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# UNIT 2 COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND THEIR USE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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## 2.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

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After studying this unit you should be able to:

- define a communication channel,
- classify communication channels,
- distinguish the one-way or two-way flow of message,
- list the various functions of communication channels,
- give examples of interpersonal communications and discuss the importance of feedback in communication, and
- explain the implications of communication channels in rural development.

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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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Communication channel is one of the elements of communication process. In Unit 1 we dealt with the basic principles and techniques of communication as well as the elements of communication. The focus in this unit is upon the communication channels through which messages flow from source to receiver, be it a word of mouth or mass media—radio, television, newspapers, etc. This unit attempts to familiarize you with the definition of communication channel, categorization of communication channels, selection of communication channels, feedback in communication, and the role of communication channels in rural development.

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## 2.2 DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

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A communication channel is defined as the means by which a message travels from a source to a receiver. Communication channels facilitate the source and the receiver to communicate. In order to communicate you have to choose a channel; you may opt for radio, television, newspapers, or magazines. Once you decide on a particular channel, say television, you still need to make a choice as to whether it should be international, national or regional telecast (Zee TV, Jain TV, Star Plus, MTV, BBC, Doordarshan etc.). Similarly, if you decide on a magazine then you need to select whether you prefer Life, Reader's Digest, Society, Eves Weekly, Savvy, etc. You may select a particular channel or a combination of channels depending on what is available, and at what cost?

It is an established fact that the receiver cannot retain as much oral information as s/he can retain through visuals. It is also more effective to transmit "hard" content visually rather than orally. It is the source who has to decide what kind of messages should be transmitted orally and what kind of messages should be transmitted visually. Should s/he encode a message so that the receiver can decode them, can see, hear, and touch? Messages transmitted by radio are channelled so that they can be heard. Television is a vehicle that enables us to channel messages so that they may be both heard and seen. Newspapers can be seen and touched as well.

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## 2.3 CATEGORIZING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

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Communication channels may be categorized as either interpersonal or mass media in nature. Interpersonal channels involve a face-to-face interaction between two or more persons. Mass media channels involve some medium, such as radio, television, film, newspapers, magazines etc. for transmitting messages. Mass media channels enable a source of one or a few individuals to reach an audience of many rapidly with uniform message. It may be remembered that mass media and interpersonal channels play complementary roles rather than competing roles in the transmission of messages from source to receiver, and hence they may be suitably combined to yield maximum possible results.

Communication channels may also be classified as originating from either local or cosmopolitan sources. While mass media channels are almost entirely cosmopolitan, interpersonal channels may be from outside the social system or sources inside the social system.

Considering both impersonal vs personal dimension as well as cosmopolite vs localite dimension, communication channels may be categorized as follows :

- 1) **Interpersonal channels involving face-to-face communication.** It may be cosmopolite or localite.
  - a) Personal cosmopolite channels may be categorized as communication with extension agent or change agent, farm input supply personnel and persons from other villages.
  - b) Personal localite channels may include communication with neighbours and friends, family members, etc.
- 2) **Mass communication channels** (or impersonal, cosmopolite channels) may include radio, newspapers, films, magazines, television, etc.

Let us now discuss both interpersonal and mass communication channels.

### 2.3.1 Interpersonal

Interpersonal channels are also referred to as face-to-face communication channels. These channels have greater effectiveness in the face of resistance or apathy on the part of receiver. The flow of message tends to be two-way in interpersonal channels. Feedback which is very essential for effective communication is readily available in the context of interpersonal channel. If a large audience has to be reached then these channels will be relatively slow compared to mass communication channels. These channels are, however, most efficient for attitude formation or for bringing about attitudinal changes.

### 2.3.2 Mass Communication Channel

Contrasted with interpersonal channels, mass communication channels involve a large, heterogeneous group of people who are far removed from the source of the message. The chief source in mass communication is a communication organization or an institutionalized person (e.g. broadcasting station, editor). The organization works exactly as the individual communicator does, performing the function of decoder, interpreter and encoder. The only difference is that

communication in an organization is carried out by a group of person rather than by one individual communicator. An organization has a very high ratio of output to input, encoding millions of identical messages at the same time to be distributed to a large group of people. There is very little direct feedback in mass communication. But for mass media to take effect, they must first reach their intended audience.

### Check Your Progress 1

Notes : a) Write your answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Indicate if the following statements are true or false, by putting a tick mark (✓) in the relevant column.

	TRUE	FALSE
a) Interpersonal channels are most effective to reach a large audience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Feedback is readily available in interpersonal channels.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) In mass communication, the receiver is away from the source.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Mass media is most effective in bringing about attitudinal change.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Communication channels are categorized as either interpersonal or mass media in nature.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Mass media involves a face-to-face interaction between source and receiver.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Interpersonal channels enable a source of one or a few individuals to reach an audience of many rapidly with uniform message.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h) Mass media and interpersonal channels play competing roles in the transmission of message from source to receiver and hence they should not be combined.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i) Interpersonal channels may be cosmopolite or localite.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j) The flow of message tends to be two-way in mass media.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 2.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Mass media and interpersonal channels may be distinguished in terms of one-way or two-way flow of messages which may be mediated or not, the extent to which selectivity process operates, and speed to reach the audience with the possibility of affecting their attitudes or reinforcement of existing opinions, and beliefs.

### 2.4.1 Flow of Message One/Two-Way

Flow of message from source to receiver may be one-way as in mass media or two-way as in interpersonal communication. Mass media involves a large heterogeneous group of people who are far removed from the source of the message. Prior to the work of Lazarsfeld and others (1944) during the 1940 Presidential election in the United States, it was considered that mass media communicated in a one-way fasluon with individuals who communicated little with each other. These authors while studying the role of mass media in clinching vote decision found

that ideas often flow from radio and print to opinion leaders and from them to the less active sections of the population. This so-called two-step flow hypothesis suggests that new ideas spread from sources of new ideas via relevant channels to opinion leaders and from them by way of personal communication channel to their followers. While the first step from source to opinion leaders is mainly a transfer of information, the second step from opinion leader to their followers may also involve the spread of influence besides passing on of information. Recent researches now suggest a multi-step flow where opinion leaders may influence other opinion leaders and they, in turn, influence their followers. Once the message is sent through mass media, the source has no way to know how it is received, by whom it is received and what has been its impact.

Personal influence, on the other hand, involving a direct face-to-face exchange between communicator and receiver results in changed behaviour or attitude on the part of receiver. It is found that personal influence figured both more frequently and more effectively in decisions than any of the mass media. It is also found that neighbour to neighbour communication was of greater importance in the diffusion of farm information than any other communication channel among Indian villagers who were illiterate or poorly educated and hence were unable to use mass media communication.

#### 2.4.2 Face-to-Face Vs Interposed Communication

Mass media communication is sometimes referred to as "mediated" or "interposed" communication because the print or electronic channel links the source to the receiver. In face-to-face communication, the source and receiver need to have encoding and decoding apparatus which will enable them to translate internal electrical (nervous) impulses into some external physical message. The source must be able to speak, and the receiver must be able to hear. The oral message that the source produces has to come to the receiver in some message vehicle. The vehicle which carries oral messages are sound waves. The sound waves themselves need something to support them, a wave carrier. In face-to-face human communication sound waves are supported by air. These then are the three major aspects of the word 'channel' in communication: modes of encoding and decoding messages, message-vehicle, and message-carriers.

In mass communication message-vehicles are radio, newspapers, magazines, television, etc. Any radio station or any advertising agency employs source, encoders and decoders. Message-vehicle and message-carriers are the concern of professional engineers.

Satellite technology is collapsing not only distances but time as well. Information highways, teleconferences, teletel bulletin board, electronic mail are some of the recent applications in this direction resulting in overcoming, to a great extent, the barriers of mass communication in terms of feedback and selectivity.

#### 2.4.3 Ability to Overcome Selectivity

Selectivity is composed of three socio-psychological processes which tend to inhibit the effectiveness of a communication channel. These three processes are:

- 1) **SELECTIVE EXPOSURE**: Selective exposure is the tendency of individuals to attend to communication that agree with their existing opinions, attitudes and beliefs.
- 2) **SELECTIVE PERCEPTION**: Selective perception is the tendency of individuals to interpret communication messages in terms of ones existing opinions, attitudes and beliefs.
- 3) **SELECTIVE RETENTION**: Selective retention is the tendency of individuals to remember or retain communication messages that agree with their existing opinions, attitudes, and beliefs.

Since exposure to personal influence is often less selective than exposure to mass media, personal influence is more likely to overcome these three barriers to communication effectiveness. The communicator of a mass media being separated in time and space is seldom in a position to correct misinterpretation or misperception of communication message. In case of interpersonal communication, if the receiver misinterpret the communication message, the source is in a position to take corrective measures immediately. Why is it that we are exposed daily to hundreds of mass media messages about new products, but only a few of these register on our minds.

#### 2.4.4 Speed to Large Audience

Interpersonal channels are very slow as compared to mass media when the speed to reach a large audience is considered. In the absence of mass media, time-bound information, or information which may otherwise become irrelevant after some time, may never reach the intended audience. Besides time, cost is another consideration. It costs comparatively less to communicate through mass media as compared to interpersonal channels. An experienced communicator always tries to create awareness and interest through mass media followed by selective interpersonal contacts at the decision-making stage. For certain information and for certain ideas which have not been encountered previously and for which no opinions are held, mass media alone may be most efficient and cost effective to reach a large audience.

#### 2.4.5 Possible Effects

Klapper (1950) reports that mass media function more frequently as agents of reinforcement than as agents of change. The information that an individual receives through mass media channels serves to reinforce what was already there as a result of face-to-face communication or other means. Mass communication do not necessarily tend to initiate action, but works amid other influences in a total situation. Similar are the views of Berelson, who says: "Effects upon the audience do not follow from and in correspondence with the intent of the communicator or the content of the communication. The predispositions of the reader or listeners are deeply involved in the situation, and may operate to block or modify the intended effect or even to set up a boomerang effect."

Schramm (1960), on the other hand, points out that attitudes can be changed by mass communication, but a host of factors ought to be present in order for attitude change to occur. O'Hara agrees with Schramm and says that mass communication channels have a socializing effect on "attitudes towards life, ourselves, and on those we come in to contact with."

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## 2.5 SELECTION OF CHANNELS

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In communicating, the source has to choose a channel or combination of channels to carry his message. A number of considerations will have to be made in selecting the channel. Selection is limited by :

- a) what is available,
- b) how much money can be spent,
- c) what channel is preferred by the source as well as receiver,
- d) which channels are received by the most people,
- e) which channels have the most impact,
- f) which channels are most adaptable to the kind of purpose which the source has, and
- g) which channels are most adaptable to the content of the message.

There are people who have acquired considerable ability to pick and choose among channels. There are agencies that attempt to measure the impact of messages over various channels, the level of readership of newspapers, television viewing pattern, recall probability of messages

sent through mass communication channel. A review of experience of all these will be of much help to the change agent in selecting a particular channel.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- Notes : a) Write your answers in the space provided.  
b) Check your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Indicate if the following statements are true or false by putting a tick mark (✓) in the relevant column.

	TRUE	FALSE
a) Flow of message from source to receiver is one-way in interpersonal communication.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Among illiterates mass media communication is more popular than neighbour to neighbour communication.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Selective exposure is the tendency of individuals to interpret a communication message in terms of one's existing opinions and beliefs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Interpersonal communication helps in overcoming the selectivity process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Communication through mass media has advantage of low cost and high speed in reaching large audience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Interpersonal channel is more efficient and cost effective in transmitting an entirely new idea to which the audience has not been exposed previously.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Mass media is more often an agent of reinforcement than an agent of change.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2) Describe two-step or multi-step flow hypothesis in mass communication.

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3) Explain the selectivity process.

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**2.5.1 Functions of Communication Channels**

In order to understand various functions of communication channels it is essential to throw light on the adoption process. The adoption process is the mental process through which an individual passes from first hearing about a new idea to its final adoption (Rogers, 1962). The process is conceptualized in following five stages or steps.

- At awareness stage you are exposed to the idea but you lack complete information about it. You have heard about the existence of technology without knowing full details, the pros and cons of it. You are just aware of it. Mass media is considered to be the most effective and rapid way of creating awareness among the people.
- At interest stage, being aware of the technology, you have to arouse interest among the learners. Personal contact, home and farm visits, and film shows will be useful to arouse interest among the learners.
- At evaluation stage, once you are aware of and have developed interest in a particular technology, you will start assessing the utility in terms of its pros and cons. At this stage you mentally apply the idea to your own situation and then decide whether or not to try it. Discussions with experienced people, assessing resources, witnessing the performance of technology through demonstration will enable you to judge the merits of the technology.
- At trial stage, having been fully convinced with the new technology, you may like to try it on a small scale to see its performance. Guidance from people who have already tried it, and also from an extension agent will be helpful.
- Adoption stage is the final stage when you decide to continue the full use of the new ideas. After seeing the performance of technology on a limited scale you will assess the results in comparison with your previous experience, the experience of your neighbour and accordingly decide to go for adoption of technology on a large scale and continue the adoption of technology for a longer time till you are exposed to another new technology.

The new idea may be rejected at any stage. Normally a new idea, if accepted, is continually followed up unless some other more beneficial idea is put forward for adoption. It is not necessary for an individual to follow through all the five stages of adoption. If he is convinced of the new idea or if the new idea has substantial returns on investment he may adopt it at the awareness stage itself.

It has been observed that mass media or impersonal channels are relatively more important at the awareness stage in the adoption process and interpersonal channels are relatively more important at the evaluation stages in the adoption process.

Communication channels may also be classified as to their degree of cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolite communication channels are those from outside the social system. Interpersonal channels may be either local or cosmopolite. Mass media channels are almost entirely cosmopoliten. It has also been noted that cosmopolite channels are relatively more important at the awareness stage and local channels are more important at the evaluation stage.

Past studies by Beal, Bohlen, Rogers and others have shown that mass media channels are most effective in the early awareness and interest stages of the adoption process for new farm and home-making practices. Magazines, newspapers and radio rank low as sources of information in the latter stages of evaluation, trial and adoption. They rank first, however, in both the awareness and interest stages when people are just learning about a new idea or practice and are seeking more information about it.

### 2.5.2 Communication Channels by Receiver

Communication channel is a device by which the message is transmitted to the receiver. The message may be an innovation or an idea or practice perceived as new by the individual. Awareness about any new idea occurs in a social system at a more rapid rate than does adoption. Not all persons adopt an innovation at the same time in a social system. Some persons tend to adopt an innovation much faster than others and there will always be some persons who will fail to adopt one. Innovativeness is the degree to which an individual is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than other members of his social system (Rogers, 1962).

Adopter categories are the classifications of individuals within a social system on the basis of their innovativeness. The adoption distributions follow a bell-shaped curve over time and approaches normality. Rogers has partitioned this distribution into five adopters categories namely, innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Laggards are the last to adopt an innovation.

It is found that early adopters in a social system tend to be younger in age, financially sound, have higher status, have more opinion leaders and followers, and use multiplicity of communication channels than do later adopters. Earlier adopters utilize communication channels that are more impersonal and cosmopolite than later adopters. Earlier adopters utilize a greater number of communication channels than do later adopters.

Mass communication channels are relatively more important than interpersonal channels for earlier adopters than for later adopters. When an innovator adopts a new idea there is no one else in his social system who has experience with that new idea. Those adopting late need not rely so much on mass media because there is a lot of interpersonal experience and local experience that has been accumulated in the system by the time they decide to adopt one. Interpersonal influence is not so necessary to motivate earlier adopters to decide in favour of a new idea. Mass media message stimulus is enough to move them to adoption. But late adopters require stronger influence, like that resulting from interpersonal channels.

Cosmopolite channels are relatively more important than localite channels for earlier adopters than for later adopters. Innovations enter a system from external sources; those who adopt first are most likely to depend upon cosmopolite channels. Then those earlier adopters, in turn, act as interpersonal and localite channels for late adopters.

### Check Your Progress 3

Note : a) Write your answers in the space provided.

b) Check your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Indicate if the following statements are true or false, by putting a tick mark (✓) in the relevant column.

	TRUE	FALSE
a) It is necessary for an individual to follow through all the five stages of adoption process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Interpersonal channels are more important at the awareness stage in the adoption process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Localite channels are more important at the evaluation stage than cosmopolitan channels.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Late adopters utilize a greater number of communication channels than do early adopters.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e) Mass communication channels are relatively more important than interpersonal channels for early adopters.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f) Late adopters are more influenced by interpersonal communication channels.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g) Early adopters are more influenced by localite channels than cosmopolitan channels.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2) Explain what is innovativeness.

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### 2.5.3 Selection and Combination of Channels

Selection of channels is dependent to a large extent on the type of message. The content, the code and the treatment of a message are related to the choice of channels. At the same time the knowledge of our receiver is related to choice of channels—can the receiver decode better by ear, or by eye, or by touch.

Needless to say that two channels are usually better than one. A receiver will be more likely decode a message accurately if he can see it and hear it at the same time. It is noted earlier that the receiver cannot retain as much oral information as he can when the message is presented visually, other things being equal.

Various channels have to be utilized in order to reduce overlap by time as well as by channel. It is found that people who attend to one type of exposure at one time of the year (or day) tend to attend to it at other times as well. This is known as overlap by time. Similarly, people who are exposed to one type of communication channel tend to expose themselves to other communication channels leading to channel overlap. This area of research is of particular significance to a country like ours where not only media resources are limited, but prime time is also of lesser duration compared to other developing countries.

It has long been established that mass media when used in combination with organized interpersonal communication will produce more effects than either of the two used alone. Schramm (1960) demonstrated three advantages of mass communication plus group discussion: a) students in a group tend to stay with a lesson better than when listening or viewing individually, b) it is easier to facilitate feedback when a receiver is in a group, and c) groups are sometime easier to persuade.

There are strong indications that the receiver of a message is more likely to be influenced by a message when he is given an active role in the communication process. Lewin and others have demonstrated that group decision may be more effective than one-way lectures in changing food buying habits.

Media forums organize small groups of individuals who meet regularly to discuss a mass media programme. These mass media forums were first experimented within Canada and then spread to countries like India, Nigeria, Ghana, Brazil, etc. The mass media linked to the forum may be a radio, as in Paul Neurath's (1960, 1962) field experiment with India's radio forum, or the *radiophonics* schools of Latin America, or television as in the Italian *telescuola*. In all these media forum some form of mass communication channel (radio, television, newspapers) is combined with interpersonal channel and is subjected to group pressure and social expectations in a small group.

In Canada group listening appeared during 1941 in the depression days of agriculture. It ended because of 'apathy' in April 1965 after ten relatively prosperous years for agriculture. However, it got a momentum again in January 1966 when a number of agricultural representatives in Ontario organized group viewing of the 1966 TV series: "This Business of Farming". This approach is now getting more popular.

The French Teleclub experiment is known to have produced impressive qualitative results in terms of discussion and a change in attitude towards farm modernization. So is the Italian *telescuola* experiment.

Since the early twentieth century the Chinese Communist Party has employed magazine and newspaper discussion groups as a means of indoctrination and learning among its own party cadres and recruits. According to Hiniker (1966) approximately 60 percent of the adult Chinese population, literate and illiterate, men and women, and urbanites and peasants regularly participate in study meetings where magazines are read out and discussed.

Analogous to the Canadian Farm Radio Forum is the structure of the Indian Radio Farm Forum. Neurath (1962) observed that "the group method of decision brought with it a learning process

both in meeting and discussing things together in decision making. As evidence of impact of the forum, he presented a list of actions taken in villages which correspond with the content of broadcast.

In the foregoing discussion, we have seen that combination of mass media and interpersonal channel offer several advantages over purely interpersonal or mass media channels. Several examples of mass-like interpersonal communication may be cited. Storysingers called *cakulia pandas* in Orissa play an important role in introducing new ideas. They walk from village to village with belt tied to their things to announce their coming. They are a highly credible channel for villagers. An elephant used to create awareness-knowledge of family planning is yet another example. The idea behind the use of elephants or storytellers in dissemination of new ideas is similar to the radio forums, except that the latter are more formal, more frequent and generally have more information to disseminate.

#### Check Your Progress 4

Note : a) Write your answers in the space provided.

b) Check your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Indicate if the following statements are true or false, by putting a tick mark (✓) in the relevant column.

	TRUE	FALSE
a) Type of message need not be considered in selecting a channel.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Visual presentation helps in retention of a message.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Mass media channels in combination with interpersonal channels will not be more effective than either of the two.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d) Receiver of a message is more influenced when he is given an active role in the communication process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2) Describe what is media forum and give two examples.

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## 2.6 FEEDBACK IN COMMUNICATION PROCESS

Consider the situation where communication between two people is involved. One is constantly communicating back to the other. The return process is called feedback. So is a letter to the editor of a newspaper regarding his editorial.

### 2.6.1 Process of Feedback

Feedback provides the source with information concerning his success in accomplishing his objective and directing the future course of action. When an individual communicates with himself, for example writing a letter, the messages he encodes are fed back into his system by his decoder. But when he communicates with others he needs feedback to ascertain whether or not he was successful in communicating what he wanted to communicate and whether it had the desired effect.

The action of the source affects the reaction of the receiver, and vice versa. The source or the receiver can make use of the reactions of the other. Reactions serve as feedback. For example, a newspaper affects its readers by selecting the news they are allowed to read. Similarly, the readers also affect the newspaper. If readers do not buy the paper, it may have to change its selection criteria of news and presentation of news. An experienced communicator is attentive to feedback, and constantly modifies his message in the light of what he observes in or hears from his audience.

Person to person communication channels permit maximum feedback. The source has an opportunity to change his message immediately as a result of feedback he gets. Mass communication channels have minimum opportunity for feedback since the source and the receiver are separated in time and space. They have little opportunity to get feedback from each other.

### **2.6.2 Importance of Feedback**

Programmes of rural development are normally channelled through mass communication in which the source and receiver are separated in time and space. The communication skills of source, his attitudes and knowledge level and his position within a social system is different than that of the receiver resulting in communication breakdown. Therefore, feedback assumes greater importance. The programme concepts and objectives are decided at the central or state level and communicated mostly in written form to the change agent at the village or block levels. The predisposition of the recipient of information at lower levels influence their behaviour towards communication messages. They tend to expose themselves to those ideas which are in accordance with their interests, needs, or existing attitudes. They tend to perceive and retain information selectively as we have seen in the discussion of the selectivity process.

Change agents seem to concentrate their efforts on creating awareness, although this goal can be achieved more efficiently by mass media channels. Change agents could perhaps play their most distinctive and important role at the decision making stage of the adoption process. They can also be instrumental in giving feedback to those who have designed the programme so that any discrepancy in the programme content as perceived by the source and as perceived and interpreted by the recipient of information may be rectified in subsequent communication messages between the source and the receiver.

#### **Check Your Progress 5**

Notes : a) Write your answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answer with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Indicate if the following statements are true or false, by putting a tick mark (✓) in the relevant column.

	TRUE	FALSE
a) A good communicator need not modify his message in the light of feedback he receives from his audience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Mass communication permits maximum feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c) Change agents play an important role only at the awareness stage.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## **2.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Selection of a communication channel or combination of communication channels have direct implications for a change agency entrusted with the responsibility of rural development. A change agency might better decide where to emphasize agency contact where the mass media facilities are needed most, and where mass media channels need to be combined with agency contact. By using the mass communication channels, the change agency reaches the urban

sector and only a privileged minority of the rural sector. The message is lost to those whom the government seeks most to inform and influence, for the well-known reasons of illiteracy, physical isolation and the lack of radio and television sets in the rural areas.

Though the change agent stationed in rural area make efforts to multiply their message through ways within their reach, their radius of action has limited force and stumbles against barriers of resistance, traditionalism, and lack of interest. Their limited knowledge of the characteristics of the audience and that of communication channels hamper them even more.

We have seen that combination of mass media and interpersonal channel offer several advantages over purely interpersonal or mass media channel. Change agent would do well to organize small group discussions or media forum immediately after the audience has been exposed to mass media channel (either through radio, television, film, or magazines) of the type of Italian *telescuola* or radiophysics school of Latin America, or that of Paul Neurath's (1962, and 1962) field experiment with India's radio forums. Their real test of success is the extent to which there is effective feedback between the mass media channels and the informal, face-to-face communication channel. Change agents should also use traditional mass media like use of an elephant as in family planning campaigns, and storytellers of Orissa, *cakulia pandas*, for disseminating idea or farming practices.

Although change agents can use radio to reach farmers' families, it encounters a most strong competition in the form of commercial broadcasting with its entertaining programmes. Newspapers too are inspired by an urban-bias with very little message pertaining to rural development. Its orientation and distribution fail to reach the majority of rural masses who are illiterate. Therefore knowledge of the audience as well as that of communication channels used differently by the recipient of communication characterized by innovators, early adopters, late adopters, etc. may be useful in expediting the communication process and in increasing the speed with which messages are received by rural people and interpreted by them in the way that the messages are intended to be interpreted. There is no prior reason why those engaged in production and dissemination of rural development programmes should not be governed by the interest of their audience in terms of preferred timing, subject matter and method of presentation.

Change agents are required to work with all kinds of people. Some of them may be aware of a particular issue, others may be aware but are wanting to know more about it, and still others who may hold a favourable or unfavourable attitude towards it. Therefore segmentation of audience in terms of their predisposition on a particular issue may at times be necessary to counteract it with interpersonal channel, leaving aside the use of a mass communication channel for the purpose of reinforcement or creating awareness and interest.

### Check Your Progress 6

Notes : a) Write your answers in the space provided.

b) Check your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) Indicate if the following statements are true or false, by putting a tick mark (✓) in the relevant column.

- |  | TRUE                     | FALSE                    |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Combination of mass media and interpersonal channels does not offer any additional benefit in promoting programmes of rural development.            | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| b) In programmes of rural development, the predisposition of an audience on a particular issue can effectively be altered through mass media channels. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- 2) If you are to educate rural people on the use of public latrines what communication channel(s) would you use.

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.....  
.....  
.....

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## 2.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we took a closer look at the role of communication channels in rural development. Communication channels are the means by which messages travel from a source to a receiver. These channels are categorized as either interpersonal or mass media in nature. Interpersonal channels involve a face to face interaction between two or more persons while mass media channels use print or electronic medium to link a large, heterogeneous group of persons to the source.

Interpersonal channels may be from within or outside the social system, while mass media channels are almost entirely cosmopolite. These channels may be distinguished in terms of one-way or two-way flow of message, the extent to which selectivity process operate, and the speed at which they reach large audiences with the possibility of affecting their attitudes or reinforcement of the existing ones.

We also directed your attention to a number of considerations which will have to be made in selecting the channel. Mass media channels are most effective in the early awareness and interest stage of the adoption process, while interpersonal channels are most effective in the latter stages of evaluation, trial and adoption.

We also covered the five adopter categories. Mass media communication channel are relatively more important than interpersonal channels for early adopters who utilize a greater number of channels than do later adopters and laggards.

A combination of mass media and interpersonal channels offers several advantages over purely interpersonal or mass media channels. Media forums are organized small groups of individuals who meet regularly to discuss a mass media programme—be it a newspaper, television or radio programme. Mass media when used in combination with interpersonal communication will result in overcoming the selectivity process and will provide effective feedback which is very essential for the success of any rural development programme.

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## 2.9 KEY WORDS

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**Personal cosmopolite channels** are those which originate from outside the social system such as communication with change agents, persons from other villages and farm input, supply persons.

**Impersonal cosmopolite channels** are those mass communication channels which originate from outside the social system such as radio, newspapers, films, magazines and television.

**Localite personal channels** are those which originate from within the social system such as communication with neighbours and friends, and family members.

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## 2.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

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## 2.11 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: THE KEY

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### Check Your Progress 1

- |    |          |          |          |
|----|----------|----------|----------|
| 1) | a) False | e) True  | i) True  |
|    | b) True  | f) False | j) False |
|    | c) True  | g) False |          |
|    | d) False | h) False |          |

### Check Your Progress 2

- |    |          |          |         |
|----|----------|----------|---------|
| 1) | a) False | d) True  | g) True |
|    | b) False | e) True  |         |
|    | c) False | f) False |         |
- 2) Two steps or multi-step flow hypothesis indicates that new information or idea normally does not reach the intended receivers directly. It first reaches the opinion leader and then the opinion leaders pass it on to their followers/receivers. The second state may involve, besides passing on of information, the spread of influence by the opinion leaders.
- 3) Selectivity process refers to the tendency of the individuals to selectively expose themselves (selective exposure) to communication in a way that agrees with their existing opinion and beliefs and then accordingly interpret a message (selective perception) and retain only information (selective retention) which is in line with their existing opinions and beliefs.

### Check Your Progress 3

- |    |          |          |          |
|----|----------|----------|----------|
| 1) | a) False | d) False | g) False |
|    | b) False | c) True  |          |
|    | c) True  | f) True  |          |

- 2) Innovativeness is a measure of one's preparedness to adopt a new practice or idea earlier than other members of the social system to which one belongs.

**Check Your Progress 4**

- 1) a) False      c) False  
b) True        d) True
- 2) Media forum is an organized gathering of selected individuals who meet regularly to discuss a mass media programme. The examples include—Paul Neurath's radio forum in India, *radiophonics* school of Latin America, and Italian *telescuola*.

**Check Your Progress 5**

- 1) a) False      c) False  
b) False

**Check Your Progress 6**

- 1) a) False  
b) False
- 2) To educate rural people on the use of public latrines, one can use several communication channels such as small group discussions, radio, television or video programmes as well as exposure visit to a village where public latrines are in use.