

# มีการค้ามนุษย์ ในแคนาดาด้วยหรือ?

คำตอบจะทำให้คุณตกตะลึงได้

ทุก ๆ ปีจะมีคนถูกหลอกล่อและถูกบังคับให้เร่ร่อน  
ที่ไม่มีวีซ่าเข้าเมือง - ถูกขายเพื่อการขายประเวณี  
หรือใช้แรงงานในทั้งระบบและผ่านเครือข่ายค้ามนุษย์ที่ซ่อนเร้น  
โดยได้รับค่าตอบแทนที่ต่ำกว่ามาตรฐานที่ยอมรับได้  
จนกลายเป็นเหยื่อของอาชญากรรม

การค้ามนุษย์ใน  
อาชญากรรมที่ร้ายแรง  
[www.justice.gc.ca](http://www.justice.gc.ca)

community &  
independent media

# Communication Tools in Interacting with Grassroots Women in Asia Pacific Countries

by Niel Steve Kintanar

*New information and communication technologies (ICTs) have been introduced as central to empowerment and development. But the research conducted by Isis International challenged this new ICT-centric development framework. Eighty one organisations from five Asia Pacific countries (India, Philippines, Thailand, Fiji, and Papua New Guinea) were interviewed regarding the accessibility, and effectiveness of diverse types of traditional and new communication tools in reaching out to grassroots women. Presented here are highlights on the top three tools - film, radio, and theatre - and the new ICTs - computer, internet, and cellular phones.*



A scene from the critically-acclaimed movie *"Bata, Bata Paano Ka Ginawa?"* (also known as *"Lea's Story"* in English), which was based on the novel of the same title by feminist writer Lualhati Bautista. The film was produced by Star Cinema.

## FILM and VIDEOS

The top communication tool used by most intermediary groups in interacting with grassroots women is film or video. Films and videos are mostly used by intermediary groups from the Philippines, India, and Thailand.

Films showing varying themes, issues and genres are often employed in workshops, seminars, lectures, plays and in various fora where women's agendas are discussed. Films have been cited as a great way to jumpstart discussions, facilitate reflections, make inputs much more understandable, and synthesise points for grassroots women: *"It's easier for them to catch-up, then input and then proceed to deepening."* But films can also be effective even without discussions as the film's message is often self-explanatory.

In the Philippines, films are used to help widen the perspectives of their viewers, making them see worlds and images different from their own, affecting how they perceive things and perhaps even shattering stereotypical depictions about women.

In India, one informant gave an example of how their organisation made a film on violence against women and distributed it throughout their country:

***"When we worked on Manipur, I was very careful that instead of complaining to the UN that this has happened to Manorama, we made a film and we also had a little CD passed all over India..."***

In Thailand, films and videos are used because they spark the interest of these women:

***"It works because people can see pictures, hear voices and songs. They also see what they have never seen before."***

Also, according to an informant, it reveals truth and raises awareness to the villagers:

***"The technology helps to reveal the truth in motion picture which raises more awareness among the villagers."***

Films and videos are seen to be effective because of their stimulating visuals and wide-reaching coverage. One Indian informant reported:

***"I am telling you, at an average, our films are watched by 5,000-6,000 people and I do believe that our films change them."***

Also a film easily catches one's attention and allows women to easily comprehend the messages conveyed by these intermediary groups. Another Indian informant shared:

***"Audio-visual catches you. They catch your attention immediately. It gives you freedom to take what you want to take. It brings a lot of diversity. You know when you show one film and discuss it, you get very different reactions. And it depends on the person - where he is coming from or what is affecting him or her. So I feel it's very effective..."***

A Filipino informant added:

***"If it's in video or documentary, the message can be absorbed easily by the participants, because they see something, they hear something."***

### Previous page:

*"Are people for sale in Canada?," this poster asks in Thai. It aims to raise public awareness on human trafficking activities which lure Thai nationals to travel to Canada even through illegitimate means. Print materials such as posters have also been cited as effective tools by Thai grassroots women. Taken from the Canadian Department of Justice, <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/fs-sv/tp/pub/post-aff/thai/index.html>*

Moreover, films can easily convey information even to children and illiterate adults. One Thai informant reported:

*“For children, animation makes it easy to understand stories. Also, it can easily disseminate information to illiterate adults as well.”*

But while many groups recognise the power of film, there are also some who pointed out its limitations. For instance, the film’s reliance on electricity makes it problematic for some groups to use it, particularly in communities that lack sustained electricity.

## **RADIO**

Radio is a powerful tool particularly in remote areas not reached by television. In fact, in terms of accessibility, radio is the most accessible tool to grassroots women across five countries. In Fiji, radio is by far the single most accessible tool to the grassroots women. Many intermediary groups had commented that almost every household in Fiji has a radio. What separates the radio from the other tools with wide-reaching coverage is that it is cheap and easy to

*femTALK 89.2 is a space for women on the airwaves of Fiji. Photo from femLINKPACIFIC*



use because no special skills are needed to operate it. In the Philippines, the radio is a tool found in many community households and works particularly well in the regions and in areas not easily reached by letters.

In Fiji, the radio is frequently used since it is useful in announcing information about organisations, their activities and programmes:

*“We think that radio is a good way of communicating because we get time slots and most people listen to the radio. It is easier for us to inform them of our organisation, workshops, and what we intend to do. We also have talkback shows.”*

Regardless of whether it is mainstream or community radio, respondents attested to the radio’s popularity among the grassroots especially in rural areas. As one respondent put it, “they like listening to radio and they are looking forward to it every week.” One participant likewise remarked:

*“and when you are in the rural areas, you can tell the time through the radio. The evening is for socialising... we’d turn it on and we listen to music and the program.”*

In Thailand, the radio is widely used for advocacy on issues such as children’s rights, trafficking, drugs, health, problems of the community, and parenting. The community radios reach beneficiaries who have neither televisions nor landlines. Thus,

*“the community radio can directly access our target groups in the rural areas. Moreover, some of our*

*volunteers are part of the community radio so this is our channel to easily express our vision and mission.”*

Listening to radios is also better for elderly women. In addition, it is preferable to women who can simultaneously work and listen:

*“The elderly rarely watch television but they enjoy listening to the radio. [And then] when someone is awarded, villagers will pay attention and tell others who are going to be interviewed and talk on the radio. They will help spread the news. If villagers listen to the radio they can do other things simultaneously like working.”*

Radio is seen to be the most effective tool in communicating and interacting with grassroots women across five countries except India, where it is the second most effective tool. In the Philippines, radio is seen as effective because the information broadcast over the radio has a very high probability of immediately reaching its target communities, particularly the grassroots women. It also does not interfere with the grassroots women’s activities:

---

“In terms of reaching the grassroots women, I would have to say radio would be the most effective tool. I know that radio is something that is part of the tapestry of their daily lives.”

*“[You can listen to the] radio, even if you are doing the laundry, even if you are cooking, that is what’s positive about it. So while they are working, at least, they can listen to the things that are being shared to them.”*

In Thailand, the community radio is seen as effective because aside from disseminating news, it can promote culture through playing local songs and story-telling:

*“As for me, I consider community radio as a very important media to villagers. When they work in the fields, they would like to listen to radio. The program is all about their own community, not about others from the city or Bangkok. The community radio can respond to community needs and provide channels for villagers to communicate. It’s a prime media sector that should be supported. Not only for disseminating informative news, the community radio can be an effective channel to promote cultures in local communities which needs to be revived such as local song, local story-telling.”*

In Fiji, radio is the most effective tool in interacting with grassroots women, mainly because many grassroots women have access to it and more importantly, are listening to it. Radio programmes also cut across sectors, areas, and divides. One respondent explained:

*“In terms of reaching the grassroots women, I would have to say radio would be the most effective tool. I know that radio*

*is something that is part of the tapestry of their daily lives.”*

Some radio sessions are particularly effective because they allow women to share their thoughts on issues. They can get feedback and comment about the issues:

*“Because it is an interactive radio session, they are able to receive feedback and discuss a human rights framework! So I think that radio is a pretty effective tool. So even those people without phones, [who could not] phone in their own thoughts – but they listen to their peers and fellow women in the communities talking about these issues.”*

In Papua New Guinea, radio was cited as the most accessible as it can cover a huge area. One group reported that the majority of their interaction is through radio:

*“The majority of our outreach is by radio. We have two, no three radio stations which we make use of for our outreach programmes.”*

## **THEATRE**

In India, theatre is the most effective tool because it is culturally appropriate, provides therapy, empowerment, and a lasting impact. One Indian informant shared her views in doing theatre with the sex workers,

*“Very, very effective! After every performance, people (sex workers themselves) chat, ask questions. Very effective.”*

Theatre allows the use of other ICT types like music, songs, puppets, and

posters. It is very effective as explained by another informant:

*“We prefer the traditional one. Particularly the street theatre, it worked very well. Songs, local songs, it makes more effective.”*

In Thailand, drama was deemed more effective than the radio. Unlike the radio, drama provided a two-way communication process or interaction.

*“Drama showed the best result. When we acted, we saw the audience. At least we knew whether they were interested or not. It reflected their answer. If the audience stared at the drama, it showed they are interested. But if they talked, it meant they weren’t interested in what the drama showed. It was a two-way communication. It showed audience reactions that we couldn’t see when they are listening to the radio.”*

Drama training also boosts the participants’ confidence. As one informant said:

*“Because of our drama training process, they are empowered, gain more confidence to speak out, and they get their own power back.”*

The process behind the staging of plays was also considered therapeutic and therefore empowering for grassroots women. As one of them explained:

*“What is important for me is the fact that they get to this space where they can jump, scream, shout, something they have never been allowed to do in their lives. Secondly, it’s a non-judgmental space – and it’s*



A classical Indian dance, Alarippu is also the name of a feminist theatre group, which stages progressive plays and performs with women of the Bediya caste in various educational institutions. Photo from Wikimedia Commons



*where there are no mistakes, nothing is right, nothing is wrong. So this kind of freedom that women experience – men also experience. But I think, it is far more important; For me it is more important for women to go through this experience of free expression, of exploring their body, their voice and of coming together with so many women where they find so many things that were deep inside them were deep inside so many women. So this kind of togetherness, this camaraderie that emerges I think these are very, very precious and important things. And in theatre workshop they come through fun. The learning comes through a lot of enjoyment. And I think it stays with them, lot of inhibitions break, they gain a lot of confidence, they become more connected with their bodies and more confident about their own articulation, their own expressions and I think it affects lives in that sense.”*

In India, theatre is also used as an exercise in trainings, encouraging the participants to be actively engaged and interested in particular issues.

*“They themselves made a script and they themselves acted the whole problem through the skit. They showed how this problem could be solved through the map, which they had drawn on the floor with different colours. The entire presentation of the project was made by them and we were just standing behind. We were not into any of the*

*scenes. At the end of the day, the evaluator acknowledged that ‘your people know everything what the project is all about, they had the whole plan and they were explaining to us, that was, amazing.”*

## **NEW INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TOOLS**

### **Computers and Internet Technology**

New ICTs like the computer figured in the top five communication tools while the internet closely bordered on the fifth spot. Computers are mainly used in producing visual presentations for the community. These presentations are particularly effective as visual aids that kept women interested and awake. As an informant from Fiji shared:

*“We have visual presentations at the moment... and you get quite good feedback...this is where we are able to demonstrate pictures and stuff.”*

For one informant, the computers are not learning tools but rather enhancement tools. As an intermediary group from the Philippines remarked:

*“Quite recently, we have been relying on the visual presentation because it’s easier to present and you can prepare it even before the training. It’s easy such that you don’t have to take time to write it on the board... it’s already prepared beforehand.”*

Aside from making these visual presentations, intermediary groups from the Philippines find computers useful in encoding and in performing financial

“Every woman has a mobile and they are like in constant contact with each other. They have not figured out SMS yet because they don’t know English! Even to read and write Marathi. But they know how to answer the phone and make a call! It is very effective for clients, their lovers, collectives...”

transactions. Playing computer games has also provided some form of entertainment for others:

*“Even without the internet, we use it for encoding and then you show them the other features of the computer, there are the games, then when they look at it, they will say, ‘Wow, it is possible to play cards here in the computer?’ (laughs)”*

While the computer is a relatively popular choice, some organisations admitted that the computer is appropriate for select audiences only. One respondent from Fiji said that these visual presentations were used mainly for literate communities. Another said that visually-impaired people would not understand nor appreciate this tool. While senior citizens are free to use the computers in one organisation’s office, 95 per cent of them lack the skills to use the tool.

New ICTs like computers and the internet are still viewed as the least accessible and effective tools for grassroots women. The computer poses

many practical limitations: It is an expensive tool, requiring a special set of skills. It also entails electricity which not all areas have on a sustained basis.

In Papua New Guinea, new ICTs like computers and the internet are not easily accessible and if they are, these are only accessible in some centres for a fee. An informant from Fiji explained:

*“As a tool for administrative work, or for lobbying policymakers, or for dealing with other civil society groups, it is effective. But as a tool to reach out to grassroots women, it is a bit of a dud.”*

## Cellular Phones

Cellular phones ranked 15th among the 31 communication tools cited by intermediary groups across these five countries.

Generally, the cellular phone is the third least accessible and least effective tool for grassroots women because of its high cost and network problems. But it is one of the top accessible tools in India and the Philippines. Cellular phones have gained accessibility in India among grassroots women. As shared during an interview, there are already cellular phones in the villages. Every woman has a cellular phone, though some are illiterate and cannot send short text messages (SMS). Nevertheless, through the cellular phone, people can contact and talk to one another.

*“Every woman has a mobile and they are like in constant contact with each other. They have not figured out SMS yet because they don’t know English! Even to read and write Marathi. But they know how to*

*answer the phone and make a call! It is very effective for clients, their lovers, collectives...”*

The cellular phone is one of the most visible ICTs in contemporary Filipino life, with many people owning one or at least having access to one. According to some groups, most people from the communities are now using the cell phone because it has become easier to acquire than a landline phone:

*“Cellphone, yes in communities. It seems that almost all people, mothers who are poor but they have cellphones (laughs out loud). They monitor their spouses. It’s for spouses...”*

In addition, the wide reach of a cell phone allows it to work even in remote mountainous areas:

*“Because it can be used even in mountains, even when you are on top of a mountain.”*

Thus connecting far-flung places with other areas and bridging distances.

The value of the cellular phone lies in its SMS or texting function. By using text, the relationship between the groups and the grassroots women has become more interactive. Grassroots women have been reported to benefit from the cellular phone because texting allows them to ask questions and receive immediate replies without having to travel and spend a considerable amount of money in order to do the same.

But some groups admitted that the cellular phone is used mainly for sharing information, particularly important and urgent messages such as people’s time of arrival, confirmation of fax messages, following up of loans, coordination regarding an activity, or mobilising people at a particular time and place.

*“In our view, 80% of the use of our cellphones is more for official use because it is used in coordination. Example if there are certain things, they are*

*Cellular phones are deemed important among Philippine women’s groups and social movements. It is the most accessible and effective tool in organising mobilisations such as this one during the International Day of Women in downtown Manila in 2008. (Isis Photo Bank)*





*consulted through cellphones, through text, and then sometimes, our organizers or other staff members, if they follow-up on participants, they just text, their lies its use.”*

The cellular phone has hardly been used to tell a story or communicate a message in the same way that the other media like film, radio, computer or theatre do:

*“Ah the cellphone, the use of cellphones, ‘Oh, how are you? Are you going to pay your debts?’ That’s it. (laughs.) It’s straightforward, because when you use cellphone, it’s not complicated. The cellphone is just used for ‘How is my loan? Is my loan OK? When are you going to pay?’ That is the only*

*use of the cellphone for us. We do not use the cellphone as a way to tell a story.”*

Some groups also observed that SMS and its use of shortcuts have limited women’s ability to be expressive. Texting also does not allow for the expression of non-verbal cues and actual feelings. It has even been known to convey the wrong feelings thus leading to miscommunication problems:

*“Ah, you see, because the cellphone, sometimes what you feel, there is no feeling... Though sometimes in the lines, there are some feelings. But at least, when you see the facial expressions, the feelings, it’s more transparent when it’s face to face, and your conversation is more detailed.” ■*

**Niel Steve Kintanar** was a member of the research team behind the making of PC4D.