

Gaunle Deurali

Empowering Rural People through Community
Community Communication

Collection of Articles, Research papers and Evaluation
papers regarding the impact of

Gaunle Deurali

Of Nepal

The first rural newspaper of South Asia

Published by
Rural Development Palpa,
Nepal
Since 1993

Request to
All national and international
Development Organizations

It is a SOS call from the publisher of Gaunle Deurali. For some time the paper is run by only three paid staff and honorary editors and reporters. It does not seem possible to continue after July 2006. Therefore the publisher humbly requests the national and international development organizations to support for the continuation of the paper.

For your kind information here are some documents which can help you to understand the importance and impact of this project. Thank you.

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Request/Proposal for Support

DEURALI – Empowering Rural People Through Rural Media

Vinaya Kasajoo

The Problem

Nepal has experienced an information explosion since the advent of democracy five years ago. However, its impact has barely been felt outside the capital city Kathmandu and some of the big towns. Most of the rural areas have limited access to books, newspapers and the electronic media.

The consequence is that information and knowledge regarding health, sanitation, nutrition, environment, family planning, HIV/AIDS, new technologies, income generating opportunities and similar important issues seldom reach rural areas, where poverty is rampant and information is most needed. Lack of information also restricts the active participation of rural people in democratic process.

The Solution

To meet this challenge a local NGO, Rural Development Palpa (RDP) established the Deurali Rural Newspaper project in 1987 to breathe life into the idea of a non-profit non-political rural newspaper in cooperation with the Nepal Press Institute.

With financial support from the Asia Foundation for equipment and operation costs in the start-up period, the first issue of the weekly Deurali newspaper rolled off Deurali's own printing press in December 1993.

Today, Deurali's seven professional staff working together with community-based contributors produces a quality weekly newspaper for individual and institutional subscribers in ten rural districts in Nepal. Deurali has its own computer and modern equipment to produce the newspaper in Tansen, the headquarters of Palpa district, 300 km west of the capital. The idea has become a reality.

Target Group

Deurali is produced for and by the rural people of the Middle Hills of Nepal, a unique geographical area sharing many common problems and challenges along with rich cultural traditions and ethnic diversity.

Hence the name "Deurali", which signifies a traditional rural meeting place found at crossroads throughout the Middle Hills.

A special focal point for Deurali is newly literate adult readers living in remote rural areas, who often have no access to reading material after they learn to read in non-formal education classes.

Objectives



Deurali Sample Issue in English,
Published in June 1995

Deurali is working to dignify rural life and improve the living standard of the villagers with objectives:

- Give voice to rural people and create a forum for the exchange of knowledge, information and experiences.
- Encourage rural newly literate people to continue reading and writing.
- Inform rural people about the development activities in rural areas.
- Expose rural problems to government agencies and NGOs.
- Strengthen democratic practices in rural areas.
- Support the introduction of income-generating activities.
- Inform rural people about appropriate modern technologies and improve and implement indigenous technologies.
- Raise awareness regarding environment conservation and sustainable development.
- Expose rural people and local talent, who are serving their communities in various ways.
- Support women's development.

Content

Some of the topics covered by Deurali in its past issues are: income generating activities, nutrition, mother and child care, birth control, success stories of development projects, information regarding garniture, agro forestry, raising animals, vocational skills, health care, indigenous technology etc.

These topics are presented in simple easy-to-read Nepali language with photographs, illustrations and cartoons.

Empowerment in Action

Our experience has proved that when the problems and feelings of the disregarded, voiceless rural people are printed with their name and pictures they feel empowered. They start to realize that they have a status in the society. They are self-esteemed. They start speaking confidently and begin to make decision for themselves. They start participating in development activities more. Thus it accelerates the process of development and strengthens democracy.

The result is even greater when the rural people, contribute report, stories and article for the newspaper, and participate in it production. Deurali delivers basic journalism to the village based people to enables them to contribute their stories to Deurali. Along with social recognition and self confidence this adds a little extra income to those barefoot journalists.

[Source: Deurali Weekly Rural Newspaper, Sample Issue in English, June, 1995]

Gaunle Deurali: Barefoot Community Journalism in Western Nepal

Arjun Banjade

From: <http://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/gmj/sp06/gmj-sp06-banjade.htm>

Executive Summary

This study is based on (1) a content analysis of the newspaper, *Gaunle Deurali Weekly*, published and distributed by a non-governmental organization Rural Development Palpa, and (2) an in-depth interviews with its editor. The newspaper, a product of barefoot journalism, is used as a platform for local leaders and villagers to express what is important to them rather than being a channel for the government or political elite to push their agenda. Two-thirds of the news items dealt with development issues, and non-development news did not get special treatment in terms of use of accompanying photos or graphics.

Gaunle Deurali truly represented the rural villages in Palpa district and provided equal access and participation to different villages. Moreover, most of the development news was related to soft development issues, mostly covering activities of local organizations and clubs in social awareness programs, instead of physical infrastructure development. Overall, the types of stories, their source, and the language of presentation as well the distribution mechanisms made *Gaunle Deurali* a true community development newspaper.:

Introduction

News media are widely regarded as important tools for national development. However, the way development journalism is practiced in Third World countries has been problematic. A heavy dependence on official sources exists in gathering and presenting development news. Some critics regarded such journalism as the Third World countries' a disguised effort to manage the news content in order to give flattering publicity to political figures (McDaniel, 1986: 167). A quarter century ago, Lent (1978) termed the Asian development news as "government-say-so journalism." Similar arguments are found in the *Manual of Development Communication*, the text that is widely used to train development communicators in Asian countries. It warns that

Development communication in some countries is confused with publicity for government projects. The government as the chief designer and administrator of a country's development plans should rightfully tell people what is being done for them. But development communication is more than that. (Rajasundaram, 1981: 17-18)

Critics argued that development journalism should also present an alternative to official viewpoints. In development news

... the journalist... should critically evaluate and report the relevance of a development project; ... the difference between the planned scheme and its actual implementation; and the difference between its impact on people as claimed by government officials and as it actually is. (Aggrawala, 1978: 200)

Development is a complex phenomenon and development communication is the systematic use of communication for national development (Lent, 1979). Furthermore, how development journalism should be practiced depends largely on how the term 'development' is defined. As Singhal & Rogers (2001) note:

Development is a widely participatory process of directed social change in a society, intended to bring about both social and material advancement (including greater equality, freedom, and other valued qualities) for the majority of people through their gaining greater control over their environment. (p. 33)

Research shows that official sources were most often quoted in the Indian dailies (Shah, 1990), whereas weekly newspapers in rural Georgia devoted less space to development news, emphasized physical facilities development, and rarely quoted government sources (Griswold & Swenson, 1992). Indonesian newspapers published more development news than non-development news and used straight news and features format when presenting development news (Sutopo, 1982). Studies on media ownership and proportion of development news coverage showed that conglomerate-

controlled newspapers covered more governmental news than development news in comparison to independent newspapers (Vilanilam, 1979b).

The newspaper publication in Nepal has a century-long history. The *Gorakhpatra*, the oldest and for a long time the largest circulated newspaper, was started by Rana Prime Minister Dev Shamsher in 1901. Since then the condition of the press has changed with the changing political climate in the nation. However, the content of print media in Nepal is generally heavily dominated by politics.

It was only in the 1980s that development journalism was introduced in Nepal. "It was argued that stories about social and economic development activities could be as interesting as political stories provided they were written in a different and more interesting way. Well-written development stories could inspire people to become more involved in the development process" (Koirala & Bista, 2001). Similarly, Kasajoo would argue that coverage of local activities increases the circulation of a newspaper. "I was a reporter for *Dainik Nirnaya* [Daily Decision] published from Bhairahawa in 1965. The newspaper used to cover mainly politicians or high-profile personalities and national news. I started reporting village news. It increased the sale of the newspaper" (personal communication, 2004).

A good example of a community based development newspaper is *Gaunle Deurali*.^[1] Literally, *Gaunle Deurali* means a meeting place in the villages. Launched with the support of *Nepal Press Institute* and the *Asia Foundation* in 1993, it is a weekly, rural-development newspaper published by a local non-governmental organization called *Grameen Bikash Palpa* [*Rural Development Palpa*] (RDP). Based in Palpa district, some 310 kilometers west of the capital city of Kathmandu, RDP's professional staffs work with community-based contributors, mostly barefoot journalists, to produce the newspaper.

Gaunle Deurali consists of development news, covering a wide range of subjects -- from HIV/AIDS to crops and environment, to campaigns against alcohol and drugs. It focuses on both the success and failure of farming patterns and plantations. *Grameen Bikash Palpa* received an offset press from the *Asian Foundation* and periodic financial assistance from *MS Nepal*. Financially, it is more or less self-sufficient. *Gaunle Deurali* mobilizes the community members in planning, reporting, editing and publishing the newspaper. Its 1,500 copies are distributed in different rural villages in Palpa district as well as to different organizations in 50 of Nepal's 75 districts. The newspaper has been used by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in promoting adult literacy. Published every Wednesday, the 16-page newspaper is valued at Rs. 5 [U.S. 7 cents] per copy (Meghraj Sharma, personal communication, 2004).

The following paper on this product of barefoot journalism is based on an in-depth interview with the editor of *Gaunle Deurali* Weekly and a content analysis of the newspaper. The study sought to assess the content of development newspaper published for rural people in terms of the news source, development issues, as well as the importance accorded to various news items.

Since *Gaunle Deurali* is a community development newspaper, it was assumed that the newspaper heavily publishes development news. It was also assumed that emphasis accorded to stories would be reflected in presentation of longer stories (with a higher number of words) and frequent use of relevant photos or graphics. Since *Gaunle Deurali* is purely a community development newspaper, an association between the development stories and the appearance of villagers or local leaders, instead of experts, was assumed.

For the full text of the article please visit:

<http://lass.calumet.purdue.edu/cca/gmj/sp06/gmj-sp06-banjade.htm>

About the Author

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The other print media

The national print-media scene in Nepal is dominated by Kathmandu-based Nepali language newspapers. Since the social field in Nepal is dominated by party-based politics, one need not be surprised if the subject par excellence of these newspapers has been politics too, narrowly defined along party lines. As I discussed in one of my earlier essays in this column (18 April 1997), while market sales might not justify their total investments, these newspapers sustain themselves also from the social capital that accrues to them as influential media doing the political journalism dance.

In this scenario, questions arise regarding the viability of print media from which neither toe the political journalism line nor muster any social capital for their sustenance. What do these non-mainstream newspapers cover? Who are their readers? How do they sustain themselves financially? I shall try to answer these questions by using the example of an 'other' print media that I am most familiar with: *Deurali*, a weekly rural newspaper published by *Gramin Bikas Palpa* from Tansen, Palpa. I was in Tansen when its first issue was published on 27 April 1994. Since then, I have followed its career from a distance. Veteran journalist Vinaya Kumar Kasajoo edited it for the first three years and since April 1997, this responsibility has shifted to Meghraj Sharma.

What's in it?: "*Deurali* will run completely according to the interest of village people. It is a newspaper where news about villagers and discussions regarding how to improve village life will be printed." Thus ran the mission statement in *Deurali's* first editorial. When its 150th issue was published on 23 May 1997 we could say that, from a production point of view, *Deurali* has been successful in fulfilling its mission.

Deurali's coverage is extensive in terms of subjects.

Deurali's coverage is extensive in terms of subjects. Apart from news, four general subjects are covered well in its pages. Issues related to public health, such as AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, contraceptives, rabies, eye camps, gastro enteric diseases and women's health are covered in an informative manner. The second general area can be entitled 'development' coverage in which successful and innovative features of *bikas* work related to agriculture, rural electrification, education, environment, community forestry, informal credit networks, drinking water schemes, biogas, and schools from various places are highlighted.

The third general area of coverage consists of feature articles highlighting success stories of village-based individuals who have experimented with various occupations, farming styles and small industries. The fourth area of coverage provided by *Deurali* has concerned women and gender issues. It has not only featured the stories of women who are successfully engaged in income-generating occupations outside their homes, but it has also covered women's activism on various issues. These have included their campaigns against alcohol, and for legal rights on various issues.

While the topics covered in *Deurali* are also covered by 'national' newspapers, two things distinguish the former. First is the village-centric approach to reporting. Hence we get local details that are hard to find elsewhere. The second distinction is its style of writing which makes its contents accessible to anyone who can read the Nepali language.

Who's reading it?: *Deurali* has a weekly circulation of about 1200 copies in about 50 districts of Nepal. Letters-to-the-editor indicate that *Deurali's* most dedicated readers come from the districts of Palpa, Syangja, Gulmi, Baglung, Arghakanchi, Rupandehi, and Nawallparasi. Bulk distribution by I/NGOs working in the field of adult literacy has also dispersed this newspaper to various regions of Nepal.

To extend the set of its readers and the areas about which news is printed in this paper, *Deurali* has promoted the idea of readers' clubs whereby reading groups are sent a free copy of *Deurali*. In return each group has to send at least one news report to the paper

every month. According to editor Sharma, *Deurali* currently has 152 such clubs (in more than 30 districts of Nepal) out of which 100 are very active. Although most of them are located in the west and central west regions, some such groups exist in Dhankuta in the east and Bardiya in the west.

Without more research into its geography of distribution, it is hard to be very specific about just who has been reading *Deurali*. Apart from members of the reader's groups, it is most plausible that neo-literates, school students, teachers, business people, NGO personnel, and women activists constitute the bulk of its readers. That *Deurali's* specialty coverage is appreciated by its hardcore readers can be deduced from many letters-to-the-editor, one of whom described it thus: "No speech of the leaders, no (false) promises of the ministers. Just the subjects of genuine villagers, their stories and their suffering. Their photos and their language."

Apart from functioning as an informative, consciousness-raising forum, it can be said without doubt that *Deurali* has given birth to new communities of readers who are testimony to important and vital changes taking place in Nepali society through the field of communication.

What's its financial viability?: *Deurali* was initially supported by a grant from the Asia foundation. The money thus received was used to buy necessary hardware for printing. A USAID grant helped its production subsequently. Profit made from the use of the press for other printing jobs was supposed to be used to support the paper.

When *Deurali* entered the third year of its publication in late April 1996, outside financial support ended. At that point the price was raised to rupees five from rupees two. This price does not cover the average cost of production of each copy which Sharma puts at rupees twelve. The presence of other offset printing press in Tansen, Butwal and Pokhara has meant that the press does not get enough other printing jobs to actually subsidize the production of *Deurali* as originally estimated.

Hence if the market is the yardstick by which we should judge the viability of *Deurali*, then it is a losing proposition. Going by the experience of the past three years, the editorial team does not expect a huge growth in returns from subscriptions and sales. In the past, some staff members have worked without pay or at half-pay but editor Sharma added that it was not possible to continue to expect such sacrifice from them. Without outside support, he stated that *Deurali's* publication will have to be stopped soon.

For 'donor' support: According to Sharma, the annual support needed by *Deurali* with a 10 member production staff is about three lakh rupees. It is clear that our rural economy cannot, by itself, support such endeavors for some years to come. Since Nepali political and financial urban-based elites have done close to zero work when it comes to establishment of endowments to support such rural-based activities, the necessary money to support them will continue to have to come from foreign donors for some years into the future.

While sustainability has been a pet theme within the *bikas* world in recent years, there has little differentiated analysis of what projects or works should be expected to pay for themselves in the short-term and what should receive a relatively long-term support. *Bikas* money flowing into Nepal today signifies that the country itself is not market sustainable even after about 50 years of foreign aid. Hence to expect a rural newspaper like *Deurali* to pay for itself within the first three years of its existence is outright unfair.

If one considers the fact that the cost of a donor-supported single 3-day seminar in one of Kathmandu's hotels (encompassing at most a few hundred of Nepal's elites) could match the annual support sought by *Deurali* and if it is important to bring about a slow revolution that will ensure that each rural-based *Deurali*-reading Nepali is as equal as a Kathmandu-based smooth operator, then *Deurali* and similar projects need further support from donors. This is not an argument for eternal support for Nepali endeavors in non-mainstream media. Instead it is a call for those with *bikas* money to wake up to the fact that unless such endeavors are supported in the medium-term of about 10 years or

more, they are bound to die. And when that happens it will be proved that short-term disbursement priorities and prestige portfolios of support are still the way through which donors ensure their own sustainability, despite the *bikas* rhetoric of the year being 'people's empowerment' and 'strengthening democracy through the media.'

Source: The Kathmandu Post, Daily, 13 June 1997

Village weekly *Deurali* celebrates 100th issue

On 17 May 1996 a small milestone of sorts went unnoticed in the Kathmandu-based 'national' print media. The 100th issue of *Deurali*, a weekly village newspaper published from Tansen, Palpa, under the editorship of Vinaya Kumar Kasajoo, was brought out on that day. This writer was fortunate to be in Tansen for the publication of its first issue on 27 April, 1994, amidst a small ceremony. Recently, I chanced to read through all of its back issues. In a national print media scene dominated by party-based Nepali language political journalism, the 16 page *Deurali* is a much needed alternative print forum.

Kasajoo, of course, is well-known journalist. Having competently edited another Tansen-based weekly, *Satya* for more than twelve years, nobody really doubted that *Deurali* wouldn't last these two years. A production of the NGO Gramin Bikas Palpa, *Deurali* was initially supported by a grant from the Asia Foundation. The money thus received was used to buy necessary hardware for printing. A USAID grant contributed to its production more recently.

Since the past April outside support has ended and in an effort to be financially solvent, the price of the paper has been raised from RS. two to Rs. five. Profits made from the use of the press in other printing jobs are also to be used to support the paper, currently with a paid staff of ten people.

In his very first editorial, Kasajoo explicitly stated the purpose of the paper with the words: "*Deurali* will run completely according to the interest of village people. It is a newspaper where news about villagers and discussions regarding how to improve village life will be printed."

While the topics covered in *Deurali* are also covered by broad-sheet dailies and other weeklies, two things distinguish the former. First, of course, is the village-centric approach to reporting providing local details that are hard to find elsewhere. For understandable reasons, most of the coverage is of the western region close to Tansen. Second is the language used in the paper. The text is written in simple Nepali that can be easily read by anyone who knows the alphabet.

The fact that *Deurali's* specialty coverage is appreciated by its readers can be deduced from many letters-to-the-editor. One reader describes it thus: No speech of the leaders, no (false) promises of the ministers. Just the subjects of genuine villages, their stories and their suffering. Their photos and their language.

To extend the area of news covered in the paper, *Deurali* has promoted the idea of Readers' Clubs in which groups of at least five people (preferably half of them women) are sent a free copy of *Deurali*. In return, each club sends at least one news report to the paper every month. IN a telephone interview editor Kasajoo informed this writer that there were more than 130 such clubs now, about 75 of them in Palpa District alone. The rest are located in 30 other districts of Nepal, from Dhankuta in the east to Bardiya in the west.

Deurali's coverage is extensive in terms of subjects. However, apart from news, four general subjects are covered well in its pages. Issues related to public health, such as AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, contraceptives, rabies, eye camps, gastro enteric diseases and women's health are covered in an informative manner. The second general area can be entitled 'development' coverage in which successful and innovative features of *bikas* work related to rural electrification, adult education, environment, community forestry, informal credit networks, drinking water schemes, biogas, and schools from various places are highlighted.

The third general area of coverage consists of feature articles highlighting success stories of individuals who experimented with various occupations, farming styles and small industries. These articles discuss the life of various village based men and women

– small farmers, artisans, erstwhile housewives – and suggest why they have been successful in their endeavors. Apart from inspiration, these stories contain "how to do x" variety of practical advice. Fruit and vegetable farming, animal farming and other subjects have been discussed regularly.

The fourth, and to my mind, the most impressive general area of coverage provided by *Deurali* has concerned women and gender issues. It has not only featured the stories of women who are successfully engaged in income-generating occupations outside their homes but also covered women's activism on various issues. These have included their campaigns against alcohol (a phenomenon that is slowly taking the shape of a national campaign) and discrimination with respect to property rights and traditional rules regarding the performance of post-parental-death rituals by sons only.

Deurali has also covered women's fight for the reproductive health and rights. Work related to the movement against mental and physical violence of men against women is also highlighted. In the editorial and elsewhere, women's rights as human rights have been regularly championed.

Given the predominant number of Magars living in the areas, some articles in the past have also been published in The Magar language. While none have appeared in more recent issues, coverage of Magar ethnic activities is regularly provided. Also featured are stories related to *lahures* – long-distance laborers – from the area. A page of comics is dedicated to child readers.

Letters-to-the-editor indicate that *Deurali's* most dedicated readers come from the districts of Palpa, Syangja, Gulmi, Arghakhanchi, Baglung, Rupandehi, and Nawalparasi. According to Kasajoo, there are about fifty subscribers in India. Nepalis from Palpa who work as far away as Poland also receive the paper. It is also sold via vendors in the above mentioned western districts. Bulk subscriptions by INGOs and NGOs working in the field of adult literacy have also increased the number of circulation.

Deurali deserves to be read by a wider circle of readers. It provides an insight into a Nepal that is somewhat different from that portrayed by the party-based, often Kathmandu-based, irresponsible variety of political journalism. Many cheers to *Deurali*, and may there be more hundredth issues.

Source: The Everest Herald, 13 June, 1996

Alternative Media for Rural People

- *Vinaya Kasajoo*

Men have achieved unimaginable development in the field of information technology (IT) during last two decades and unpredictable things are going to happen in the coming century in the field of IT. Any body with a telephone and a computer can have access to every kind of information of the world. Actually the 21st century is going to be the century of information. But what is there in the IT stuff for the vast majority of the people who live in the Third World and specially in the remote and rural areas?

In the rural areas of Nepal, schoolbooks of the children, labels and wrapper on the commercial goods and posters and pamphlets during election are the only printed paper the people usually see. If knowledge is the fuel for change, i. e. development, where is that fuel for the majority of the people of Nepal?

During last four decades the world has spent a lot of resources for the development of the people, the community and the nations. But the development goals have not been achieved and they are changing continuously. Now it has become quite clear that whatever the target of the development, it cannot be achieved without empowering the people. There is no doubt that knowledge or information is the key to empowerment and communication is the vehicle to transfer that knowledge.

Situation of Mass Communication in Nepal

After the reinstallation of multi party system in Nepal in 1990 the constitution has guaranteed various democratic rights to the people. Among those fundamental rights the right to information and freedom of expression are significant rights. But there is no practical means to utilize those rights on the part of underprivileged people, most of whom live in rural areas.

Although Nepal has experienced an information explosion since the advent of democracy, its impact has barely been felt outside the capital city, Kathmandu and some of the big towns. Most of the rural areas have only limited access to books, newspapers and the electronic media. As a result people are deprived of basic information such as health, sanitation, environmental conservation, population, control of AIDS, new technologies, income generation activities and other important issues which are quite important for the development of the people. Lack of information also restricts the opportunity for rural people to play an active role in democracy.

In the hill areas the traditional village-criers are still there. Wells and waterspouts were the regular meeting places of most of the villagers. But after the villages got tap water through polythene pipes their regular meetings were hindered. There is no easy way to know what is happening in the local neighborhood.

Problems of Mass Media

Mass media in Nepal have not been able to play the role of changing the life and mind of the people it should have done. It has not been considered as an effective agent of development. Most of the newspapers seem to be mouthpiece of political parties. The government controlled electronic and print media and the newspapers published from private sector also are targeted to the elite urban readers. There is very little for the rural and new literate people. Broadcasting fails to reach the majority of the rural poor. Massive illiteracy prevents the print media from reaching the people. Limited transport facilities and adverse geographical conditions restrict the free flow of newspaper and radio transmission. Linguistic and ethnic diversity also limits the usefulness of centralized mass media.

One of the reasons why people are poor is because they lack access to information about ideas and technologies, which could improve their lives. Dissemination of information is the greatest challenge for the development of the rural poor. To meet this challenge many efforts have been started in Nepal during last five years.

Efforts to meet the challenge

To meet this challenge a local NGO, Rural Development Palpa (RDP) started a weekly rural newspaper Gaunle Deurali in 1993 with the financial support from The Asia Foundation for equipment and operational costs for three years.

Today RDP's eight professional staff working together with community-based contributors, mostly barefoot journalists, produce the newspaper, which is distributed in more than 25 districts in Nepal. It has a modern computer-equipped newspaper office and offset printing press in the remote hilly district of Palpa, 300 km. west of Kathmandu.

Gaunle Deurali is produced for and by the rural people of the Middle Hills of Nepal, a unique geographical area sharing many common problems and challenges along with rich cultural tradition and ethnic diversity. A special focus point for Deurali is new literate adult readers living in remote rural areas, who often have no access to reading material after they learn to read in non-formal education classes.

Objectives

Deurali aims to dignify rural life and empower rural people through rural media, by fulfilling the following objectives:

- To give a voice to rural people and a forum for the exchange of their information, opinions and experiences.
- To encourage rural new literate people to continue reading.
- To inform rural people about development activities in rural areas.
- To expose rural problems to government organizations and NGOs.
- To strengthen democracy in rural areas.
- To support the introduction of income-generation activities.
- To inform rural people about appropriate modern technologies.
- To inform rural people and exchange their ideas about improving indigenous technologies.
- To raise awareness about environment conservation and sustainable development.
- To expose rural people who are providing community service.
- To support the development activities of women and unprivileged people.

Empowerment in Action

RDP's experience with rural newspaper has proven that when the problems and feelings of disregarded voiceless rural people are printed they feel empowered. They realize they have a place in their own community and the democratic decision-making process. The feeling of self-respect and self-confidence is increased.

The result is even greater when rural people can produce their own newspaper articles, respond to others views, and participate in the production of the newspaper, with the support of training courses and other activities such as Barefoot Journalism Training.

Barefoot Journalists

RDP felt the need of a new breed of journalists who are dedicated to change the fate of rural people and give voice to the underprivileged. Deurali needs journalists in rural and remote areas who can report the down to earth, the real people, their problems and their aspirations. Development workers, schoolteachers, students, farmers, health workers, housewives, members and staff of Village Development Committee with a basic knowledge of journalism can be reporters.

RDP conducted the first such training in June-July, 1992. The performance of the first batch inspired RDP for producing more barefoot journalists. And the process of producing barefoot journalists through training programmes is continuing.

Community Broadcasting and Community Audio Tower (CAT)

Since Nepal has a very low literacy rate print media cannot play vital role in educating the people in comparison to broadcast media. Sale and distribution of printed material has limited scope due to the difficulty in transportation and low purchasing power. Therefore community broadcasting can be very useful in the remote areas of the country. In this situation Community Audio Tower and Community Broadcasting Programmes, if planned, managed and handled properly, can server the purpose of empowering and changing the rural people.

In Nepal there is provision to give license for the private radio station. Most of the development-oriented organizations and some of the Village Development Committee have visualized the community broadcasting as an effective media for the empowerment/ development of the mass. In this respect an audio tower can be a pre broadcasting exercise in the rural areas. Such systems have been successfully conducted in other counters such as Philippines, Shrilanka, Thailand etc. for the development of the community. In some villages of Nepal too such audio towers are under operation. They are totally controlled and managed by the community.

Objectives of the Community Broadcasting

Community Broadcasting is not a commercial broadcasting. It encourages a high level of participation of all the sectors in a community in the ownership, operation and control of the media. The target is the community as a whole including all the minorities, underprivileged class of the people. It is run/ handled not by the professional journalists, but by rural based barefoot journalists, farmers, mid level technicians based in the village, local representatives of the people, village development workers, local artists, school teachers and students most of whom are volunteers. They decide what to broadcast how to produce program and they make rules and regulations to operate it efficiently.

Main features of the program:

- Local news
- Local views/debate on issues of local and national interests.
- Interviews of Local and Outsider experts
- Highlighting local talent, skill, technology and expertise.
- Local advertisements, which can generate small income and make the station sustainable.

- Any information which help to promote the life, dignity and happiness of the community.
- Main focus on health, nutrition, sanitation, drinking water, conservation of natural resources, prevention of AIDS and other diseases, family planning, human rights, democracy etc.

Because Radio Broadcasting is the cheapest form of Mass communication it lends itself to 'grass roots' use by communities of interest – geographical, cultural, political. Its potential is to be run by and for local communities, special interests and followings.

Madi Valley Community Broadcasting Project

It was started as a pre-broadcasting exercise for the real broadcasting in the future.

Seven sub committees and one main committee operate it. All the members of the committee are women. They are from different classes, castes and ethnic groups. The result has been enthusiastic. Similar Programmes are being run in other districts too and the number is increasing.

Support from MS Nepal

MS Nepal, a Danish organization for international cooperation started supporting RDP in 1994. The support has been in many fields, but its main target is to increase the quality of the content of the newspaper through journalism training. Other activities of the support targeted to increase the circulation and strengthen the organization through staff development. Several initiatives have come out of this support including different kinds of training such as barefoot journalism training, specific journalism training for women, basic photography training for rural people and graphic design training, book keeping training, repro camera operation training for the staff. RDP's management assignment, readership survey and trial subscription of Deurali for MS cooperation partners are some other forms of cooperation with MS Nepal.

Madi Valley Community Broadcasting Project is a significant support from MS Nepal. MS Nepal has supported RDP with an expert on radio journalism. It has also provided funds for feasibility study of FM Broadcasting in the valley and equipment and training for the project.

Similar efforts for alternative rural media are started in some other districts too. After the successful operation of Deurali The Asia Foundation supported to publish another rural newspaper Gaun Ghar in Dang district. The World View Nepal has been conducting training for audio towers. Recently Nepal Press Institute also has undertaken training programmes in broadcasting. But the number of such initiatives is quite insufficient in view of the great mass of the rural people. The world which has been divided into 'Haves and Have-nots' are again being divided rapidly into Information-rich and Information-poor. There is a big challenge for new communication technology to fill this gap and alternative media can help to face this challenge.

(Published in TODAY National and International Magazine, A Special Issue on Nepal & Denmark Relations; Vol. 16, No. 2 Apr/May 1998)

Empowering Rural People through Communication

Vinaya Kumar Kasajoo

In the rural areas of Nepal, schoolbooks of the children, labels and wrappers of the commercial goods and posters and pamphlets during election are the only printed paper the people usually see. If knowledge is the fuel for development, where is that fuel for the majority of the people of Nepal?

Although Nepal has experienced an information explosion since the advent of democracy in 1990, its impact has barely been felt outside the capital city, Kathmandu and some of the big towns. Most of the rural areas have only limited access to books, newspapers and the electronic media. As a result people are deprived of basic information such as health, sanitation, environmental conservation, population, control of AIDS, new technologies, income generation activities and other important issues which are quite important for the development of the people. Lack of information also restricts the opportunity for rural people to play an active role in democracy.

The constitution has guaranteed various democratic rights to the people including the right to information and freedom of expression. But there is no practical means to exercise those rights on the part of underprivileged people, most of whom live in rural areas.

In the hill areas the traditional village-criers are still there. Wells and waterspouts were the regular meeting places of most of the villagers where they communicated every day. But after the villages got tap water through polythene (hard plastic) pipes their regular meetings were hindered. There is no easy way to know what is happening in the local neighborhood.

Mass media in Nepal have not been able to play the role of changing the life and mind of the people it should have done. It has not been considered as an effective agent of development. Most of the newspapers seem to be mouthpiece of political parties. The government controlled electronic and print media and the newspapers published from private sector also are targeted to the elite urban readers. There is very little for the rural and only literate people. Broadcasting fails to reach the majority of the rural poor. Massive illiteracy prevents the print media from reaching the people. Limited transport facilities and adverse geographical conditions restrict the free flow of newspaper and radio transmission. Linguistic and ethnic diversity also limits the usefulness of centralized mass media.

Efforts to meet the challenge

One of the reasons why people are poor is because they lack access to information about ideas and technologies, which could improve their lives. Dissemination of information is the greatest challenge for the development of the rural poor. To meet this challenge some efforts have been started in Nepal during last five years.

Rural Development Palpa (RDP), a local non-governmental organization has started a weekly rural newspaper Gaunle Deurali in 1993 with the financial support from The Asia Foundation for equipment and operational costs for three years.

Today RDP's eight professional staff working together with community-based contributors, mostly barefoot journalists, produce the newspaper, which is distributed in more than 25 districts in Nepal. It has a modern computer-equipped newspaper office

and offset printing press in the remote hilly district of Palpa, 300 km. west of Kathmandu.

Gaunle Deurali is produced for and by the rural people of the Middle Hills of Nepal, a unique geographical area sharing many common problems and challenges along with rich cultural tradition and ethnic diversity. A special focus point for Deurali is only literate adult readers living in remote rural areas, who often have no access to reading material after they learn to read in non-formal education classes.

Objectives

Deurali aims to dignify rural life and empower rural people through rural media, by focussing the following activities: Give voice to the people and provide a forum for the exchange of information, opinions and experiences; encourage only literate people to continue reading; involve people in development activities; expose rural problems to government organizations and NGOs; support the introduction of income-generation activities; inform rural people about appropriate modern technologies; and exchange ideas about improving indigenous technologies; strengthen democracy in rural areas; raise awareness about environment conservation and sustainable development and support the uplift of unprivileged people with main focus on women.

Empowerment in Action

RDP's experience with rural newspaper has indicated that when the problems and feelings of disregarded voiceless rural people are printed they feel empowered. They realize they have a place in their own community and the democratic decision-making process. The feeling of self-respect and self-confidence is increased.

The result is even greater when rural people can produce their own newspaper articles, respond to others views, and participate in the production of the newspaper, with the support of training courses and other activities such as *Barefoot Journalism Training*.

Barefoot Journalists

RDP felt the need of a new breed of journalists who are dedicated to change the fate of rural people and give voice to the underprivileged. Deurali needed journalists in rural and remote areas who could report the down to earth, the real people, their problems and their aspirations. Development workers, schoolteachers, students, farmers, health workers, housewives, members and staff of Village Development Committee with a basic training of journalism could do that..

RDP conducted the first such training in June-July, 1992. The performance of the first batch inspired RDP for producing more barefoot journalists. And with the support of MS Nepal the process of producing barefoot journalists through training programs is continuing. It has become a main source of people's news and views.

Community Broadcasting and Community Audio Tower (CAT)

Since Nepal has a very low literacy rate print media cannot play vital role in educating the people in comparison to broadcast media. Sale and distribution of printed material has limited scope due to the difficulty in transportation and low purchasing power. Therefore community broadcasting can be very useful in the remote areas of the country. In this situation Community Audio Tower and Community Broadcasting Programs, if planned, managed and handled properly, can serve the purpose of empowering and changing the rural people.

Since the government has started issuing license for private FM radio station, some of the development-oriented organizations and Village Development Committees have visualized the community broadcasting as an effective media for the empowerment/ development of the mass. In this respect an audio tower can be a pre-broadcasting exercise in the rural areas. It is a simple combination of microphone, taperecorder, amplifier and loudspeakers. The loudspeakers are mounted either on a pole or on a tall tree. Such systems have been successfully conducted in other counters such as Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand etc. In some villages of Nepal too such audio towers are under operation.

Objectives of the Community Broadcasting

Community Broadcasting encourages a high level of participation of all the sectors in a community in the ownership, operation and control of the media. The target is the community as a whole including all the minorities, underprivileged class of the people. It is run/ handled not by the professional journalists, but by rural based barefoot journalists, farmers, mid level technicians based in the village, local representatives of the people, village development workers, local artists, school teachers and students most of whom are volunteers. They decide what to broadcast how to produce program and they make rules and regulations to operate it efficiently.

Main features of the program are local news, views/debate on issues of local and national interests, interviews of local and outsider experts, highlighting local talent, skill, technology and expertise, local advertisements, which can generate small income and make the station sustainable, any information which help to promote the life, dignity and happiness of the community with main focus on health, nutrition, sanitation, drinking water, conservation of natural resources, prevention of AIDS and other diseases, family planning, human rights, democracy etc.

Because Radio Broadcasting is the cheapest form of mass communication it lends itself to 'grass roots' use by communities of interest – geographical, cultural, political. Its potential is to be run by and for local communities, special interests and followings. Madi Valley Community Broadcasting Project is one of such pilot projects in Nepal. It was started as a pre-broadcasting exercise for the real broadcasting in the future. Seven sub committees and one main committee operate it. All the members of the committee are women. They are from different classes, castes and ethnic groups. The result has been enthusiastic. Similar programs are being run in other districts too and the number is increasing.

Gradually it is becoming clear that such community level media projects can play an important role for the dissemination of information in the rural area and the empowerment of the rural people.

(Danish Translation of this article was published in POLITICAN May,13(?), 1998. Special Supplementary Issue on the occasion of MS and PEN International conference (May 15-17) in Louisiana, Copenhagen.)

Article printed in MS-Revy by Peter Lowe

The inspector was totally surprised when twenty six women swept in through the door and squatted down on the floor of the rural police station to hold a press conference about why a pregnant woman was beaten while she was in police custody.

The women were school teachers, housewives, and students, who were participating in a recent Workshop for Women Journalists in the remote Palpa district of western Nepal – the first rural training for women journalists in the country.

Nepal has experienced an information explosion since the advent of democracy two years ago. However, the impact has barely been felt outside the Kathmandu Valley where most of the media and other information services are concentrated. Most rural areas are still in the dark ages as far as access to books, newspapers and audio-visual equipment.

The workshop for Women Journalists was conducted by two women journalists from Kathmandu. When they heard about the plight of the pregnant woman they decided to use it as a training exercise for the students and went to the police station.

One of the trainers Harikala Adhikary, a Nepalese journalist who will be visiting Denmark later this year, explained what happened next: "We asked the questions while the students looked at the face of the police and wrote down the answers.

"The police were sweating and at first they acted as if they were in a hurry to go somewhere else. Some of the students started to throw their own questions...."

Later the trainers told the participants in the workshop that they should be aware of these types of cases and be ready to be media activists.

According to one of the trainees, Ganga Kasajoo – a human rights activist and some-science teacher, the commitment of the journalism trainers to getting the truth of the case touched her heart and made her feel she had to do something through journalism.

"Though men understand the serious problems women are facing they don't expose it in their writing because if they do they will have to face the problem themselves and do something about it," Ganga said.

"Before this workshop I had the same feeling about women but I could not express that. I had to ask my husband to write about the problem, but now I myself can write about this case, to show local women how partial our law is against women."

The Workshop for Women Journalists was arranged by a local NGO Rural Development Palpa, which has recently started the first community newspaper in Nepal. It was supported by MS-Nepal.

A special bond of solidarity developed between the rural women and the women journalists from Kathmandu who conducted the 10-day workshop. On the last day they decided to go together to visit the victim, Ana Kumari, even though her village Pipaldanda was far away.

It was already growing dark when the women reached the village and crowd gathered around them in the moonlight as they waited outside the headmaster's house for him to return from his school. When the headmaster saw the crowd on the road near his house he tried to run away but a villager caught him, Harikala explained.

"He didn't agree that he had caught the woman three or four times to have sex with her, but he was obviously nervous and frightened."

The villagers started a hot discussion with the headmaster. He started to cry, and said *guhar, guhar* (help, help). Harikala told him: "Why are you being such a fool. I am a journalist and I am also an eye witness. Don't try to create any drama. You have the

position of a headmaster, so you can also give justice to the poor woman. It is better to end the case here."

The scattered crowd of villagers and women journalists formed a circle and everybody's voice was heard. The village leaders, who had already had four meetings to discuss the cases, started by taking the side of the headmaster. They offered Ana Kumari Rs. 25,000 if she would leave the village. But others disagreed.

Near midnight the villagers formed a ghau sabha, a traditional village court, to collect everybody's opinions. It was decided that the women should enter the headmaster's house and he should give her permanent shelter.

The villagers stopped a night express bus so the women journalism trainees could return to Bartung, which they reached at 2.45 in the morning, tired and hungry. There was still two hours walk to go before the group reached Tansen.

"It was getting cold when we started to walk, and we were all only wearing our summer clothes, so we started to sing, and the moon was with us. We reached our destination just as the moon was disappearing," Harikala said.

Since then Ganga has written an article about Ana Kumari's case, which has appeared in the community newspaper, and other participants in the workshop have also written articles about other topics.

Box Article

When Ana Kumari was just 9 year old she was married to a 38 year old man who was already married to her aunty. She became a child-widow before her menstruation started.

Then she lived alone for 25 years.

The reason for the marriage was her aunty was childless. It was believed that if a man took a second wife then his first wife would have a child.

For the last two years she has been sexually molested by a local high school headmaster, with the result that seven months ago she became pregnant.

Her "illegal" pregnancy created a scandal in the village. The local leaders called four meetings to try and solve the problem before they took the headmaster and the woman to the district police office. Both were detained, pending the outcome of the police investigation. But the headmaster was soon released and he returned to the village with his influential friends.

Ana Kumari said she was beaten with a stick by five male police men one after another because she would not change her statement that the headmaster had made her pregnant. She had blue welts from the beating on her head, stomach and legs.

A group of women journalists trainees heard about the case and came to the police station to interview the police inspector. Later they went to the village to discuss the case with the villagers.

The villagers decided to resolve the case in the traditional way, whereby a woman is regarded as married to a man as soon as she becomes pregnant with his child. It was decided that the headmaster should take Ana Kumari into his house.

Now the headmaster, who already has one other wife, is treating Ana Kumari like a household servant instead of a wife. She can no longer earn her own livelihood as an agricultural laborer as she did before.

In addition, Ana Kumari has lost her belongings and the house she had from her former marriage. If a woman marries a second time, all property from her first marriage becomes the property of her first husband's family. Her former relatives have put locks on the door while they fight over who should have her house. She has lost her freedom,

her belongings, her house, and the right to earn her own income, to become the servant of the man who sexually molested her. Such can a woman's life be in Nepal.

Photo Caption:

SHOUTH HEADS NORTH: Harikala Adhikary is a sub-editor with the Nepalese government-owned Gorkhapatra daily newspaper, and a central committee member of the Nepal Journalists Association. She will be visiting Demark later this year for a meeting of the journalists from Denmark and other Nordic countries with South Asian journalists.

Catching the Pen

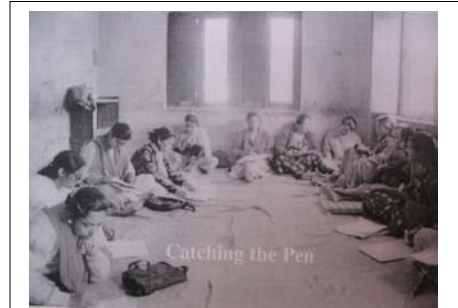
Vinaya Kasajoo

Can some one who has just become literate be a journalist? This question struck me when I entered a classroom where some women of the Women Literacy and Income Project had gathered for one week of journalism training.

"Sir, it is very hard for me to write. Can I stay in the class? If not I would like to send my daughter," a lady enquired.

Two other ladies joined her, "We have just finished a six months' long literacy class. Will it be useful for us to take this training?"

Is it not amazing to hear such questions in a journalism training class? Nari Bikas Kendra (NBK), Women's Development Centre, Nepalgunj, had called eighteen women from various Income Generating Groups to join the journalism class. The women had been reading Deurali, a weekly rural newspaper, for about one year. Now they wanted to write for Deurali themselves. Some of them had already tried to contribute stories, and two or three of them had succeeded. Now they wanted training to write for Deurali.



Women Barefoot Journalism class at Bal Mandir in Nepalgunj

Photo: Vinaya Kasajoo

Theirs was a genuine cause. It matched the basic concept of barefoot journalism and Deurali's aim to empower rural people by giving them a voice.

I had heard about illiterate but trained village women midwives who could give basic, medicine and vitamins to patients by looking at the shape, size and colour of the packet or bottle. But I'd never heard of a barely literate journalist!

But I did not want to disappoint them. So I answered, "Your hand writing is not the problem. The main thing is that you should be able to express your ideas without any hesitation. I hope you will be able to do it after you finish of this training. Let us begin."

I was not sure how to produce barefoot journalists from this, group, about half of whom were just literate. I suggested they bring some more participants from their village who had got some school education to join them in the class.

Next day there were four new faces in the class. One of them was Dipa, the daughter of the lady who had asked me whether she could send her daughter or not. Dipa and the other three new women had some school education.

When I asked the class to give me the homework which I had given them to do the previous day almost all of them spoke in a single voice. "We do not have time to read and write at home. All of us are housewives and have to do our cooking, washing and other jobs."

Some of them had to lock up their goats and hens to come to the class. One had come with a child. They had different problems and the main problem was that the male members of the family did not cooperate with them in doing their household jobs. Some even joked that they would become journalists and write about their husband's bad habits!

I was amazed to see Dipa had done the homework even though she was not present the previous day. She said, "My mother remembered your lesson well and she told me everything she learned yesterday."

This was inspiration for me! Of course people who can't read and write can understand, think, talk and work. They can also handle audio media. They can conduct interviews, lead discussions and handle electronic equipment. At the same time they may learn to read and write with the inspiration of their work.

We worked together for six days, from 11 a. m. to 5 p. m. listening and doing exercises, as well as discussing their experiences and problems.

On the final day we had a small meeting. The participants expressed their views about the training. I was quite excited and satisfied when Danikala, who could hardly write, said, "This hand which caught the handle of a *haisya* knife and spade can now catch the pen and we can write for ourselves. We have been able to express our views. We've got a new voice. We thank our teachers and NBK for this chance!"

Now, when I receive the bundle of mail I look for the dispatches from Nepalgunj. On average, I receive one every day. Those who did well in the class are sending less than those who could not do well in the class. Is it not surprising?

[Source: EKCHHIN, MS Newsletter, March 1996, published by MS Nepal, Danish Association for International Cooperation in Nepal.]

The information revolution in Nepal

From the well to the magazine

From Nepal's mountainous countryside it is far to the capital, Kathmandu, geographically as well as culturally. Therefore Vinaya Kasajoo publishes his paper Deurali for the people of the countryside, not for the people of Kathmandu.

Interview by **Asa Hammar**

Vinaya Kasajoo is a journalist, and visited Sweden in October together with a group of colleagues and fellow countrymen to learn about Swedish journalism. His country has recently converted from monarchy to democracy and there are lots of things that must be built up from the start in the Nepalese society. A free press for example.

That is a task that Vinaya Kasajoo has taken in very seriously, but also set about to in a slightly different way.

Together with his wife he prints and publishes the magazine *Diurali* once a week in the Palpa district, where he lives.

Deurali is a non political magazine for the provincials in Palpa.

Huge Gaps

Vinaya Kasajoo is a short man with a lot of integrity. He visits Arbetaren's editorial office an ordinary Tuesday, dressed in a correct costume and a traditional richly coloured cap.

We sit down for a talk. He speaks distinct English delivered in hesitating, thoughtful sentences.

He talks about the distances between the people in his country. "Most of the villages in our district have no roads", he says, "You have to go there on foot."

The last year has brought what Vinaya Kasajoo calls an explosion of communication to Nepal. In spite of that it is more difficult than ever to overcome the gaps between different people, social groups and between countryside and city.

"A town-dweller today can talk to someone in Japan on the telephone, but not with a villager in his own country."

In the villagers there also used to be a well, where everybody went to get water. It was a natural meeting-point where people discussed and shared news with each other.

"Now 65 percent of the people have access to their own running water. And of course that is good in a way. But now there is nowhere to gather and speak to each other. Therefore we need a new method to communicate."

And may be the magazine Deurali is such a new meeting-point. The name means exactly meeting-point.



Caption: *Vinaya Kasajoo also worked as a journalist during the years of monarchic dictatorship in Nepal. Once he printed a song about women's freedom, ended up in custody for a month and lost his passport. Now he's been publishing the magazine Deurali for two years, to give the provincials a voice.*

ARBETAREN, weekly, Stockholm, Sweden, 28 Oct. – 3 Nov, 1994.

Deurali is printed in a thousand copies. But its message reaches many more.

"Indeed only one third of the people in the village can read. But people are reading the magazine for each other," Vinaya Kasajoo says.

Young Democracy

Nepal has been a monarchic dictatorship in many decades. After a short democratic break-through in the late 1950s, royal autocracy was introduced again in 1959. During the 1980s the demands for democracy increased and when the Berlin wall fell in 1989 the Nepalese went out in the streets and called for an end of the dictatorship. In 1990 the dictatorship gave up and three years ago free elections were held for the first time in the history of the country. It was the centre party Nepali Congress that took over power following a close election victory over the largest communist party. After a turbulent summer new election has been called to mid-November and there are many who believe that the United Marxist-Leninists will win this election.

Since 1990 there is a certain extent of democracy and freedom of press. The changeover to democracy has resulted in a down explosion of magazines.

"But they are all in the capital and in the big cities," Vinaya Kasajoo says. "They have a discriminating tone towards the rural population."

According to Vinaya Kasajoo even the democracy has failed to reach the small villages in the mountains. There, the local leaders still decide. And they have taken advantage of the new grants for road construction and other things that the new government has set aside.

"If a road is to be built in the village, they make sure it passes by their houses. And they seize cement and pipes and sell on to others, without letting the villagers know about it."

About these things Vinaya Kasajoo and his colleagues write in the magazine, but in guarded terms. The villagers are afraid; nobody wants to be exposed with their name when it comes to criticism of local authorities.

Barefoot Journalists

It is Vinaya Kasajoo, the publisher of the magazine, who decides what shall be written and then prints it in his little printing office in the city of Tansen. The magazine is financed by the Asia Foundation.

But those who write in it themselves come from the villages. They are school teachers, nursing staffs, students that have been taught by Vinaya Kasajoo. A kind of barefoot journalists that live among the people they write about.

"Last spring we had a course for housewives and female teachers. We also want the women to make their voices heard through *Deurali*," Vinaya Kasajoo says in his distinct English.

The language in the magazine is dialectical.

"I want it to be written in the words that the rural people use. The gramatics too must be their own."

A couple of pages are also written in the minority language *Magari* by people belonging to the Magar community.

Not all of the articles contain criticism of the village little bigwigs. In the edition that Vinaya Kasajoo brings to show me, there is an article about a young boy who went to India to get job, and who later on returned to the village, provided land and started to cultivate it. A female writer takes up the environmental problem with the chemical

pesticides used by the villages on their fields. Then there is an interview with an old man about his life. And, under pseudonym of course, an article about the human rights and which organizations that are working for them in Nepal.

"When people are seen in the magazine they feel they mean something, that what they say and do is important. Then they also dare to speak in front of others."

Nepal has a cast system just like in India, even though it has not the same importance as in the big neighboring country. The women that belong to the low casts of course have the lowest status.

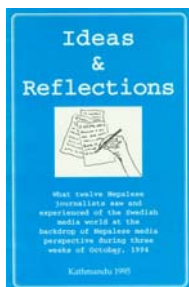
"I interviewed a couple of low cast women who sewed garments at a little factory," Vinaya Kasajoo says. At first they were afraid that I was doing something illegal since I asked them to tell me about their lives. But then they started to talk anyway. One of them told me how she was driven away from her home by her husband when she started to work. Now she is independent and earns her own money."

And one can imagine that it is something very unusual that a poor woman can make her voice heard in such a public arena as a magazine.

[Source: An Interview by Asa Hammar, published in ARBETAREN, weekly, Stockholm, Sweden, 28 Oct. – 3 Nov, 1994.]

Kathmandu holds the grip

Vinaya Kasajoo



After the restoration of multi-party democracy in Nepal in 1990 the trend to publish newspapers got a boost. However, most of them were from Kathmandu, the capital city, where modern printing facilities are also concentrated. People living outside Kathmandu, mainly in rural areas, have no adequate access to books, newspapers and other reading materials. Moreover, whatever printed materials are available; they do not provide contents reflective of rural socio-economic and cultural environment. The materials targeted to the elites living in the select few urban centres in the kingdom. There may be one excuse for this that is massive illiteracy in the rural areas. But the literates and neo-literates in the rural areas, whose number is steadily increasing, find no reading materials to sustain their interest and retain their skills of reading and writing. Mass media in this country are, thus based to cater to the urban elites instead of providing a resource material for education and information to the benefit of the people of all walks of life.

The following figures are an evidence of the disproportionate distribution of newspapers in the country:

Number of Newspapers registered in Nepal 722

Number of newspapers registered in Kathmandu 429

(Dailies – 61, weeklies – 339, fortnightlies – 29)

Of the 61 dailies only 12 are regular among the 339 weeklies about 20 are regular

According to the Department of Information and the Press Council Nepal only 14 of the 47 dailies, registered outside Kathmandu in different zonal and district headquarters, are published regularly.

Among 220 weeklies registered outside Kathmandu, only 67 are regular. Most of these are published from those urban centre which are situated in Terai area.

The situation obtaining in the Dhanusha district is clarified by the following figures:

Newspapers registered regular

Dailies	7	2
Weeklies	41	27
Fortnightlies	7	3

In fact, these figures represent for the cases obtaining in other Terai districts as well. But when we look at the figures of circulation and quality of the printing, layout and content it is quite disappointing.

Another Terai based town, Biratnagar, enjoys the greatest number of paper registered outside Kathmandu. There are 19 dailies 52 weeklies and seven fortnightlies registered. But the number of regular newspapers published from Biratnagar is little bit better than those of the papers brought out in Dhanusha.

The factors contributing to media centralization trend in Nepal can discussed as follows:

- a) Technical aspects – Almost all the papers outside the capital are printed in letter type treadle press. This is an obsolete technology which is quite time consuming and giving poor quality output. It is no possible to print quality pictures/photographs.

- b) Professional aspect – Quite a small number of professionally trained journalists are working outside Kathmandu. The journalists working in the peripheral areas are deprived of opportunities for exposures and trainings in the field of mass communication and journalism. In fact, training opportunities for journalist are rare. Whatever there are, they usually grabbed by the Kathmandu based publications.
- c) Unequal information flow – The district headquarter and urban centres provide outlets for Kathmandu based newspapers and publications. They are better in printing quality and they cover diversified contents. The newspapers in the periphery sometimes draw upon the contents of the Kathmandu based newspapers instead of covering the topics of local interest and importance. Ironically, they tend to reproduce the national and international news which the national newspapers and radio have already covered in a more effective way.

The problems facing the newspapers in peripheries are multifaceted. Among them receiving information and tailoring them to the interest of rural readers is crucial. Associated with the problems are the inadequate communication infrastructures like lack of transportation, absence of modern communication facilities and prevalence of outmoded technology.

In the light of above problems local radio can be an appropriate solution. But no attention is paid to develop radio into a media to suit local needs and imperatives.

When we look at the regional or local media in Sweden the situation is different. The national, regional and local level media in Sweden are equally developed. There is no centre – periphery divide. Local newspapers are developed, favored and subscribed by the local readers. No largely circulating national newspapers published from Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmo can take place of local newspapers. Readers in Sweden find on the local newspapers issues around their vicinity covered and discussed. The local paper circulation in Sweden is high and they can sustain on their sale proceeds and returns. Since the Nepalese and Swedish socio-economic and development context are different, we can not fully replicate Swedish system in our environment. But we can draw a lot of inspiration from Swedish experience and emulate to give new dimension to adapt the journalism to the needs of local populace.

[Source: ***Ideas and Reflections***, Reflections of twelve Nepalese journalists on the Nepalese media world with references to the Swedish media during the seminar, Mass Media and Democracy, October 3 – 23, 1994, Gothenburg, Sweden. Edited by Mukti Rijal and Badri Paudyal. Published by Seminar Group, Mass Media and Democracy. First edition June 1995.]

The hands that plough

Vinaya Kasajoo

Hello! How do you do?

Today I'm in the mood to tell you something very frankly.

First of all I would like to thank you for loving Deurali and writing your views.

This 'Thanks' of gratitude is not similar to that western type of 'Thank You' which is often just a formality to show how well mannered you are. This 'Thanks' is from the core of my heart. Because when I receive your letter and hear something from you I get inspiration. I'm very glad that our readers who live in the village have accepted Deurali as their own paper and are eager to help it. When I'm writing this letter it is 8'o clock in the morning. I've just finished milking my cow. It's cold. My fingers are tired (stiff) from pulling mild from the nipples of the cow. Therefore my writing has become zigzag.

This has made me think of some of my friends who teach in the village schools at the same time they plough the field with their own hands.

How do those hands which plough the rice field feel when they write on the black board of a class room or when they write with a pen on paper! I want to ask: Are you writing zigzag too?

Whether your hands' writing is good or bad does not matter much. The main thing is their respect for work or labor.

However, there are some villages neighboring the town of Tansen where the young men and women hesitate to carry their loads of shopping, and daily commodities on their shoulders.

It is obvious that the destiny of our land will be drawn by those hands which till the land and writ with chalk and pen with the same enthusiasm.

Thanks!

An editorial from **Deurali Rural Newspaper** translated and published in MS Nepal Annual Report 1995.

Evaluation of Gaunle Deurali
by Media Services International

1
Chapter

Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

Some changes that have taken place in the fields of information, communication and education, since the re-establishment of democracy ten years ago, have shown signs of significant and long-term impact. New experiments are being tried in the fields of publishing and broadcasting.

The 1991 Constitution of Nepal provides right to information as one of the fundamental rights of the people. Both the government and civil society appear to be working together in this effort to make right to information a foundation of democracy and part of the democratic culture.

The Nepalese media is presently playing a positive role in making the work of the government more transparent, in assisting social and economic development programmes, in making the elected representatives of the people more responsible to their electorate and by strengthening the people's voice by exposing irregularity.

In spite of the positive developments in the field of communication indicated above, the disparity between Kathmandu and the rural areas does not appear to be less.

In fact, the disparity in the field of information and communication appears to be growing. All the newspapers regarded as Nepal's most powerful publications are produced in the Kathmandu valley. In spite of this, some positive developments can easily be seen.

One important example is that of Rural Development Palpa (RDP). RDP's main objective has been to use the various means of communication to carry information, knowledge and education to the doorsteps of the people to bring about positive change in their lives. It is with this objective that RDP launched its village newspaper "Deurali" in 1993.

It was found that RDP did not limit itself to the publication of Gaunle Deurali but rather extended its area of concern to establish by initiating such innovative ideas as the Deurali Readers Clubs and Training of Barefoot Journalists. Both these concepts appear to be successfully working in many villages.

The most noteworthy aspect of the work of RDP and the publication of Gaunle Deurali is that this is the first establishment and operation of such a unique institution and its equally unique product.

An attempt is made in the present impact study to emphasize these unique qualities of both RDP and its programmes as well as their role in the Nepalese context.

Methodology

Interviews, meetings, focused discussions on relevant topics and a questionnaire survey were used to receive information from all those whose opinions were deemed necessary. Prior to this, the following documents and working procedures were reviewed.

1. The Constitution, background information and by-laws of RDP were reviewed
2. Arrangements relating to the Readers Club
3. Proceedings relating to the Training of Barefoot Journalists
4. All published material in the various issues of Gaunle Deurali and the reporting pattern of journalists who sent reports on a regular basis
5. The Partnership Agreement between RDP and M.S. Nepal, Danish Association For International Cooperation

In the course of the study, all those who are directly related with the editing and publishing of Deurali village newspaper, regular contributors, readers, members of the Board of Directors and members of the Readers Club were met. The names of those that were met and the questionnaire used to acquire information from these are attached in the Annex.

In order to assess the opinion of MS Nepal regarding its long-standing relationship with RDP and the prospects of continuing this relationship, the Director of MS Nepal and other concerned officials were also interviewed.

In the course of these interviews, Tansen, Palpa District's headquarters, Tahun of Easter Palpa and Galyang of Syangja were also visited.

Chapter 2

Rural Development Palpa (RDP)

Rural Development Palpa (RDP) has been working since 1987. Its main objective has been to empower the underprivileged rural people, particularly women, by supplying essential information and knowledge through rural newspaper, community audio tower and adult literacy programmes. RDP's publication Gaunle Deurali, a weekly newspaper, in regular publication since 1993, is appreciated as a unique and useful rural newspaper, the first of its kind in the South Asian region.

RDP is a non-profit, non-government organization. It is based in Palpa, Tansen, a hilly area 300 km. west of Kathmandu. It was established in 1991 with the aim of supporting the overall development of the rural areas of Palpa and neighboring districts. In an area where there are not so many non-government organization, the achievements of RDP are well-recognized in Palpa.

With empowering rural people through community/alternative media as its mission, RDP appears to have played a key role in developing the alternative media and using it effectively.

The following has been enumerated by RDP as its principal goals:

- * To produce Gaunle Deurali Weekly newspaper for the rural people living in the Mid-hill area of Nepal.
- * To conduct Barefoot Journalism Training throughout the country to empower people, enable them to produce their own community media and write for Deurali.

RDP mentions that its overall objectives are to give voice to the underprivileged people living in rural and remote areas, to inform them about development activities, to encourage new literates to continue reading, to support women's development, to raise awareness about environment conservation, to introduce and support income generating activities and to strengthen democracy in rural areas.

Its main Activities are identified as:

- * To publish Gaunle Deurali Weekly Rural Newspaper and introduce essential community media
- * To assist partner organizations to enable them to operate their own community media.
- * To produce a cadre of Barefoot Journalists who can expose the rural problems and empower rural people.
- * To establish a Rural Communication Training Centre to:
 1. Support Community Based Organizations, local NGOs and other development organizations to operate their own community media
 2. Provide Training on Rural/Community communication
 3. Provide Production Facility to other organizations to produce their own training/educational materials, reports, newsletters, magazines etc.

Chapter 3

Partnership Between MS Nepal and RDP

The relationship between MS Nepal and RDP dates back to 1994 when the two organizations came into contact for the first time. Since then, a series of mutually beneficial activities have been implemented through different partnership programmes in phases.

The main purpose of the partnership was to support the development of RDP as an independent and sustainable NGO, so that it can achieve its objective of empowering the underprivileged rural people through participatory communication media.

The development objective of the MS-RDP partnership project appears to be to help the underprivileged rural people to acquire and use knowledge and awareness in solving problems related to environmental degradation, health, poverty, illiteracy, prejudices (particularly on the grounds of sex, ethnicity, and caste) and lack of human rights.

After the successful completion of the first project (June 1996 to June 1997), a Self Evaluation Workshop was conducted in order to assess the achievements made during the project period and also to look critically at the challenges and constraints being faced by RDP in implementing the project.

In the same manner a PRA Workshop was conducted during the transition period in order to acquaint the RDP staff and executive board members about the importance of adopting participatory tools in development and also to strengthen the relationship between the staff and Executive Board members.

As an outcome of the LFA workshop it was decided that the future project would focus on the three main interventions, namely: a) Institutional Development/Human Resource Development for RDP staff, b) Coordination and Networking and c) Strengthen and Improve the Deurali Magazine/ Continue implementing the Barefoot Journalism Training.

A second phase partnership project was developed for a period of one and half years, from June 1998 to Dec. 1999. It was decided that after the completion of the second phase

partnership a Self Evaluation workshop facilitated by an external resource person would determine the feasibility of continuation of the Partnership in future.

The third phase of the programme has been developed for a period of 10 months with the main focus on (1) institutional capacity building of RDP and (2) strengthening of Deurali magazine, and barefoot journalists training through new methods and modalities. This phase of the programme was shortened just to continue some of the previous activities while an impact assessment would be carried out in order to review and refine the previous modalities. With the outcome of the impact study, it was anticipated that MS and RDP, in future, will be able to jointly enter into a new phase of partnership with greater management efficiency and new modalities of participatory rural media programmes for community empowerment.

MS Nepal and RDP are organizations which have many common objectives. MS Nepal is an international organization working to promote people-based development in a spirit of international understanding and solidarity while RDP is an NGO based in Palpa and working to raise the status of the rural poor and disadvantaged communities. Both the organizations have similar experiences in their partnership programmes and have been able to make visible, positive changes in the lives of their target population.

The core policy principles of the MS programme in Nepal appears to be to strengthen development by the people, mainstreaming gender and disability, environmental conservation, sustainable development and promotion of pluralism. The thematic approach that will be used while working with all the principals are capacity building and advocacy. Two other goals seem to be capacity building and advocacy; while the former entails empowerment of the poor and disadvantage the latter seeks to promote democracy, human rights and international understanding. MS Nepal seeks also to serve as a cultural meeting point to foster cross-cultural understanding and solidarity among people from the North and the South.

MS Nepal started its program in 1986. it aims to support development in Nepal through partnership with like-minded organizations that involves people's participation. MS Nepal will according to their new policy paper focus on cluster placement in Western, Mid-western and Far Western Regions of Nepal.

Considering the stated goals of the two organizations, RDP and MS- Nepal appear to have a have common vision for alleviating rural poverty and establishment of sustainable human societies. The partnership's common vision is also to promote the principles of development by the people, environmental conservation, gender sensitivity and sustainable development through participatory rural media programmes.

The partnership agreement is focused on social mobilization through the barefoot journalists training and publication of Deurali newspaper to strengthen the process of empowerment of the poor section of the community so that the villagers themselves will be capable of determining their own well-being and future.

This partnership agreement also strives to encourage involvement and participation of the community for strengthening democracy and equitable development in order to promote pluralism and gender sensitivity.

Chapter 4

Gaunle Deurali - Brief Introduction

Gaunle Deurali is produced for and by the rural people of the Middle Hills of Nepal, a unique geographical area sharing many common problems and challenges along with rich cultural tradition and ethnic diversity. A special focal point for Deurali is the large number of new literate adult readers living in remote rural areas, who often have no access to reading material after they learn to read in non-formal education classes.

RDP has identified the main objectives of Deurali newspaper as:

- * To give voice to the rural people and create a forum for exchange of information, opinions and experiences.
- * To encourage the new literate population to continue reading.
- * To inform the rural people about development activities in the villages
 - * To bring to the attention of the government and NGOs the rural problems affecting the lives of the people.
 - * To strengthen democratic practices in rural areas by creating an environment of open discussion and dialogue and involve the people in the decision making process.
- * To support the introduction of income-generation activities.
- * To inform the rural people about appropriate modern technologies.
- * To exchange ideas about improving indigenous technologies.
 - * To raise awareness about human rights, conservation of the environment and sustainable development.
- * To highlight the work of the rural people who are providing community service.
- * To support the development activities of children, women and unprivileged people.

* To promote dignified rural life.

While carrying out the impact study three principle areas of concern were examined: the distribution pattern of the newspaper, the readership and its impact on the population.

A. Distribution

Area of coverage: It was evident that Gaunle Deurali is distributed mainly in the rural areas of Palpa district and the different localities of Tansen bazaar. It was found that 50% of all printed copies are distributed in Tansen and the rest of Palpa district.

After Palpa it is in Syangja that Deurali is most widely distributed. Rupandehi and Nawalparasi districts of Lumbini Zone also have a relatively large number of readers of Deurali. There are 205 Deurali Readers Club where the newspaper is read on a routine basis (see Annex). These clubs are located in 18 districts of the country. In addition to these there are regular subscribers in 25 districts. These districts are: Kailali, Bardia, Banke, Dang, Pyuthan, Arghakhanchi, Gulmi, Baglung, Myagdi, Parbat, Kaski, Lamjung, Syangja, Palpa, Rupendhi, Nawalparasi, Chitwan, Gorkha, Makwanpur, Kathmandu, Dolakha, Sindhuli, Okhaldhunga and Dhankuta. There are also many subscribers of Deurali weekly in a number of cities in India who read the newspaper with a lot of interest. People from Palpa and neighbouring districts who go to India to work subscribe to Deurali in order to read about the villages in their districts.

Some institutions were found using copies of Deurali as post-literacy material in their classes. Redd Barna Nepal, Women's Development Section, Women's Welfare Committee Palpa and Aguwa Nepal, Nawalparasi are worth mentioning.

Target readers of Gaunle Deurali: "The rural literate living in the Mid-hill region of Nepal" have been identified as Deurali's target group. Even among these, Deurali seems to be giving special importance to those engaged in agriculture and the women. The underprivileged, those that are lagging behind in society, down-trodden and those suffering from various prejudices appear to be the main focus in news coverage for Deurali.

Even though this is the case, the intellectual community in the urban area and those engaged in teaching and other professions were also found to enjoy reading Deurali.

The neo-literates constituted another target group for this publication.

Methods of distribution: Deurali was found to be distributed on a regular basis among the following:

- a. Regular subscribers
- b. Deurali Readers Clubs
- c. Participants of the rural journalism training programmes
- d. Those who received complimentary copies
- e. The bookstores and other outlets in the market

Apart from the copies that are sent directly to the market for sale, the bulk of the copies are sent by post. Private courier services were also found to be utilized for distribution of

Deurali. Those that are sold or distributed in the urban area are physically carried by individuals and distributed.

B. Readership

Why do people read Deurali?

Three methods were used to assess people's opinions on why they read Deurali.

- a. Readers' opinions sent to the publication from time to time
- b. Opinions collected on the basis of a sample survey through a questionnaire
- c. Through a focus group discussion among members of the Readers' Clubs

By analyzing the results of all three of the above methods, the following conclusions could be drawn:

- a. Because it is a newspaper that covers even what is regarded as small events in the villages
- b. Because it publishes material that is useful for villagers
- c. Because it presents news and views without taking sides in political groups
- d. Because the language is very simple and easy to read and understand
- e. Because it gives ideas on how to achieve income generation
- f. Because it publishes material relating to women
- g. Because it publishes material on health
- h. Because it is the only publication that presents news about villages
- i. In order to read inspiring news and success stories

3. Impact

Effects on its Readers and the Community

"We heard that Deurali had printed a story which was of interest to blacksmiths like myself. I bought a copy at Tadun (marketplace in eastern Palpa). I asked my daughter to read it to me. It had written a story that was close to our heart. After that I informed the (Bistas) landlords, too."

"Now-a-days the Bistas are good to us. When new iron has to be beaten the Bistas bring our wage along with them. The Deurali newspaper has been of benefit to me. From then I always been Deurali and ask my daughter to read to me all the stories printed in the paper. "

-Lal Bahadur Biswakarma
Ringneraha, Bhalnak, Palpa

"I make a livelihood by working every day. I have no home, no property. My arms, "doko" and "kuto-kodalo" are what I can call my wealth. I did not know about newspapers. After a story was published about my husband Shankare I like to hear what is printed in the newspaper. When I heard stories printed in Deurali about the sufferings of others like myself I feel like listening to whatever is printed in the paper. I feel happy when I see a copy of the paper.

When the newspaper publishes news about poor people like us we feel have been given justice.

-Shankhini Damini

The feelings of two individuals given above are indicators of the impact that Deurali has on its readers and the community. When one travels to those areas of Palpa where Deurali is read on a regular basis, such statements are very common.

The Focus Group Discussion held with the regular subscribers of Deurali and members of the Readers' Clubs, as well as the questionnaire survey, have adequately revealed the kind of impact that Deurali has on the communities it serves. An attempt is made here to enumerate the various ways the paper ways in which it has been possible to judge the impact that Deurali has had on its readers and the support it has rendered in such fields as empowerment, environmental conservation, health, human rights and income generation.

1. In areas where Deurali is read on the regular basis, the people are anxiously waiting for issues of the paper
2. Every copy of the paper is passed from hand to hand and read by turn
3. There are many examples of how people who read the material published in Deurali and feel that they are "citizens endowed with their due rights".
4. By reading Deurali farmers now believe that organic fertilizer is better than chemical fertilizer
5. People are more conscious of health and hygiene
6. Many people were found to have been inspired to undertake innovative projects after reading the success stories published in Deurali
7. The local communities appear more aware of human rights
8. The readers of Deurali seemed aware that if there were incidents of injustice, criminal activities, corruption and financial irregularities, Deurali would write about them.

Chapter 5

Barefoot Journalism Training

The Barefoot Journalism Training programme was started by RDP to train people who are able to write news and features for Deurali by expressing their views and feelings in their own language. The idea has been to create a network of rural journalists who can write for newspapers like Deurali on events and processes that affect the lives of the people living in villages.

While selecting participants for this training programme RDP appears to have adopted the policy of including those that live in the villages and belong to different castes, professions or ethnic groups. Special emphasis seems to be given to the participation of women.

MS Nepal appeared to have contributed immensely to make the Barefoot Journalism Training programme more organized and effective.

While examining various aspects of the rural journalism training programme conducted by RDP, the following observations need to be made:

Participation

- Over 600 individuals have so far taken part in the Barefoot Journalism Training programme. These training programmes have been conducted in over 20 districts stretching from Kailali district in the Far West to Dhankuta in the East.

- Over 25% of the participants have been women

- In order to conduct the programmes in the local environment and to make local participation easy simple and effective most of the training activities were carried out in rural settings.

- In order to encourage the maximum participation of women, attention seemed to have been given while selecting potential participants.

- While selecting the venue for training, more attention seemed to have been given to those areas that are backward, lack opportunities and situated in remote areas.

- While selecting the participants, people from the more deprived and underprivileged classes and victims of social prejudices seemed to be encouraged to participate.

- The training programmes were held in those zones and districts which were indicated in the RDP-MS partnership agreement.

Effectiveness

The Barefoot Journalism Training seems to have helped develop a sense of self-confidence among those that were trained. The demand for training from many areas of the country appears to be beyond the capacity of RDP to handle.

As a result of the discussions held on the effectiveness of the training programme and the survey that was carried out, the following observations can be made:

1. A questionnaire survey designed to find the motivation for participating in the training programme has revealed that almost everyone seems to be motivated by the desire to write to Deurali, become journalists or develop their capacity to write.
2. Even after the training, most of the participants have remained in contact with Deurali. These participants seemed also to be engaged in promoting rural journalism.
3. Most of the trainees seemed to be sending news, features or comments at least once a month.
4. The trainees mentioned that Deurali published the materials they sent for publication
5. A Rural Journalist Mobilization Committee has been formed in Tansen to use the trained journalists in an organized manner. The committee appears to be active in using the services of journalists who have undergone training.

Impact

The Barefoot Journalism Training appears to have been carried out in an effective manner. The following observations seem to corroborate this fact.

a. Expansion of readership

Deurali receives more news, features and comments from those districts where rural journalism training has been conducted. And, because Deurali publishes news from those districts the circulation of the paper has also grown in those districts.

b. Growth in the number of Readers' Clubs

There has been a growth in the number of Readers' Clubs and their membership in those districts where journalism training has taken place.

c. Acceptance as Voice of the People

Because Deurali has been an effective medium for exposing cases of irregularities, injustice, prejudices and also a medium for encouraging and inspiring good work, it has succeeded in firmly establishing itself in areas where training was conducted. The readers seemed to be anxious to read the views and feelings

d. Fear of publicity

It was encouraging to find those individuals who were used to being engaged in irregularities or doing things that are harmful to the communities were deterred by the fear that such actions would be reported in Deurali.

e. As post literacy material

Deurali serves as excellent material for neo-literates. Many organizations use Deurali as post literacy material.

Chapter 6

Readers' Clubs

Deurali Readers' Clubs are located in 30 different districts of the country. There are now 203 such clubs. Membership ranges from 7 to 35. This means that as many as 2,200 people read Deurali on a regular basis as members of these clubs.

Deurali has been able to receive news and information on regular basis from the committed readers in these readers' clubs. On the other hand, the members of these clubs receive information and knowledge free of cost.

Role of the Clubs

These readers' clubs are a very important medium for bilateral, interactive relationship. There is now a basis for receiving very useful suggestions from the readers' clubs on how to improve and refine the material published in Deurali with respect to language, presentation and choice of material.

There are evidences that the readers' clubs have helped to increase the circulation of Deurali. The number of readers and subscribers has grown because of these clubs.

In addition to this, the readers' clubs have helped the mothers' clubs and children's clubs to register with RDP for free copies of Deurali. This way they are assisting these clubs to achieve empowerment.

Even though newspapers are often considered a medium for one-way flow of information, the establishment of these clubs has made Deurali stand out a possible medium for interactive communication.

These Deurali readers' clubs seem to be playing an important role in enabling the rural readers to analyze national, district or local issues and events and help them practice those ideas that are suitable for replication.

Readership

The establishment of the Deurali readers' clubs has not only increased the number of readers but also expanded the geographical coverage. Before the concept of readers' clubs was introduced Deurali used to be read mainly in Palpa district. Individual subscribers in other districts received copies which they alone read.

Since the establishment of the readers' clubs, it was found that each copy of Deurali is read by 7 to 50 individuals, sometimes by as many as 100. These readers of Deurali can be regarded as active readers. The members of the clubs not only read the content of each of issue of Deurali but discuss what they read. And, if they find it necessary, they send their reactions to Deurali. In addition to the establishment of such clubs and the growth in the number of active readers in 30 districts of the country there has also been a qualitative improvement in the publication.

Youth clubs, schools and local libraries also appear to have joined the readers' clubs. When the school students who are involved with the readers' clubs take copies of Deurali to the school library the number of readers immediately goes up. This seems to raise the number of readers per copy of the paper quite substantially.

This large group of readers constitutes an important human resource for Deurali and RDP. They should be viewed not just as readers of the newspaper but as a group that can help the underprivileged population and help provide voice to the voiceless.

Contribution to Deurali

According to the by-laws of Deurali Reader's Clubs, each club must send in at least one news item each month in order to retain its status and receive a free copy of Deurali. Out of the 203 clubs, most of the active ones appear to be achieving this goal. As a result, the material published in Deurali now reflects a much greater geographical coverage and diversity in terms of news content.

There has been a growth in the number of subscribers and also of the readers.

Gaunle Deurali is no longer confined to Palpa district. It is developing as an important rural newspaper for the hilly region of western Nepal. It is gradually being transformed from a local newspaper to a regional newspaper.

These new elements generated by the establishment and expansion of the readers' clubs have to be taken into account and Deurali must decide how to cope with these new developments.

Chapter 7

Main Findings and Recommendations

Main Findings

Rural Development Palpa (RDP) is a pioneer in taking journalism and mass communication to the grass-roots level. The experiences gathered by RDP and Deurali can be very useful for the development of rural communication in Nepal.

The Partnership Agreement between RDP and MS Nepal appears to have played a catalytic role not only in the consolidation and expansion of RDP's activities but also in the organization's own sustainability.

The development objective outlined at the time of the signing of the partnership agreement seems to have been achieved. However, the objective of making RDP fully independent and sustainable has still to be achieved.

It should nevertheless be borne in mind that a village-oriented organisation like RDP and villager-oriented publications can hardly be capable of becoming self-sustaining in the rural context of Nepal in the near future. No such grassroots –oriented organisations and activities have yet been found getting self-sustained in Nepal. What is more important at this stage of development is to make it more effective and result-oriented rather than evaluating it on the basis of sustainability.

In order to use the unique experiences of the present partnership between RDP and MS Nepal in the development of rural communication in Nepal, there seems to be the need for a carefully worked out plan for a new RDP-MS Nepal partnership phase.

Findings

A. Institutional Development of RDP

One of the principal objectives of the partnership agreement was to make RDP independent and sustainable. The activities generated by the partnership has certainly helped make RDP more independent and sustainable.

However, it cannot still be considered a fully sustainable NGO. The institutional development RDP could not be achieved as planned or desired at the time the partnership was established.

B. Training of Barefoot Journalists

During the partnership period RDP developed as the principal organization in Nepal offering rural journalism training in many areas of the country. The kind of knowledge and experience that RDP has acquired in the field of rural journalism training is not found in any other organization in Nepal. However, the partnership programme does not seem to have made arrangement for providing an organizational structure that could achieve continuity and permanence.

C. Improvement of Gaunle Deurali

As a result of the partnership Gaunle Deurali has not only achieved sustainability but has also improved. With the arrangement to add four more pages dealing with women and children, the coverage on women and children has substantially grown.

Considering the material printed in Gaunle Deurali, not only has the quality of the content improved but there is now greater diversity in terms of the subjects covered. Increased remuneration paid to contributors seems also to have helped in improving the quality of Gaunle Deurali.

Recommendations

1. While studying the institutional structure, membership, executive committee and the RDP's employees, it is evident that it should be developed as more broad-based organization.
2. One of the weakest aspect of RDP and Gaunle Deurali is its inability to market its products in the right manner. Much effort is needed in this field.
3. The layout and mast head of Deurali have to changed from time to time to make the publication more attractive.
4. Extra effort is needed for regularly monitoring the performances of those that have trained under the Barefoot Journalism Training programme and for involving them in the work of RDP and Gaunle Deurali on a continuing basis.

5. In addition to improving Deurali and making it more effective, RDP should also begin to become involved in promoting other media of communication.

Proposal for Rural Newspaper Project

Project Title: *Gaunle Deurali rural newspaper project*

Summary of project:

Gaunle Deurali, a unique rural newspaper in South Asia, was started in 1993. The rural people of the Middle Hills of Nepal are the main readers of this newspaper. It has been playing important role in empowering underprivileged and semi literate people living in remote rural areas, who often have no access to sources of information such as reading materials.

The *Gaunle Deurali* was therefore, thought of to help the people living in the remote areas be aware of issues affecting them directly or indirectly. *Gaunle Deurali* as a local newspaper was not only helpful in providing people with relevant information but it also helped in creating a platform for the people to reflect, discuss and pursue things which they themselves considered significant.

The Asia Foundation subsidized the establishment of *Gaunle Deurali* and provided the running cost for three years. Since the project is situated in rural, non-industrial, non-commercial areas, it could not self-sustain, as envisioned in the beginning. The newspaper has been published regularly with the enthusiasm of volunteers and occasional support from international donors.

Although the paper has been continuing, it is on the verge of collapse due to the lack of financial resources. This is SOS call from a newspaper, which has widely benefited the poor people of this area.

Needs and beneficiaries of project activities:

The rural people of the Middle Hills of Nepal, a unique geographical area sharing many common problems and challenges along with rich cultural tradition and ethnic diversity, produce ***Gaunle Deurali***.

Its' main objectives are to:

- Give voice to the rural people and create a forum for exchange of information, opinions and experiences and strengthen democratic practices in rural areas by creating an environment of open discussion and dialogue and involve the people in the decision making process.
- Promote good governance by drawing the attention of the government and NGOs to the problems affecting the lives of the people and making the people eloquent in expressing their problem.
- Inform the rural people about development activities in the villages. Support the introduction of income-generation activities.
- Inform the rural people about appropriate modern technologies and exchange ideas about improving indigenous technologies.

- Raise awareness about human rights, conservation of the environment and sustainable development.
- Highlight the work of the rural people who are providing community service and promote dignified rural life.
- Support the development activities of children, women and unprivileged people.
- Encourage the new literate population to continue reading.

Gaunle Deurali is distributed mainly in the rural areas of 30 districts of the country. There are more than 200 Deurali Readers Clubs where the newspaper is read on a routine basis. In addition to these, there are regular subscribers in 25 districts. Some institutions are using it as post-literacy material in their classes.

The rural literates living in the Mid-hill region of Nepal are the main target groups of the paper. The issues of women, farmers, underprivileged, and downtrodden communities are taken into while covering the news. Their sufferings and predicament are highlighted the most in the news of the newspaper so that there would be awareness regarding the social prejudices rampant in the rural areas. Even though the newspaper is cites the examples from the rural communities, the intellectual community in the urban areas who are engaged in teaching and other professions enjoy reading Deurali.

Rural Development Palpa (RDP), a nonprofit, non government organization, is the publisher of Gaunle Deurali. It has developed a fresh group of journalists to report from the villages. They are dedicated to giving voice to the underprivileged people by reporting grass root level problems and aspirations. Development workers, school-teachers, students, farmers, health workers, housewives, members and staff of Village Development Committee with basic training of journalism are working as barefoot journalists in the newspaper. They are the main source of people's news and views. Deurali has trained more than 700 such journalists in different districts of the country. The basic idea is to create a network of rural journalists who can write for local newspapers like Deurali on events and processes that affect the lives of the people living in villages.

Project goals and activities:

During the formulation of the Rural Newspaper Project it was assumed that the income from the printing press and desktop publishing services, revenue from advertisements and bulk subscription by development organizations would make the paper self-sustainable. But, as in the case with other similar development communication initiatives, it could not become self-sustainable because after the initial support from The Asia Foundation, MS Nepal, Danish Association for International Cooperation, particularly in three areas: institutional capacity building, strengthening Gaunle Deurali by increasing the number of pages and improving the quality of the content, and the barefoot journalist training, three successive partnership phases ended in October 2001.

Since, Tansen, Palpa is a hilly area, there is very little commercial activity and as such the printing press could not generate enough jobs and the advertisement revenue was quite negligible. The paper could not therefore be self-sustainable. In spite of the voluntary services of the board members and editorial staff the production cost of the paper could not be met. Consequently, it is now in dire need of support for its survival.

The experience of Gaunle Deurali has convinced not only its publisher but also development organizations, researchers and planners that empowerment of people can be achieved through communication. People, as well as development organizations, need appropriate communication media to improve the quality of life and to reach rural area in order to involve the people actively in development initiatives and the democratic process. RDP believes that

Gaunle Deurali is an effective tool for this purpose. RDP is therefore seeking support to carry out the following activities to make the paper sustainable:

- Running cost of at least one year. (Nepalese Rupees 350,000; US\$ 5,000)
- Bulk subscription for community based organizations, village development committees, educational Institutes, non-formal Literacy classes etc.
- Insert extra pages to cover important issues or add pages in which more specific, essential and relevant contents produced by the development organizations can be published,
- Support to improve the editorial quality of the content, increase the number of contributions and participation of local people, training of barefoot journalist and the staff and replace some of the equipments.
- Establish a Rural Communication Support/Training Centre, where people from other communities and organizations learn and produce their own communication tools.

Project location country: NEPAL

Project topical theme: "*Empowerment of people through community media.*"

Project total requested amount: \$US 15,000 (Fifteen thousand US dollar).

Contact Information:

Project point of contact name: **Vinaya Kasajoo, Rural Development Palpa (RDP)**

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Organization Information

Organization Name: ***Rural Development Palpa, (RDP)***

Short description of organization:

Rural Development Palpa (RDP) is a non-profit and non-political organization based in Palpa, Tansen, a hilly district, 300 km west of Kathmandu. It has been working since 1987. It was formally registered in 1991 with the aim of achieving over-all development of rural areas by empowering underprivileged rural people, particularly women, by supplying essential information and knowledge using the rural newspaper, community audio tower and adult literacy programmes. RDP's popular and regular publication ***Gaunle Deurali***, weekly rural newspaper, published since 1993, is appreciated as a unique, useful and first rural newspaper in the South Asia region.

Context:

Mass media in Nepal has not been able to play a vital role in changing the lives of the people. It is dominated by politics since its inception. It is targeted and confined to urban elites and political readers. Even after the reinstallation of a democratic system, it has

failed to reach the vast masses of people living in rural and remote areas. At the same time, the global trend of liberalization, privatization and free market is evident in the media market of Nepal, too. Market oriented i.e. profit motivated new newspapers and capital based FM stations are emerging and they have no space and time for the mass of the people and social service messages. They do not supply the essential and relevant information and knowledge, which is necessary for the improvement of the lives of the people.

It is a known fact that communities where there is ready access to information and knowledge there are sustainable and equitable opportunities for growth and progress. For any society to attain the above mentioned objectives there should be free flow of two-way communication between governments and their people and among people themselves. In such a society, everyone is informed of current affairs, especially those affecting them directly. This helps people to voice their rights and make the unheard voices heard so that every one has a say in shaping socio-economic plans and strategies of national relevance.

It is also a fact that in, for the society to be aware, the communication has to reach the masses. It has to seep down to the grass roots-the marginalized lot. The community needs and aspirations, cultures and values, indigenous wisdom and experience have to filter up to the policy makers and other stakeholders in order to make communication a two way process.

The most cost-effective way of achieving such widespread communication is through the mass media, particularly local. The traditional mass media can make a huge difference in transforming the aspirations of marginalized people into reality. The impact of such community media has a great impact on the overall development of the society. When the communities become aware and take part in communications processes, one also becomes a part of larger development process. Hence as a purveyor of information community media has a duty to shine the spotlight of this potent tool and become an agent for overall change.

Vision:

Active participation of the socially and economically deprived and underprivileged people in democratic and development process.

Mission:

Strengthen democracy and enhance development by making people better decision makers, full of self-respect and self-confidence through the use of Information and Knowledge.

Goal:

Empower rural people through community media.

Objectives:

RDP's overall objectives are to

- Give voice to underprivileged people living in remote and rural areas,
- Increase the rural access to information and knowledge for strengthening democracy and enhancing development,
- Promote value of Human Rights and gender equity in rural areas,
- Promote women's development,
- Raise awareness about environment conservation,
- Support the introduction of income generating activities,
- Enable the people not just to consume media but also to be able to use media in their interest,
- Improve the dignity and living conditions of the rural people.

Activities:

- Regular publication of **Gaunle Deurali**, Weekly Rural Newspaper
- Providing production and editorial services/facilities for development organizations to produce and distribute their newsletters, wall newspapers, reports, etc.
- Providing training to community media workers and development organizations to enable them to produce their own community media.
- Producing a cadre of Barefoot Journalist based in rural and remote areas, who work for community, regional and national media.
- Community Media Training for child journalists, women journalists and the Wall Newspaper Training.
- Establish a Rural Communication Support/Training Centre (*Proposed*) to:
 1. Support Community Based Organizations, local NGOs and other development organizations to produce their own community media, Newsletters, Reports, Training/educational materials, magazines etc. by providing training, editorial and production facilities and
 2. Provide information and communication services based on new Information Technology (Establishment of a Multipurpose Community Tele centre)

Short description of organization's other programs:***The Barefoot Journalists:***

To fulfill the need of rural based reporters Gaunle Deurali has trained development workers, school-teachers, students, farmers, health workers, housewives, members and staff of Village Development Committee as barefoot journalists who are dedicated to give voice to the underprivileged rural people. Over 25% of the participants have been women. Barefoot Journalists are the main sources of people's news and views. They are working not only for *Gaunle Deurali* but also for other similar newspapers and some of the National papers. RDP also conducts training for the development/ communication staff, field workers and beneficiaries of various NGOs and INGOs.

The Barefoot Journalism Training has helped develop a sense of self-confidence among rural reporters. A Rural Journalist Mobilization Committee has been formed to network and utilize trained journalists.

The Barefoot Journalism Training has helped to bring more local news and comments to the paper. It has also helped to expand the readership, increase the number of Readers' Clubs, acceptance of the paper as voice of the people, increased the fear of exposure of irregular and harmful deeds and use of the paper as an excellent material for neo-literates as post literacy material.

Available Resources:***Production and Training Facilities:***

RDP has its own Offset Printing Press and Desk Top Publishing unit. The printing press and DTP generate little income that meets partial expenses of the paper.

The Chief editor and editor of Gaunle Deurali have long experience of Rural Journalism and Community Media. RDP also has trained resource persons and journalists, capable of delivering training on community communication, rural journalism, women and children journalism, wall newspaper etc. The barefoot journalists trained by RDP are spread over 30 districts of the country.

Name of organization's director/president: Vinaya Kasajoo

Number of paid full time and part time staff 2 part time and 3 full time (barefoot journalists are paid according to their contribution in the paper)
Number of volunteers about 25
Year organization was founded: 1987 (formally registered in 1991)

Personnel Information:

Key personnel name: Vinaya Kumar Kasajoo
Key personnel title: Chief Editor (honorary)

Vinaya Kasajoo is an advocate of pro-people media. He is also one of the senior Nepali journalists and has been awarded Prakash Human Rights Award (1995) and Gopal Chandra Gautam Journalism Award (1995) for his outstanding contribution in the field of journalism.

He had been a publisher and editor of a popular regional newspaper Satya that was published for twelve years (1983 - 1994) from Palpa. The paper was renowned for its struggle for democracy and he was put to jail jailed in 1985 and 1987 for reporting, writing and publishing articles against the then autocratic Panchayat system.

He is the founding editor of Gaunle Deurali, a unique weekly rural newspaper in South Asia. He is the promoter of Community Media, particularly rural media and Barefoot Journalism. The essence of his work is empowerment of people through media.

He was born at Tansen, Palpa, West Nepal on 18 July, 1947. He grew up at Ridi, Gulmi, neighbouring district of Palpa where he worked as a school-teacher, Pradhan Panch and a social worker. He moved to Palpa in 1970, and to Kathmandu in 1996. He has been working as a free-lance journalist since 1967.

As an Ashoka Fellow he is developing community media tools and preparing training manual for barefoot journalist training, since September 2001. Recently he has published a book on democratization of media in Nepal. His books on ITC and its use in Nepa, Establishment and Operation of Community Radio in Nepal are widely apprxiated. Three anthologies of his short stories, Pashutantra (1982), Lisno (1996) and Thopa Thopa (2000) and a three more books on children stories are already published. Collection of his selected editorials, Sancho Kura (1988), have been published. He has edited some books and magazines.

He has also been working as media consultant and media trainer, particularly community media. He was advisor of Press Council Nepal (1996 - 1999) and board member of National News Agency (RSS) and a human rights organization, Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC).

Resources URL www.kasajoo.com , www.balsansar.com , www.thopathoap.com.np , www.cmr.org.np , www.msinepal.com

Thank you!