Communications

“Communicationsis a very important aspect of poor, self employed women’s lives and struggles. These women communicate in their own way and with various groups in society. They are inspired by and draw strength from each other, and a sense of solidarity and unity develops among them.” - SEWA

Communication is important to support participatory development. Communication for development means the planned use of different strategies (media and others) to help people become aware of and articulate their position, exchange knowledge and skills to take control over their lives, reach consensus and manage conflicts, and improve the effectiveness of organizations.

Communication is about bridging understanding within a human community by exchanging messages to enrich meaning and common knowledge, often with the purpose of embracing change.


Any act of communication includes four important components—SOURCE, MESSAGE, CHANNEL and RECEIVER (SMCR):

Source: Garforth, 2003
COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Source, or Sender</th>
<th>Where the information or idea comes from</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Message itself</td>
<td>The information or idea that is communicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Channel of communica-tion, or type of media</td>
<td>The way the message is transmitted. There may be some noise or distortion in these channels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Receiver</td>
<td>The person or group for whom the message is intended</td>
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Choosing the appropriate Communications Medium

1. Start by considering all of the different types of media and communications formats.
2. Consider how these different formats fit the SMCR elements above.
3. Eliminate the media which you do not have access to in terms of the equipment and technical capability necessary for their production.
4. Eliminate those media which you cannot deliver (post, broadcast etc.) and those which are not permissible due to laws, policies, regulations.

"Leadership is primarily trust and communication. When you communicate well with people and treat them with respect, they will go through brick walls for you." *Dr. Michael Hackman, Professor, University of Colorado (in the 26th Management Forum Series)"
“When people can produce their own communication media, their self confidence are increased.” - Homenet Thailand

Principles of effective communication:

- Credibility: Is your messenger credible – is he or she a trusted and respected source of information – with your audience?
- Context: Is your message in context with reality and the environment in which your audience is located?
- Content: Is your message relevant to your audience? Are they interested?
- Clarity: Is your message simple and straightforward? How far will it travel and how long will it last?
- Continuity and consistency: Repeat your message for audience penetration.
- Channels: What channels/tools of communication are you using? What value are they to your audience?
- Customer benefits: What’s in it for me?
- Caring, compassion and concern: Does your audience know that you care?
- Capability of audience: Is your audience capable of understanding the message? Will they take the time to listen/read/watch it?
- Call to action: What is your audience supposed to do now?

Source; Nick Lucido: How to Write a Communication Plan

http://nicklucido.wordpress.com/2009/03/05/how-to-write-a-communication-plan/
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Effective communications is necessary to express ideas, feelings, thoughts by words or actions. A leader, organizer, and a trainer needs to be an effective communicator to encourage the group to move towards desired action. Communication is an important tool in building organizations, in policy advocacy activities, in undertaking results oriented initiatives and in demonstrating good practices.

We often hear that the content of a message is composed of:
- 55% from the visual component
- 38% from the auditory component
- 7% from language (Mehrabian and the 7%-38%-55% Myth)

This affirms what we often hear from women that they know if they see, understand if they hear and learn if they do. Learning is deeper if they are immersed in an actual situation where they do a specific task. Learning by doing is another form of communication that is often practiced in training on specific skills or activity. It removes knowledge constraints and this in turn increases productivity and/or efficiency, thereby enhancing livelihoods as it opens new opportunities and hastens decision making.

Impact of communications

- Awareness generation
- Self-reliance
- Development of new leaders
- Women’s strengths and abilities developed
- Exposure to new knowledge and skills
- Growth and leadership stimulated
- Higher self-esteem, self-confidence and increased desire to tackle challenges

Source: SEWA Learning Academy, Modules and Presentation Materials on Organizing, Leadership and Communications

INDONESIA — MWPRI PROGRAMS

HomeNet Indonesia extensively does organizing and consolidation of women homeworkers at the local, provincial and national level. Participatory approaches are used in strengthening and maintaining member organizations. Massive exchange of information through various means aside from consultations and dialogues, workshops and meetings are done to facilitate organizing and consolidation of grassroot organizations in different parts of Indonesia, homeworkers’ policies/laws, and social protection for women homeworkers. Recently easy and simple training modules for the peer training and activities on intensive capacity building by NGO partner was done to address issues on fair trade and homebased workers.

Advocacy efforts to promote the rights of women homeworkers are done through advocacy action programs with respect to national and international issues that affect the informal sector workers in general and women homeworkers in particular. HomeNet Indonesia has been very active in initiating lobbying and campaigning activities for policies and laws addressing social protection and welfare of women homeworkers at the regional and national level.

Research is undertaken using conventional methods as well as community based action research related to issues of women homeworkers in particular and women in the informal sector in general. HomeNet Indonesia focused its UNIFEM-supported mapping exercise on women homeworkers in the putting out system in Surabaya and Bali.

BASIC COURSE ON EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION (March 22-23, 2011)

The MACWIE Group presenting their stage play about the conditions of informal workers and the need to have a law that will protect the interests of workers in informal employment.

The MACWIE Group brainstorming on the concept of their proposed communication strategy. (right)
For PATAMABA members, the participatory video process built relationships of mutual trust, mutual commitment and mutual support where members shared time and effort to come up with the actual video. Struggles of every chapter involved evolved from the group discussions. The actual video production was able to capture not only the actual production activities but the gender issues and other family concerns of every member involved in the production of their goods.

Video SEWA was established in 1984 with one set of production equipment and three weeks of training from Martha Stuart Communications. Of the twenty SEWA members and workers who participated in the training, one third were illiterate and another third had less than a high school education. They included women of all ages, Hindus and Muslims, craftswomen and vendors and women from many arms and levels of SEWA as an organization. A second installment of equipment, including editing equipment, and training were given in 1987. Video SEWA operates as a self-sufficient cooperative serving a larger people's organization. It has four full-time team members. In addition, workers and leaders throughout the organization have experience working with video and making programs.

SEWA uses tapes to motivate, mobilize and strengthen the existing membership, to organize new trade groups and new members of existing trade groups. Their programs are used for teaching, informing and orienting SEWA staff members. Their tapes create visibility for the issues of self-employed women and influence policy makers. Video SEWA members lead and facilitate group discussions when their programs are used. They are involved in and responsible for the impact of their work. (Source: http://c4c.org/about/experiences.html)

Communication is an important source of information that promotes motivation by informing and clarifying group members about the task to be done and how they perform according to group standards. Effective communication tools facilitate discussions and hastens decision making. They are also crucial in altering individual's attitudes and behavior to come up with a consensus towards attainment of a group's goals. More informed individuals come up with more...
COMMUNICATION PLAN

A communication plan is a written document that describes

- what you want to accomplish with your group communications in reference to your objectives;
- ways in which those objectives can be accomplished vis-à-vis your goals or program of work;
- to whom your communications will be addressed (your intended audiences);
- what attitudes or behavior do you want to address in a group;
- how you will accomplish your objectives (the tools and timetable), how to disseminate the information by identifying the communication channels and choosing the form of media; and
- how you will measure the results of your program (evaluation).

A communication plan is essential in organizing and leadership trainings. It describes how to consistently communicate the right messages to the right people at the right time. It describes the communication goals, stakeholders and strategies, activities and timeframes. A communication plan is usually developed during the organization’s annual planning. It is derived from the organization’s vision and mission statement. Members’ feedback and discussions with leaders are valuable inputs for the plan.

1. Pointers in implementing a communication plan

1. Design the communication tool or strategy. Develop concise themes and messages. Define the stakeholders and for which event the communication tool will be used. Allocating a realistic budget is essential.

2. Create the communication material (written, video, 3-dimensional, etc). Allocate resources in creating and implementing the tool. Determine the facility or equipment and the environment where the communication tool will be used. It is not advisable to use electricity dependent materials in remote areas where energy source is scarce. The frequency for its use is likewise essential in designing its appropriateness.

3. Produce the material for wide dissemination. It may also be useful to build a communication schedule where the tool will be optimized.

4. Distribute disseminate the communication material.

5. Evaluate effectiveness of the material used. Monitor and obtain feedback from users and from professionals engaged in designing the tool.

6. Alter the material as necessary based on the evaluation to improve not only the tool but the communication process.

Sharing the Power of Communication technology for Empowerment and Social Transformation

Participatory Video as an Empowerment Tool

Modern technology and easy access to communication networks made possible nowadays by different ICT providers facilitates the use of various forms of communications tools. Even development agencies nowadays use ICT tools for participatory education and community action. These horizontal “people to people” communication processes recognized the role of people as agents of their own development. It is in the context of participatory development that participatory video method evolved as a tool for information and advocacy.

Participatory video can serve as a powerful force for people to see themselves in relation to the community and become conscientized about personal and community needs. As Shirley White (2003;64) emphasized, “it brings about a critical awareness that forms the foundation for creativity and communication, bringing out personal, social, political and cultural change.”

Shirley White’s experience in using the participatory video approach made her realize the potential of this tool in facilitating dialogue and communication and reaffirmed what Bellenky (in "Towards an Education for Women") referred to as a powerful cycle of confirmation-evocation-confirmation that creates a culture of growth.

The Philippine group of homebased workers called PATAMABA underwent intensive training and participatory video production process for six months in 2006. The process involved collective and careful group assessment of potential risks and gains of this technology. With the goal of identifying products that would create a market niche and would sell to tourists in Baguio City. With a development and gender perspective, the participatory video highlighted the unique struggles, successes and challenges of the Apugan group to build a fair, just and sustainable economy.

The process involved three steps—pre-production, actual production and post-production of video. These included concept planning, script writing, identification of stories, field visits, story-writing, focus group discussions, actual filming, editing and finalization of the material.

The actual video film served as a marketing and organizing tool to orient stakeholders, funding agencies and potential consumers about the organization and its activities to reach a wider audience.
HomeNet Thailand operates through three networks at the moment. These networks also work with one another. Each region acts as a network to influence government policy on social protection. HomeNet Thailand has been very aggressive in reaching out to all its networks using various forms of communication tools applicable to each group and culture.

HomeNet Thailand hopes to expand its network base more effectively reach their clients at the grassroots. They have already started this in the south where one of their main contacts is a group who weaves baskets and mats from banana straw. This group is part of a Muslim community with different customs and religious traditions from Thailand’s Buddhist majority.

**Northern Network**

Established in the early 1990s with the support of ILO–DANIDA in collaboration with the YMCA of Chiangmai. In 1996, the network was taken over by the Institute of Science and Technology Research and Development, Chiangmai University. Currently there are more than 50 groups with more than 2000 home-producer members who organized themselves into committees to oversee network activities. Most of the members are own-account workers involved in traditional as well as modern weaving and handicrafts. Other equally resourceful groups are engaged in dress- and cloth-making, wood carving, and food preserving and processing. Different forms of communication approaches are used to organize, to train on skills and leadership and to advocate for their cause.

**Northeast Network**

This group was established in 1985 as the Northeast Women’s Network for the promotion of women’s participation in society. The network has its own shop selling woven products and handicrafts made by women. The shop is also used as a coordination centre where all group activities are being held to strengthen their networks in the villages and those who are engaged in sub-contracting. With about 70 groups of home producers and over 30 groups of homeworkers made up of over 4,500 members. The group continues to expand membership using various forms of communications to organize and also in providing skills training. Leaders have also undergone training as part of their capacity building activities.

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**ELEMENTS of a STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLAN**

1. Determine Goal — why the need for communicating taking into consideration all available resources (human, financial, etc.)
2. Identify and Profile Audience — who needs to receive the communication (members, non-members, academicians, trainers, media people, etc.)
3. Develop Messages — be specific with what do you want to communicate
4. Select Communication Channels — how best can you reach the target audience
5. Choose Activities and Materials
6. Establish a timetable and quantify results in a calendar
7. Establish Partnerships with whom you can implement the communication plan
8. Implement the Plan
9. Evaluate and Make Mid-Course Corrections to improve the communication processes — build a method for measuring results including a feedback mechanism to determine effectiveness of the communication plan

Source: 1) WK_Kellogg_Foundation_Strategic_Communications_Plan_Template
2) How to Develop a Communications Plan in [http://www.hieran.com/comet/howto.html](http://www.hieran.com/comet/howto.html)
Communication Tools

Communication tools in organizing include but are not limited to the following:

**Focus Group Discussions**

Focus Group Discussions is a common tool used by women’s groups to mobilize and inform, to raise awareness or stimulate discussions to facilitate formulation of solutions to their issues and concerns. A carefully planned FGD is a useful educational forum where the women and homebased workers can come together, and ideas can be openly discussed and analyzed to come up with collective decisions. An FGD may also be used to introduce new information, seek the opinions of members and gain their support for advocacy activities. Discussions about local issues for advocacy purposes are beneficial to get group consensus on collective decisions for further action. FGDs are also used to verify baseline data.

**Participatory Video**

Video has become a popular communication tool with the fast pace of information technology, availability of suitable equipment and computers, software and trained personnel. Video is widely used by women’s groups in disseminating information about new ideas and innovations, in training programs, in advocacy dialogues, in interviewing key people, or in organizing new groups. Video has become an empowerment tool for social change. Video recording allows one to document events, community consultations and discussions, and participatory activities on community-led campaigns. As an organizing and leadership tool, videos are useful in organizing in new areas, in motivating, mobilizing and strengthening existing leadership. As a basic training tool, it is widely used for orientation and teaching new and potential members, or to demonstrate an idea or a process. Facilitating skills are enhanced using videos. In Ahmedabad, India, the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) has been training poor and illiterate women in the production and use of video as a tool for empowerment. As a means of documenting the issues affecting women and highlighting their concerns, video is an integral component of SEWA’s activities. Video programmes produced by rural women associated with the group have been used for income generation, occupational health, wage negotiations, legal interventions, teaching new skills and advocating for policy changes. HNSEA initiated training for women homebased workers on participatory video production and is now being used as a tool for organizing, leadership and other activities. Video is widely used as a tool to aid to learning and as well as an integral part of community initiated programs for policy change and advocacy. As an advocacy tool, it is very useful in creating visibility of the target groups, or putting forward issues for awareness raising, information dissemination and reaching out to policy makers on certain issues that call for action or policy changes. It facilitates discussions when interacting with a group to campaign or advocate for an issue during meetings with decision makers at the policy level. Visuals compared to spoken word is more effective and has more impact when used properly to present a message. As an example, videos are extensively used in orientation briefings on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) to enable better understanding on the importance of disaster preparedness especially among homebased and grassroots women whose lives and livelihoods are greatly affected.

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Community Strategies in action

“...When people can produce their own communication media, their self-confidence is increased. Video, film, radio program are efficient and effective communication media for the poor and illiterate people because these are easy to understand. Communication is a two-way process. To apply learnings from the SEWA workshop on Strategic Organizing, Homenet Thailand encourages the committee responsible for training the members to produce the communication media and use them as organizing tools."

- HOMENET THAILAND

Homenet Thailand has been very active in advocating for social protection using the various forms of communicating with their own women’s groups, the government and other partners. Homeworkers Protection Act B.E. 2553 was enacted in 2010 and the first in Asia that aims to reduce inequality and provide basic rights and justice to homeworkers likewise enjoyed by their counterparts in the formal sector.

Country Homenets use various forms of communicating with their groups to adapt to the local situation of women homebased workers. Some pressure groups and lobbyists use more intensive forms of communication to send the message to concerned parties. Peaceful rallies creates awareness as groups march out in the streets and get attention of the general public on the issues being raised. This is different from the trade union’s tactical strategies staging strikes and rallies on the streets to be heard. Groups stage rallies to advocate for policy changes.

Homenet Bangkok has been very active in presenting homeworkers’ demands in many events such as International Women’s Day and May Day where they collaborate with other workers’ groups in various policy campaigns. The success of Homenet Bangkok in creating a market space for Homenet members, and linking up with the source of subcontracting work, especially in garments, for rural homeworkers may be attributed mainly to their effective communication strategies and processes when they work ed with partners and stakeholders. It has created 3 networks of homebased women—the Bangkok network, the Northern network and the Northeast network, which all work together towards a common goal.
Communication Strategies: The Seven Cs of Effective Communication

**Speaking and Radio or Video**
- Command attention
- Cater to the heart and the head
- Call to action
- Clarify the message
- Communicate a benefit
- Create trust
- Convey a consistent message
- Concise

**Writing and Printed Media**
- Creative
- Credible
- Convincing
- Complete
- Current
- Clear
- Communicate a benefit
- Complete
- Convey a consistent message
- Concise

Every successful form of communication follows the above seven basic principles. Several different versions and means of communications may be considered in dealing with women’s groups to effectively deliver the message whether it is in the form of printed media, audio or video.

ICT and Web-based communications

Digital media and social networking has improved organizing and communication. With the fast pace of technology, the use of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) has become popular and important to leadership and participation in community development activities. It has bridged distances even among widely dispersed groups. Using the Internet through personal computers, Local Area Networks, standard office software and applications make possible direct and interactive communications through various forms of multimedia. Groups can collaborate with other groups and engage in meetings and discussions using facilities such as audio or Videoconferencing through Skype. Modern technology allowed for more efficient, effective and faster delivery of messages using various forms of interactive communication technologies such as the Internet and electronic mails, SMS, or texting and social media such as Facebook, twitter, Chat, LinkedIn, Multiply, UnionBook for trade unions and others web-based technology. Accessibility and availability of computers, laptops, telephones and cell phones has allowed interactive means of communicating both in urban and rural areas. As new tools for advocacy and mobilizing, these facilities made communications easier despite geographical distances. ICT is an empowerment tool for women’s groups. Women producer groups can take advantage of social media or e-marketing websites for their products and services. This enables a wider reach of audience and provides interactive facilities for communicating parties. As an example, eHomemakers of Malaysia take advantage of technology and e-marketing for their eco-baskets for both local and export markets through SMS. Their members can easily be reached despite geographical distance to meet large orders from clients. eHomemakers of Malaysia has effectively used ICT in their networking with other private organizations especially in times of disasters and calamities. More importantly, ICT is widely used by women producers all over the country to mobilize producers and gather finished products to meet large orders for both local and export markets.

Radio

Aside from the fact that radio can cover a large mass audience, a good communicator creates a friendly impression to the listener as directly speaking to the latter. Radio is a popular means of transmitting messages to a wider audience especially in remote areas unreached by TV signals or other means of communications. Rudi No Radio is a popular radio station in India accessed by SEWA and its members to get through their women members even in remote areas. What is more important is that the radio allows women to do their work and get properly informed while listening. Unlike the television that requires visual attention, the radio allows women to attend to their household chores or even farm work while listening. Women get information about local activities or even big events such as weddings, birthdays or announcements about deaths that get aired over the radio. Women are kept abreast with local and national issues through the radio.
Printed Media (posters, leaflets, manuals, booklets, brochures)

Printed media combine words, pictures and diagrams to convey accurate and clear information. Their great advantage is that they can be looked at for as long as the viewer wishes, and can be referred to again and again. This makes them ideal as permanent reminders of messages. However, they are only useful in areas where a reasonable proportion of the population can read. It is also important to produce printed media in the local language for a wider reach. The printed media that are commonly used in extension include posters, booklets, leaflets, circulars or newsletter, and newspapers. Leaflets and short booklets can give short but effective information or reminders of an event, organization’s profiles, or technical details, particularly regarding quantitative information which are poorly remembered from audio-visual media, and visual (diagrams) or verbal descriptions of activities. The use of popular media using cartoons is an effective form that gets the message and the attention of readers.

Community information boards can be used very effectively to display leaflets, posters, slogans, announcements and short notes, as well as to notices on the dates and locations of events and times of group meetings. The presentation should be made to be eye-catching to attract attention of target readers.

Field Visits, Tours and Demonstrations
Field visits and study tours are interesting to women homebased workers to see how a new idea may be practicable for their group. They also can share and learn actual experiences from other groups. Field visits and tours stimulate genuine interest in particular initiatives or activities that may be replicated. Skills demonstration to illustrate income generating activities can give women an opportunity to observe, at first hand, and make comparisons between a recommended practice and their own current practices to make improvements in processes. The strength of the demonstration should lie in its simplicity and its ability to present the group with concrete results. A field tour is also very useful in bringing them together to discuss common problems and to gain useful experiences adaptable or relevant to local situations.

It is worth noting that audiovisual training materials can be brought to women in their respective villages and shown to them in the hours in which they are free from their tasks of caring for the home, producing food or earning income. When this is not possible, special arrangements can be made to enable women to attend training sessions together with men at a time that is most convenient to them.

COMMUNICATION AND LEADERSHIP
Communication skills and leadership skills go together. Effective communications enable leaders to lead effectively. Good communication skills enable, foster, and create the understanding and trust necessary to encourage others to follow a leader. Without effective communication, a leader accomplishes little. In fact, being able to communicate effectively is what allows an advocate to move into a leadership position. Through effective communications, leaders improve their ability to get things done when they are “able to communicate, make sound decisions, and get things done with and through people” (Bowman, Jones, Peterson, Gronouski, & Mahoney, Harvard Business School Study, 1964). Leadership communication uses the full range of communication skills and resources to overcome interferences and to create and deliver messages that guide, direct, motivate, or inspire others to action.

Choosing the appropriate type of COMMUNICATION TOOL depends on the desired outcome and the target group for whom it will be used like the mobilization among informal workers in the Philippines shown above advocating for the passing of the Reproductive Health Bill. Members of homenet Philippines joined RHAN in the march from Commission on Human Rights (CHR) to the House of Representatives (HOR) during the celebration of Women’s month on March 8, 2011.