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# The role of Communication

The way communication is established and nurtured will affect how involved people will feel about the issues raised and how they will participate - or not - in a research or development initiative.



# PARTICIPATORY COMMUNICATION

- participatory communication is an approach capable of facilitating people's involvement in decision-making about issues impacting their lives - a process capable of addressing specific needs and priorities relevant to people and at the same time assisting in their empowerment



HEY,  
THEY SHOULD BE  
TALKING TO US!

I KNOW THE VILLAGE WIVES WATER BUT I THINK WE SHOULD BUDGET FOR A ROAD.

MY UNCLE IS IN THE BUSINESS.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

ZZZZZ

LOCAL COUNCIL

ACTION-AID PLAN & BUDGET

INCLUDES OTHER COMMUNITIES...

... WHAT WE REALLY NEED...

... LET'S BUDGET...

FRANK  
1999

# Participatory Development communication

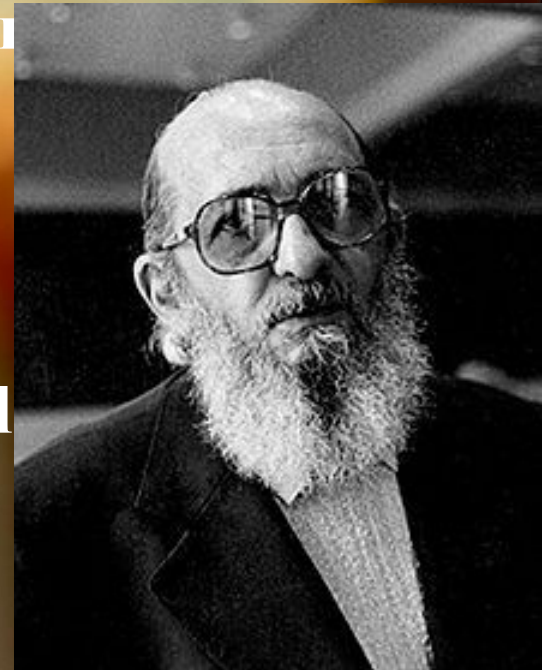
Participatory communication has been defined as “a dynamic, interactional, and transformative process of dialogue between people, groups, and institutions that enables people, both individually and collectively, to realize their full potential and be engaged in their own welfare.”



# background

**The teachings of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator and activist, had a major influence on the development of the participatory model. According to Freire, the process of raising questions and engaging in dialogue sparks “critical consciousness,”**

**Which enables the shift from reflection to action (Freire, 1970). Since participatory communication emerged in the 1960s, non-governmental organizations and community-based groups have led the way in practice and innovation.**





# [ Six phases of participatory communication planning ]

- Preliminary situation assessment
- Communication strategy design
- Participatory design of messages and discussion themes
- Communication methods and materials development
- Implementation
- Evaluation

# Preliminary situation assessment

could be done most effectively in a participatory manner through PRCA or participatory rural communication appraisal.

Three kinds of analysis are done in PRCA:

1. Audience analysis is essentially "listening" to what potential users of information need. They are the ones whom the communication program intends to reach. Users of information are also referred to as stakeholders(Beneficiaries) of a communication program. Collecting baseline information about these stakeholders is an essential preliminary step towards developing a communication strategy.

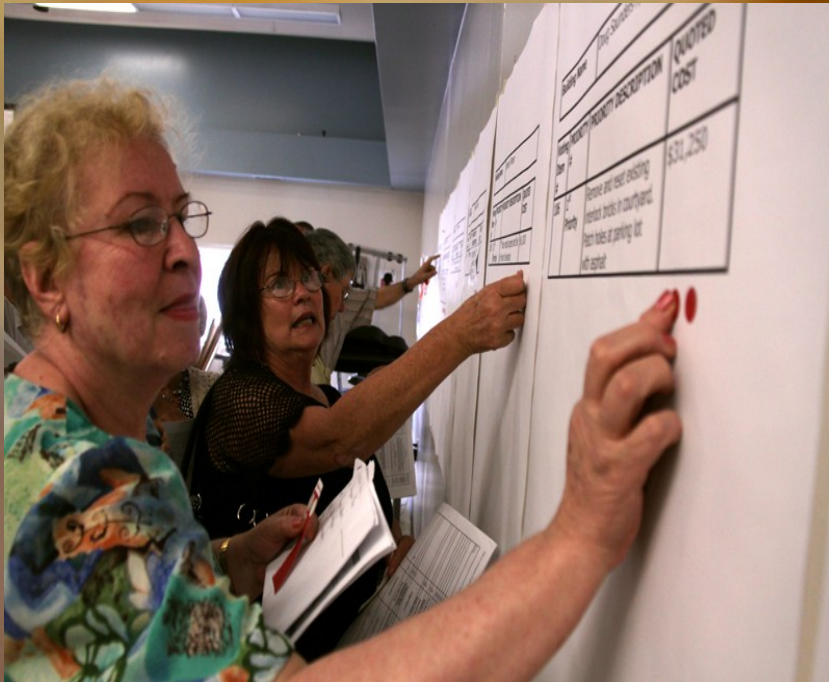


**2. Situation analysis** In doing situation analysis, planners look at both the possible problem to be addressed by the communication program and the conditions surrounding such problem.



Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in Ogbogolo Community. Assessment of baseline social conditions of extant forest communities is a prerequisite for a successful forest conservation.

# 3. Program analysis



When doing program analysis, program planners need to take both an inward and an outward look at the situation that is, looking at the organization's own vision, policies, resources, strengths, and weaknesses relevant to the problem.



# [ Communication strategy design ]

Communication strategy is the combination of methods, messages, and approaches by which the planner seeks to achieve the communication Objectives. The very word strategy suggests a unique combination of techniques or approaches by which to achieve program goals and objectives.



# Participatory design of messages and discussion themes

This phase are selection of message appeals and approaches and selection of communication channels and media. The big challenge at this stage is the development of the big idea or the creative concept around which the whole communication program would revolve.



# Communication methods and materials development

- Pretesting measures potential effectiveness of communication messages, methods, and materials in terms of their being able to attract attention, to be understood, to be accepted, and to generate the feeling of self-involvement among the stakeholders.





# Management and implementation

- Together with this come monitoring the process of dissemination, transmission, and reception of program inputs.

The management aspect also covers the management improvement process and the concept of leadership as they affect implementation of communication program.

## Evaluation

- importantly, monitoring and evaluation data contribute to planning for program sustainability and self-sufficiency.



four different ways of participation can be observed in most development projects

- ***Participation in implementation:***  
People are actively encouraged and mobilized to take part in the actualization of projects. They are given certain responsibilities and set certain tasks or required to contribute specified resources.

## ***Participation in evaluation:***

Upon completion of a project, people are invited to critique the success or failure of it.

## ***Participation in benefit:***

People take part in enjoying the fruits of a project, this maybe water from a hand-pump, medical care by a "bare-foot doctor", a truck to transport produce to market, or village meetings in the new community hall.



# ***Participation in decision-making:***

- People initiate, discuss, conceptualize and plan activities they will all do as a community. Some of this may be related to more common development areas such as building schools etc.

(Most will agree that participation in decision-making is the most important form to promote.)

- Some development initiatives provide people with opportunities to all these four ways of participation. Many do not, and restrict participation to one or two ways.

# Participatory communication in Action



- New technology, such as small format videos, have also been used successfully. The most famous is the "Fogo process" (Williamson:1991) where video is used as a "mirror" to reflect the issues and aspirations of people living in isolated communities.



Besides helping the communities reflect, the videos have also served as highly effective communication between the people and outsiders, typically politicians.

It became clear that while people were not always comfortable discussing issues with each other face-to-face, they were comfortable explaining their views on film.



# Photo novella

are equally effective. People are provided with a still camera with which they are free to photograph anything they want to make-up a pictorial novel about themselves. The pictures shot are displayed and arranged into an order through the collaborative efforts of members of the community. The picture stories help in reflection, communication with outsiders, and measuring progress of cooperative efforts.





## Form/approach

## Examples

**Participatory drama**, including interactive and “forum” theater approaches

DramAidE and Mothertongue (South Africa); Wan Smolbag (South Pacific region); Sistren Theatre (Jamaica); Tuelimishane (Tanzania)

**Folk and traditional performance forms**, such as song, dance, puppetry, poetry, and storytelling

Phare Ponleu Selpak (Cambodia); Proyecto Payaso (Guatemala); Bibi Bulak (Timor Leste)

**Participatory media**, including community radio and participatory or community-based video

TV Maxabomba (Brazil); CALANDRIA (Peru); Insight (multi-region); Video Volunteers and Radio Ujjas/Drishti Media (India); Nutzij (Guatemala); Maneno Mengi (Tanzania); Telemanita (Mexico); Through Our Eyes (multi-region)

**Participatory photography**, including photo-essays and social or personal documentary work

Shooting Back (multi-region); PhotoVoice (multi-region); Kids With Cameras (India); Binti Pamoja (Kenya)

**Participatory interpersonal communication**, including participatory learning and action (PLA) methods, interactive peer education and training techniques, and various forms of community dialogue

Stepping Stones (multi-region); Tostan (West Africa); Community Conversations (Ethiopia)

# In the Philippines...

- A somewhat surprising success is a method called CIPS--Community Information and Planning System. Surprising because it is a method based on scientific research which many people had first thought alien and not useful to rural communities.

In this method villagers who have heard about CIPS invite the University where CIPS was developed, to send a trainer to work with the community. The course is taught in the local dialect and presents the research process in a simple, easy to implement way. The people begin their research immediately after the course. They collect data and analyze them as a group. The results of the research are displayed on large charts, in the form of easy to understand graphics and presented to the community during a village meeting.



After members of the community have understood the findings of the research, they move on to prioritize problems and plan action to address these problems. The action is usually written-up in the form of a proposal to a local government agency.

# [ Limits ]

**Participatory communication processes are not a remedy for development all the time. Such processes are not suitable for solving all problems in all contexts or time frames.**

**The apparently opposing concepts of "participation" and "manipulation"**

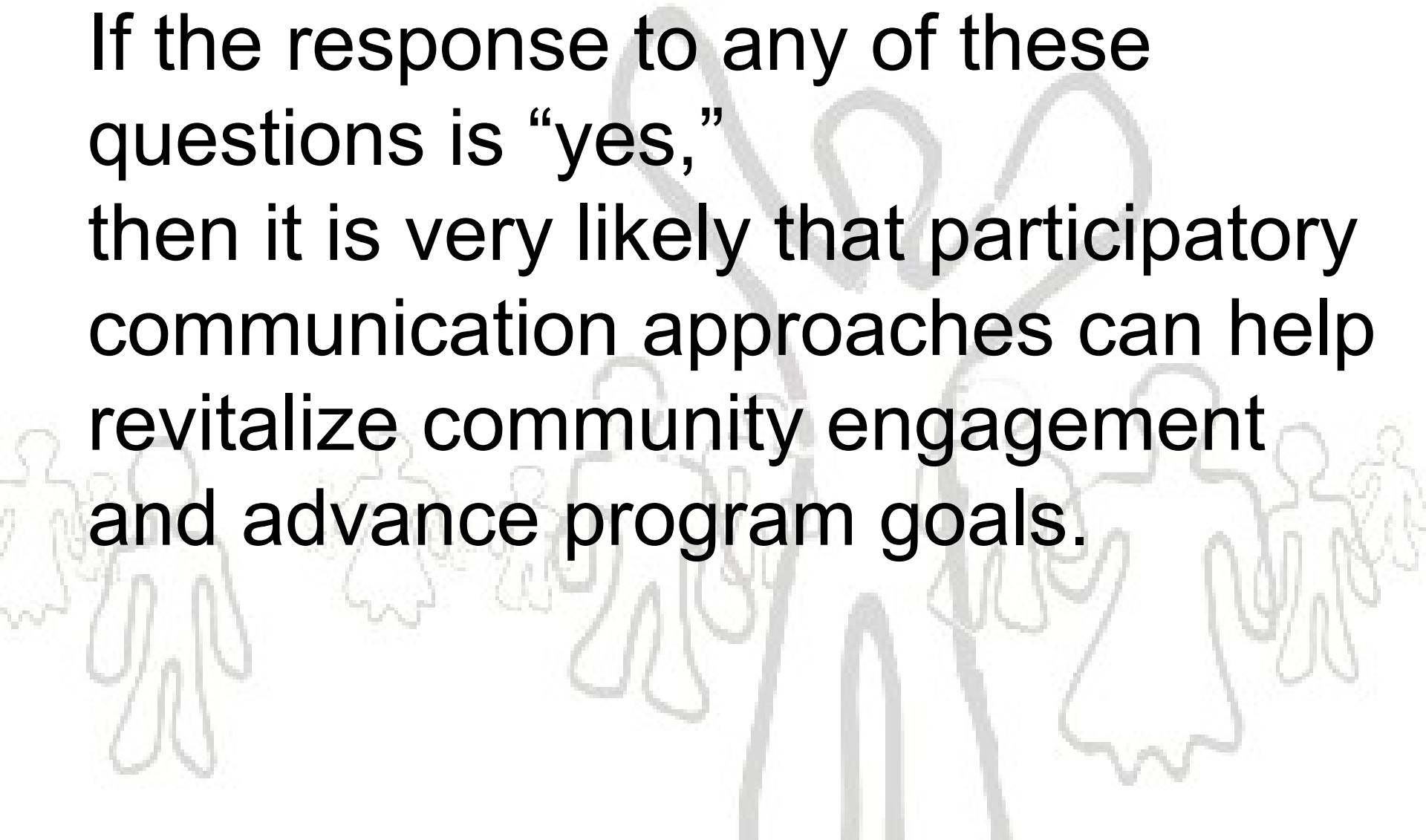
**The price people have to pay for taking part in participatory processes is often overlooked. It is often assumed that the villager has nothing better to do with his or her time.**

# Rx for participatory communication

The following questions can help program staff assess the potential of participatory communication approaches in their social development work:

- Is there a general lack of language-appropriate, culturally-specific materials for local audiences on critical issues?
- Is there a gap in reaching certain groups with important information due to low literacy levels and/or the inaccessibility of available print materials?
- Have current outreach activities (for example, mass sensitizations, health education talks) become repetitive or dull for participants?
- Are certain issues not being adequately addressed through existing activities and forums for discussion?
- Are community members in general not highly invested or engaged in program goals and activities?
- Are current activities maintaining their effect at the level of awareness-raising, without noticeable progress toward changes in local practice and behavior?

If the response to any of these questions is “yes,” then it is very likely that participatory communication approaches can help revitalize community engagement and advance program goals.



Change will not come if  
we wait for some other  
person or some other time.  
We are the ones we've  
been waiting for.

We are the change  
that we seek.

Barack Obama

VERY-QUOTABLE @TUMBLR





# Sources:

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