

# COMMUNICATION - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO D.P.I.

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## INTRODUCTION

Good communication is the key to success. We need it to have a fulfilling life and to carry out our jobs properly. Little or nothing is achieved without communication. Just think of how many times you have communicated today: 'Could I have a beer'; 'please send this letter to Headquarters'; 'I need some help with this project'; and so on.

However, perfect communication is almost impossible. Something always 'gets in the way', or people understand things differently.

This article describes types and levels of communication with particular reference to the Department of Primary Industry. Some suggestions for improving communication are also given.

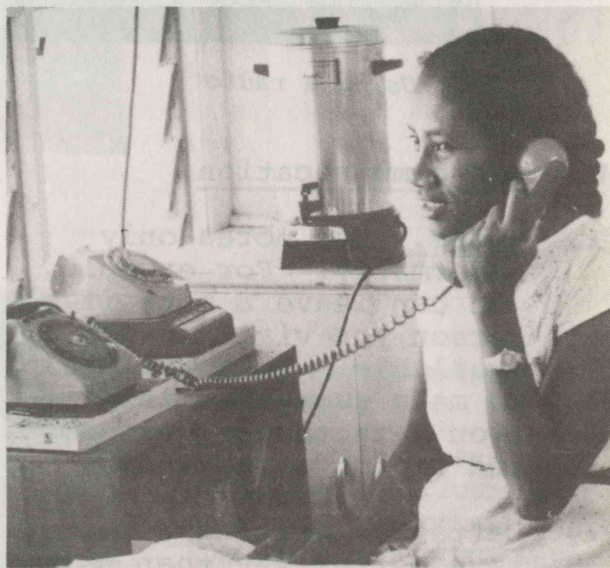
It is hoped that people at all levels will ask themselves such questions as, 'Who else needs to know about the work I am doing?', 'Who could give me help or advice?' and so on.

Communication should always be two-way. Apart from giving out information or instructions, there should be feed-back. Feed-back should be as quick as possible, but the time varies with the different types of communication.

## TYPES OF COMMUNICATION

### Verbal communication (talking)

1. Face to face. Actually talking to someone face to face is a good way to communicate. A person's reaction and understanding can be seen at once.
2. Telephone. Telephoning sometimes causes misunderstanding, but it is a good way of sending a message immediately to someone not located near you. Unfortunately not all places in Papua New Guinea are linked



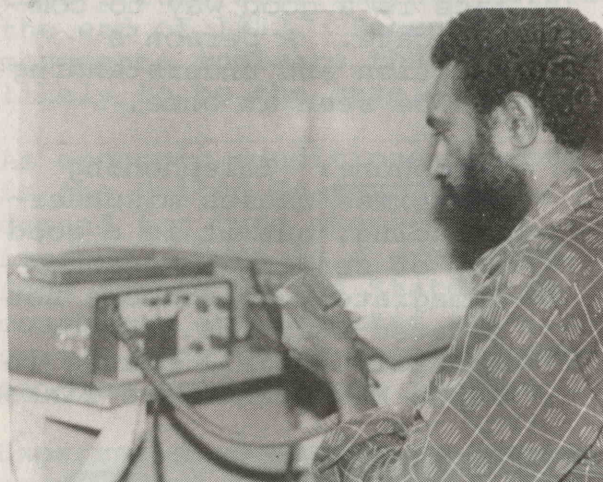
*Using a telephone*

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*This article is taken from a paper presented at the D.R.D.O.'s conference in Daru, May 1982.*

by phone (e.g. large areas of Western Province have no telephones). Also, using a telephone is quite expensive.

3. Radio. This is useful for contacting outstations. However, using the radio is often limited to 'scheduled' times. Because of interference, the message is not always clear, and some words may have to be spelt out using code (A = alpha, B = beta, C = charlie, etc.).

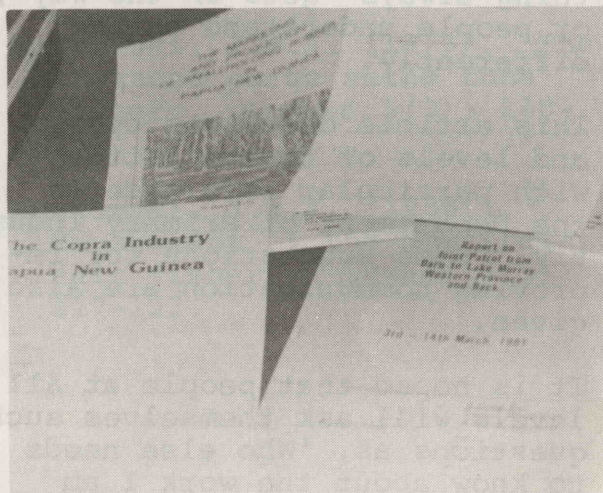


*Using a radio*

are answered - even if it is just to say that a letter has arrived.

3. Telegrams. Telegrams are used when an urgent message has to be passed quickly to someone. Great care must be taken to prepare a short, clear message. This will save money and prevent misunderstandings. Telegrams can only be sent between places with a telephone or radio. A telex is similar to a telegram. Longer messages can be sent, but both sender and receiver must have a telex machine.

4. Reports. Reports are used for a full explanation of a subject. (For example, patrol reports, feasibility studies, financial statements). They must be circulated to all the people who need to know about the subject.



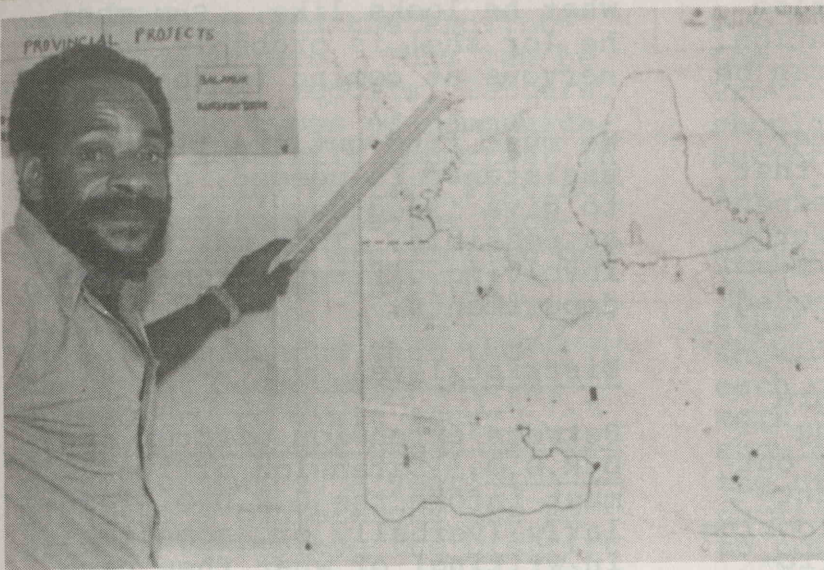
*Examples of various reports*

## Written communication

1. Notes. Use notes only informally. For example, you can leave a note if a person you visit is not available. This will help to make sure that information gets to the person, and is not forgotten.
2. Letters. Writing a letter is a better way than using a telephone or radio to explain complicated things. Also, enclosures (e.g. tables, charts) can be sent. However, the postal service is sometimes slow and we must be patient. Also it is important that letters

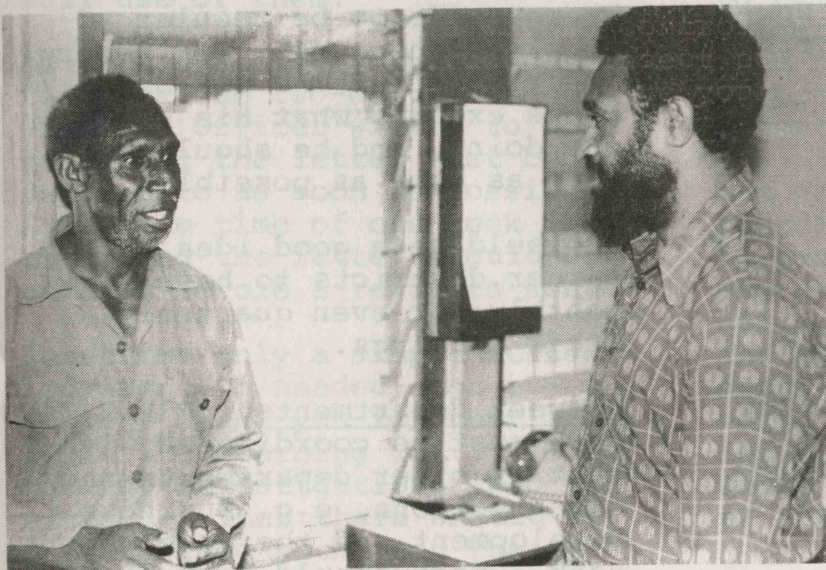
## Visual communication

1. Charts/posters. These can help make a complicated subject clearer, and they can attract people's attention. Pictures are used to help people remember things better.



#### VISUAL COMMUNICATION

Baron Nakuk, Provincial Wildlife Officer, Daru, pointing out an area on a map.



#### COMMUNICATION AT VILLAGE LEVEL

Thomas Malaisa, Provincial Livestock Officer, Daru, talking to a villager about livestock projects.



#### COMMUNICATION BETWEEN DEPARTMENTS

Kakau Biribudo, Business Development Officer, Rage Augerea, Development Bank, and Iangana Dau and Seyou Baidama from D.P.I. assessing and trying to help a combined pig, poultry and vegetable project owned by Mr Jeffrey Tabua of Daru.

2. Films/videos. These also attract people's attention. Ways of doing things can be shown, and this helps people understand better. The disadvantages are that films and videos are expensive, and a film projector or video machine, and a source of power are needed.

3. Field demonstrations. Field demonstrations are very useful for showing villagers how to carry out procedures such as planting, tapping rubber, looking after animals, etc. Problems are the expense and difficulty in organising such demonstrations. However, they are well worth the effort.

## LEVELS OF COMMUNICATION

### Village level

The Department of Primary Industry exists to serve the agricultural population, so communication at village level is the most important of all. Without it, all other communication in D.P.I. is almost useless.

The villager is the most important person in our work as D.P.I. officers. We must always be polite, and as helpful as possible. It is best to visit the villager in his own place as often as we can. This involves regular patrols.

We must always be prepared and pleased to talk to a villager who comes into the office for assistance. This happens especially in provinces like Western Province where a lot of villages are hard to reach and therefore not often visited. The villager should be welcomed, not turned away. It does not matter how he is dressed or

what he looks like. Remember, he (or she) is probably very nervous at coming to the office.

We must find out exactly what assistance is needed, and try to give 'feed-back' as quickly as possible. This may mean involving officers from other departments.

### District level

Between extension officer and D.R.D.O. Extension officers must inform the D.R.D.O. regularly (verbally or, sometimes, in writing) of what they have been doing. In turn, the D.R.D.O. should comment on this. There needs to be regular advice and checking. It is very important that the D.R.D.O. knows exactly what his staff are doing, and he should help them as much as possible.

It would be a good idea for larger districts to have six monthly, or even quarterly, staff meetings.

Between departments. D.P.I.'s work must be coordinated with that of other departments and organisations, e.g. Business Development and the Development Bank. Each should know about the others' plans, and if possible, joint patrols should be arranged. This saves cost, and topics can be investigated and discussed at the same time. I have seen this working particularly well in Kiunga, where D.P.I. officers and the Development Bank work well together.

It is essential that various departments communicate. This can be through regular, but not too many meetings.

### Provincial level

District to Province, Province to District. There must be regular communication between

the District and the Provincial Headquarters. This can be by telephone, reports, letters, etc. These types of communication are specially important in Provinces like Western Province where opportunities for face-to-face contact are limited due to the distances involved.

It is recommended that the Assistant Secretary/P.R.D.O. should try to visit every District at least once, and if possible, twice, a year. D.R.D.O.'s conferences are an attempt to improve the District to Province communication and it is important that we make full use of them.

As stated earlier, communication must be two-way. When a District Officer writes to the Province, the letter must be replied to as soon as possible. A maximum time of one week from receiving the letter should be allowed before a reply is sent.

Sometimes only a simple acknowledgement is needed, for example, 'Thank you for your letter, concerning .....; I am making investigations into the matter.' Then there should be a later feed-back when the investigations are completed. There are occasional problems with our postal service so when a letter is received, it must be acknowledged or else it may be thought to be lost.

It is also extremely important that when staff from Provincial Headquarters plan to visit a District, they inform the D.R.D.O. or his deputy. Plenty of time beforehand should be allowed and the purpose of the visit should be clearly explained. It is best to do this both by letter and telephone or radio. It is good manners, and also helps with the D.R.D.O.'s planning and makes for a more useful visit. In turn when

D.R.D.O.'s or other staff from the District, plan to visit Provincial Headquarters, they should inform the Assistant Secretary asking his permission and stating the reason.

#### Within Provincial Headquarters

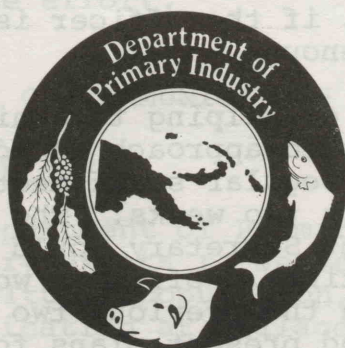
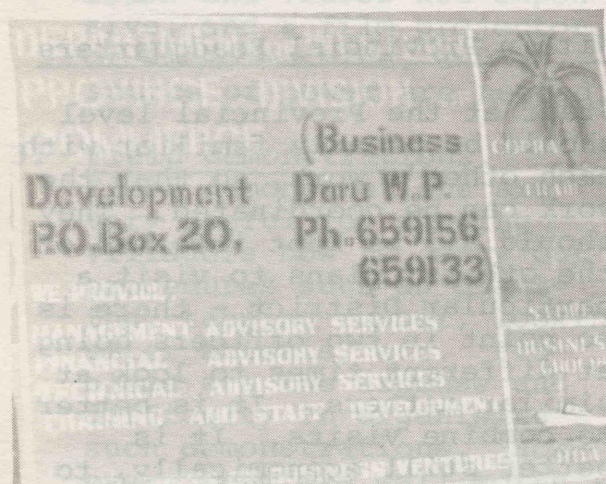
Staff at the Provincial level should be broadly familiar with each other's work, so that the work can be coordinated. They should all be kept informed of the others' plans to visit a particular District - there is no point in two officers going at different times to look at similar matters. It is better to combine visits. It is better still economically, to send one officer to look at all aspects, if the officer is competent enough.

One way of helping to achieve a coordinated approach would be to have regular staff meetings, say every two weeks. The Assistant Secretary would chair the meetings. Officers would describe the previous two weeks work, and present plans for the following two weeks or more. Joint visits could be arranged at these meetings.

Between departments. As stated in the section on communication at District level, it is essential that D.P.I.'s work is co-ordinated with that of other departments and organisations. This is also true for the Provincial level. One way of doing this is at the regular Provincial Management Team meetings. There then needs to be 'feed-back' from the representative at the meeting to the rest of the Provincial staff. This could be done at the staff meetings mentioned above.

Apart from this, there should be other formal and informal contact. Again, it is a good idea to arrange joint visits or

# P.N.G. DEVELOPMENT BANK



*Communication between departments is very important - both at the district and the provincial levels.*

patrols. If, say, Business Development are investigating setting up a business to retail vegetables, then clearly D.P.I. should be involved. On the other hand, if D.P.I. had been contacted first, then we should then work jointly with Business Development.

There should also be contact with other Departments; one committee that assists with this is the Provincial Nutrition Committee with representatives from Health, D.P.I., N.B.C., Office of Information, Business Development and Education participating. But more contact is needed.

## National Headquarters level

The communication between Provincial and National Headquarters is now slightly confused by decentralisation. It could be thought that this has placed something of a barrier in the way of this important line of communication. Under the present Provincial system, the Assistant Secretary for D.P.I. (P.R.D.O.) is responsible to the Secretary of the Provincial Departments. In theory all communications and lines of authority run via the Secretary.

So the P.R.D.O. is in charge of agricultural development in the province. He is not strictly responsible to National Headquarters. However, there needs to be regular contact for such matters as technical advice.

The locating of an Area Economist, who is part of National Headquarters, in a province is an attempt to improve this contact. But breakdowns do occur. It has happened that representatives from D.P.I. Headquarters have visited an area but no-one at District or Provincial level was informed beforehand. This should not be allowed to happen.

Lastly, there should be some communication between Provinces, particularly neighbouring ones. This is partly provided by the regular P.R.D.O.'s 'Kivung' but this is not really enough.

## CONCLUSION

It is hoped that this article provides 'food for thought'.

The message should be clear - we cannot exist alone, we must communicate with others, we must find out what they are doing and tell them what we are doing.