

by Marcos D. Agayo

Getting the message across is a problem all communicators face, whether they are trying to sell their audience on the effectiveness of a particular brand of soap or on the benefits of family planning.

Now it doesn't make much difference to national development whether the majority of Filipinos prefer Lux to Lifebuoy or vice versa. But it does make a difference how many listen to—and act on—government messages on family planning, nutrition, rural development, etc. That is why, says University of the Philippines Professor Cesar M. Mercado, government planners ought to consider new ways to get their development messages across.

For a long time now, says Mercado, the government has relied primarily on field technicians to spread development messages. Sadly, this strategy has not worked especially well. There are too few technicians, too little coordination between government and private agencies, too few opportunities for field workers to plan projects or to update their skills.

Another strategy—using mass media—had other drawbacks. Campaign plans were rarely systematic or comprehensive and there was limited feedback from the target audience.

To overcome some of the problems, Professor Mercado and students at Bicol

Getting the message across



The use of field technicians to carry development messages hasn't worked too well.

College and the University of the Philippines' Institute of Mass Communications devised an information campaign model which they called the Participatory Campaign Strategy, or PCS.

According to its developers, PCS's chief virtues are that it:

- minimizes the problem of too few technicians by tapping local manpower, including school teachers, barangay leaders, store owners and the like;

- allows field technicians and intended recipients of services to participate in the planning process and thus obtain a broader view of the government's development programs;

- makes use of local resources and promotes self-reliance among barangay members.

Good research, better results

PCS requires that the people who design

and the people who use government programs work closely together. They must analyze the effectiveness of past programs and spell out what they want of new ones. They must survey available resources and decide how to obtain whatever else is needed for a new program's success. Lastly, they must monitor the program so that they can learn from their successes or failures.

In two information campaigns (on food production and family planning) built on the PCS model, analysts found that films—especially transistorized VHS, which allow people to see themselves as well as their barrio on a screen—attract far more people than do lecture-discussions or demonstrations. Not surprisingly the analysts also found developmental messages built into sports, recreational, religious or folk-activities were able to reach more people than were programs designed to deliver only the development message.

The PCS model is of course, far from perfect. The coordination required between government/private technicians and ordinary citizens demands a good deal of time and patience. Decision-making is slow and the likelihood of conflict between agencies and individuals high. Still, says Professor Mercado, the potential benefits are worth the immediate problems. Time and experience, he says, will reduce the problems and help deliver an even better strategy.

Modular learning for teachers

Keeping up with the latest methods in teaching is never easy. But it is particularly difficult for rural elementary school teachers who must not only conduct classes but also participate in all village socials, attend barangay meetings and involve themselves in other government

inter-agency activities. These teachers rarely have the time—much less the funds—to take off for week-long education seminars or workshops, no matter how dedicated they might be.

But that may be changing—thanks to Learning Modules for Rural Elementary

School Teachers, or LMREST.

Similar to the programmed instructional materials which have proved more effective than textbooks arranged in the traditional manner, LMREST allows teachers to keep up with the latest developments at the place and pace most convenient to them. The modules, which were developed out of a UNICEF-funded project, cost very little and can accomplish as much as a seminar or workshop, providing the teacher applies the necessary time and energy to her studies.

The LMREST comes in three parts.

The first part helps a teacher decide what particular module will best fit her needs. Once that is decided, the second part details learning activities. (Some "second parts" are complete in themselves; others refer the user to other resource materials.) The third part assesses how well the teacher has done her "homework."

The prime advantage of the module system is that it can be used anytime, anywhere, for either individual or group study. LMREST may thus be the answer to the rural teachers' desire to keep up with their urban counterparts.

The Research and Technical Services Division of the National Meat Inspection Commission (NMIC) has found a new way to use carabao dung and rice hulls as cooking fuels.

Rather than using only animal dung, which emits offensive odors, or only rice hulls, which give off too much smoke, the NMIC method combines the two "ingredients." Mixed in a six-to-one ratio, hull and dung are molded into briquettes and dried, under the sun in the summer or in an oven during the rainy season. The result is a cheap, odorless fuel which burns steadily and leaves little soot on cooking vessels. The only disadvantage of the briquettes is that they tend to build up a great deal of ash, which must be cleared periodically lest it smother the fire. To eliminate this snag, the NMIC is working on new stove designs.

Using dung-hull briquettes may help rural folk reduce their living costs, if only because the materials needed are both cheaper and more readily available than the traditional firewood. But the NMIC and its parent agency, the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), are not banking only on briquettes. They are also working on producing methane gas from such waste products as straw, grain offals, chaff, weeds, and vegetable, animal and household wastes. This system, called bio-gas generation, has an additional advantage: the humus left after fermentation is a fertilizer which is far superior to ordinary compost.

Though most of the bio-gas generators now in use in the Philippines are dependent on pig manure, the BAI is hoping Filipino farmers will consider

Money-saving fuel substitutes

other sources. They point out that 100 pounds of chicken droppings could generate as much as 450 cubic feet of gas, enough to supply the basic power needs of a rural family of four for as long as 10 weeks. The same amount of pig manure could generate only 112 to 115 cubic feet of gas. The added burden of collecting chicken manure is thus made up for in terms of fuel economy.

The use of bio-gas generators has already helped some food-processing industries reduce their fuel costs. The BAI now hopes to persuade sugar centrals to do the same using their own waste products. Research has shown that sugar cane distillery slops (what remains after alcohol has been extracted from molasses) has produced gas sufficient to fuel boilers, generators, kitchen appli-

ances and kilns previously dependent on liquefied petroleum gas. Dr. Jose A. Cayabyab, BAI's assistant director for research, is currently working with Central Azucarera de Tarlac to determine the economic viability of generating gas from sugar slops.

Through its extension workers, the BAI carries out direct consultations and provides plans, bills of materials and technical assistance to small- and medium-scale farmers. Anyone desiring more information about bio-gas generation should contact the nearest BAI regional office or visit the BAI Central Office in the Rita Legarda Bldg., Magsaysay Blvd., Metro Manila.



Bio-gas digester: Power for the people.