

ADVENIAT

Bischöfliche Aktion



In the fiscal year 1999, Adveniat has, up to August 31st, approved more than 4,800 projects, of which about 90 can be considered as media projects. The following is a list of the most important types of media projects in the stricter sense (leaving aside e.g. grants towards publications):

- production of radio and TV programmes and of videos
- buying broadcasting time for Catholic radio and TV programmes
- subsidies to sell videos at a reduced price
- purchasing equipment for Catholic radio and TV stations and printing machines
- scholarships and travel allowances for journalists and other media people
- media seminars, work-shops and congresses
- contributions towards the operational expenses of Catholic radio and TV stations
- contributions towards the on-going expenses of media organisations, media departments of bishops' conferences etc.

These projects are dear to Adveniat. They are considerably dearer than the average project.

Given the limited space in this "Mediaforum" we do not dare to try and do justice to such a large number of projects and the broad variety of Catholic communication they stand for. Instead, I would like to focus on one country and I choose the one which is the poorest of all in the New World: Haiti. Is the poverty of Haiti reflected in the fact that Catholic media in Haiti are media with the poor, even more so than in other countries?

One method of finding out is to review the media projects of the quinquennial 1995 to 1999, analysing both the applications and the reports which Adveniat received – the underlying assumption being that it is unlikely that media with the poor can become a reality if such a perspective is not even envisaged when the proposal is outlined. How, then, are media projects from Haiti presented?

1. "media of": That is by far the most common way of introducing a media project, e.g. "the Catholic Radio of the diocese XY". The simple fact that it is owned and operated by the Catholic Church matters more and shapes it more than the objective of the enterprise or the question of what the audience would like to hear. For some, the local Church "is" the bishop. Thus in some places the Catholic radio station is commonly known as "la radio de Monseigneur".

2. "media for": Second in place among the aspects which are used to describe the media projects are the purposes it should serve: education, catechetics, evangelisation and others. It

The funding organisations play an important role in support of „Media with the Poor“. CAMECO asked them, about their ideas on the role of communication for development and their experiences with media projects in the different continents of their concern. Some of them followed our invitation:

is here that the poor come in to it for the first time. Not even one proposal fails to point out that the project shall serve the poor in particular. If one analyses the content of the programmes/publications, one finds that many indeed live up to that promise, i.e. that considerable time/space is given to issues of poverty and the living conditions of the poor.



3. "media against": The purpose of the media is to fight AIDS, drugs, violence, corruption, etc., all the suffering and all the vices which appear in an almost stereotype sequence like a litany (and which are, to be sure, neither stereotype nor litany, but Latin American and Caribbean reality), in order to convince the donor agency to help: a proof of necessity by means of unfolding the misery. Another "against" are the Protestant-fundamentalist sects which attack the Catholic Church through their media. In that perspective Catholic media should establish an "equity in weapons".

4. "media – why not?" It may seem paradoxical, but sometimes the reason given for setting up Catholic communications is: "We need them because one should have them" or "because the others have them". The feeling is: "We must do something". I believe that this motive should not be underestimated, and I mean not only in Haiti.

5. "media with". In recent years there is not very much consideration for "participation populaire" in media projects. A decade ago Radio Soleil strove to do this, but times have changed.

Summing it up, there appears to be few if any efforts to achieve "media with the poor". In any case, reading the projects I found no explicit trace of such a concept in the sense of "the poor should have a say". There is an awareness that – if they aren't media subjects – they should at least be the privileged media objects in the sense that they should receive particular attention. But this good-will has to struggle with the adversities of life in Haiti and the adversities with which any media project in Haiti has to struggle with every day. It is not a lack of intentions and plans, or even visions, but a lack of personnel, know-how and money which not only limits, but which also reduces the effects of the Catholic media. If anything is to be blamed, it is first and foremost the state of the country. People are struggling to survive. To be sure, all Haitians like the movies and a good many possess a transistor radio (and one radio in a hut is usually enough for all neighbours to hear because the volume tends to be turned on sufficiently), but "the media" are not a matter of interest. Haiti is too poor for media with the poor and – I am aware that such an assertion is going very far, but it may be worth discussing – maybe even too poor for media projects of the type that a funding agency would like them to develop. A French missionary who has spent much of his life in Haiti told me: "Media can come in once we have left the worst behind us". Perhaps he is wrong and media may well help to master the misery – a light in the tunnel and not at the end of it. *Michael Huhn, Adveniat*

