

The Idea of "Media Village" PUSKAT's Experience in Indonesia

by Ruedi Hofmann SJ, PUSKAT

Drastic changes in TV structures

The need of a local and national programme production

For a few years, Indonesia has been experiencing an unprecedented communication boom, especially in the field of television. This can easily be demonstrated with a few facts about the history of television in Indonesia. Television started regular broadcasting in 1962 for the Jakarta area, and a few years afterwards spread to other cities as well, until during the last decade virtually the whole population of the archipelago could be reached, at least potentially. However up to 1990 this broadcast was still limited. Except for Jakarta there was only one channel broadcasting just a few hours during the evenings. The content of these programmes was very much under control, since the government had an exclusive monopoly. During ten years there were no commercials on television. Almost all local television productions were made by just one institution, i.e. TVRI (Televisi Republik Indonesia). Since there was no choice of channels, the quality of the programmes was not seen as a major problem.

This situation has been changing drastically during the last few years. The first change came when around 1985 video became unproportionally popular in Indonesia. Since then parabola antennas which can receive foreign satellite programmes have mushroomed. The main breakthrough however occurred when in 1989 the government relaxed its monopoly by allowing a daughter of the President to fill the morning and afternoon hours on TVRI with a so-called educational programme which depends on advertising. Soon after, a son of the President got permission to start his own operation, broadcasting via satellite with earthstations in all the big markets. Three other networks have followed suit. For the first time, regular television viewers in Indonesia can now enjoy programmes 20 to 24 hours a day, and in all the big cities there is a choice of three to four commercial programmes besides TVRI, and "Educational" Television.

The question which arises is: Where do all these programmes come from? All of a sudden television broadcasting hours have multiplied. Who makes these programmes? Where are the production crews recruited from? In which schools are they trained? The fact is that Indonesia seems to be completely unprepared for this communication revolution. The few universities which have communication programmes are hopelessly behind the times as far as facilities and teaching staff are concerned.

As Christians and citizens of this country we share the following concerns:

- * Communication in Indonesia should not turn into passive consumption of foreign productions.
- * Local productions should be at least of the same artistic standard as the imported programmes.
- * Popular creativity should be encouraged to free television production from bureaucratic restraints.
- * Artistic expression should be combined with technical skills to master modern communication technology.
- * A spirit of Christian openness and freedom should manifest itself through television production teams.
- * The true life-style of committed Christians should become the content of Indonesian television programmes.

During the past 25 years, PUSKAT A.V. Studio has been using modern communication technology for the needs of small groups, such as audio cassettes, slides, photos and video cassettes. Usually this type of production is called "small media" or "group media". The advantage of group media is its ability to meet the specific needs of the groups. Each communication process can be closely observed and the outcome can be evaluated easily. Unlike mass media which necessarily operates from a center which is far away from the receivers, group media is part of a process where all the participants play an active part. However the group media approach has also its disadvantages. Group media can serve only a very limited number of people.

This is the reason why we created our own television training institute. It was not too difficult for us, since we had a wealth of experience from group media workshops with field workers. These field workers are trained in village communication, which includes video production. Video production resembles very much the type of activities needed for television. A person who is well trained in video production can easily function also in television. As a matter of fact, the standard of our video equipment is not much inferior to the standard used at the commercial television stations, and in using this equipment, our people are certainly more creative than most of the commercial crews.

Almost 50% of our Studio staff live in the housing estate which we own in Minomartani, a rural village outside Yogyakarta. Besides 14 family houses we also have a beautiful village hall there. A little "newspaper" of one page is distributed daily to the village population giving information about the events at the village hall and in the village. Every day a number of activities take place: musical practice, painting workshops, dance practice, discussion groups, non-formal English courses etc.

Some of the activities are regularly broadcast live through a very popular commercial radio station which specialises in local cultural programmes (Radio Reco Buntung). There is a micro-wave-link between our village hall and the radio station. With all these activities, this village hall gives our studio staff an opportunity to make their talents and skills directly available to the village people. At the same time they themselves learn a lot from this experience which is a tremendous importance for our creative group media productions.

Recently we built a new television production studio in a nearby village. Since the beginning of 1995, on one of the commercial satellite television networks, we are in charge of a half-hour religious programme for which we can profit from most of our group media productions as well as from many documentaries we made in all parts of Indonesia.

The same studio which we use for our own television productions is also used for training. 77 television people actually working in commercial stations have already passed through our two-month intensive live-in training programme. These programmes - as well as specialised advanced training - will continue, since there is an increasing demand.

Training and production take place in our "media village" where we have accommodation facilities for up to 40 participants, close to our fully equipped television production studio.

The "heart" of this village is a second village hall which is open for the local community, and a prayer hall dedicated to the four big religions of Indonesia: Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. In fact, the human and religious communication which is practised among the villagers, our studio staff and the workshop participants, is the source of all our activities, including television training and production.

The question remains how we found the way into the village of Minomartani. In order to answer this question, we have to go back into the seventies. At that time we produced a slide show with the title "Come back to your village". Our concern then was urbanization. We saw the many people in the cities without jobs, and we saw the fate of the villages which were abandoned by the young

PUSKAT's experiences in the field of
group media

A new task: television training

Living together - learning and working
together

RESUME

L'Indonésie connaît un bouleversement important de son paysage télévisuel avec la multiplication de chaînes locales et celle des antennes paraboliques. Pour répondre à cette nouvelle situation le Studio Audiovisuel PUSKAT a ouvert un centre de formation à la télévision: situé en milieu rural en dehors de Yogyakarta ce centre est devenu un vrai "Village des médias" avec ses de nombreuses activités artistiques et éducatives annoncées dans le journal quotidien du village, répercutées dans des émissions de radio mais aussi des programmes de télévision. Le "Village des médias" accueille une quarantaine de stagiaires qui se préparent aux métiers de la TV et sont introduits dans les convictions fondamentales qui constituent le cadre directeur de cette expérience de formation: l'apprentissage à travers la vie commune dans le village; une volonté de rendre les gens actifs face au déferlement des images; une recherche artistique et une compétence technique fortes en vue d'une production locale compétitive; enfin le parler-vrai des productions qui doivent refléter et s'inspirer de la vie et de l'expérience quotidienne des gens pour que le message puisse être crédible et accepté comme tel par le public.

RESUMEN

El presente artículo resume el rápido desarrollo de la comunicación en Indonesia. Especialmente la aparición de nuevos canales de televisión fue un gran desafío para el Estudio Audiovisual PUSKAT. Partiendo de la condición que programas locales deben tener el mismo standard artístico y técnico como los importados y que en los equipos de producción debe manifestarse un espíritu de sinceridad y libertad cristiana, su estudio en Yogyakarta se dedica especialmente a la capacitación y formación de productores de televisión. Lo especial en el trabajo de PUSKAT es que todo sucede en un pequeño pueblo ("Media Village"), donde la mayoría del equipo no solamente vive y participa en todas las actividades locales pero comparte totalmente sus capacidades y habilidades con la gente misma. Hasta 40 estudiantes reciben su formación como productores de programas de televisión en este pueblo. Así todos los mensajes de los programas tienen su fundamento en la vida real y común de los habitantes de un pequeño pueblo en Indonesia.

generation. In our programme we suggested that there were many challenges for creative young people in the villages, whereas in the crowded cities there was no real future. As it happened, this slide show was presented to a group where the famous poet W.S. Rendra was present. Rendra asked: "Where do the makers of this programme live, in a village or in a city? If they themselves live in a city then their message can only be the opposite of what the title says." Rendra was right. Many comments by villagers who watched the show made it clear.

Nobody believed us. On the contrary, the fact that a production team working in a city wanted other people to stay in their villages served as an additional reason for young people to try a new life in the city. There was no way to camouflage the reality about our production team. We can let villagers speak in our programme, we can show village projects, but if our production team does not live according to the same ideals, it will never convince anybody. The question "What message?" has to be answered by who we are as a production team, and if we prefer to stay in the city, so our message will always be: "City life is better," even if we try to state the opposite. We had only two possible choices. Either we dropped the idea of convincing villagers to stay at home or we ourselves moved to a village and then made a new programme based on our own experience in that village. Obviously we had to opt for the first alternative. The programme was withdrawn from circulation, and we made a new programme instead. In this programme which is called "The Young Generation" we show the many possibilities for young people in the city. Of course, this new programme doesn't serve as propaganda against urbanization, but then the old programme didn't either!

Since we now live in a rural area, we are in a much better position to produce a convincing message. Actually the formula is quite simple: whatever message we want to convey, let us practice it in our real life as a production team, and then it will become the message of our programme. People will be convinced when they see it. In the "Media Village" we train television production teams who can become such a message.

Palavra Viva - a Successful Concept of Religious TV Spots in Brazil

by Sister Ana Elidia Neves SSPS, General Coordinator Association Palavra Viva, São Paulo

In Brazil, television has always been a challenge for the Catholic Church. There are only a few religious television programmes, the majority of which are produced by religious movements. The production costs are very high, and the prices for broadcasting time are expensive.

In this special situation, a group of religious congregations started a common project for a television programme directed at people who normally have no contact with the church. The association 'Palavra Viva' ("Vivid Word") was founded in January 1993. From April of that year onwards the programmes of Palavra Viva were broadcast by Sistema Brasileiro de Televisão (SBT), which is - after TV Globo - the second national TV network. The transmission of the spots, which have a duration of only two minutes, is gratis. During last year, more and more local TV stations have offered the transmission of a daily spot

Associação Palavra Viva
Rua Oscar Horta 143, Mooca
03105 São Paulo - SP, Brasil
Fax (011) 279.2565