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**COMMUNICATING POVERTY:
The Philippine Experience**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of**

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ABSTRACT

Poverty is a major problem in the Philippines. Different policies and programs have been instituted to address it. Each administration designs its own program according to its definition of poverty and this serve as historical footnotes to their administration.

Communication is used as a strategy to generate awareness and secure people's acceptance of poverty policies and programs. However, it has been used as a political tool to enhance an administration's image. More open forms of communication need to be developed to avoid political patronage.

The study examined the poverty alleviation policies and programs of the government and attempted to gain a deeper understanding of how these were implemented. Subsequently, it assessed the role communication plays in the delivery of these programs. The research yielded a wealth of data that links poverty, communication and programs. The study reveals that people's conditions affect their capacity to gather and receive information. In their dire conditions their information needs revolve around their wellbeing, livelihood and security. Likewise, the poor rely on handed-down information and search for other forms of communication such as mass media to confirm the information.

The nature of communication remains top-down despite the democratic setting, as barriers prevent unfavourable information to reach the top. The sifting of information takes place, filtering out failures of programs, which may in turn affect the image of the Presidency or the administration. The free flow of information has yet to truly manifest character. The study identified several strategies to implement this. Interpersonal communication is one of the best methods and tapping the local officials to serve as the conveyor of information, can be maximised.

Several trends regarding poverty as well as communication have surfaced in the last few years. It could be summarised that the poor people's participation in the crafting of programs that affect their lives is an important aspect. It is therefore paramount to establish linkages and open communication lines between them and the government.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Local Government Units¹

Region is a sub-national administrative unit comprising several provinces having more or less homogenous characteristics, such as ethnic origin of inhabitants, language or dialect spoken, agricultural produce, etc.

Province is a political unit of the Philippines. It consists of varying numbers of municipalities and, in some cases, of component cities. Its functions and duties in relation to its component cities and municipalities are generally coordinative and supervisory.

Municipality is a political corporate body which is endowed with the facilities of a municipal corporation, exercised by and through the municipal government in conformity with law. It is a subsidiary of the province which consists of a number of barangays within its territorial boundaries, one of which is the seat of government found at the town proper (poblacion).

Barangay is the smallest political unit into which cities and municipalities in the Philippines are divided. It is the basic unit of the Philippine political system. It consists of less than 1,000 inhabitants residing within the territorial limit of a city or municipality and administered by a set of elected officials, headed by a barangay chairman/captain (punong barangay).

Seven regular Sangguniang (Council) Barangay members or *kagawad* (councilmen) are also elected at large. The council is also made up of the Sangguniang Kabataan (Youth Council). A secretary and a treasurer are appointed by the council to assist them in their affairs. Each of the members of the Sangguniang Barangay chairs different committees as part of their duties and responsibilities and brings to the council the problems of their particular sector. These committees include finance and appropriation, infrastructure and public utilities, peace and order/disaster, health, environment, education, agriculture and youth and sports. The barangay council convenes every last Saturday of the month. The agenda is prepared by the barangay secretary as concerns are brought to the barangay either individually or as formalised groups.

Income Classification of Municipalities²

Class	Average Annual Income (For the last 3 calendar years)
First	P 35 M or more
Second	P 27 M or more but less than P 35 M
Third	P 21 M or more but less than P 27 M
Fourth	P 13 M or more but less than P 21 M
Fifth	P 7 M or more but less than P 13 M
Sixth	Below P 7 M

¹ Terms defined in Ortiz, 2003.

² Based on Department of Finance Department Order No.32-01 effective November 20, 2001, in www.nscb.gov.ph.

Communication Terms³

Change Agent is an individual who influences clients' innovation-decisions in a direction deemed desirable by change agency.

Communication is a process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding. An individual can reduce the degree of uncertainty by obtaining information.

Communication Channel is the means by which messages get from one individual to another.

Diffusion is the process which an innovation is communicated through certain channels overtime among the members of the social system. Diffusion is a special type of communication concerned with the spread of messages that are perceived as new ideas.

Innovation is an idea, practice or object perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption.

Poverty Terms⁴

Absolute poverty is the condition of the household below the food threshold level.

Food threshold refers to the minimum cost of food required to satisfy nutritional requirements for economically necessary and socially desirable physical activities.

Income Gap refers to the average income shortfall (expressed in proportion to the poverty line) of families with income below the poverty threshold (1997 Philippine Poverty Statistics, NSCB)

Poverty Gap is the total income shortfall (expressed in proportion to the poverty line) of families with income below the poverty threshold, divided by the total number of families (1997 Philippine Poverty Statistics, NSCB).

Poverty incidence refers to the proportion of families (or population) with per capita income less than the per capita poverty threshold to the total number of families (population).

Poverty threshold refers to the minimum income required to meet the food requirements and other non-food basic needs.

Relative poverty refers to the gap between the rich and the poor.

Severity of Poverty is the total of the squared income shortfall (expressed in proportion to the poverty line) of families with income below the poverty threshold, divided by the total number of families.

³ Terms defined in Rogers, n.d., in
<http://mstm.gmu.edu/mstm720/Articles/DifussionOfInnovationsGlossary.html>

⁴ Terms defined by the National Statistical and Coordination Board in
<http://www.nscb.gov.ph/glossary/default.asp>

Subsistence incidence refers to the proportion of families (or population) with per capita income less than the per capita food threshold to the total number of families (population).

The *poor* are individuals and families whose income fall below the poverty threshold as defined and/or cannot afford in a sustained manner provide for their minimum basic needs of food, health, education, housing and other essential amenities of life.

Poverty alleviation refers to the reduction of absolute and relative poverty.

Urban poor refers to individuals and families residing in urban centres and urbanising areas who cannot in any sustained manner provide their minimum basic needs and other essential amenities of life.

Poverty Alleviation Program Terms⁵

CIDSS Implementer implements the program, coordinates/links/networks with LGUs, GOs, NGOs, POs and other organisations in the delivery of social services; gives directions to the barangays as to the implementation of the program.

Convergence is the focusing and synchronisation of resources, services and interventions by SRA flagship programs and other agencies/entities on specific target families and communities, using the MBN approach as the strategy for convergence, and providing for multi-level, multi-sectoral and inter-agency coordination and consultation.

Flagship Program refers to projects in Agricultural Development; Fisheries and Aquatic Resource Conservation and Management; Protection of Ancestral domains; Workers Welfare and Protection; Socialised Housing; Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services; Institution Building and Effective Participation and Governance prioritised by the government.

Food for Work is the expansion of Credit and Livelihood projects supported in terms of cooperative spirit (*bayanihan*) which involves the provision of manpower/labour requirements for the construction of infrastructure that is responsive or relevant to unmet MBN and benefits at least 80% of the CIDSS target families in the community.

Minimum Basic Needs (MBN) refers to the needs of a Filipino family pertaining to survival (food and nutrition, health, water and sanitation, clothing); security (shelter, peace and order/public safety, income and livelihood); and, enabling (basic education and functional literacy, participation in community development and family and psychosocial needs).

Measurements of Poverty⁶

Human Development Index combines measures that seek to capture longevity, knowledge and standard of living as components of human development. Each of the three basic components sets a minimum and a maximum for each dimension and then shows where each country stands in relation to these scales.

⁵Terms defined by the CIDSS National Secretariat, 1991 and 2001

⁶ Terms defined by the UNDP in <http://www.undp.org/hdr2002/faq.html#1>

Human Poverty Index measures poverty by indicators of the most basic dimensions of deprivation: short life, lack of basic education, and lack of access to public and private resources.

Gender Empowerment Measure measures gender inequality in key areas of economic and political participation and decision-making.

LIST OF TERMS

ADMU	Ateneo de Manila University
APIS	Annual Poverty Indicators Survey
AuSAID	Australian Agency for International Development
ARCs	Agrarian Reform Communities
ARMM	Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BCS	Bureau of Communications Services
BIAC	Barangay Inter-Agency Development Council
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CAR	Cordillera Administrative Region
CCRM	Community Communication Resource Mobilisation
CIDSS	Comprehensive and Integrated Delivery of Social Services
CORD	Cabinet Officer for Regional Development
DBM	Department of Budget and Management
DOF	Department of Finance
DSWD	Department of Social Welfare and Development
EDSA	Epifanio delos Santos Avenue
E.O.	Executive Order
FACE	Focused Accelerated Convergent and Expanded
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FIES	Family and Income Expenditure Survey
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National product
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report

HPI	Human Poverty Index
HUDCC	Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council
JBIC	Japan Bank for International Cooperation
KALAHI	Kapit Bisig Laban sa Kahirapan
KALIMOSKA	Kamog Livelihood Mobilisation of SEA-K Association
KERA	Kamog Environmental and Re-greening Association
LGC	Local Government Code
LIMs	Low Income Municipalities
LBP	Land Bank of the Philippines
MBN	Minimum Basic Approach
MIAC	Municipal Inter-Agency Council
MIMAP	Micro Impacts of Macroeconomic and Adjustment Policies
M.O.	Memorandum Order
MTPDP	Medium Term Philippine Development Plan
NAAPA	National Action Agenda for Poverty Alleviation
NAPCC	National Anti-Poverty Commission
NCR	National Capital Region
NEDA	National Economic Development Authority
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NSCB	National Statistical and Coordination Board
NSO	National Statistics Office
OPS	Office of the Press Secretary
PAF	Poverty Alleviation Fund
PIA	Philippine Information Agency
PIAC	Provincial Inter-Agency Council
PIDS	Philippine Institute for Development Studies

POs	People's Organisations
PSCC	Productivity and Skills Capability Center
POs	People's organisations
R.A.	Republic Act
RIAC	Regional Inter-Agency Council
SEA-K	Self-Employment Assistance <i>Kaunlaran</i>
SK	Sangguniang Kabataan
SRA	Social Reform Agenda
SRC	Social Reform Council
SRSC	Social Reform Council Secretariat
SWS	Social Weather Station
TESDA	Technology Education and Skills Development Authority
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United National Development Programme
WDR	World Development Report
WB	World Bank