, Foreground and background.

Thus there were in reality three different aspects to the structuring and content of this portion of the programme which can be roughly broken up into the Physics of photography; the Chemical aspect of the printing process and lastly Design elements. Unlike a normal course in photography, the content of the one designed for the CENDIT programme sought to place an equal stress on the physics of photography and more importantly on aspects of design which are often missing in conventional courses which tend to pay greater heed to physical shooting and developing. This made way for giving participants a wider exposure. It aimed at helping the participants:

- a) Understand what makes a good photograph
- b) Grasp various related elements in such a way as to be able to replicate these through their individual effort;
- c) Understand the medium of video via an understanding and appreciation of the still.

Through materials distributed to participants aside from theoretical and practical coursework, a follow-up to the acquired learning was provided for. For instance they were provided detailed notes on how to make their own darkroom should they desire or need to do so.

Importance of the visual

Participants were already convinced and acquainted with the impact that a visual medium can have on its audience. Some had already delved into this medium in their own ways. In any case it was clear that they saw the importance of the visual medium in direct relation to their work, which, at the grassroots level implies a process of initiating change.

There is an oft quoted saying which sums up the impact of a variety of mediums on the individual:

What I am told I forget

What I see I remember

What I do I know

Thus visuals essentially help improve retention and create more interest in the subject at hand.

Practical and theoretical inputs

Photography means painting with light and thus the first lessons offered to participants dealt with light and the direct relationship between the passing of light and the formation of an image. This was demonstrated to them through an exercise which involved all participants:—**the creation of a pin hole camera.** This first lesson helped establish basic concepts such as that of the positive and negative image. Gradually as the training proceeded previous experiences gained through the course were combined and new elements of theory introduced. A series of exercises were conducted using the pin hole camera which helped clear theoretical principles governing the role of the aperture, the distance of the image and light. The simple device was altered/reconstructed to change the size of the aperture. The distance of the image was also altered and readings were taken on all these variations.

Instead of a film, a bromide paper was used to record an image which however remained invisible until the bromide was developed. This formed the negative. Another practical exercise they were asked to do was to go out and sketch what they saw. The purpose of this exercise, which was not clear to participants initially, became much more clear later when **Perspective** was discussed. Participants were also provided with simple cardboard frames to take with them and look through in an effort to understand framing of shots. They used these frames while sketching the scene they sought to photograph by placing the frames on a drawing sheet and drawing in the picture.

After this they experimented with film and each participant exposed two roles of black and white film, using the standard reading for different conditions.

The participants, divided into groups had to take five photographs on each theme - rhythms, pattern, emphasis and light and shade. Similarly they were given various exercises related to software elements such as lighting and composition. Every time a group went out with their cameras, on their return group evaluations were conducted to examine first the design aspects incorporated in their work and then the physics such as the depth of field and the use of various lenses. The final assignment in the photography section saw the group divided into four teams which worked on the following themes:-

1. Rajiv's India
2. The process of making dung cakes
3. Life in Jama Masjid
4. Pollution of the Jamuna river.

For this photo feature the teams exposed three roles each, of which 10 photographs were initially selected. The final photo feature however consisted of five photographs.

The participants, it was later assessed, came away from this portion of the programme confident of the inherent properties of a photograph.

In addition to the core resource persons external resource persons came to share their work with participants, and this section of the programme was unique in that some amateur photographers also sat in on the course as they were attracted specifically by its emphasis on design.

LIGHTING

Lighting plays a major role in any film medium and the programme placed special emphasis on it. Partho Sarkar a freelance film maker was invited to deal specifically with lighting. Partho's approach to the subject can be seen as a dual one. The first was didactic and the second forced participants to look for solutions to problems posed before them.

The theoretical aspect of the course began with a brief history of lighting and therefore also of cinema. To make an explanation of creative lighting more lucid, Partho took examples from the history of European painting and linked these to the imagery found in modern-day cinema.

While undoubtedly different societies have different ways of seeing things the theoretical concentration remained on the European way of seeing the world largely because cinema as a technique emerged in the West. Before dealing with issues directly related with the developing world and its own particular imagery the need was felt to define certain basic aspects of lighting.

Much change has been seen in the world of lighting since it emerged in black and white. Lighting strategies underwent a sea change with the introduction of colour and the emphasis on realism took on new meaning and importance.

Depth

The concept of depth is very important to Western imagery and how this can be achieved through lighting formed one of the aspects of the session on light. The West has divided three dimensional space into the primary, secondary and tertiary planes. It is an interesting exercise to view how light can be used to illuminate these planes according to their significance. This becomes all the more exciting in the context of new technology and techniques, fast lenses and fast stocks which permit the photographer or film maker to work with less light.

All these developments together created a situation in which lighting became an important tool which could be used to achieve closeness to life as we see it and therefore to further the trend towards greater realism. However contemporary critics complain that lighting is gradually ceasing to be an important force in expressiveness and is giving way to diffused light.

To demonstrate this an experiment was conducted with a stone, illuminated from various angles. During the exercise the power of light to transform the image was clearly demonstrated by shifting the lighting and by changing it whereby the expressive properties of the image underwent a radical change.

The participants were also asked to conduct an experiment wherein they were required to capture on screen an image as approximate to what they saw. The subject provided was a man sitting by a lantern and the participants were limited in their scope with the availability of only a 2000 wt light.

Said some participants;

"Before attending this session, the camera and photographic techniques were a mystery to me. Now that mystery has faded like a mist".

"For a person like me who didn't know the ABC of photography this course has helped me improve my power of visualisation".

"I feel quite confident of using a camera, but I need much more practice".

The audio-visual session, which lasted ten days, followed close on the heels of the photography component.

Prior to the Audio-Visual session, participants were encouraged to experiment with the use of colour transparencies. They were given two roles of slides to shoot and develop during this intervening period.

AUDIO-VISUAL

The orientation to the AV section was initiated by addressing the group through photo-language. Photo-language as a fairly new concept has become very popular especially in the area that describes itself as Group media. Effective in group dynamics, photo-language helps elicit responses from individuals in the group by showing them a set of powerful photographs and probing their reactions to these in relation to themselves. As a sensitive medium this helps search the innermost feelings and sensibilities of the individual and is, therefore, an effective tool for psycho-therapy as well.

The AV course was coordinated by Rajendra Shaw, who is the Director of the Centre for Development Communication a Hyderabad-based organisation, Nagesh Bhandari, a senior programme coordinator from the same centre and Virendra Kanitkar. The resource persons, in a departure from a formal approach to inter-personal communication, made photo-language their conduit for establishing a relationship with the participants. They gave them a wide choice of photographs to look at and chose from in order to answer three questions which would help introduce themselves:

1. Who they are
2. What they do
3. What they like or dislike

Rather than verbalise their answers, the participants carefully selected photographs and then discussed their selection.

Unlike the photography course which the participants had already been through, the audio-visual section which also dealt with photography marked a major shift in emphasis and perspective. It brought together the roles of the visual, sound and music and discussed the value, purpose and aims with which AVs are made.

Audio-visuals have proved an invaluable asset to the development worker particularly in the field of education. Given the fact that AVs are used for transmitting vital messages and information, participants were introduced to the limitations and potentials of an AV as opposed to other mediums which set out with differing aims such as to entertain. Ideally, keeping in mind the retention of an average person, an AV should not be longer than 15-20 minutes. Longer AVs have suffered from the danger of their messages backfiring which has taken away from their wealth in content.

Given the time factor it is obvious therefore that an AV cannot take the load of a programme which seeks to "say it all" by providing a history of the issue and dealing with every aspect in detail. Instead, one of the most important functions an AV can perform is to motivate the audience. In this connection the resource persons showed participants an AV made by them on Wastelands. This AV had little technical or theoretical input to its content. It approached the subject through the individual experience of a woman directly affected by environmental devastation.

The purpose of the screening was not only to indicate that subjects in hand need not be conventionally approached, but that the act of providing facts and figures is better reserved for published work rather than for an audio-visual medium which seeks to have an immediate and lasting impact. There are undoubtedly two ways in which media practitioners approach the making of an AV. These are determined by the logic they purport to follow :

1. **Linear Logic:** Which chooses a message that is to be conveyed indirectly, in a straight forward fashion to the audience. The message is transmitted in a way that ensures that the audience understands it as the AV maker wants them to. In other words it follows a step-by-step approach to the subject. For instance if ORT is to be explained an AV might show a spoon, boiling the water in which the solution is to be made, the exact quantity of sugar and salt to be added, and its administration.

2. **Audio-Visual Logic:** This approach does not require, the visual and sound effects/narration to be obvious or direct. Infact as much as 60% of the message is left to the imagination of the viewer. Under this category the AVs selected as examples were 1. Modern music videos such as those produced currently in the West, which use computer graphics, portray wierd disjointed images and play on the viewers imagination. 2. Advertisements : Such as the HMT advertisement put out on TV which plays with the concept of time moving, "Time after time", and through oblique visuals portrays the various models of HMT watches which the producer wants to market.

The three major aspects that the session concentrated on were:

1. Photography
2. Sound effects/music
3. Narration

Photography: As distinct from the previous session on photography which dealt (apart from design) with the technical skills and techniques of photography, during the AV course the emphasis moved from black and white to chrome colour and dealt at length on the aesthetics of photography. Secondly and more importantly, it used a slide-tape medium, and therefore also discussed processing of slide film, its chemistry as well as cutting and mounting slides.

Thirdly, as the ultimate aim of this section was to combine and add on sound and script to produce a series of related visuals/slides and formulate a meaningful programme, the approach to photography was radically different. The photograph, when seen as an important and essential part of a audio-visual cannot be viewed in isolation, as a single visual, or separately from the other components that combine to create an AV such as sound, music and narration. Photographs, per se can stand on their own, while their role and use changes in an AV.

The slide tape which using colour transforms the reach of the visual, conceptualises a movement from one still to another, with a crescendo crowning the established sequence. Under the photography section new principles of editing were introduced.

These included:

1. Visual size
2. Image size

The idea sought to be put forward was that through a variety of ways, in AV it is possible to enforce an idea through editing of the photograph. Similarly composition plays an equally important role. The example offered was of a woman collecting wood fuel in a forest. Her work is hard and tiresome, her burden heavy. By taking a close-up of her legs as she carries her load it is possible to say much more about the drudgery of her work and the physical toll it takes of her.

Cinematic principles which form the basis for serialisation were discussed. An example of length. The portrayal of a character for instance can change dramatically when three shots are arranged differently. Take the following scenario. You have

1. A picture of a man, gaunt and starved
2. A picture of a gun
3. A picture of the same man laughing

In the given order a story of success in which the man emerges as a hero could be built up. However if the 1st and 3rd picture were interchanged in order of appearance the man could be portrayed as a coward. Known as the **Kuloshoev effect** this was one of the cinematic principles introduced to participants.

Time lapse: While editing, this can play a major role in creating the desired effect. The use of abstracts is equally interesting. An instance of this could be had in Kurosawa's film *Ran* in which to portray time lapses, the director cuts repeatedly into the dramatic sky featuring changing seasons.

Music and sound effects

AVs are partial to music and sound effects which complement the visuals and thereby enhance them. While music is an important aspect of the AV and another dimension to it, the resource persons were of the view that it should not overshadow or dominate the visual. Thus music should be used judiciously and control is required to ensure that the music is appropriate and blends with the visual rather than stand on its own as a component.

Narration

The scripts written for AVs usually play a role subservient to the visual and depending on the strength of the visual material it is possible to have an AV without narration. Participants were given notes on narration and tips on writing scripts for AVs.

Mixing and synchronising were also part of the content covered in these sections.

Each aspect of the course was backed up by exercises. In keeping with the content of this part of the course, participants first experimented with photo-selection. From a stock of photographs made available to them, they were required to select a few that could be serialised in relation to a theme or subject.

After selection of photographs and their serialisation the next step was to order the visuals in keeping with selected music.

Thirdly they had to take photographs specifically suited to a 10- slide story on a chosen theme.

Another exercise allowed participants to put together a 20-slide AV, for which they could choose from slides and stock music provided to them. The theme was also left to them to choose. The slides offered were on topics which included: health, children, women, cooperatives and environment.

Sound effects

The exercise on sound effects demanded of participants that they produce a 6-7 sound effects story, without the support of either visuals or commentary. While someone chose the theme of a murder, another followed a woman into her office, with the 9 a.m. bell ringing and her typing, pulling paper out of her typewriter, leaving the office at 5 p.m. and starting her scooter to head home. She gets onto the road, has an accident. She screams. Incantations signify her death.

The major exercise was to shoot an AV, and the participants were left free to choose their own themes. The following were the subjects chosen by the three groups of participants for the final exercise:

1. The street children of Delhi
2. The power of women
3. Rajiv's India

The participants proved extremely creative and experienced the pressures of working very late and very hard. The final AV was completed at 2 p.m. and the presentation was followed by an evaluation which took place at 3.30 a.m. The experience was exhausting but exhilarating.

How did participants feel about the AV section. We reproduce some of their views:

"This was the first time I had seen an audio-visual programme. It was interesting but I am not sure that it is a very effective medium for development communication".

"Previously I thought slide processing was very difficult. But when the group was shown the procedure it was very easy!"

"I feel that the AV section was great fun and a good learning experience".

"The audio-visual programme was well organised. This workshop taught us about

the technique of making AVs, we saw a number of slide - shows which enhance our visual knowledge. We were also made aware of how we could use this medium in the field".

"The two-week audio-visual training was interesting. It was certainly a good idea to start the programme with a focus on audio. We got a feel of the communicative potential of this medium".

FILM APPRECIATION

With the coming together of related concepts the various aspects of film were by now becoming clearer to participants and it was felt that the time was right for a film appreciation session which would allow them to evaluate the media more critically. The session, conducted by Arun Bidani, lasted a week and offered participants not only an opportunity to examine the film and analyse what was screened but also to discuss and assess the strong human reactions that these evoke. They also gave participants an idea of the history of cinema.

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Joyless Streets | (1925) by Pabst |
| 2. Modern Times | (1936) by Chaplin |
| 3. Grapes of Wrath | (1940) by Ford |
| 4. Bicycle Thief | (1949) by De Sica |
| 5. IKIRU | (1952) by Kurosawa |
| 6. La Strada | (1954) by Fellini |
| 7. Panther Panchali | (1955) by Ray |
| 8. Hiroshima Men Amour | (1955) by Resnais |
| 9. Komal Gandhar | (1961) by Ghatak |
| 10. Firemans Ball | (1967) by Forman |
| 11. Ramparts of Clay | (1970) by Bertolucci |
| 12. Yol | (1980) by Gurney |

In the post-course feedback these were some of the reactions we received:

"I saw 11 of the 12 films shown and regret having missed "Grapes of Wrath". The film appreciation programme was a great treat for us, as we seldom have an opportunity to see films which have created history".

"My perceptions about film appreciation have changed a lot after attending the film history course. I have realised that there are other dimensions hitherto unknown to me, specially the relationship of the film to the period of history in which it was made and the influence of the period on the film".

"I had a fantastic new experience in viewing the films shown. I am still confused about the idea behind these films without going into the technical aspects of video camera which we still have to learn".

"The discussions after the films helped me understand them better. I hardly understood Kurosawa's film while watching it but realised its relevance during the discussion".

"We felt at times that we were not mature enough to understand some film like the 'Fire Man's Ball'".

VIDEO

Following an introduction to video, Dinaz, and Raju who were handling the Video section gave the participants both a theoretical explanation and a on-hands experience of basic principles of video, tape formation, the physics of video, and an understanding of how the camera, the video recorder and tapes function. During the practice shooting which was becoming by this stage a more common feature of the course, the starting exercises sought to define the importance of good focus and therefore of a steady hand. In film these concepts are best viewed through practical experience for only then can the learner appreciate the finer distinctions that make one photograph or film sequence better than another. Similarly participants were put through a series of exercises aimed at honing their skills in terms of framing and composition of a shot. Many of these exercises were conducted in and around CENDIT. On one occasion the group was asked to shoot the construction of a road nearby. Every exercise was followed by a review and group evaluation wherein the group would collectively see its work, and comment on it.

The practical exercises took participants through the paces with reference to camera angles and lenses, lighting, the use of reflectors, a demonstration on lighting with minimal lights, and another on appropriate lighting. They also learned to use colours and work out different planes with the use of these and not merely through illumination. The role of different coloured filters was also demonstrated.

Audio-functional and creative

Audio, functional and creative as part of video was demonstrated through the addition of sound and by showing films that had paid special heed to sound. By now the group was more confident and experienced and some of them even took the initiative to take equipment out early in the morning before the day's programme commenced in order to practice theoretical postulates. In this section one group took equipment out to shoot crowd reactions which incorporated the noise of traffic and portrayed the confusion of a city.

Editing was taught through practical exercises using the material shot by the group. Among the concepts introduced were Mechanical cuts, concepts of time, space and different kinds of continuity. The participants were asked to shoot a continuity exercise based on a person eating a banana who then throws the peel down. The idea once given to the group was left to them to develop into a story.

In-camera editing This method of editing is particularly important to film makers who lack editing facilities. It requires the discipline to plan the series of shots that the filmmaker desires to include in the film. Dividing into three groups the participants practiced in-camera editing while shooting a) a garment factory b) one group taking a film of the other group while it was shooting c) A man working all day. (This role was played for the team by a CENDIT employee).

Multi-camera demonstration Using three cameras, a demonstration was held to give the participants an idea of how a film can be created through a multi-camera approach. Two cameras were trained on the title while the third camera was used for capturing audience reactions. On-the-spot editing was also introduced here. Two plays were enacted during this exercise in one of which a woman character was to die. However, with a turn of events, the character comes alive and questions the writer's right to end her life.

RESEARCH INPUT

One of the most significant aspects to any film production is the research that precedes the making of the film. S.R. Joshi, a social researcher from ISRO was invited to give participants an understanding of the use of research in communication and its importance. In addition to research on the subject the film seeks to deal with research on audiences, or audience profiles are equally important. Such research helps define peoples needs which the film should bear in mind.

Scripting Scripting is another vital area that needs professional training. The group was asked to individually prepare ten to fifteen minute scripts worked out with storyboards detailing every aspect of production including time, space and camera placement. The group was given three ideas to work on for these scripts.

These included a scenario where a participant at the workshop, called Kumar was leaving Delhi after an intensive interaction with the group. It was to detail his send off, journey and return to his hometown.

The second idea dealt with a young person who had just joined an NGO and come into conflict with the local leaders and the sarpanch. Waiting endlessly for a bus he finally hails a man on motorcycle who turns out to be the sarpanch who had threatened him. In none of these scenarios did the resource person work out the conclusion of the story and the participants were left free to handle it as they desired.

Visits to communities

The groups, once confident of their ability to handle equipment and work with scripts were taken to locations in Delhi and outside to shoot reality as it exists. In Delhi one group went to Alaknanda while two other groups went to Nand Nagari. Here they shot short films on issues related to slum dwellers. They learnt to interact with people, introduce themselves in a manner that would not intimidate the local people, identify problems (in Alaknanda there had just been an outbreak of a cholera epidemic) and deal with such community problems as water shortages.

The participants made 15 minute films and in the course of their work in these areas had a variety of experiences which they shared with other members of the group. Peoples reactions to the slum dwellers were also recorded. Participants also had the opportunity to meet political groups working actively in these areas.

In the documentary section, participants worked on a short film on Safdar Hashmi, the street theatre activist who was killed early this year. They also learned to capture an environment and went out of their way to shoot a Mushaira in the Walled city.

Following the shooting the groups would return each time to CENDIT and edit their material.

SHIMLA: The last exercise during the programme was conducted outside Delhi, in Shimla. It provided the participants an experience of carrying heavy equipment to locations identified by them. They studied the problems of the area they were to do their shooting in, researched specific aspects of these problems, visited many villages and spent a great deal of time discussing issues and formulating ideas. During this field trip at first the group moved together as a whole splitting up when it came to the production stage. Three topics were selected for final production:

- 1) A documentary film on the coolies of Shimla
- 2) Land allotment for a new airport which would displace a large number of people and the water problem.
- 3) The role of the forest guard, the system he operates under, and peoples grievances.

As Julia Alfero put it at the Leipzig Festival "Film art is the weapon with which we combat the enemy off all those people engaged in the struggle for their freedom. And it must be the duty of each and every one of us day in and day out, to create films of quality which are dedicated to this struggle."

In India more than anywhere else perhaps the poor find that their voices cannot be heard. To the individual man, woman or child the problems are insurmountable and basic survival is all that can be aimed at.

The three groups that conducted research and then shot their video films in Shimla watched the coolies in the city and their plight very closely. They saw forests and hillsides denuded, They saw and heard from the people of their crying lack of water and it was on these themes that they worked.

1. **Bojh (LOAD):** This documentary video film opens with a shot of men, doubled over carrying inhuman loads on their backs, barely able to stagger up inclines. The local coolies; the Kashmiri coolies; coolies from Kangra and Bilaspur, but coolies all. These men, some of whom have tiny holdings of land in their native states are too poor to make that land productive and thus turn to migrancy in search of some cash to keep their families alive. They come to Shimla where they eke out a meagre existence. The story of these coolies is the story of unequal development, of exploitation, of unemployment and a life barely lived. Their makeshift homes in Shimla are crowded hostels, filthy cycle sheds and often enough the roadside. Their education seems to be in vain and even to keep the load on their backs they have to compete fiercely with others like themselves. To all of them the Government has been unhelpful, and there is no one who will listen. At the end of the film a young educated man who has in desperation become a coolie, talks of their various problems and says "No labourer in India can ever be happy".

2. Whither to?

This documentary highlights the discrepancy between national development priorities and the real situation and needs of the people. In Shimla where only 16% of the land is irrigated, the peasant has grown poorer. He is more poor than ever because he listened when he was told that his land needed new seeds and fertilizers which he invested in. But without water these are of no use to him.

This documentary touches upon the lack of drinking water for people, cattle and irrigation, the denudation of forests and consequently the scarcity of domestic fuel and fodder. These problems have been compounded by the decision of the government to build an airport owing to which a large number of people have been displaced. The plight of the poor, and of women is pathetic. Opportunities for growth are few, and the time and energy spent on fending for basic necessities of water and fuel are wearing the people down. People cannot understand why priority should have been given to an airport over their more fundamental need for water.

3. Forests and life

This documentary studies the effect of environmental changes on the lives of people. As forests have rapidly disappeared a vast range of complex problems have come into existence. These include a drying up of a vital source of income for the poor who used to collect medicinal plants, mushrooms and other such forest products. It has also led to a major housing problem as there is no wood for construction and no alternative materials have been made available in the region.

A perceptible change in attitudes has resulted with disrespect for nature taking over.

The film studies the causes for destruction of forests, the ipolitical interests whose purpose this has served and the hostility that now marks the relationship between the forest guard and the people whose existence depends on the forests.

It was in these films that the culmination of the course took place. They were the first real experience of producing a video. The first experience of reflecting reality. The first experience of saying it as the people do.

When the group returned to Delhi editing had to be done in three shifts at the CENDIT office. The work was hard but rewarding. In all, over the twenty-week period that the programme lasted the participants were involved in three video productions, one audio and one picture story. While the video and audio materials were jointly produced in teams, the picture story was individually handled.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology worked out for the 20-week programme was influenced by the following factors:

- 1) The experience and age of participants
- 2) The experience and age of resource persons

As mentioned earlier, the nature of this programme differed from that of conventional programmes of a longer duration. These latter are not necessarily designed and geared to meet developmental needs. More importantly they cater to the kind of people who would wish to build a career as professional media persons.

The 20-week programme attracted a totally different kind of participant. The participants came to the course rich in experience and the base level, as a result, was very high. Resource persons responsible for the training could appreciate the fact that the resource and potential was already there and had merely to be honed, directed and trained in a new area.

This was evident at the start when a perusal of the participants and their backgrounds was undertaken before the commencement of the programme.

It was equally clear that the age of the average research person did not differ substantially from that of the participants. As a result it was necessary to respect human sensibilities and provide enough room for freedom to interpret. Rather than impose discipline and foster a traditional teacher - taught relationship, the resource persons approached the programme with an informal, flexible and open mind. They also realised that they could learn and share valuable experiences with the participants who represented a social movement and development efforts of various kinds.

Exercises/Demonstrations

Theory alone has never succeeded in achieving practical ability. For a programme of the kind CENDIT was initiating this was more true than ever. Therefore the methodology adopted ensured that every theoretical explanation was followed by exercises which encouraged participation or by demonstrations to make clearer how an idea or a proposition works. Similarly a variety of additional inputs were introduced to break monotony, and to keep interest alive. These included constant breaks to view materials, to handle equipment and to interact with external resource persons.

Distribution of materials

Written materials were provided to participants throughout the course which could serve as excellent reference matter even after they returned to the field. Among the documents made available was a detailed handbook entitled "Seeing and Showing Ourselves: a guide to using small-format video tape as a

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participatory tool for development. This handbook, a CENDIT publication, not only discusses the role, potential, and use of videotape but offers useful guidance on how to approach and understand the technologies involved. Packed with vital information, the handbook could become a reliable source of ideas and information for anyone entering the world of video production.

Notes were circulated on light, on how a film is constructed and how it reacts to light, light conditions, aperture and filters.

A glossary of common terms used in video production was part of the package of information provided to each participant.

Extracts such as a chapter on 'History through films and filmed History', script writing and treatment and screenplay, some of which had pictorial and visual examples; an article entitled 'Man with a movie camera' which dealt with the New Wave and so on also went into the set of printed materials that were circulated.

Participants could also turn to the reference material to appreciate the debate on communication, culture and social relations, issues that confront any communication effort at the grassroots level. Personal experiences of photographers and film makers were also extracted to give participants a wider view of the exhilaration and problems the individual may face.

Almost every aspect of the course was thus backed up with carefully chosen articles, excerpts and other materials for ready reference. Even how to interview people and the many methods or types of interviews that can be employed were explained through a printed document.

Level of Participants

As with any such programme those who participated in the CENDIT workshop were individuals with varying interests, talents and abilities.

In order to help the group stay more or less on par, the core research personnel planned their training so as to allow time and space to draw out any participant who proved a little slower in comprehending an idea or a theory.

Group activity: Given this approach, at every stage the participants were first dealt with in a large group and then broken into smaller groups which shared a working relationship. They then joined up with the larger group again to evaluate experiences and practical work.

Some of the participants at the 20-week programme had no previous experience. Others had made some slide shows. Those who had some past experience had, in most cases, worked through other professionals or with them but had little direct experience. Thus the development of their skills evolved according to their individual experiences and abilities.

For instance a Santhali participant, after his first hands-on experience with the camera/SEG mixer, felt he was in another world, as though he had suddenly been transported to the moon. The medium he was now coming in contact with was so different and distant from his reality. While the tribals have their own forms of communication, visual literacy is relatively

less stressed. Interaction indicated that the Santhalis have a highly developed aesthetic sense which is wonderful. Thus resource persons felt that they could not take anyone in the group for granted, and instead learnt from them.

Group interaction & skill development

Given this background, group interaction, a sharing of views, an appreciation of individual opinion and a determined effort to help each other out was encouraged.

In any learning experience, skills develop gradually. During the 20-week programme therefore the various aspects related to videotape were introduced unhurriedly by going from the ABC as it were to sentences, paragraphs and finally the text as a whole.

One of the areas stressed in every group discussion was clarity. Participants were repeatedly reminded that any film maker and communications person must first of all know and be quite sure of what exactly is sought to be communicated.

However, little effort was made to link issues and define perspectives until basic technical skills had been developed.

Two forms of interaction were envisaged. The main form was interaction within the group. As a non-residential, intensive programme which proved very demanding in terms of the time participants had to spend, a disparate group of people from different parts of the country found themselves thrown together and were forced by virtue of this to learn to forge a good working relationship and evolve an understanding of their common interest. Those from outside Delhi faced their own problems as they had to find appropriate accommodation and look after their needs of food etc.

The group shared several new experiences in work terms such as working long hours, dealing with exhaustion and learning to meet ambitious deadlines.

As mentioned, the group served as a sounding board for both individual and group - oriented practical efforts. Every photograph, sound recording, audio-visual, screenplay & script as well as the video productions that were part of the hands-on training, were brought back to the group and viewed critically. This proved an important aspect of the learning process.

During some of the more technical sections of the training which involved theoretical classes to make the physics of video-tape clear to participants there was a sense of resentment discernable. Participants could not always see the need or the direct relationship between an exercise they were asked to do and their ultimate goal of handling a video camera and producing a certain kind of visual material, like sketching on the road in order to learn the basics of perspective.

Individual Initiative

Resource persons were impressed with the individual initiative of several members of the group who set aside their fatigue to put in extra time to handle equipment on their own. Some who missed a vital session during the week would make up on the weekends.

The other form of interaction involved professionals invited to CENDIT share their work and experiences with participants.

Participants commented:

"The methodology adopted by CENDIT was a perfect mix of theoretical input and practical training".

"The group interaction was the best part of the programme. We learned to share our inhibitions and felt very close to other members of the group. Working in a group I have learned to be more tolerant of ideas that did not appeal to me".

CONCLUSION

"On the whole it was quite satisfying, but the urge to know more kept surfacing as we went ahead"- A Participant.

The 20-week workshop which was conducted from the 16 of January 1989 to the 2nd of June 1989 was the first ever effort of its kind in India.

CENDIT's feedback both from internal and external resource persons was most encouraging. Not only was the ambitious course content executed with finesse but the methodology and commitment of the people involved served to make it an extremely creative effort. Participants were motivated to explore new and unknown avenues and the results were evident. The overall enthusiasm that marked the nature of participation was crucial to the programme and to achieving the goals it set for itself. So much was being packaged in so limited a period that the work was hard and taxing and both resource persons as well as participants were pushed to the extreme.

Owing to the pressures under which the group operated, it would be unfair not to admit that there were moments of tension when nerves were frayed, tempers ran high and elements of discord threatened to shatter an otherwise orderly and serious progression.

In the end however none of this affected the performance of the group in general or that of the resource persons. Instead the effort provided several lessons for future programmes and proved above all that:

- a) The need does indeed exist to create this kind of opportunity for that section of people who, already committed to development and working at the grassroots level, have a rich experience in communication.
- b) Such people are ideal candidates for a programme in Communication and Development which aims at ensuring that the requisite skills are transferred.

c) Their basic ideological commitment to a cause makes the goals and aims of an intensive course such as this attainable.

d) CENDIT can attract in equal measure some of the finest professionals in the field to share their knowledge and experience with development workers thereby creating a bridge between two groups in Indian society who can greatly benefit and grow through such an interaction;

e) In order to promote alternate media such courses and programmes are essential

Empowering the very people whom development efforts in a country like India seek to reach is a stupendous task. One small step in this direction is to break through the age - old approach to mass media, (in particular media that use the film medium). This conventional media tends to impose images, values and attitudes rather than reflect reality.

In simplistic terms the process of seeing oneself is never easily initiated. Internal resistance, and lack of ability can impede such a process even in an individual, what to speak of a people. But once an alternative media presents itself as mirror of reality, film as a whole (be it directed towards a role of entertainment or information) can go beyond creating an achievable dream world to become an agent of change.

CENDIT believes that media materials that originate from the community can accelerate a process of change by bridging the enormous gap between information seekers and information creators. It also believes that much can be done to ensure that vital, essential and useful knowledge reaches the people. However this is only possible if the family of development and communication workers forges a determined relationship from which a more realistic picture of the needs of people and the success and failure to fulfill these needs can emerge.

In conclusion therefore it may be stated that while the first ever 20-week programme in Communication and Development, was undoubtedly a success, it is merely the beginning of a long and demanding process. Many more such efforts are required. Along with these an organised network to guide and help individual grassroot activity is equally important if the approach proposed by CENDIT and backed by several development organisations is to take shape and indeed become a powerful tool of intervention.

India has a strong NGO movement working towards social transformation through people's participation. The effectiveness of communication is an important determinant of the success of NGO interventions and efforts. Traditional media like folk - theatre or puppetry and modern audio-visual media complement each other in the process of communication.

Undoubtedly modern audio-visual media are expensive to use and mystifying to the general public. While within the grasp of illiterate people, there is considerable technical expertise involved in their production. However these media have the following advantages:

- a. The constraint of locality is overcome
- b. The audio-visual has popular appeal
- c. The recordings of peoples initiatives have tremendous potential awareness - raising
- d. The use of video is an excellent tool for training.

GROUP EVALUATIONS

How did participants react to various components of the course? In order to get a feed - back from them they were asked to write in an evaluation of each section as it was completed. The responses were encouraging and interesting. They reflect the impact of the component, and the methodology used to convey it as well as the participants own feelings about each new experience.

Several participants suggested that an introduction to and training in colour photography is essential and should be incorporated in the course structure in future. The jump from black and white photography to colour in the audio visual section left some participants feeling unsure of themselves.

In terms of equipment and a hands-on experience too there were some complaints. These ranged from insufficient time for each individual in the group to master the equipment available, to problems with equipment itself. Said a participant, "The actual handling of equipment has been brief. I am not confident of handling and using an audio-medium in the future".

Several participants have suggested that CENDIT should expand its facilities and make equipment available to development organisations at least until these organisations can equip themselves. Insufficient equipment was highlighted as a major constraint by some members of the group.

As individuals each participant reacted differently. While most were pleased with the informal and friendly approach adopted by resource persons, one or two disagreed with the selection of external resource persons and felt that the number of external resource persons should be increased.

As for the video component there was a general feeling that more time should be allocated to it and that the practical aspects of video productions should be given greater stress. Although the participants clearly approved the manner in which the video section was approached from individual components (audio, photography and audio-visual) to a combination of these in video, some felt that they had left the individual components behind and that their unification in video did not match the progression as planned.

PARTICIPANTS

1. **Sister Patricia:** Sr. Patricia comes from Kerala where she has been working with the Fisherman's forum which is an independent fishermen's union. By profession, Sr. Patricia is a radiographer with some previous experience of photography as well. Expressing her views on media, she told her group members at CENDIT that she was of the firm opinion that media had a very important role to play in rousing peoples' consciousness. Sr. Patricia has, after the course, returned to her organisation which in turn has bought some equipment. She is actively using her skills and producing material for local use.
2. **C. Krishna Kumar:** Kumar, works with the Society for Integrated Rural Development and is based in Madurai (Tamil Nadu) Twenty-seven-year old Kumar has over the years courted photography as well as dramatics which have heightened his interest in media and communication. Following his return to his home state Kumar is making full use of the equipment newly acquired by his organisation.
3. **Tajan:** Tajan is with the Programme for Community Organisation (PCO) which works with fisher folk in Kerala. According to the feedback he is presently making a film on artisanal fisherfolk.
4. **Suresh Acharya:** Suresh comes from Kalahandi in Orissa where he works for Viswas, a development organisation. At twentythree Suresh enjoys music, particularly vocal music and dramatics. After completing the course with CENDIT Suresh joined another voluntary organisation which has taken up production of video materials in a big way.
5. **Meghanath:** Meghanath has been working with the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in a tribal area of Chota Nagpur in Bihar since 1980. His work consists of mobilising people, and helping them form mass organisations. Meghanath has attempted to generate awareness in the area of his work through the mediums of photography and painting. It was through these activities that he met a group from CENDIT, learned of the 20-week programme and decided to join it. Prior to his work with the JMM Meghanath worked with a voluntary organisation operating in the same state, having given up a post graduation with Tata to move to grassroot work. Meghanath had also worked with producer Tapan Bose on a film on Bhopal and is currently making a film on Punjab.
6. **Sulaiman Siddiqui:** Sulaiman graduated from Delhi University with a degree in Political Science. A student activist and member of the Students Federation of India (SFI) he contested elections in the university and later joined the Jana Natya Mach, a street theatre group. Apart from his active interest in theatre, Sulaiman has also had an interest in photography and video. Persuaded by experience of the importance of communication to any attempt to create a truly democratic order in the country, Sulaiman joined the 20-week programme. On completion he has joined CENDIT as a full-time employee.

7. **K.J. Mathew:** Mathew has been associated with the Bangalore based ISI. Essentially an adult educator his area of work has been among tribals in Kerala. He has studied tribal myths, songs and languages through his work at the grassroots level. A creative person he has used theatre to communicate and educate groups of people, and is now making efforts to use his newly acquired skills.

8. **Chinmaya Khatri:** Chinmaya is an economics graduate from Delhi University. Following his graduation Chinmaya travelled widely within the country and later joined PSI (Peoples Science Institute). His work with the institute has entailed tackling reports on droughts among other things. To further his professional skills he has now joined the Jamia Milia University course in mass communication.

9. **P.B. Krishnan:** A freelance journalist, Krishnan writes on art, culture and personalities. Although a Keralite by birth Krishnan was born and brought up in Delhi. Apart from his evident interest in art and culture Krishnan is also interested in sociology and psychology. He joined the course as he was convinced of the powerful role that media has to play in a country such as India. He is now trying to develop several film projects.

10. **Sanjay Kumar:** Like Krishnan, Sanjay is also a freelance journalist. His area of interest and expertise is Science and Technology. Associated with active organisations such as the Delhi Science Forum and the Students Federation of India, Sanjay has also worked with the Kerala Shastra Parishad. Interested in science communication he is also involved in doing photofeatures on important issues such as Ayodhya.

11. **Dimple:** Dimple has always enjoyed painting but she moved gradually into theatre and worked with an orphanage. She was associated with TAG (Theatre Action Group) and worked with street children. She is hesitant to work with a voluntary organisation as she feels such units are hampered by internal politics. Dimple has also worked with Prayog, a street theatre group. After the course at CENDIT she moved to Bombay where she is working with a voluntary organisation and putting her skills to use.

12. **Diamond:** Diamond moved away from literature, which she studied at St Beeds in Shimla as she felt it was too restrictive and could appeal to only a small section. Cinema and street theatre seem to her an effective and essential form of communication which she could explore and use in the future. Following her stint at CENDIT Diamond has returned to Shimla where she now teaches.

13. **Sanjeevan Lal:** Sanjeevan moved from Jamshedpur to Delhi, where he studied to be a chartered accountant for two years. Having written for the newspapers and had some experience with theatre Sanjeevan came to the CENDIT programme determined to learn how to handle a more powerful medium. He has a special interest in the handicapped. Inspired by the course Sanjeevan has elected to take up film direction more seriously and is now at the Film Institute in Pune.

14. **Frenny Khodaiji:** Frenny moved to Delhi eight years ago. While she lectured in a few Delhi Colleges her interest in womens' issues and development directed her towards a different kind of involvement. She worked with ISST, a research organisation specialising in women-related information and later with the Mahila Haat, a project on income generation for women. She has also been associated with Development Alternatives and Saheli. Frenny wishes to integrate music, theatre and communication with development efforts. Frenny has subsequently gone back to her work with Saheli.

15. **Walter:** A graduate in Malayalam literature, Walter who comes from Kerala is now a film critic. Not permanently employed anywhere Walter also writes scripts for films. His most recent script was based on issues related to fishermen. On his return to Kerala after the course, Walter has set up a film society which pays special attention to video films and documentaries.

16. **Nitya Charan Tudu:** Tudu comes from a tribal area in Madhya Pradesh. A Santhali himself, he now works with an organisation which helps villagers form communities and collect funds for development-related activities in the area. Very excited with the course Tudu identified and bought equipment for his organisation while in Delhi. He is now working on some film projects.

