

*"The question confronting the Church today
is how to employ the communication media so as to let them have
the full impact of the Gospel message"*

Pope John Paul II, Message for the 23rd World Communication Day

Trends in Christian Communication ✓ 1985 - 1989

Le soutien apporté par les Agences d'Aide des Eglises aux programmes de communication dans les pays en voie de développement s'est stabilisé à un très haut niveau au cours de la décennie qui vient de se terminer. Cependant on peut relever un certain nombre d'éléments annonciateurs de modifications structurelles suggérant que dans l'avenir la communication se verra de plus en plus considérée comme une composante essentielle de projets intégrés de développement plutôt que comme une fin en soi.

C'est ce qu'indiquent en tout cas les données statistiques disponibles au CAMECO sur base de l'enregistrement des projets soumis entre 1985 et 1989 pour financement auprès de plus de 25 Agences d'Aide en Europe et en Amérique du Nord, que nous commentons ci-après.

Whereas inter-governmental development cooperation in the media and communications sector obviously reached its peak in the second half of the last decade, support of respective programmes through Church funding agencies by and large consolidated at the high level which had been achieved. There are however indicators for certain structural changes suggesting that more emphasis will be put in future on communications as a functional component of integrated development projects rather than on media ventures with an end in itself.

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Statistics compiled by the documentation department of the Catholic Media Council - where applications submitted to more than 25 European and North American funding agencies and international Church aid

programmes are registered and classified - show that both the Church funding agencies and their local counterparts in the developing countries take a continuously strong interest in the improvement of communication infrastructures and media facilities. The total support requested in this sector during the years 1985 - 1989 amounts to some US\$ 370 million. Out of this total - according to the most cautious estimates - at least 50 per cent were actually granted. Unfortunately the total investments cannot be more accurately assessed, since rejection but also revision of individual projects is always possible, and the data processed by the funding agencies do not include the contributions of the local project holders - usually about 25 per cent of the overall expenses involved.

The annual amounts requested show a steadily increasing trend with a minor slope in 1989 (cf. table 1), whereas the total number of registered projects in the media and communication field have more or less stabilised since 1986 (cf. table 2). Although no direct comparison is possible, one might recall in this connection that for instance UNESCO's "International Programme for the Development of Communication" (IPDC) launched in consequence of the MacBride Report (1980) and influenced by the fervent debate on *New International Information and Communication Order (NIICO)*, in the years 1982 - 1987 could only allocate

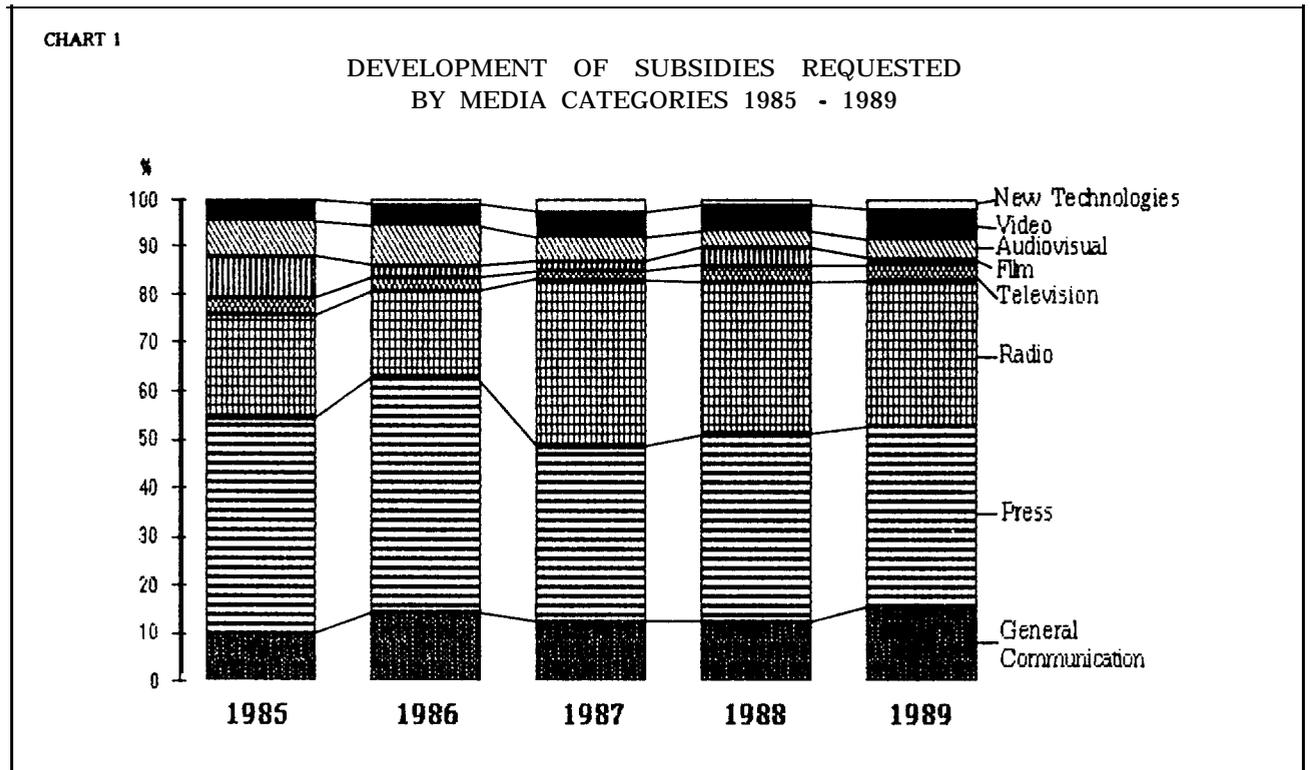
an average of US\$ 2.5 million per year, the overall requests during this period amounting to US\$ 61 million. Support was offered mainly in the fields of research and training, followed by news agencies, radio and TV broadcasting, and planning. Meanwhile the programme as such is seriously at stake, although much hope was raised during the past two years for an eventual increase of funds, most of them based on voluntary contributions by a few member states, which may now decide to act on bilateral terms. Deliberations are under way for restoring the programme as a joint venture of several organisations in the U.N. family, like FAO, WHO, and others, but the outcome of this effort is still unclear.

Also some national development agencies of the industrialised countries seem to have placed communications at a lower rank on their list of priorities: A specialised department for media development at the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)* for example - a service agency of the Federal Republic of Germany for technical cooperation with developing countries - has been dissolved when the organisation was restructured some two years ago. Part of its function has been taken over by a central service unit advising the regional departments on questions of information and knowledge transfer.

TABLE 1

AMOUNTS REQUESTED 1985 - 1989 (in DM)

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	TOTAL
Gen. Communication	9 442 218	13 201 171	11 540 835	13 220 832	14 555 364	61 960 420
Press	42 439 378	44 373 905	34 250 249	42 722 499	34 565 541	198 352 072
Radio	20 425 941	16 289 435	32 717 117	34 302 685	28 692 584	132 427 762
Television	3 382 892	2 307 004	1 692 667	3 324 046	2 836 338	13 542 947
Film	8 220 798	2 243 764	1 820 674	4 688 358	1 194 638	18 168 232
Audiovisuals	7 711 650	8 435 054	5 130 931	4 244 061	4 237 840	29 759 536
Video	3 692 651	3 150 874	4 858 446	4 968 889	5 641 255	22 312 115
New Technologies	427 200	1 593 968	2 576 772	1 819 425	2 338 504	8 755 869
Subtotal	95 743 228	91 595 175	94 587 691	109 290 795	94 062 064	485 278 953
Not specified	18 096 002	34 100 532	40 861 882	38 290 138	32 578 647	163 927 201
T O T A L	113 839 230	125 695 707	135 449 573	147 580 933	126 640 711	649 206 154



Are these already signs of resignation at the end of the 'communication decade' which was so hopefully proclaimed after the MacBride Report? Or do such developments rather reflect a certain change of view on the role of media and communications in the development process, calling for a fresh approach in the years to come? Finally, what will be the consequences of the fundamental changes in the geo-political scenario we are witnessing today on the future of development policy in this field? An interpretation of data on Church activities in the realm must not fail to seek for possible answers on such questions too, even though the demand and interest of Church institutions in communications development is holding on and seems not to face similar problems as yet.

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What have been the major trends in Christian communication development over the past five years? For the first time, comparative data can be presented covering such an extended stretch of time, and in spite of many limitations the figures are sufficiently valid to allow for an assessment of the general priorities and major development trends during these years.

MOST INVESTMENT GOES INTO PRINT MEDIA AND RADIO

One of the outstanding results has been mentioned before: The overall investments in communication programmes and technology consolidated at the high level that had been achieved in 1986 (*cf. table 1; US\$ 1.00 = DM 1.75*). Altogether US\$ 370 million were requested in the years 1985 - 1989. The requests from Latin America account for approximately 50 per cent of this amount (US\$ 186 million), whereas Africa and Asia equally share in the other half (US\$ 91 million respectively US\$ 95 million). Also the average amount requested per project is higher in Latin America (US\$ 42,000) than in Africa (US\$ 28,000) and Asia (US\$ 29,000).

If going into the different media sectors (each category including the related training and research activities), it shows that the print media are by far the most important means of communication for which financial aid has been requested from the Church funding agencies, closely followed by radio, but far ahead of all other media categories, which in combination did not require even half of the amount requested for the press. One exception is general communication, a category which includes communications **admi-**

nistration, media centres, multimedia campaigns as well as programmes in pastoral and development communication based on traditional communication and group animation. For activities of this kind, altogether DM 61.9 million or US\$ 35.4 million were requested in the reporting period.

Within the different media sectors the development was not so homogeneous as the overall trend might suggest: Whereas the demand in the sectors press, television, film and audiovisual show a certain regressive tendency (most significantly in film and AV), an increase of requests can be observed in general communication, radio, video and new technologies (the latter including computer text processing and data bases). If looking at the actual number of projects forming these requests (table 2), the growing interest in general communication and new technologies is even more significantly marked, whereas the fluctuating financial demand in the sectors press and TV is not so directly linked to the number of projects submitted for support. Quite obviously the financial demand in these media categories is to a greater extent depending on the occasional need for major (initial or interim) investments, whilst the number of activities reported remains to be stable, indicating that a certain saturation point has been reached. Radio shows an equally growing trend both in the number of projects and in the financial requirements, although at the end of the reporting period there is a certain decline of planned investments in this sector as well.

TRENDS BY CONTINENTS

How are these trends reflected in the various continents and are there possibly different priorities in Africa, Asia and Latin America as far as communications development is concerned? (Oceania must be excluded here because the total number of projects registered in the Pacific region is too small for a comparison in this regard). A respective breakdown of the survey (cf. chart 2) shows that the distribution by continents is rather similar as far as the absolute rank order or media categories is concerned: Press is by far the most important sector in all continents, followed by radio in Asia and Latin America, but audiovisuals in Africa where broadcasting is in most cases a State monopoly with little or no access for non-governmental or private initiatives. More differences do occur if one looks at the relative importance of the media categories in the various continents: Print media are taking the lead especially in Africa, whereas radio has its traditionally great importance mostly in Latin America. Multimedia programmes including traditional communication (theatre, dance, folk-arts and music) but also audio-visuals (often related to the former category) have a comparatively high stand in Asia,

Finally the general development trends take a slightly different shape if separately traced by continents: One must clearly see that general communication is the only category showing a steady and continuous increase all over the world, whereas the incline of radio is focussing

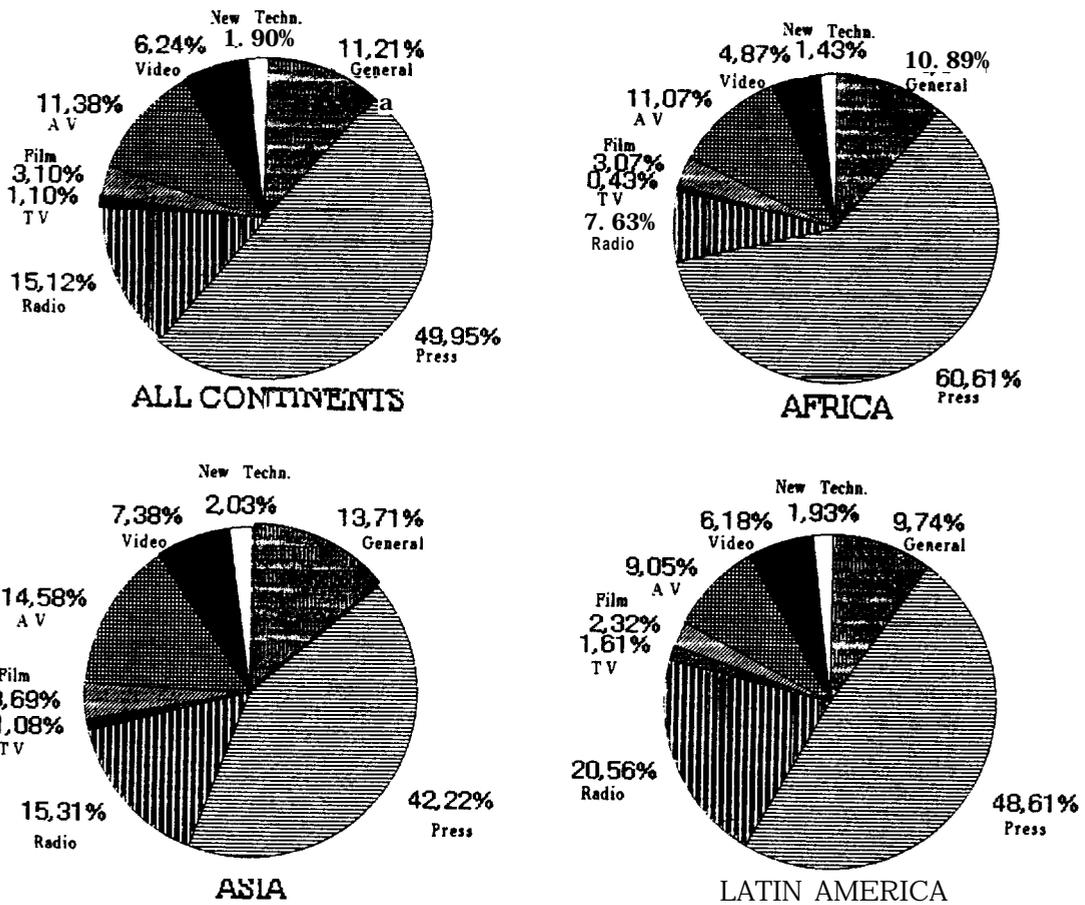
TABLE 2

NUMBER OF REGISTERED PROJECTS 1985 • 1989

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	TOTAL
Gen. Communication	168	198	292	286	316	1 260
Press	1 000	1 254	1 204	1 066	1 092	5 616
Radio	307	338	405	279	371	1 700
Television	20	21	23	33	27	124
Film	103	79	82	30	54	348
Audiovisuals	239	320	300	224	196	1 279
Video	77	113	161	135	216	702
New Technologies	11	29	39	63	72	214
TOTAL	1 925	2 352	2 506	2 116	2 344	11 243

CHART 2

AVERAGE DISTRIBUTION OF REGISTERED PROJECTS ON MEDIA CATEGORIES 1985 - 1989



on Asia, as far as the financial demand is concerned, and Latin America in terms of the number of registered projects. The slightly regressive trend of planned investments in the print media cannot be observed in Africa, where the respective figures are still on the incline, although the number of registered projects is stagnating here too. The general increase of video is most significantly marked in Latin America, whereas new technologies show the highest increase in Asia, the continent where most of the respective devices are meanwhile also produced.

CONCLUSIONS TO BE DRAWN

● In spite of a general stagnation, print media remains to be the most important means of communication for which support is requested from the Church funding agencies, more and more closely followed

by radio. Qualified partnership based on professional advice with regard to the concepts and technology involved in these sectors is an ongoing demand challenging both the funding agencies and the Catholic Media Council.

● In this connection, Africa deserves a special concern: The highest increase of planned investment in the print media sector is reported from here, and a similar development seems to be possible for the broadcast media in consequence of the political changes actually taking place. Socialist state centralism is losing ground also in the African world. At the same time the need for planning, training and practical advice is nowhere as urgent as it is in Africa, the overall requests for media development decreasing since 1985, whereas the other continents show a consolidated trend.

• The steady increase of requests in the field of general communication equally shared by all continents, can be interpreted as a reaction on disappointing experiences with isolated media ventures without appropriate infrastructures for planning, training and programme development. This holds especially for the cost-intensive mass media, but also for those media preferably used in group animation (like film and AV), the decline of which cannot be sufficiently explained by the relative increase of video projects. It seems that the growing importance of media planning and communication management, goal-oriented media research and interdisciplinary training in the different media sectors has become a felt need in the developing countries as well, and that this is at least one reason for the surprising development in this field. Another reason is of course that the traditional forms of communication, like theatre, dance, folk-arts, storytelling and music, have been increasingly adapted for pastoral and development programmes, especially in the rural areas of the developing countries. Their statistical significance however is limited by the fact that operations of this kind are often fully financed through local resources, and accordingly do not appear in the project statistics.

GROWING INTEREST FOR COMMUNICATION PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

It is difficult to say what the contribution of the Catholic Media Council has been in this process of raised awareness in the developing countries for questions of communication planning and evaluation, media training and management, and the successive transfer of competence in these fields. It shows clearly however that this part of its original mandate - namely to foster the capacity for communications planning in the developing countries at local, national and regional level - meets an existing demand and especially during the past five years has become ever more important.

If trying to draw a scenario of the nineties, this development is more than likely to hold on: There is a worldwide trend towards de-regulation in media ownership as well as towards more individualised and segmented media use at the recipient's end. The booming telecommunications industry will create a more competitive media environment also in areas where so far is none. It seems only a question of time when the media landscape in many developing countries will turn from a producer-market to a consumer-market, where people make a selection between different media channels and decide for themselves which messages they want to receive. The invasion of the video cassette in rural Asia was only a first example of what can happen in this field.

All these developments call for competent planning and concerted action of those who want their messages not to perish unheard. The aims of education and development cannot be imposed on the communication process any more, but have to prove themselves in an increasingly competitive environment. New approaches have to be developed especially as far as the appeal and attractiveness of educational, pastoral and development oriented media products is concerned.

The required improvement of professional quality must be accompanied by integrated and balanced media strategies replacing isolated action in the different media fields. More and more it will be necessary to promote public issues in multi-media campaigns rather than relying on the transmission effects of one communication channel alone - be it the mass media or face-to-face interaction in personal extension work. More and more the necessity for communication modules in integrated development programmes will be seen. In this connection the increasing interest of Church funding agencies and their local project partners in the issue of communication planning and media management is an encouraging sign of the time.

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TO OUR READERS

Unfortunately, some of our readers have not yet returned the enquiry form enclosed in issue 1/90. May we invite you to do so at your earliest convenience. Dispatch of the I.B. will be suspended for those not replying with issue 4/90.