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# UNIT 1 DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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While development as phenomena is as old as human civilisation, development studies emerged after the Second World War. The concept of development has been associated with Westernisation, modernisation, progress, social change and sustainability. There have been paradigm shifts, and changes in the way development was conceived and theorised. These changes in definition and theory have impacted reporting of developmental issues in media which have been dealt with in this Block.

Over time, the reporting of development issues from a narrow focus on the economy and related fields has broadened to include the social sector, environment, telecommunications, policy and planning. Earlier reporting used to be by wire services for radio or print media which has widened to include new media. At the same time, principles and techniques of reporting on development are mostly the same, some differences, especially concerning new and digital media. There are various challenges in reporting developmental issues, which we shall discuss in this Unit.

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## 1.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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After studying this Unit you should be able to :

- differentiate between the concepts of development, development communication and development journalism;
- discuss important developmental issues;
- describe coverage of development related issues;
- analyse what makes for good reportage of developmental issues;
- examine reporting on developmental issues for legacy media as compared to new media;
- identify challenges to reporting on developmental issues; and
- report on major developmental issues.

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## 1.2 CONCEPTUALISING DEVELOPMENT

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The field of development and its offshoots - development communications and development journalism emerged following the Second World War. The Western world had witnessed unparalleled death and destruction during World War. There was a large scale loss of human life and destruction of infrastructure during its course. Therefore, with peace came the emphasis on rebuilding infrastructure, especially roads, bridges, buildings and cities. The United Nations agencies also laid renewed emphasis on the concept of human dignity and the rights of an individual. All this helped in bringing the notion of development to the centre stage.

After the Second World War, the world became politically divided into the capitalist bloc lead by the USA and the Communist bloc lead by the USSR. These two competing worldviews and alternative development paths also helped to make the concept mainstream.

### 1.2.1 Defining Development

As stated earlier, the term Development relates to progress, advancement in stages, modernisation and economic growth. The term development is a contested one. According to Amartya Sen, Development is freedom. He further says, “freedom is both the primary objective to development and the principal means of development. The human being is the engine of change”. Is economic progress, for some, means well being of the individual. The overall development is growth, wellbeing, economic progress, freedom to pursue what we want to pursue development. From 1970s onward, development has come to mean social change. Questions related to the environment, sustainability and human rights are all part of the development discourse today. The Rights-Based Approach to development stressed the importance of the rights to basic needs – food, shelter, education, livelihood, among others.

### 1.2.2 Development Communication

Development communication makes strategic use of communication in the pursuit of development objectives. Development communication is positive, pragmatic

and practical and follows various approaches: Information, Education, Communication IEC approach, Behaviour change communication, advocacy, social mobilization and others. Development Communication includes social marketing and social advertising as well.

### 1.2.3 Development Journalism

Development journalism is a subset of development communication. It is centred on news related to development issues and does not include advertising and public relations. In India, development journalism is interpreted to be news and features relating to development issues. In certain countries, it is viewed as the information given by the Government.

#### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

**Notes:** 1) Use the space below for your answer.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1) What is common between development communication and development journalism?

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2) What is development reporting?

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## 1.3 MAJOR DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES AREAS

Many issues related to development came to the forefront after the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century. These stemmed from new modes of production, creation of capital and labour, rural to urban migration and transformation of society from traditional to modern. During the period after the Second World War, the development pathway was based on economic growth. The economists viewed the central issue of development as being characterized as the growth of the national economy. While the field of development journalism emerged in the 1960s, the issues covered have changed for a while.

### 1.3.1 The Economy

The economy has occupied the centre stage in development right from the Second World War onwards. The dominant paradigm of development that held sway

from 1945 to about 1970 considered development synonymous with economic growth. Development was defined in purely economic terms. It was a limited world view which considered economic growth to be an essential aspect of development. Economic growth was to be achieved by capital intensive investment in large projects. Development was to be measured in macroeconomic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product GDP and per capita income.

Economists such as W.W. Rostow had popular models of economic growth centred on mechanical processes of spurring savings and investment rates. **His proportion is related to modernisation theory.**

In the period immediately following the Second World War, development was considered an investment in infrastructure and rebuilding of many roads, bridges, dams, factories, buildings etc., which were destroyed in Western Europe.

Today, the economy continues to be central to our understanding of development, but the field's scope is much broader. Reporting on the economy involves the interpretation of statistics and trends to simplify and demystify complex issues. Often economic reporting is based on data. The economy broadly includes the primary, secondary, and tertiary or services sectors, with infrastructure and telecommunications being the most important. The primary sector includes agriculture, and the secondary includes industry and manufacturing. Sectors such as information technology, energy, transportation, financial and social services are considerable areas in themselves.

Journalists reporting on the economy must understand the Union and Budgets, Economic Survey, taxation policies and other policy announcements made by the Finance and Commerce Ministries. After economic liberalization in 1991, news stories reflect happenings in the stock, commodity and bullion markets, and monetary and credit policy announcements made by the Reserve Bank of India. The privatization, liberalization and deregulation that India witnessed post-1990 gave content for a variety of news. Taxation and corporate affairs are potential areas of economic reporting.

Economic indicators such as Gross Domestic Product GDP and Per capita income, indices of consumer and wholesale prices, industrial and agriculture production, employment, stock indices, money supply, trade balance, foreign currency reserves, the exchange rate of the Indian rupee are all material for economic and developmental stories. Comparative growth trends across regions or at different points of time all provide a good scope of such reporting.

The poverty rate or poverty line is a topic of debate and discussion in any democratic society. The state poverty data, national numbers and international comparisons are all subjects of good development stories. At the same time, poverty could be calculated by keeping in mind some minimum level of per capita income required to purchase basic amenities. More developed countries also factor in access to health and education. The World Bank releases data on global poverty, taking a base of earnings in terms of dollars per day. In India, the erstwhile Planning Commission used to release information on poverty trends in the country.

### 1.3.2 Social Sector

The emphasis on social aspects of development increased after the 1970s with the emergence of the participatory paradigm of development. The emphasis on industrialisation in the mainstream economic models of development was called into question. The concept of development was broadened to include social aspects apart from the economy. Health and education were two significant areas that gradually grew in importance. The Human Development Index (HDI) formulated by Amartya Sen, a composite index, measured social aspects of life beyond the Gross Domestic Product. It was an amalgam of the GDP growth rate, a measure of education, and health measures. Thus, it was broader than just a measure of wealth or the GDP growth rate. The HDI statistics are compiled and released annually in the form of reports published by the United Nations Development Programme. These are a good indicator of a country's overall development over a period and its comparison with other countries. The education sector is measured in terms of overall literacy rate and gross enrollment in schools and colleges. Health is generally understood in terms of the expected rate of longevity. This gives some indicator of the state of healthcare in a country, as well as nutrition.

There is an emphasis on including gender ratio in the context of development. For example, the access of girl child to education, nutrition for girls vis a vis boys, etc. There are also gender-adjusted income accounts and development statistics compiled by the UNDP as part of the Human Development Report.

Indian media and policy planning circles gave a lot of emphasis to analyzing changes in GDP figures. Unfortunately, the same emphasis is not given to analyzing HDI figures. India has not done well in HDI rankings in the region or other developing countries with similar economic growth rates. For a development journalist, the different aspects of a country's HDI can be a good matter for development stories since HDI incorporates social sector elements such as education and health.

Various government policies and schemes geared towards poverty removal and the lower-income strata of society are the subject matter of development stories. For example, the state-wise performance of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA), Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and schemes for poverty removal or their impact on people at risk constitute some excellent areas of interest for a newsperson.

### 1.3.3 Government and Governance

Let us start differentiating Government and governance. Government is a structure, and governance is a process. The Government of any country is central to development issues. It is a vast news beat in itself as several ministries need to be covered by reporters. Government policy is yet another area for development journalists.

Governance has always been an important issue in development. Writing on social change and the social thinker Ibn Khaldun mentioned the quality of governance as one reason for the ascendance or decline of a civilization. The quality of governance or good governance has been emphasized in the World Bank literature from the 1980s onwards. Development stories based on the State as an actor or State as a reformer all delve into governance and policy planning.

Even economic stories based on trends on foreign direct investment are often related to the stability of the Government and reasonable governance measures. If the perception is of an unstable government or an ineffective or corrupt government, it isn't easy to attract foreign capital for investment. You will read more about it in the next Unit.

### **1.3.4 Environment**

The dominant paradigm of development that prevailed from 1945 to the decade of 1970s was characterized by industrialisation, primarily through large scale projects. Governments pushed heavy capital intensive projects in infrastructure for development. Factories, steel plants, hydroelectric dams, roadways, bridges etc., were the road to modern life and development. Manufacturing was the keyword everywhere.

An unintended consequence of such industrialisation was pollution and environmental degradation. In Unit 2 on Environment Reporting, you have read that the environmental movement grew from a small beginning in the 1970s. Rachel Carson's book, *A Silent Spring*, highlighted concerns about the adverse impact of the dominant development models on the environment. Slowly public perception about the efficacy of heavy industrialisation as the road to development began to change. Some development reports of environmental damage and adverse impact on humans from pollution started surfacing in newspapers in developing countries. Alternative pathways to development using intermediate technology and small and medium scale projects started becoming popular after the 1970s.

The notion of sustainable development was discussed in various United Nations meetings and conferences. It helped to build public consciousness environment. Issues such as ozone layer depletion, carbon emissions, alternative energy and climate change, and pollution have become mainstream now. Alternative pathways to development that do not damage the environment are being explored. Today environment is an important beat. Various global environment accords are important stories. Environmental stories are interconnected with development, and many environmental stories are best understood by studying processes for a more extended period. Climate change and global warming are topics that provide the subject matter of many development stories. Alternative energy such as solar or wind has also emerged as a significant development and environmental reporting aspect.

The Indian news media is increasingly reporting on air pollution and its causes and its adverse impact on human health. The media has popularised the measures against air pollution. Issues such as particulate matter and crop burning etc., have become common knowledge because of sustained reporting by media.

### **1.3.5 Infrastructure**

The dominant paradigm of development was centred on the importance of infrastructure and the economic growth rate. The infrastructure sector is substantial, with everything from highways to telecommunications being part of it. All these aspects are crucial for development. Although infrastructure is part of the economy, it is so vast a subject that it is generally studied and reported on as a subset – highways, waterways, railways, etc. In India, the railway's sector is so huge that the railways had their separate rail budget presented in Parliament

until recently. The railways are perhaps the most significant employer not only in India but the entire world. Development stories on Indian railways could cover passenger, freight, pricing, safety, customer service, new routes, track maintenance, employees issues etc. Telecommunications is another sector that has implications for the entire economy. Telecommunications systems act with a multiplier effect, impacting all the three sectors of the economy, primary, secondary and tertiary. Development stories concerning telecommunication could touch upon the spectrum, pricing, penetration of services, new applications and comparative growth trends across states or regions.

### 1.3.6 Agriculture/Rural

Agriculture is a large segment of the primary sector of our economy. Innovations in agricultural techniques formed the basis of the early work in development communication. Everett Rogers proposed his theory called Diffusion of Innovations based on agricultural innovations among farming communities during the 60s.

The agricultural sector is still vital to the economy. As a country develops, GDP accruing from agriculture generally goes down, while that of the services sector increases. The agriculture sector is a considerable employer in many developing countries. In India, productivity in agriculture is mainly low as the sector suffers from unemployment and underemployment. Some developing countries are heavily dependent on their agricultural sectors either as raw materials domestically or for export. Such countries have very little diversification in their economies and are heavily dependent on fluctuations in the price of agricultural commodities.

In India, the farming sector is crisis-ridden. Farmers often go bankrupt after taking loans which they are unable to repay. They often demand loan waivers, an increase in minimum support price and other benefits from the Government. In India, there is a lack of well developed cold storage networks. Thus a lot of agricultural produce rots and not processed. Spurt in farmer suicides is a stark reminder that the sector is bedevilled with problems. P. Sainath's book *Everybody Loves a Good Drought*, a compilation of his development reports on agricultural and development issues, throws light on the problems faced by the agriculture and rural sectors in India.

Apart from agriculture, rural issues include access to education and health. Livelihoods are also an important aspect. Various government schemes have targeted rural poverty and distress. There is generally a paucity of good news stories on rural issues. You will read more about it in Unit 7 of this Block.

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## 1.4 REPORTING DEVELOPMENT

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Some evergreen principles of reporting have stood the test of time, whatever the change in scenario.

### 1.4.1 Principles of Good Reporting

Good journalism is based on principles such as truth, objectivity, accuracy, fairness etc., and adherence to these principles differentiates a journalist from an activist. The job of a journalist is to tell the story, as it is, without taking sides. A journalist reports on the story, s/he is not part of the story. Development reporting also

adheres to these basic tenets. Good development journalism involves reporting on stories that are concerned with some aspect of social change. Reporting on development issues is not synonymous with propaganda on behalf of the Government or a non-Government organisation. Instead, it involves looking at developmental issues with a critical lens and separating the truth from the lies. It also means holding various stakeholders accountable.

### **Truth and Accuracy**

Like any other area, reporting development issues also requires adherence to truth. Accuracy involves cross-checking facts to make sure that there are no errors.

Verification of facts is more important than ever before in the present time when digital media often indulges in the creation and dissemination of false and fake news.

### **Objectivity**

In journalistic terms, objectivity implies covering the issue from all angles and perspectives to arrive at a 'balanced' view. For example, in a story about an industrial dispute and labour unrest, views from labour, management, government officials, and independent experts could all be considered. The journalistic notion of objectivity is different from the view of the social sciences that all enquiry is essentially subjective. The journalistic notion of objectivity is more functional in approach and a recipe for practising good journalism.

### **Fairness**

Reporting should not be one-sided. If an allegation made the person or entity concerned, they should be allowed space to offer their opinion or rebuttal. All the relevant facts should be disclosed. Insinuations or partial disclosures which are motivated go against the tenets of good journalism.

## **1.4.2 Techniques of Good Reporting**

Development reporting follows many of the principles and procedures of reporting in other areas. A news story follows a classic inverted pyramid approach. The most important information is given at the beginning, followed by less important information. What makes a subject newsworthy? Something has changed, it has an impact, and it is essential to the audience. For example, a new law or policy announced by the Government could be considered newsworthy. A disaster that affects human life is also newsworthy. Questions such as the magnitude of the change and impact thus determine the newsworthiness of the topic. Proximity is yet another determinant. For example, a tsunami affecting India directly is of more interest within India than a tsunami affecting Indonesia, even if the casualties are more.

Development features are written in a format different from a news story. Most are not required to follow the inverted pyramid format. A feature can adopt the narrative structure of a story with a beginning, a body and a conclusion. We have discussed in other units that there is no single way to write a news feature. However, good features typically personify an abstract issue and are best written from a human interest perspective.



## **Subject/Angle of the story**

Generally unfolding current events trigger development news reportage. However, investigative stories require in-depth coverage and contextual information. The story's angle can come out of research - it can be based on current happenings that gain a particular prominence. The headline of the story is critical to grab attention in today's competitive media environment. It must relate to the subject matter and yet be catchy.

## **Reporting style**

It should be audience-specific - the literacy levels, age, gender, cultural background, rural or urban and other parameters should be kept in mind. In reporting development, jargon should be avoided. When technical terms are used, these should be followed by a short explanation to connect with the reader/audience. The style should be simple, lucid and crisp. Most print and television stories are now shorter in length. Online stories can have more information as compared to print media stories.

## **Research-based**

Development reporting should be research-based. Development issues are typically complex and have different dimensions and ramifications. Research in these areas is essential. Research can start with secondary material such as published books, journals, reports from independent and government agencies. It should be followed up with interviews with experts concerned, government officials, and persons affected by the issue in question.

Many development stories can be based on data, such as from the human development reports or Ministry reports on different economic aspects. Statistical data available from ministry reports/websites can be used for development stories pertaining to economic trends or health and education indicators etc. The UN agencies are often a good source of research material, from human development reports to health and climate change.

## **Visuals/ Infographics**

Visuals add interest to a story and make it alive. A good photograph can literally speak volumes. A good photograph can personify or illustrate an abstract issue. Infographics and graphs can be used for illustrating complicated trends or statistics. Bar charts, pie charts, line graphs are among the more common ones. For online stories or television reportage, video clips can tell the story. However, a word of caution is needed. In this age of fake news, photographs can be photoshopped and morphed, leading to false news being created and disseminated. As with other forms of journalism, the source is essential in ascertaining the credibility of a news story.

## **Sources**

The credibility of sources is key to the impact of a story. Sources quoted can be government officials, independent experts, people affected by the matter under consideration etc. The participatory paradigm ushered in from the 1970s gives more importance to dialogue, debate and discussion, which are participatory and democratic processes. Thus the angle of vision of the news or in-depth story has to be people-centric, rather than based on 'official sources of information. For example, quotes, photographs, audio or video clips should be affected by the

development processes. The development reporter should make all efforts to locate sources that will give insights into an issue that s/he is covering. As indicated earlier, research-based reports and publications can also be authentic sources.

**Time frame**

While news stories are based on recently unfolding events, development stories often need to consider processes to give context to the story. These may require research into the background of an issue. For example, a story on agricultural development in an area should cover how it is happening and who have been instrumental in bringing it about over a period.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 2**

**Notes:** 1) Use the space below for your answer.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1) What are the principles of good reporting?

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2) What are the techniques of good reporting?

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**1.5 REPORTING DEVELOPMENT IN DIFFERENT MEDIA**

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While some reporting principles on development remain standard across all media, some are more specific to a particular medium. In the following section, we will discuss reporting development issues in print, radio, television, film and new media. Historically, much of the development coverage has been related to disaster management or reportage of problems faced in developing countries. Positive development stories have had a much smaller share of the coverage.

**1.5.1 Print**

They are reporting development news stories like any other news story to follow the classic inverted pyramid style. Here the important question of who, what, when, why and how are all covered in the intro (first) paragraph of the story, with other elements of the story following in subsequent paragraphs. Most news stories are shorter than features, with the length of every story differing from

newspaper to newspaper. For example, The Hindu newspaper gives more excellent coverage and space to developmental stories than the Times of India.

### **1.5.2 Radio**

Radio continues to be an effective medium for reporting on development as it has a comprehensive outreach and covers different strata of society. While radio sets may be declining, radios are being listened to more and more over mobile phones. Many public service announcements are aired repeatedly on the radio, as it is a suitable means of reaching the target audience. In India, we have the national broadcaster, All India Radio, and many private radio stations in operation. However, news and current affairs remain the purview of the state, as mandated by our Government. Private radio stations in India are primarily focused on entertainment. There is always scope for good radio documentaries and features on development. The role of radio is also essential in giving disaster warnings and coverage to disaster management.

One of the effective mediums for reporting on development is community radio. In countries such as Tanzania and Nepal, community radio is at the forefront of reporting development. Community radio programming is developed and aired by the community members themselves. It is genuinely participatory and reflects the voice and aspirations of people. In India, community radio is yet to take off in a big way. However, there is a sense of scepticism that the medium may be misused in some troubled regions in the country. Many licenses are yet to be allotted.

### **1.5.3 Television**

Most of the private TV channels are based on advertisement-supported models. The exception is public service broadcasting. In India, most TV channels are striving to survive in a crowded, competitive market. The channels often adopt sensationalism and tabloidization to grab the attention of a fractured audience. In this scenario, the space for in-depth development stories is minimal.

### **1.5.4 Films**

Documentary films are a good way to explore development issues with an in-depth approach. Documentary films are a vehicle to explore nuances of development which may not be available in mainstream TV news channels. Unfortunately, the channels showing development based documentary films are relatively few. Some channels in the infotainment sector, such as Discovery or National Geographic show documentary films.

Mainstream commercial cinema also has the capacity to create awareness about development issues. While the primary purpose of commercial cinema is entertainment and to earn profits, it can also be a vehicle for informing the public. For example the Hindi film *Taare Zameen Pe* created a lot of awareness about learning disabilities and dyslexia. The Hollywood film *Erin Brockovitch* created awareness about industrial pollution and health hazards.

### **1.5.5 New Media**

New media, including websites, e-publications and social media such as Facebook and Twitter, can be utilized effectively to report on development issues. Web

portals such as Scroll cover a range of development-related stories and have a wide audience. Since space is not a constraint in new media, detailed development stories can be covered in it. The new media is inherently multimedia, which allows audio and video clips to be inserted. Suitable links related to connected stories can be hyperlinked as well. Writing for social media differs with the medium. For example, Twitter is restricted in length, so generally, short opinions are aired. However, links to long stories can also be added. Facebook posts are generally to a general audience of ‘friends.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 3**

**Notes:** 1) Use the space below for your answer.

2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this Unit.

1) What is the difference between reporting a development story for print media and for online media?

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2) How can films help in creating awareness about development issues?

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**1.6 LET US SUM UP**

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In this Unit we discussed various issues related to Development studies. We started with the concept of development and then defined development communication and development journalism. Some major development areas such as economy, social sector, governance, environment, infrastructure and agriculture and rural development were also explained. It was observed that development issues are complex, interrelated, have a long time frame, and technical in nature.

We then moved on to describe the principles and techniques of development reporting. The principles of good journalism such as truth, accuracy, objectivity, fairness etc. hold for the development journalism as well, and the need for proper selection of format in development reporting was emphasized.

We also briefly looked at development reporting in different media – print, radio, television, films and new media and discussed the challenges in reporting development issues. Some pertain to lack of knowledge on the part of the journalist, while others relate to lack of authentic information. At times, problems

arise due to corruption or influences that seek to block stories and propagate false news. As a journalist, you need to stay vigilant and take due care in reporting development issues and give voice to the people effectively.

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## 1.7 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

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## 1.8 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) All communication aspects, except for advertising and public relations approaches, are common to both development communication and development journalism.
- 2) Earlier reporting on development meant only economic growth. Since the 1970s, the arena of reporting on development has widened to include social issues, environment, gender, demography, nutrition, policy etc.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) The principles of good reporting involve adherence to truth, accuracy, fairness, balance, objectivity etc.
- 2) The techniques of good reporting include research, use of appropriate reporting style, visuals, infographics, credible sources and angle of the story.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Print media stories tend to be shorter than stories on new media which are not limited by length. Stories on new media can be multi-media with audio and video links and can also be connected to related stories via hyperlinks.
- 2) Documentary films can explore development issues in-depth. Commercial cinema can use an entertainment format to create awareness about development issues. They have large audiences and large potential impact.



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