

**Development of a drama format for interactive communication with special reference to community development and livelihood improvement project**

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Gemidiriya Community Development and Livelihood Improvement Project (CDLIP) is a World Bank funded development project, based on Community Driven Development (CDD) approach. A conventional communication strategy has been used by CDLIP. The objective of the study was to develop a new drama format for interactive communication of the CDLIP and to assess the effectiveness in communication. A preliminary assessment was undertaken in a pilot village of the Project in Badulla District, to evaluate the effectiveness of presently used communication methods. Forty respondents were randomly selected and interviewed with a structured questionnaire schedule followed by key informant discussions. Using the findings of the preliminary assessment a new drama format was developed based on the selected combinations of the stage drama and street drama. The drama was designed to facilitate the interactions among four major stakeholder groups i.e. community members, project staff, experienced village leader from a close by CDLIP village and the university group. This drama is consisted of messages that are relevant to the initial contact of a Project village. It was improved with an expert panel and further improvements were done after the pre - testing undertaken in a CDLIP village.

The evaluation of the interactive drama was conducted in Malpotha GND of the Badulla District. Before and after testing was done to evaluate the effectiveness of the newly developed drama format and 30 randomly selected participants of the program was surveyed. Evaluation of the drama showed that the planned messages were transmitted effectively and there was a positive change of attitudes. The mean attitude level of the respondents towards the major principles of the CDLIP before showing the drama was 3.2. This value rose up to 8.8 after they participated in the drama. This is a highly significant increase. (Wilcoxin Rank Test,  $Z = -2.8079$ ,  $p = .005$ ) Interactive drama format for communication could be advantageously incorporated as a participatory communication method. The media treatment incorporating a dramatic component combined with wide participation of four major stakeholder groups appears to be scientifically valid and socially acceptable. The different dramatic formats should be experimented with different characters and incorporation of other communication methods and materials may achieve higher effectiveness and efficiency..