

GUIDE TO COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN PLANNING: A LESSON FROM RUBBER SECTOR

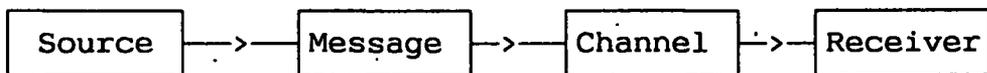
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1. Introduction

A communication campaign can be described as a massive but short-term communication process designed to solve a specific communication problem (UNDP/DTCP, 1989). Usually all of us involved in development work have participated in either planning or implementing a campaign at sometime in our careers. Similarly we have all been a target of one campaign or another which has tried to persuade us to change our own behavior. We react to these appeals in many different ways. Sometimes by following such recommendations but often by ignoring them.

Why is that some campaigns are effective and others are not? Is it because we don't agree with the message? Or is it because we were just "turned off" by the way we were approached? These are some of the issues which will be addressed in this paper. The main thrust of this paper, however, is to illustrate a simple, yet, a very important fact that with **better planning**, we will be able to minimize the mistakes that others have made before us during similar exercises.

The key elements of a communication process, commonly known as the SMCR Model can be described schematically as shown below.



The 'Source' is the initiator of the campaign. The 'Message' contains the information which should be disseminated by the campaign. The 'Channels' cover institutions, organizations, equipment and individuals who can help to deliver the message. The 'Receiver's include people who are considered as target beneficiaries by the source. The characteristic of these elements determine the effectiveness of the campaign.

"Communication support" refers to all aspects of a campaign which deal with transfer of information (Najib and French, 1984). Communication is just one element of an overall campaign strategy. Other elements such as delivery of supplies, administration of field services or provision of incentives are critical. Communication

campaign makes sure that the target group is aware of key information contributing to achieve the overall campaign objectives.

There are three processes which are important in planning effective communication campaigns.

- Feed-In** : This involves gathering information about the target audiences. This information should include the problems and needs of the people, sources of information, available channels, existing knowledge, attitude and skills of the target group. In practice, feeding is done by conducting a baseline survey and visiting in the community/or homes of the expected target beneficiaries. These information are important in understanding the technical problems, appropriate target group, messages and channels.
- Feed-Forward:** This includes planing the relevant message, appropriate channels and dissemination of messages from the source to the receiver on the basis of the data gathered in the feeding process. The implementation of this process is carried out by sharing of information through training activities, training materials, extension materials, and mass media.
- Feed-Back :** This refers to the gathering of information from the campaign staff and the target beneficiaries to determine whether the former are doing their assigned activities and the latter are showing the effects expected by the campaign staff. These reactions can be detected through monitoring and evaluation.

2. Rubber Smallholder Sector

Although accurate information is lacking, the total rubber area is estimated to be about 198,000 ha according to a census carried out by the Rubber Control Department (RCD, 1984). Smallholders who constitute a significant part of the private sector, own 65,000 ha, which represent 33% of the total rubber area. The total number of smallholders is estimated at 155,000, and 93% of such holdings are less than 1.6 ha. This shows that a significant part of the rubber sector is dominated by smaller units and in large numbers. Distribution wise the three main rubber growing districts, viz Kalutara, Kegalle and Ratnapura together account for 70% of the total rubber extent.

The Advisory Service Department (ASD) of the Rubber Research Board (presently being amalgamated to form the rubber Development Department) is responsible for all extension activities related to increasing production and productivity of smallholdings and improving the quality of the rubber produced by smallholders. Field extension work on rubber cultivation and processing is carried out by nearly 201 grass root level Extension Officers under the supervision of 5 Regional Advisory Officers (RAO) and 17 Divisional Rubber Extension Officers (DREO). ASD also operates a training center and a publicity unit to educate both extension personnel and rubber growers.

3. Methodology

The Communication Campaign plan that appears in this paper is an output of a training programme conducted in 1989 for a group of Rubber Extension Officers of the ASD. The basic steps followed by the participants in preparing the communication campaign plan are as follows:

Baseline survey – Participants prepared a simple interview schedule and conducted a baseline survey in the target area (Kalutara District). Forty farmers were interviewed to find out the following information in particular.

- a) The specific reasons for retarded growth in immature rubber holdings.
- b) The existing knowledge, attitude and practices adopted by farmers to overcome the specific problems.
- c) Sources of information and available channels.

Participants tabulated and analysed the data for following purposes.

- a). To identify the main causes for retarded growth.
- b). To identify the target audiences, key messages and appropriate channels to use in planning and launching the take communication campaign.

In addition to the survey data, secondary data available at the Advisory Services Department were also used in the planning process.

Considering the limited time given to participants in developing the plan, participants were divided into different groups with each group assigned to work on a specific component of the plan. The various outputs were matched and appropriate interphasing and synchronization of activities in the different components were done.

4. Communication Campaign Planning Process and Results

A flow chart of the process followed by the participants in preparing the communication campaign plan is shown in figure 1.

4.1 Baseline survey and situation analysis

The major reasons observed for retarded growth during the immature period can be described in the following manner.

Reason	Number	%
Lack of Cover Crops	24	60.0
Lack of Fertilizer	12	30.0
Lack of Drains	03	7.5
Others	01	2.5
	<hr/> 40	<hr/> 100.0

The lack of cover crop appears to be the most significant problem of the farmer respondents.

The main sources/channels of agricultural information were as follows:

- A. Rubber Extension Officer
- B. School children (largely through Ordinary and Advanced level Agriculture school teachers).

4.2 Problem analysis

Proper identification and analysis of the problem is a fundamental prerequisite for any affective communication campaign. The problem analysis should highlight the problem, its causes and solutions to the problem as perceived by farmers.

Identification of problem

The baseline survey showed that soil erosion as the most serious problem.

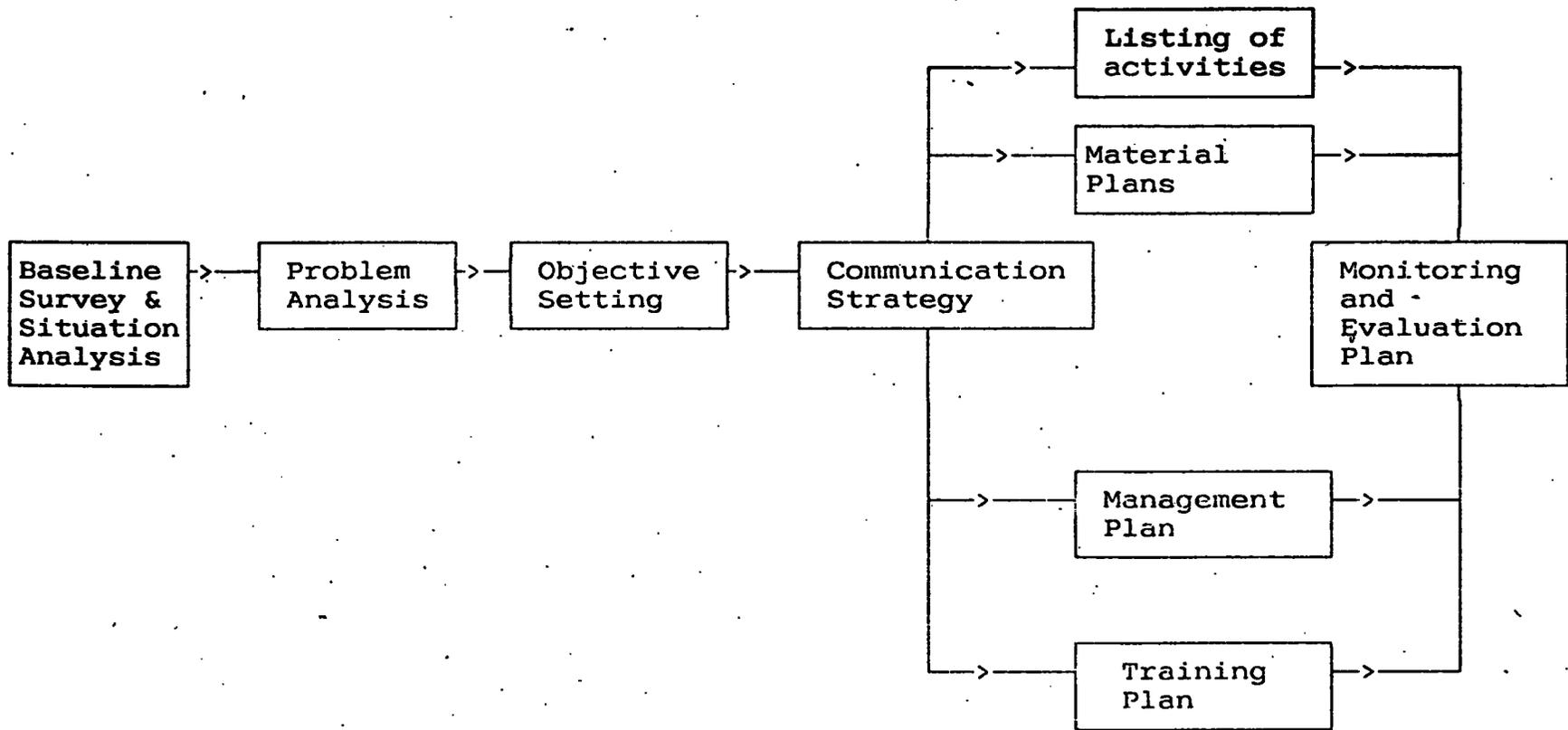


Fig. 1 Communication campaign planning process

Cause of problem

The cause of the problem identified by the participants was lack of cover crops planted in the area surveyed.

Proposed solution

To establish recommended cover crops in immature rubber holdings.

4.3 Objective setting

To conduct a successful a good campaign every action must be aimed at producing a concrete and measurable result. The indicators specified in the communication objectives should be defined in such a way that, after the campaign has been implemented, they can be used as criteria for evaluating the success or failure of the whole effort. Hence, a communication objective is a target which specifies the intended audience, the type of change that is expected, when and where the communication activity is to take place and finally, what criteria will be used to measure it's degree of success. (Annex - 1)

4.4 Communication strategy

A communication strategy is a combination of methods, messages and approaches by which the planner seeks to achieve the communication objectives (Annex - 2). This step is perhaps the most challenging because it calls for creative thinking since the ultimate mission is to alter the way in which people behave.

In some cases the target audience be willing and eager to act on the message communicated by the campaign. Under these conditions a relatively direct approach can be used. In other instances, there may be some "mental blocks" or rigid attitudes which have to be dealt with in a more indirect manner. This is where the creative communication campaign planner can demonstrate his expertise.

Communication research has amply demonstrated that always a combination of media and interpersonal methods are most effective in persuading people to adopt new ideas and practices.

4.5 Listing of activities

Having thought out the strategy, the next step is to list major activities that will have to take place in order to implement the strategy and achieve the objective. These should include preparatory activities such as media production as well as

operational activities which are needed once the communication begins. To keep the task relatively simple, all that is required is listing of events as they should occur. This can later be developed into a detailed work plan or schedule.

Listing of activities will give a reasonable picture on the magnitude of the task we are faced with. For instance, we may have chosen farm visits as a likely communication method. Yet, after reviewing the expenses and logistical support required, we may decide to go back and revise the plan based on the limited resources available. This type of constant evaluation of alternatives makes this a dynamic planning process. Brainstorming among team members is a good technique to adopt to generate ideas which are extremely valuable at this stage.

4.6 Materials plan

This shows the different materials needed for training and the field campaign (Annex - 3). To accomplish a professional job of media production, considerable lead time is necessary. Depending on the strategy selected, varying amounts of resources may be required. As deadlines approach, shortcuts often have to be taken. One short cut not to take however, forego pre-testing of the materials at least with a small sample of the target group. Sending out a message which has not been pre-tested can, on some occasions, do more harm than good in achieving the campaign objectives.

4.7 Management plan

The Management plan summarizes the various activities and schedule of implementation. This should be used as a tool for helping the campaign coordinator to keep track of who is doing what, where, when and why (Annex - 4). A plan which is understood by only one person is less dynamic as it is not subject to the constructive criticism of others. It should be noted that team efforts produce better results than individual performance. A critical element of planning therefore, is to build up teams or "task forces", who have a common mission.

Since the campaign approach tends to be a very intense effort over a short period of time, even minor delays can have an adverse impact on the overall process. A good management plan helps to reduce such problems associated with implementing the schedule.

4.8 Training plan

At this stage everything should be shaping up, at least on paper. The key to converting a "paper plan" to reality, is to organize a group of people where they can work as a team to pursue a common goal.

The training plan shows the different staff to be trained, the topics, methods and training materials to be used (Annex - 5).

4.9 Monitoring and evaluation plan

This shows the expected output and activities including their indicators that will help to determine whether or not the communication campaign was successful (Annex - 6).

In most development activities much lip-service is given to monitoring and evaluation but seldom is very much done in a systematic manner. Yet, a monitoring and evaluation system is a must to measure progress.

Choosing indicators which can be quantitatively checked over time is a critical element in any planned communication process (Samarappuli 1983). Too few, or inappropriate indicators will produce unreliable data. At the same time if we choose too many indicators, data collection can become cumbersome and will be flooded with information which we may not have the time or resources to analyse.

5. Limitations of the Study

"Pre-testing of media materials could not be done due to some unavoidable reasons. A good way to pre-test is to interview the target group in the environment where the material will later be tested. Responses can reveal misunderstandings, misconceptions or other shortcomings that must be corrected before the materials are finalized, reproduced and distributed.

6. Conclusion

The communication campaign plan developed in this study provides a useful guide for agricultural and community development personnel in planning communication campaigns. It is important to encourage target beneficiaries to participate throughout the planning process of the communication campaign.

It may not always be necessary to go through the entire sequence as prescribed in the guidelines. Nevertheless, there should be a logical relationship between steps. The way in which this set of guidelines is used depends on the particular needs of the user. The guidelines may be used either for self-instruction, or as the core material by extension organizations involved in planning similar campaigns in their areas of responsibility.

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Training Group	Expected Behavioral Change	Under what Conditions	To what Extent
<p>820 Farmers in the target area Land Size :- less than 04 ha Age of Rubber plants:- less than 3 years</p> <p>Distribution of the farmers:- Range A - 60 Range B - 355 Range C - 40 Range M 35</p> <p>Total <u>21</u> <u>820</u> — —</p>	<p>At the end of Campaign, farmers should be able to:</p> <p>a) Explain</p> <p>i) At least one, recommended cover crop variety</p> <p>ii) Specified seed rate</p> <p>b) Demonstrate</p> <p>i) The method of seed treatment</p> <p>ii) The method of preparing seed beds</p>	<p>With one year covering 1989/1990</p>	<p>50% (410) of the 820 farmers in the target area</p>

Audience(s)	Approach	Message	Methods
a. Rubber Extension Officers in Kalutara District	Group Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to motivate farmers to grow cover crops - Campaign - Objectives - Strategy - Activities - Benefit - Organization of Farm Families 	Training on how to conduct Field days and Group meetings
b. 820 Farmer Families	Group approach	- Methods of soil conservation and cover crop management	1. Group meetings 20 Nos
c. School Teachers and Student.	Group approach Mass Media	- Beneficial effects of growing recommended cover crops	2. Field days 40 Nos
d. Religious and political Leaders + N.G.O's	Individual approach	-do-	3. Field demonstrations 20 Nos 4. Field Visits 20 Nos 5. Video Films 10 Nos 6. Mass Media. Radio, Banner, Posters, Leaflets, Mobile van.

Material Plan :

Materials	Target	Message	Date	Person(s) Responsible
OHP, Transparencies, Flip charts, Handouts	Extension Field staff	Campaign: Objectives, Approaches, Activities and Responsibilities-	1989	Training Officers
Flip charts, Video, Black Board Demonstration Plot	Selected: Farmers, Motivators, Teachers Children	How to earn more income Advantages of cover crops., Cover management	1989	Training Officers Regional Rubber Advisory Officers
Posters and Video Films	All Farmers and their Family	Differences between eroded land and improved land due to cover crops	1989	Publicity Officer
Banners	All the villagers	Campaign objective	1989	Publicity Officer

Management Plan

Annex - 4

Activity No	Activities	Location	Date/Duration	Person responsible	Estimated Cost
01	Training programme -Supervisory Field staff -Field staff -Farmer Leaders & Motivators -Teachers	Training Centre	1989 - 1 day	Training Officers	
02	Media Development -ASD administrative staff -ASD Publicity Unit -Field staff -Farmer Leaders	Head office Training Centre	1989	Publicity Officer Training Officers	
03	Monitoring of activities	Kalutara	1989 - 1990	Field Staff	
04	Evaluation of activities	Kalutara	1990	Evaluation Team	

Training Plan

Annex - 5

Trainees	No	Content	Date/Duration/Location	Responsible Persons
Field Supervisory Staff Administrative Officer Publicity Officer Accountant	07 01 01 01	The need, benefits, strategy, activities of the campaign technical and financial support to the campaign.	1989 - One day at Training Centre.	Training Officers assisted by Regional Staff
Field Staff	24	The need, Objectives, strategy, activities of the campaign and How to train Farmer leaders to plant recommended cover crops.	1989 - Two days at Training Centre	Regional Advisory Officers assisted by Training Officers
Farmer Leaders and Motivators	48	The need, objectives, strategy and activities of the campaign. Benefits and method of Planting cover crops, How to convince farmers	1989 - Two day Programme at Training Centre (2 Nos)	Supervisory Field Staff
Selected Teachers	08	-do-	1989 - One day programmes	-do-
Selected students	80	-do-	-do-	-do-

Evaluation Plan

Annex - 6

Evaluation Indicators	Evaluation Methods	Evaluation Tools	Training Eva. Staff	Responsible Officer	Estimated Cost
50% of the 820 selected farmers in the target area should have followed the cultivated Schedule at the end of one year.	Field Survey Evaluation	Interview schedule Guided questions		Regional Rubber Extension Officer	