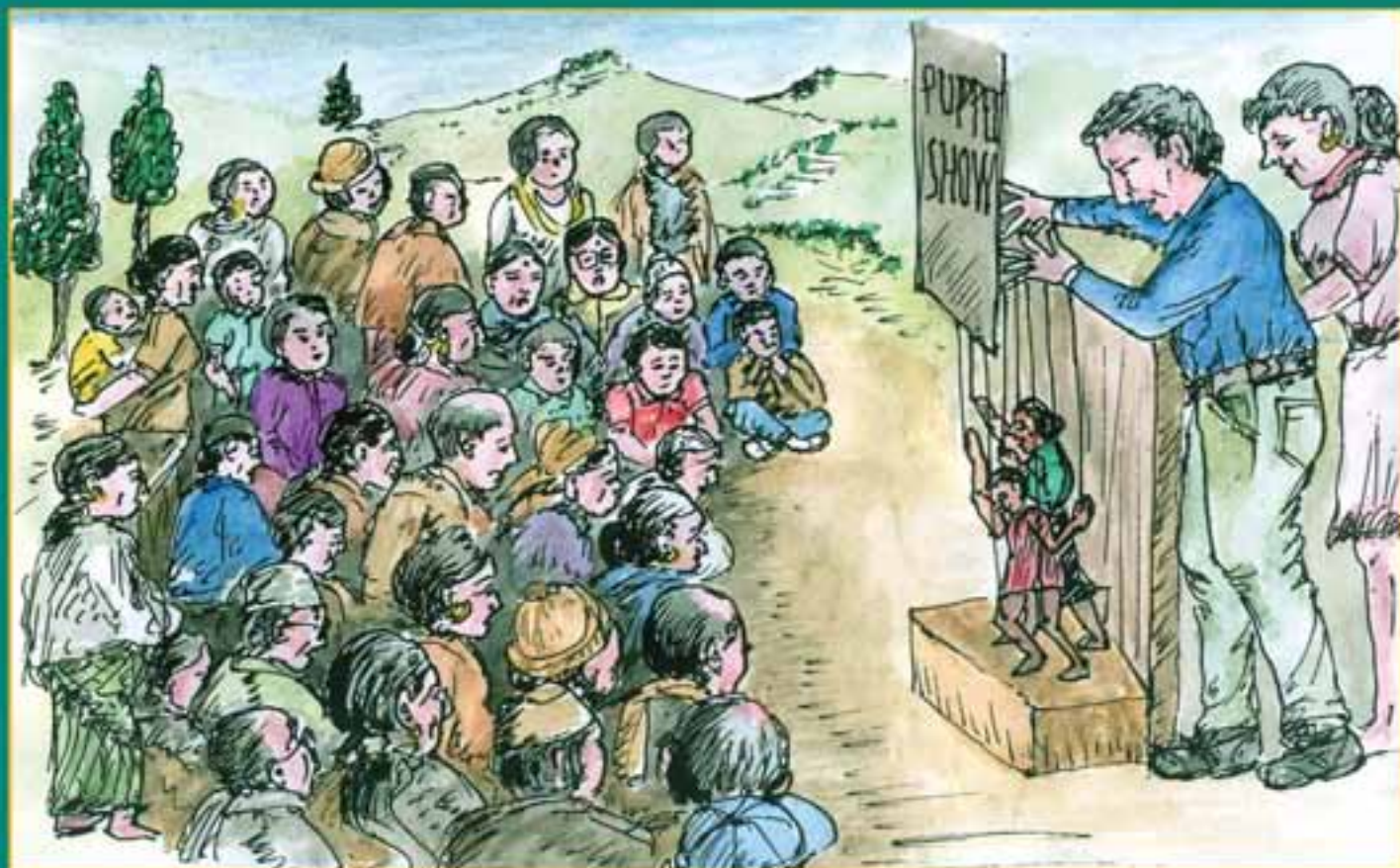


# Alternative Media

## A Guide



# About ICIMOD

## 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.

# **Alternative Media**

## **A Guide**

**International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development**  
Kathmandu, Nepal  
December 2007

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**ISBN 978 92 9115 073 1 (electronic version)**

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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](mailto: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 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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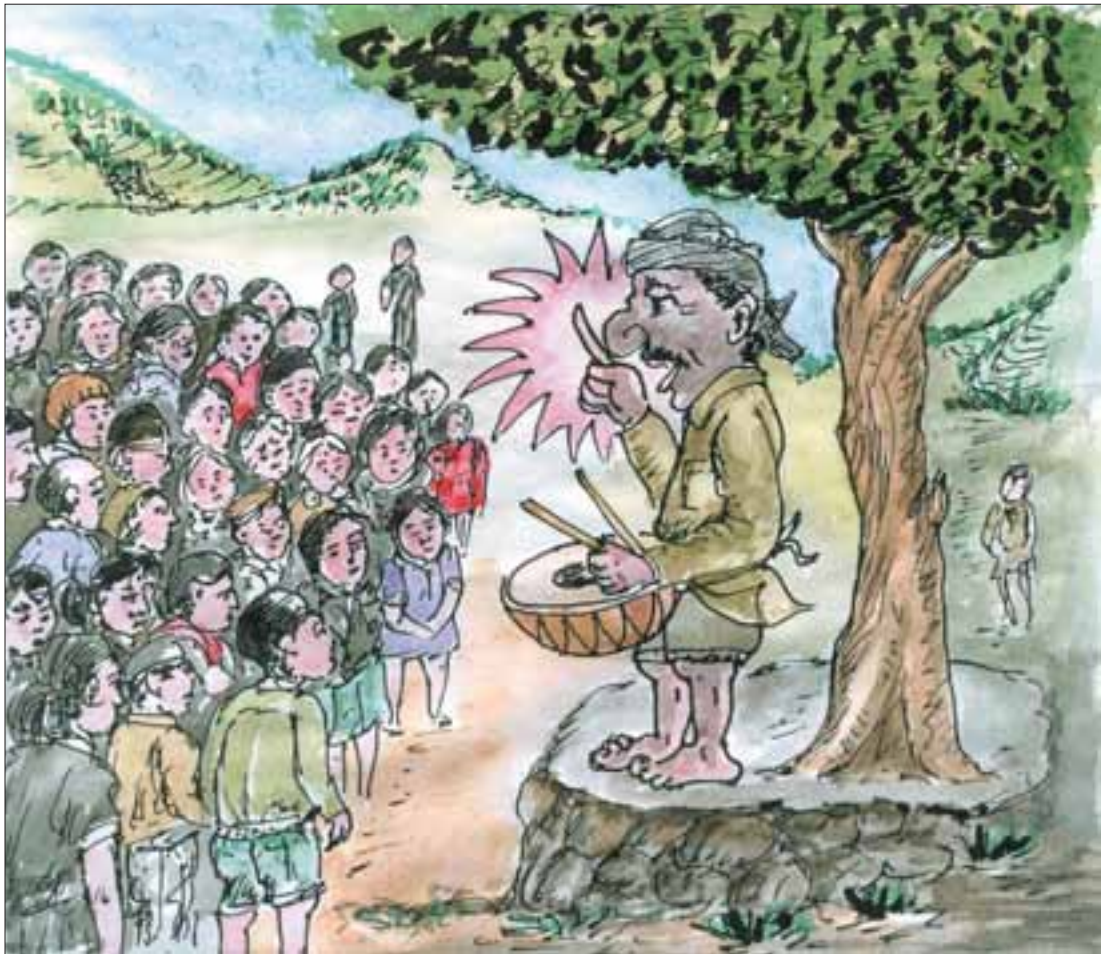
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# Part One

# About Alternative Media





# What are Alternative Media?



Alternative media presentation in Thaiba, Nepal

Imagine the age before television, telephone, and the Internet... Village criers spread the news and people told stories for entertainment. Stories were told around firesides, in family and small community gatherings. They were chanted, recited in rhyme, and illustrated in dances. Families and communities played riddle games and exchanged barbs and wit in instant poetry for entertainment. These folkways were also the ways in which family histories and community customs and traditions were handed down from generation to generation.

In upland communities like Chitral, Pakistan, as well as in some areas in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and other countries, these traditions still exist side by side with more modern means of entertainment. But for most of us, these forms have all but gone, taken over by electronic mass media. **That is why we call them traditional or 'alternative'.** They follow the ways in which our forefathers informed one another and entertained, and they are still alive especially in mountain and other remote areas.

In the remote hill settlements of Nepal, a village crier appointed by the community still performs the task of informing the village of festivities, village assemblies, harvest time, births, weddings, and deaths, the outbreak of disease, irrigation and water use, and other concerns important to the community. The crier goes up to the highest point in the village or the village centre, beating drums to attract attention and delivers the message. This act of informing people is known as 'Katuwal Karaune' or the 'Cry of the Katuwal'.





Alternative media are ways people have conversed with one another for centuries, using song, dance, poetry, drama, puppets, announcements, stories, and poems, and passing on these skills from one generation to the next. They entertain and are familiar and can thus be successful in reaching all members of a community, including non-literate people and marginalised social groups. Alternative media encourage community cohesiveness and can support social mobilisation as the products are developed and owned by the community itself.

In Pakistan, Sufi poetry is still passed on by bards who enjoy a high standing in the community. Similarly, the shepherd poets of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, India, and the ancient storytellers of Nagaland and some villages in the Northern Areas continue to practise storytelling and verse.



Music and poetry evening in Chitral, Pakistan

## Forms of Alternative Media

Typical delivery forms include

- street plays
- stage plays
- puppet shows
- folk songs
- folk dances
- poetry
- radio programmes
- and various combinations of the above



Listening to songs and poetry



# Why Alternative Media?



Information delivered in an appropriate way is important for development. Having useful information and knowledge increases the chances for a better life and opens an important road away from poverty. However, professional presentations, lectures, handouts, meetings, and pamphlets have little or no effect in sharing knowledge with people who have minimal formal education or are not used to this way of acquiring knowledge. Equally many types of communication depend on modern technical infrastructure,

especially electrical power and electronic equipment, which is not always available in remote areas. Alternative media can provide a channel for reaching out to rural and remote communities and especially poor and disadvantaged groups. Even in urban environments, communicating and knowledge sharing based on entertainment can be a welcome and effective way of disseminating information and ideas.

Traditional storytelling, music, dance, and poetry continue to define people and communities in many remote areas - who they are, what they stand for, their life approaches, hopes, and dreams. For the outside world, these forms of communication provide a window by which we view and better understand mountain communities. They help us better understand ourselves, because they provide a bridge and mirror to our past.

In Pakistan, WWF-Pak has been carrying out an environmental education programme in remote northwestern areas. School nature clubs are a big part of the programme. Thirteen of these clubs have been set up in Chitral and Gilgit, with about 340 student members. Club activities include essay-writing, drawing, poster making, storytelling, and poetry contests. All aim at increasing the knowledge of nature in general, and the snow leopard in particular, among youngsters and their parents.

Alternative Media can champion change in remote areas, they help gather the community and introduce better practices in ways that are fun and entertaining and will get the message across better because they are in a language and form people know and understand.



Watching a street performance in Thaiba, Nepal



## Alternative media

- make the process of knowledge delivery independent of modern technology and the availability of technical specialists,
- help reach communities that lack modern facilities and technical skills, such as electrical power, audio and video processing, and telecommunication,
- bring communities together towards common action,
- empower communities that plan, organise, and select alternative media events which include community members in both message preparation and delivery (ownership),
- use formats in which people understand each other and speak a common language,
- work well where people need to be aware of need for information but have no means to access information sources,
- facilitate a dialogue between performers and audience,
- are not expensive and can be adjusted to the subject and environment,
- help to overcome the divide between the digital and non-digital world.



Play about reforestation, Nepal



Play about bees and beekeeping, Nepal

### Are we getting across?

Achieving development depends to a large extent on **communicating the right information in the right way**, not just disseminating handouts to the poor.

People will argue: But we have been communicating! We have been writing reports, publishing books, and sending them out to whoever may need them and whoever we think could use them.

**Getting across effectively means inducing change by providing appropriate knowledge. Are we communicating information the way people understand it, want it, and can use it?**



# The Alternative Media Approach



The major components in the successful production of alternative media events in communities are: broad participation of the community, selection of interesting, locally relevant stories that convey important messages; selection of an appropriate, locally attractive, medium for the event; and use of local materials.

## Participation

Alternative media events should be prepared by local people willing to dedicate their work to the community. The role of external specialists is to provide training and assistance, if needed. Using alternative media means facilitation of community involvement at all levels. Full participation of local people in the entire process of selecting the problem and message, and planning, designing, developing, and delivering an alternative media event ensures ownership of the production and adequate identification of real needs for knowledge. Overall, it enables conceptualisation of a long-term knowledge sharing model for the community.

### Participation encompasses:

- Involving community leaders, local people, and artists who can motivate people and have the flair to convince local people and disseminate information useful for them
- Promoting equal participation of women. Women's participation is vital; they should be motivated to be a part of the team to participate fully in planning, organising and delivering information.

People from Lakhuri Bhanjyang (Nepal) organised a team to discuss safe drinking water issues. Village women were involved in preparing and drafting the street play. As users and providers of water in a family, women know the realities of water resources and manage the water supply at home. The women performed a street play in a local school. In this way they shared their knowledge and transferred messages to their fellow villagers. They were successful in transferring indigenous knowledge on water conservation.



## From message to story

Alternative media events are intended to convey locally important information or knowledge - the message - in a an attractive and entertaining way. Most often the best way to do this is to develop a story, whether brief (as in a song or poem), or long (as in a play or puppet show). Story telling is an old art of disseminating information and sharing knowledge. It is a description of events; spoken words told from one person to another in an effort to communicate a message or a feeling either real or

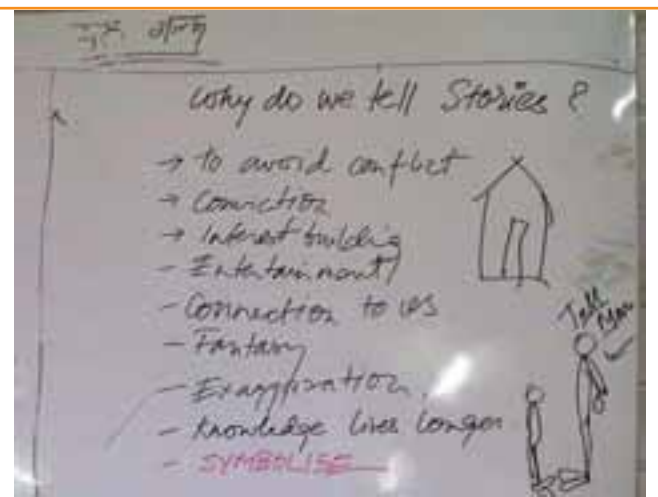
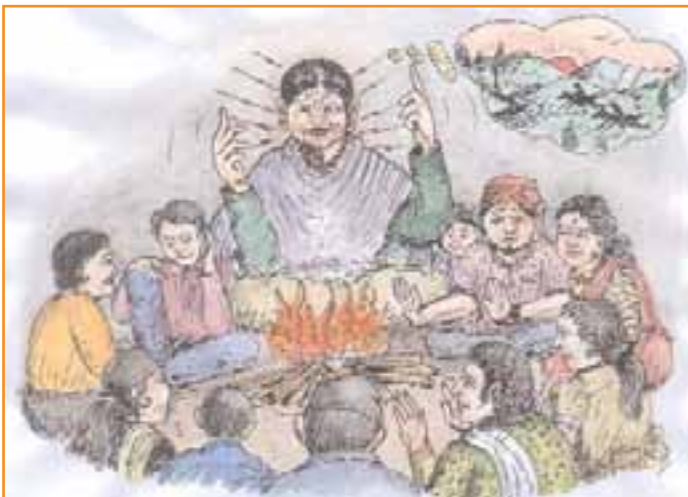




imagined. A story provides important messages that teach the most of important lessons of life. Stories are told from parent to child, from generation to generation. Many have been repeated, adapted and improved from a time when there was no television, no radio, no newspaper, indeed no paper.

Common elements that are found in a story are:

- problem
- struggle
- solution
- lessons learned
- element of surprise
- social messages



## Use of local materials

Whatever might be the message, the tools used for communication should be, as far as possible, local materials. External materials should be used to complement or better illustrate the issues described by local sources. Using local materials helps foster the feeling of ownership of the message and means of delivery. It also means that communities can work independently and spread the approach to others with little further support.



Local instruments give sound effects in Nepal



Symbolic car made with local materials in Nagaland, India

# The Alternative Media Process

The use of alternative media for spreading development messages means a participatory process in which members of the community and external specialists (if needed) work together to produce and deliver messages aiming at empowering the people by making (new) knowledge more widely available. This section presents the main steps in the process.



A key principle in using alternative media is people-to-people communication in which the message is prepared and delivered by members of the community themselves. It may take some time and several meetings and trust building before the right team members are gathered and formed and the potential community partners are persuaded to join in, particularly among marginalised groups used to staying on the sidelines. But their involvement is invaluable, they should in fact be the driving force of the alternative media production. The aim is to ensure that the alternative media project is embraced and owned by the community and not imposed by 'outsiders'.

## Step 1 - Identify needs

The identification of needed messages or knowledge should be a community or group oriented process with as broad a participation as possible from all community members, in particular marginalised social groups. The first, critical step is to find out what issues people are interested in and why they want to know new things. Focusing on local development issues is an obvious starting point in needs analysis - local infrastructure, hygiene, water problems, natural resources management, social issues, economic constraints, gender bias, education, and similar.

Even when promoting a particular issue or development theme - say natural resources or community forestry - it is important to know first where the community stands in terms of awareness of the issue, and to find out the community's own problems and needs. Conduct informal talks and interviews with community members, gather community members for consultations, and relate your advocacy to the findings.



People from Lakhuri Bhanjyang, Nepal, assessing their knowledge needs



Discussing a strategy





### Case study from Chapakharka, Nepal

Villagers, with the help of facilitators, conducted a needs assessment exercise and identified a motorable road leading to the village as the priority need. They realised that if enough people were motivated, they could construct the road themselves. They selected a locally popular medium – the dohri (duet) song – for conveying their message. Dohri is a traditional song form with verses sung alternately by a group of men and a group of women expressing their opinions and trying to 'win' the argument. A

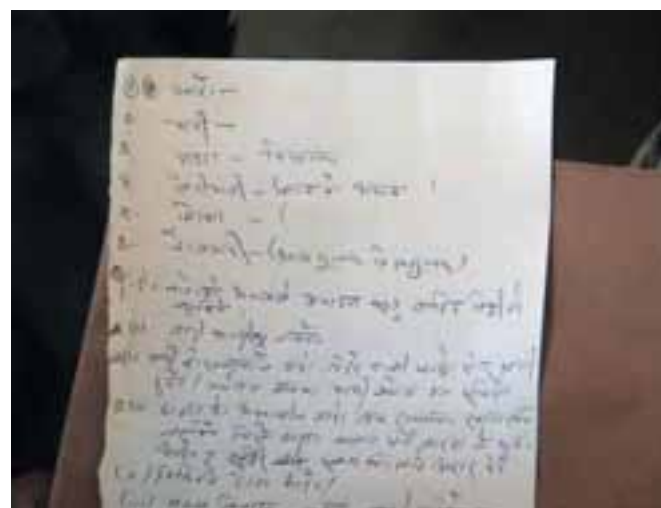


dohri song was prepared and sung at a community event with the aim of motivating the villagers to work together for the road construction. As a result a group of volunteers was formed to provide labour for the construction.

## Step 2 – Select the message

With the issues pointed out, concrete messages that address the needs should be identified and selected according to the interests and capacity of the targeted audiences, and the availability of the local or external knowledge and resources needed to address the issue. It is important to involve the broadest possible sectors of the community in planning the appropriate message/s and next steps, not just in identifying needs.

Workshops on 'Use of alternative media to provide sustainable solutions for transferring knowledge and information' were conducted in Guwahati (India) and Lakhuri Bangjyang (Nepal). The workshops focused on a needs assessment exercise as the first action. Local people participated in the activities that followed.



Messages collected at a workshop





### Step 3 Develop the story

Often the best way to convey a message is to tell a story that illustrates the problem, the solution, and the result of the change. The way in which a story is developed depends to some extent on the medium to be used (see step 4 below), but the main elements remain the same, whether the story is told in song, poetry, a play, a dance - or by a storyteller. The alternative media team members and community participants should sit down together to discuss and decide how the story will unfold, what ingredients it will emphasise, and where it will lead.

Using the issue to be highlighted or message identified, the team members should

- i) develop a storyline: where they want the plot or series of events to take the audience or the community;
- ii) determine or lay down who will be the protagonists - the parties at odds or in conflict. Either realistic or exaggerated characters may be developed. Characters may be just that, or they may be made to represent certain concepts. Sometimes one character can be made to represent or symbolise something such as a despotic landlord, or an unfair law, which creates conflict in the community; a humble farmer can symbolise the community, or the rendering of justice to the underdog;
- iii) agree on what kind of resolution they want, who they want to triumph, and every turn and step of the struggle.

These steps may coincide with the process of collectively writing the story, or the plot may be discussed collectively but one writer, playwright, or storyteller is assigned to do the actual writing. If the latter, then the team will again discuss the writer's product.



Street performance in Bandarban, Bangladesh

## Tips on script writing

After developing a story the next step is to write the actual script. This may be a play script, song, poem - whatever medium has been chosen. The language of the script should be very simple and appropriate for the community. The aim is to make communication more effective by focusing on what helps to draw in an audience. When developing a script, it is useful to bear the following points in mind.

- Actions speak louder than words - promote actions that are possible.
- Blend messages into the story, don't add on afterwards.
- Tell a story - don't preach.
- Think visual - for example, soil can be a character.
- Entertainment - the script should contain entertaining and comic elements, while touching on the community's problems and possible solutions.
- Don't start with the problem statement, introduce it after setting the scene.
- Prepare the script with a particular audience in mind.
- Tell the audience how and why as well as what.
- Have an element of surprise.
- Where possible use music to heighten the experience.



## Storyboard

A storyboard is a means to maintain and keep continuity of issue presentation, and to direct and to visualise a script, especially one that will be presented in action like a play. It is a collection of frames developed in bits and pieces to put the story together for implementation in the selected media. It helps to visualise each character and its role, including dialogue. Participatory development of the storyboard by the group helps all participants to understand the consistency of the story and the messages.

STAGES	DIRECTION	SOUND	DIALOGUE
I A: Enter from 3 and move towards 3	A: Enter from 3 and move towards 3	Ah... Ah... Wh... Wh...	
II A: Move around the circle 3	A: Move around the circle 3 Dance Move	222... 222...	
III T: Come forward start talking with A A: Respond T with surprise expression	T: Come forward start talking with A A: Respond T with surprise expression	Chink... Woon... Tong... Tong... Kak... Kak...	
IV			

Storyboard prepared in Guwahati, India

Essentials to be considered while preparing a storyboard.

- Use minimum props to reflect any character or object to make it more practical when presenting in the field.
- Use sounds, body language, and dialogue to enhance the uniqueness of characters and situations.
- Ensure equal participation of both men and women characters.
- Use locally available materials and props.



## Step 4 - Select the delivery method

The next step is to select the best method to deliver the messages. Typical delivery forms include street plays, stage plays, puppet shows, folk songs, folk dances, poetry, radio programmes, or a combination of any of these.

The next section tells more about different types of alternative media. The alternative media group should decide which type of medium is the most appropriate for delivering the message based on the local traditions, available resources, and message.

Using alternative media effectively means discovering what media the community finds most fun, and avoiding any that are inappropriate. If there are many possibilities, then select the form that best fits the message.



## Step 5 - Produce and deliver the alternative media production

The next section provides some basic ideas about how to produce different types of alternative media 'products'. The most important point to remember is to involve the community as much as possible in production and delivery.



Preparing for a performance, Thaiba



## Step 6 - The alternative media event



A sport, culture and alternative media event in Chitral, Pakistan

The formula of 'edutainment' (education and entertainment) is a key concept often employed in the alternative media approach to knowledge delivery and transfer. The production must be able to grab the spectators' interest and attention and be able to entertain, but it must also bring home the message at the end of the presentation, the actual objective of the alternative media production.

An alternative media event can be a straightforward performance (play, puppet play, story telling, song or dance), advertised in advance or at the time through music, drums, or a 'village crier'.

It can also be packaged as part of a competition, for example, songs and poetry on the environment, or a broader scale cultural event. It can be prepared as a 'stand alone' event, or built into an existing (or created) larger event, for example a sports gathering or market day.

After the production, immediate audience feedback may be obtained by asking the audience what they thought about what they just viewed, what they think of its message/s, and their own ideas on the issues tackled. This feedback can help in the planning of future productions. whether in the same or a different community. It is also good to note down problems and hitches encountered during preparation and delivery of the production to improve future planning.

Ideally, the alternative media team should try to ensure continuity of events and make a long-term programme for educating and entertaining people.



## Part Two

# Types of Alternative Media



# Street Theatre

Street theatre is drama taken to the streets and can be performed anywhere, from a street corner or small alley, to a public fair, park, shopping centre, or recreational reserve, with the minimum of props. It is usually shorter than a formal stage drama (about half an hour to an hour). The objective is mainly to arouse social consciousness and often to protest against injustice through entertainment. The lack of elaborate stage effects focuses audience attention on the message.



Street theatre or drama has a long tradition in Bangladesh and gained momentum after the country's liberation in 1971. Street theatre is generally aired in the open on the street or in the community without a stage. In earlier times different theatre groups performed street theatre all over the country to observe different festivals as well as to voice demands for rights and democracy in terms of crisis. These days street theatre has become a useful communication tool to promote the issues of poor people and has become a part of social development. 'Jatra' is another popular open air form of theatre which literally means 'going on a journey' and combines acting, song and dance delivered in a stylised, oratorical, and exaggerated manner. The beauty of street drama is that it costs less time and labour to produce and reaches to a broader audience than other means, and it can deal with serious themes and deliver development messages without sounding too serious or 'preachy'. Different tools like puppets, comics, and popular folk songs, have been incorporated into this modern drama form. Street theatre is very popular in Bangladesh and many theatre groups in the country observe week long street theatre festivals.

## Step 1

Organise a team and discuss issues of importance and ideas for potential stories illustrating the issues.

## Step 2

Form a team of amateur performers or professionals from the community who are interested to take part in a street play.



Watching a performance in Nagaland



A team of performers from a Nepali village

### Step 3

Prepare a story based on the issues discussed with the community.



#### **Sample story: The marketing story – Mopungchuket village in Nagaland**

The story is based on marketing of wild green vegetables collected from the forest. Two women meet half way towards the village market. One is going to the town market to sell her produce. The other one gives her produce to a middleman. Later when they compare notes, they realise that it would be more profitable for the first one to give her produce to a middleman as she spends money and time on going to the town and loses a day of getting more products from the forest. Since most of the villagers go to the city to sell these products, the participants feel that if the villagers can be convinced to send only one person (a wholesaler) to the market to sell all their vegetables, then they would save labour and money.

### Step 4

Write a script for the performance, and decide who will do what.

### Step 5

Develop a storyboard to assist in enacting the play with the characters in place. Use local materials for props and local instruments for sound effects.



A story about a local bazaar

### Step 6

Rehearse the play with performers using props and organise the performance as necessary for community events.



Practising a street drama in Bangladesh



Rehearsing a play in Nepal



# Puppet Shows



Puppet show in Bandarban,  
Bangladesh

Puppetry is an ancient art with roots in almost every culture. The forms of puppetry are as varied as the people who create them. They can educate as well as entertain audiences and their simplicity allows the audience to hear difficult messages. A puppet can convey concepts clearly using a language of symbol and gesture, humour and character. Puppets can be used to deliver any type of message - social, cultural, economic, political, or environmental - without raising ill feeling. Sensitive issues can be discussed much more easily. Puppets create a world in which one can identify oneself with the character as the drama unfolds.

There are four main types of puppets, with many variations and combinations.

- String puppets
- Shadow puppets
- Glove puppets
- Rod puppets

## Making puppets - simplicity

Puppets do not have to be complicated or expensive. But they do have to be creative and intelligent. They can be moved and can be made from different materials and in any size. However cheaply they have been put together, they all come to life as characters. It's important for puppets to act, not just stand around talking. Let them share jokes, dance around and come alive.

## Character development

To help the community identify with the puppet show, the faces and dresses of the puppets should bear a resemblance to the community members. Farm animals, pets, and folk or traditional characters can help make the show more entertaining. Attempts should be made to weave aspects of local atmosphere and flavour into the story.

A good puppet is not necessarily a pretty puppet but one that performs well for the puppeteer.

– Carmen Osbahr and John E. Kennedy,  
Puppeteers for 'The Puzzle Place'







## Tips for making a puppet

- Puppets should only be made after determining the target audience and choosing the type of story.
- The puppet characters need to be acceptable to the audience and should reflect their customs and dress code.
- If the audience are children, make sure that creating the puppets is part of the fun.
- The size of the puppet will depend on where it is to be used. Puppets designed for outdoor use need to be bigger so they can be seen from a distance. Larger puppets can be made from foam or hard polystyrene material, the lighter the materials the easier it will be to manipulate the finished puppet. However, small puppets are cheaper and easier to dress with fine clothes and decorations.



Characterisation of a puppet

## How to prepare a puppet show

A puppet show can be organised for any community event.

- Step 1** - Organise a team and choose a topic based on the issue
- Step 2** - Identify the target audience
- Step 3** - Develop a story and script based on how, why, and what
- Step 4** - Think of the type of puppet to be used and where it is to be used
- Step 5** - Make puppets using locally available materials
- Step 6** - Use music to give sound effects
- Step 7** - Rehearse, rehearse, and rehearse
- Step 8** - Present the show to the audience



Preparing a puppet show

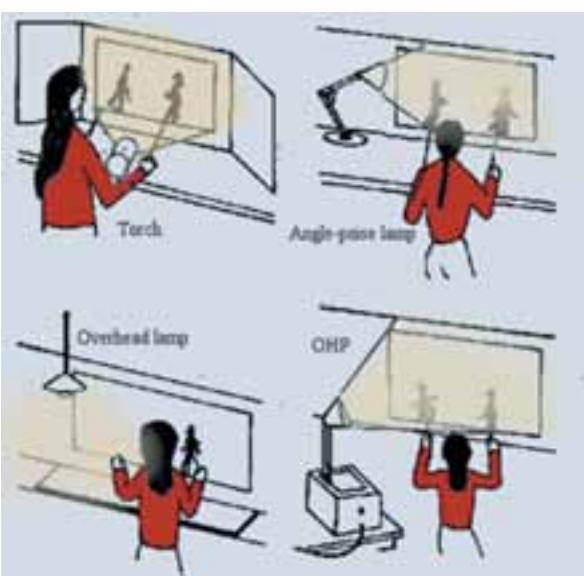
# Shadow Play

The actors in a shadow play are shadows of people, puppets, or cutouts. This way of presenting a story avoids personalising the characters in real terms and is a good option for conveying difficult messages.



A shadow play can be performed by a group of people or by puppets behind a lighted screen. Shadows can be depicted either behind a screen or in front of a screen with enough lights. As in other forms of communication, the show can be a mixture of a drama and a puppet show. The difference is that the activities are shown on the screen.

When the shadows are from people, the actors act in front of the (preferably white) screen and the light system is arranged at such an angle that the shadows are reflected on the screen, making the characters look big and different to their usual selves. Accessories can also be used in such plays as in theatre or dramas. Use of music and sound effects makes the show livelier and adds value to the entertainment.



If a shadow play is performed with puppets, then the shadows of the puppets are projected on the screen from behind and the audience does not see the puppets, which are manipulated in the same way as in an open puppet show. A strong light is required to project the puppets on the screen. Shadow screens must transmit as much light as possible, but at the same time, be opaque enough to hide the puppeteers. The screen also needs to be tight enough so that the puppets can be pushed against it lightly without it sagging, and thin enough to give sharp edges to the shadows.

Shadow puppet play

The show can get boring if the puppets only move back and forth. To overcome this, it is advisable to use different sized puppets at different heights on the screen. This makes the show look as though it has three dimensions and makes for a much more interesting stage picture.

The light brings the shadow puppet alive on the screen. In a rural setting without electricity, oil lamps can be used on bamboo frames between the puppeteer's face and the screen. There are several factors to consider when choosing the light - intensity, spread, colour, and angle. Several light fixtures have been used in shadow puppetry. Probably the most popular is the simple 'clamp lamp'. They are inexpensive and adjustable, but you'll need a good, solid place to clamp the lamp. The angle of the light is also important. Light can come from below, from above, or from the side. Each gives different effects. Light at a bad angle can show all of your control rods and even the puppeteer's heads.

# Songs and Dances

Songs and dances are a major historical form of entertainment in most cultures. Epic stories about historical events were often depicted in the form of cultural dances and songs. This type of entertainment is widely popular and still very alive in rural and urban areas. Songs and dances can be used very successfully to share messages of social importance in communities.



A song and or dance event can be performed indoors or outdoors. In a rural setting, it can be performed as an open air event, which is open to a larger audience. But it can also be performed in a community hall or auditorium.

As for other media, songs and dances need a script for the final product. The major steps are:

- Step 1 -** Needs assessment
- Step 2 -** Selection of message(s)
- Step 3 -** Form a team of people who are willing to participate and have fun. For singing, it is essential to have a group of people with confident and strong voices. For dancing, the group must be willing to learn and rehearse.
- Step 4 -** Prepare the script (song or dance routine) incorporating the message(s) to be delivered. In a dance sequence, emphasise the use of facial expressions and actions, as actions speak louder than words.
- Step 5 -** Rehearse and present to the community.



Singing a two-part 'response' song in Nepal



A woman dancing at a village gathering in Nepal



# Cultural Events

A cultural or sports event is a good platform for sharing social messages and knowledge. Such events can be organised as part of a festival or during fairs where a large mass of people can be drawn together.



Cultural events need to be well organised and coordinated to reach out to as many people as possible. To organise and manage a mass event, the organisers have to be creative and think of a variety of things to include, for example, stalls, performances, sports, demonstrations, and awareness programmes aired through loud speakers. Decoration is important to attract a crowd and make the event feel more organised. Decoration can be done for the display tables and stalls, through a nicely decorated gate, and in other ways.

Many activities can be organised.

- Display tables can be set up for people to share items from other cultures or villages (such as clothing, dishes, pictures, and crafts)
- Food stalls are always important at any event. Local people can be invited to host the stalls and sell traditional food and drinks to the visitors attending the event.
- Performances like dances, songs, poetry recitals, and storytelling can be organised with local issues and social messages for the targeted communities. Each performance should be kept within a time limit to increase entertainment and decrease boredom among the crowd.
- Demonstrations can be shown on any technical matter that could be useful to the community. Likewise, demonstrations can be conducted on any type of art, skill, or training to raise awareness. The idea is to share knowledge and to demonstrate it to the crowd to get the maximum impact.



Combined sport, cultural and alternative media event in Chitral

## Organising a cultural event



- Step 1** - Bring together active local bodies and relevant development practitioners to set up an organising team and develop an agenda
- Step 2** - Identify intermediaries who will participate
- Step 3** - Think of a theme and issues that could be useful to share, discuss, and demonstrate at the event
- Step 4** - Plan activities to be conducted and hosted
- Step 5** - Publicise through word of mouth, local institutions, community leaders, and religious institutions
- Step 6** - Gather people for the event and impart knowledge and information to all levels of society including children, women, and elders. Demonstrate new technologies useful to the community, and organise any form of media display (drama, songs, dances, and so on) to share information on development issues that could be relevant to the community.



A polo game at the sport and cultural event in Chitral

### Technical Demonstration – Biosand Filter Technology

The committee members of the District Council (Chitral) contacted some organisations in the search for a localised solution to the problem of obtaining sufficient clear drinking water. In response, the bio-sand filter, a simple technology made of local materials, was provided to the community by the Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology. The simplicity and importance of the technology was demonstrated practically at a cultural event. The simple apparatus was able to generate clean drinking water from muddy water within a few minutes. The overwhelming reaction from the audience showed how successful the knowledge transfer had been. As a result, the local people invited the community leaders to hold demonstrations in their areas and disseminate this local technology to wider audiences.



# Poetry Symposium



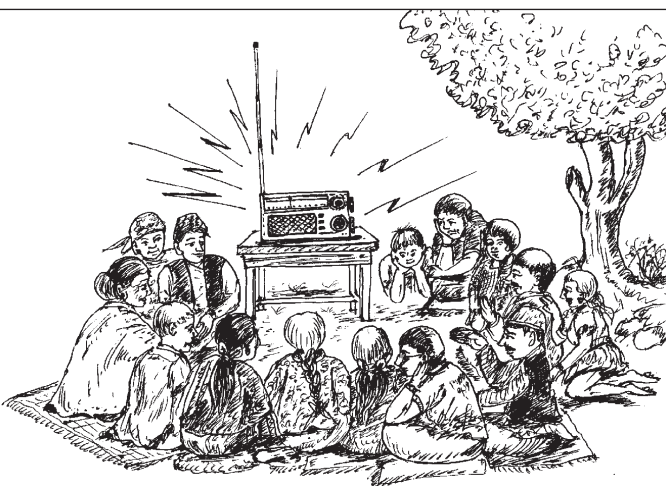
Listening to a poet reciting a poem on environmental conservation in Pakistan

A poetry symposium, also known as a Seerat Conference in Chitral can be a very entertaining and educational way of sharing knowledge and information. Many otherwise unsaid messages can be delivered through poems. In earlier times, poems were well known as a means for exchanging words of love or expressing love for people or nature in a very romantic manner.



A poetry symposium can be conducted by gathering local poets who will be asked to write and recite their poetry on a selected topic.

# Radio



Village radio

Radio is not necessarily a community event. But in many rural areas, local radio stations exist that are targeted to, and may be owned by, local communities.

Thus certain radio programmes can also be considered 'alternative media' in the sense used in this guide, and can be prepared in a participatory way by communities as described for other forms.



Radio can be used to channel information developed with alternative media concepts like plays, poems, and songs. The programmes can be adapted to a community's interests and concerns and can be produced in local languages. As with other alternative media, radio has the advantage of reaching people who do not read or write.





## Postscript

*We find that using alternative media to reach communities can be highly stimulating, popular, and effective. We hope that you will feel encouraged to try more of these approaches in your work, and we would enjoy hearing from you about any activities that you have tried or know of in this direction.*

The ICIMOD-IMCO Alternative Media Team



A fascinated audience in Bandarban, Bangladesh





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ISBN 978 92 9115 073 1