

## Development Journalism

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A 'Manual for News Agency Reporter' published by IIMC defines the purpose of development reporting as follows.

→ The purpose of development reporting is to create a sense of involvement, to spread the realisation that the future comes out of present efforts, that development can be nobody's gift, least of all of the aid given by affluent countries, but is the result of one's own labour.

'Destiny does not descend from above, it grows out of one's hand.'

→ Development reporting must concern itself with the people. It must show them how to improve their bargaining power with society. It must make them realise that their future is in their hands. It must describe the process of backbone building.

→ Development reporting must describe the people actually at work in new projects and processes. It must describe the process of change and modernisation, the new discoveries and the products. It must describe teams and concepts of development.

→ An important aspect of development reporting is success stories of people who have adopted new technologies, tried new methods, and benefited themselves and helped society.

→ Development reporting by its very nature, is devoid of the kind of sensational interest that an eruption or a calamity or a political confrontation produces. Secondly, it does not carry the stamp of immediacy that 'events' do.

→ Development reporting, to be effective, requires considerable investigative and research skill on the part of the journalists, apart from firm grasp of trends in economic thought, planning and development.

## The Manual went further to define development.

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What is development - ?

- ⊙ The removal of poverty
- ⊙ The lessening of disparity b/w regions and classes
- ⊙ The building up of technological infrastructure.
- ⊙ Modernisation of Society through shedding - feudalism, tribalism and Superstitions.
- ⊙ The gradual achievement of economic self-reliance

"Development is measured in the improvement of lives of the people and strengthening of the family's or the individual's capacity to deal with the rest of the society and of the nation's capacity to deal with the world"

Hence, finally, the very purpose of development reporting is to improve the quality of life both of individual and of society.

## Nature and Area of development journalism

- Development reporting is primarily socio-economic reporting giving the Why, When, Where, Which, What and How of deep structural changes in our society. The publication of economic dailies like - The Economic Times & Business Standard. Undoubtedly has given a fillip to development reporting but equally credit must be given to India's planning approach that first gave development reporting its due significance. In that sense planning, development and development reporting go hand in hand.
- Development reporting has always been a feature of western reporting, especially in the specialised journals of the west, as can only be expected. It is now becoming fashionable in India, primarily b'coz India is rapidly becoming a developed country itself. Inevitably, the Indian press has to take note of the processes of development and report on it.

- Development reporting need not to be confined strictly to Socio-economic issues. Any reporting pertaining to development in fields as diverse as - medicine, science, industry and technology would come under that heading. The stress rightly, is placed on the term development.

Approach to development Journalism

- A question that can be asked about development reporting is whether it always has to be positive. Human nature being what it is, corruption is a way of life in many developing countries where millions of rupees have often been known to have been wasted. Should it not be the duty of the conscientious reporter to write about corruption, inefficiency and embezzlement wherever it is discovered?
- One feels that a reporter is indeed duty-bound to report on administration's shortcomings so that they are expeditiously overcome.
- Development reporting is not "puff" reporting with no effort being made to find out what is wrong where, what has not achieved is as much news as what has been achieved.

Idea vs. Individual

- Most development reports seems more "idea" centred rather than "individual" centred. When a reporter take recourse to such phrase as "it is believed", "it is stated", "the general impression is that", "the point has been raised" it must be clear that he has not done his interviewing of people ~~individual~~ involved but is merely passing on his own personal understanding of situation.
- The reporter and his report will gain more credibility, - apart from readability - if he specifies who made what point and who states what. Development reporting lives or dies by its association with live individuals and live situations. The reporter who "believes", "understands" and hears it being "contended" is more often merely trying to fill column space than telling a straight story.

Certain rules may be laid down for writing a Development Story.

1. → If you are writing a development story, see that the story is meaningful to the community that your paper is serving. A development story that your paper is readable but has no relevance to your readers fails of its purpose, which is to entice and inspire parallel action.
2. → Research the background of the story from the pre-developed ment stage to its current status and find out whether schedules have been met, expenditure properly audited and if schedules have not been met, the reason why.
3. → Give a patient and objective learning/hearing to all those involved in the development project including government servants, plant managers, worker's representatives and the people for whose benefit the project had been undertaken in the first place.
4. → Mention names, Take down the complaints or excuses made by different parties and where possible check whether they bear scrutiny.
5. → Beware of public relations men who will provide you pre-digested material that is laudatory but could be misleading
6. → Look for parallels. Has a similar project been lauded else where and how does it compare with the project on which you are planning to write
7. → If two contrary opinions are advanced by two different sets of people, state them impartially, Do not take sides.
8. → Whenever possible, quote profusely, let the reader know that you have actually been talking to individuals and not just generalising on what you may have heard.
9. → Be meticulous about providing facts and figures.
10. → Avoid the temptation to re-write handouts; treat them as basic raw material on which to build the superstructure of your own well researched story.
11. → Keep your personal hang-ups, likes and dislikes, prejudices and preferences strictly to yourself. let them not intrude in your reporting which is for the purpose of informing your reading public of what is happening around.

12. → Be constructive where criticism is merited; be generous where praise is warranted. Remember, no matter how hard you tried to get all the facts, the whole truth may still elude you. "You are a reporter not God"

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### Readable Books.

Kusum Nair — Blossoms in the Dust (1961)  
P. Sainath — Everyone loves good drought  
Bharat Dogra — Empty stomach, packed godown

## Facets of Development

- ① Development has many facets, +ve and -ve, social, cultural, economic and even political and that its effects are far-reaching. Development efforts can contribute to corruption. Isn't reporting on corruption, then, a part of development reporting? The nation ought to know how money spent has been transformed into the betterment of a given society:
- ① How many jobs have been created?
  - ② By how much has the per capita income of a given village, taluka, district or state gone up?
  - ③ Are children better fed up?
  - ④ People better clothed?
  - ⑤ Gramaries fuller stocked?

Positive answers to such questions make for traditional concepts of development reporting. But consider the other side of the picture as well.

- ① The Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy in its 1977 report on the standard of living of the Indian people has this to say about Food: the first need.

"Perhaps, of all the indicators, next only to the per capita real income, the most significant single indicator of the standard of living would be the per capita availability of foodgrains: for this item accounts for 66% of the total consumption expenditure of an average Indian. Shockingly enough, according to CMIE calculation, while the per capita availability of cereal and pulses in 1953

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was 350 and 63 grams per day, in 1977 it was 347 and 56 gms a distinct fall."

It is poor development, but good development reporting.

- ① What it finally amounts to is that development reporting includes Science reporting, investigative reporting and even legal reporting. While it may be argued that this is throwing the net too wide and that the reporter should limit his development reporting to clearly demarcated fields of progress and prosperity, it may be counter-argued that this would leave vast areas of development subjects untouched.

### News Coverage for Rural Areas

- ② Should the term 'Development' necessarily have to do with the economic betterment of the people? Shouldn't the fact the people living in Indian villages are not getting justice and are living frequently under the tyranny of the rich and the powerful, also be a part of development reporting?
- ③ Mr. D.R. Manjekar in his article in 'Mainstream' (March 1, 1980) raised the issue of justice in rural India and the role of the media

"As we all know, that which is not reported does not exist. Also And Crime unreported is crime licensed and encouraged. And we also know too well that when lawlessness and crime go unreported, the law and order authorities and government feel that they could get away with it and therefore they could afford to do nothing about it

Why is such a scandalous state of affairs possible? Because the Indian Press has failed in its duty - its duty not only to lift rocks and expose worms but to cleanse the ground under the rocks by focussing light on them."

Even if the metaphors are somewhat mixed here, the main thrust of Manjekar's argument is clear: rural reporting is poor, halting and often non-existent.

- ④ The poor, the arguments probably goes, do not make news

for the urban elite. In a sense it's very hard to define "development reporting" unless one is willing to settle for the narrowest of meanings. Development brings in its wake a multitude of problems. Shouldn't they be part of development reporting? The problem of pollution, for instance or the problem of displacement.