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UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA



Public Administration, Human Resources
and Social Development Division

**REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION
IN SUPPORT OF EFFECTIVE POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN
THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

(Africa Hall, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 26 - 28 October 1994)

Opening Statement

by

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Executive Secretary of UNECA

Distinguished Workshop Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to have this opportunity to welcome you to Africa Hall at this opening session of the Regional Workshop on Development Communication in Support of Effective Popular Participation in the Development Process.

More than ever before, Popular Participation has become an issue of significant relevance to Africa. The reality that Africa's recovery and development can not be achieved without the full and effective participation of people and their organizations is now widely recognized. The African Charter for Popular Participation in Development is an historic landmark that has given credence to the principle that people's organizations, non-governmental organizations and other components of civil society have the right to participate in the social and economic processes of their countries.

An integral thrust of this regional workshop is to enhance the skills of people's organizations and non-governmental organizations in communicating with grassroots to support of the effective participation and involvement of people in the development process. It is our firm believe that NGOs and people's organizations should not simply serve as mechanisms for merely carrying out development projects, but they

must also have important roles and responsibilities in promoting the active participation of people in the process. Its main purpose is to equip the participants with and provide an opportunity for them to exchange information and crossfertilize ideas on the important areas of promoting participatory development through effective communication techniques. The workshop has a practical emphasis and its main focus is on techniques and practices in activating communication channels to ensure two-way flow of information between the grassroots and policy makers.

Since communication is a new field and its incorporation into development work is even newer there is a need to develop skills and build into the development process an imaginative human communication component. Research and experience shows that disseminating information does not automatically mean that it is accepted and adopted. Often well designed programmes and attractive technologies all fail to produce the intended changes because of lack of appropriate communication technology.

As development agents' our prime responsibility is to get things done through people. However, sound our ideas or well-reasoned our decisions may be, they become effective only to the extent that they are transmitted to others and as they achieve the desired action--or reaction. Communication, therefore, is our most vital development tool. As people's organization we communicate not only with words,

but through approaches, attitudes and our actions, for communication encompasses all human behaviour that results in an exchange of meaning. How well we manage depends upon how well we communicate in this broad sense.

It is obvious that for development strategies to be successful, they must aim at engendering understanding and awareness of the problems and opportunities of people and improving the interaction between grassroots people and the development process through an efficient communication system. ECA's Public Administration, Human Resources and Social Development Division has organized this workshop to highlight the crucial role of communication in increasing the efficiency, cost-effectiveness and continuity of development activities to underscore and its rightful place as a cornerstone of the development process.

To facilitate the deliberations of the workshop, ECA has prepared two background documents that deal with some of the underlying principles and practical techniques of communication in support of participatory development. They are intended to help in the examination of the role and significance of communication in the development process and in identifying various modules and techniques for enhancing the communication skills of people's organizations and non-governmental agencies. Besides the background documents, ECA is distributing a training manual entitled "Communication for Participatory Development". These should guide us in

giving serious thought to and seriously examining the important areas of development communication for effective popular participation

I would like, once again, to thank all of you, for being here to participate in and share your views at this workshop. I would like to assure you that the results of this workshop will be widely disseminated to People's organization and the non governmental communities as well as to interested partners outside Africa with a view to ensuring that the fruits of your thought and deliberations are appropriately shared and supported by all those, who are, involved in this very pertinent issue.

I thank you for your kind attention and wish you most fruitful deliberations.