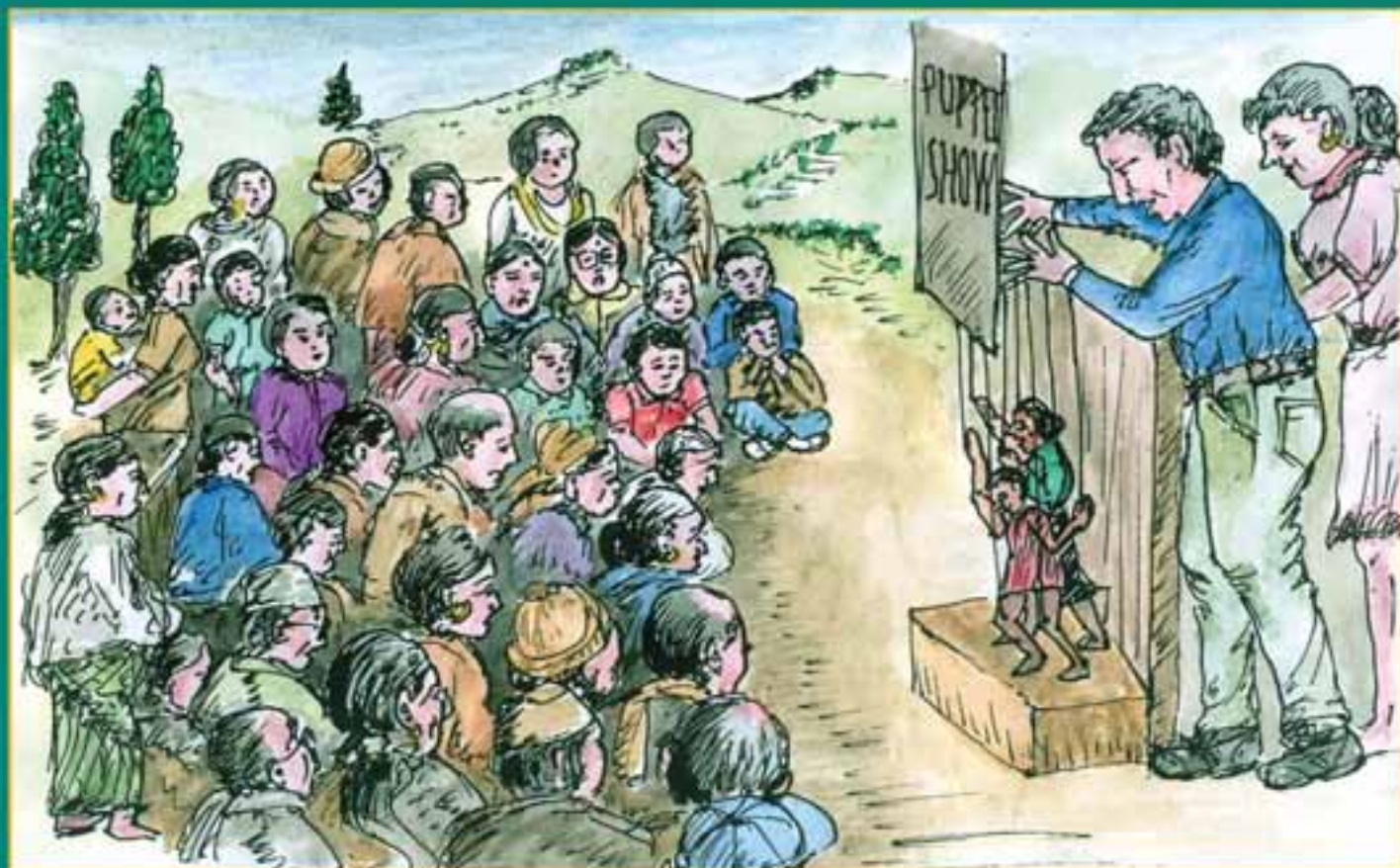


Alternative Media

A Guide



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International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is an independent regional knowledge, learning and enabling centre serving the eight regional member countries of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas – Afghanistan , Bangladesh , Bhutan , China , India , Myanmar , Nepal , and Pakistan  – and the global mountain community. Founded in 1983, ICIMOD is based in Kathmandu, Nepal, and brings together a partnership of regional member countries, partner institutions, and donors with a commitment for development action to secure a better future for the people and environment of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. ICIMOD's activities are supported by its core programme donors: the Governments of Austria, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, and its regional member countries, along with programme co-financing donors. The primary objective of the Centre is to promote the development of an economically and environmentally sound mountain ecosystem and to improve the living standards of mountain populations.

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International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
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About This Guide

There is no consensus regarding the term 'alternative media'. In this book, we use 'alternative media' to refer to a combination of processes, methods, information materials, and products that are based on traditional ways of communicating in communities. The term 'alternative media' is also widely used, especially in Western countries, to refer to the (mass) media produced for and by anti-establishment groups in forms such as underground newspapers, radio and TV stations, and websites - but this is not what is meant here.

One of the most important points about using alternative media is that people in communities can do it for themselves. Development organisations and other knowledge providers can develop alternative media products in partnership with a community and then communities themselves can carry out the process of delivering information. The process empowers communities because they control the creation and transmission of useful information. Most other types of development communication rest firmly in the hands of experts or administration.

Why this guide?

This guide is an offspring of ICIMOD's Alternative Media Project funded by Ford Foundation. The idea of the project originated at ICIMOD in connection with exploring ways of reaching out to communities in the Himalayan region. The project began in 2002 and was completed in 2005. The aim was to explore traditional media and forms of communication in local communities and use them to deliver messages that could contribute to the improvement of livelihoods. The purpose of this guide is to synthesise the experiences of the Alternative Media Project and share them with people interested in development communications at the grassroots. It presents some of the project activities, and describes different types of media and how and when they can be used.

Who is it for?

We expect that the guide will be useful both for people working in diverse rural communities such as development workers, and for community members interested in sharing knowledge by traditional means. The guide attempts to provide easy-to-use guidelines for developing communication processes in environments in which there is limited access to electronic media and other sources of information. We hope that it will contribute to understanding of some of the issues related to informal education and the role of alternative media as a powerful tool for reaching out to remote communities and people with little formal education.

Additional material: Three CD-ROMs have been prepared to accompany this guide: a) showing examples of alternative media in practice, b) a very short introduction to alternative media, and c) an interactive and animated version of the guide itself. These can be provided for personal use on application to ICIMOD distribution (distri@icimod.org).

Acknowledgements

This guide is based on a compilation of the results of the activities that the Alternative Media Project undertook in its pilot phase. We would like to thank Ford Foundation for their support for the project without which this work could not have been carried out. The contribution to this book doesn't end with the few of us who wrote, edited, and compiled it, but encompasses the skills and knowledge of the partners, intermediaries, and rural communities of the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. We would like to thank all who were involved in the project during 2002 to 2005, as well as those who contributed later to this book.

We would like to extend our gratitude to all our partner organisations - the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme and the District Development Council of NGOs, Chitral, Pakistan; the Bangladesh Institute of Theatre and Arts, Bangladesh; Spiny Babbler, Kathmandu, Nepal; and The Missing Link, Mopungchuket, Nagaland, India. Without their dedication and commitment, the alternative media concept would not have made a mark in the sites where it was implemented. The partners played an important role in the conceptualisation and implementation of the project. Their contribution has made the alternative media project and this guide a unique, fascinating and valuable undertaking.

We would like to extend our special thanks and recognition to Greta M. Pennington Rana, whose fascination with alternative media and innovative ideas for their revival were pursued over a number of years, finally resulting in the development and implementation of this successful project, which she coordinated from 2002 to 2004. We would also like to thank Sanjay Madnani for his professional skills and expertise in implementing the project at the grassroots. His work with communities was highly praised by villagers and authorities. Finally we thank Zbigniew Mikolajuk, who saw the project through its final stages and was instrumental in the preparation of this book and the accompanying CD-ROMs.



Last but not least, we thank the members of the communities who embraced the ideas so wholeheartedly and really showed how useful, important, and fun these different ways of communicating can be. We are sure that the results of this initiative are here to remain in the rural communication development sector.

Thank you all,
The IMCO Team, ICIMOD

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