

Many thanks for your comments and statements. There were a couple of comments about the impact of long-running radio campaigns. They increase what people can remember by repeating information numerous times rather than relying on people to retain everything they hear the first time. Also, radio is user friendly. Dr. Myo Min from Myanmar pointed out that, where television is gaining ground, it can have a bigger impact because of the compelling nature of the added visual medium. It is true, of course, that where people watch television as their evening entertainment, they are less likely to listen to evening radio programs. On the other hand, we have started to find that, among urban audiences in places as diverse as China and Jamaica, radio is a better medium at certain times of day, particularly when people are commuting to or from school or work or getting ready in the morning.

Today, I want to focus on some of the principles that I believe underlie effective strategies for social change communications. One principle is spelled out in the ICPD Programme of Action: “To ensure acceptance, effectiveness and usefulness by the community, education projects should be based on the findings of socio-cultural studies and should involve the active participation of parents and families, women, youth, the elderly and community leaders.” In other words, know your audience.

The importance of formative research to help shape the content of media programs cannot be overemphasized. Formative research is important to designing programs that are culturally and linguistically relevant, that do not violate a society’s taboos, and that have characters or presenters with whom the audience can relate. Formative research should find out about the availability of relevant reproductive health services and the audience’s attitudes toward these services and toward SRH issues in general. The creative team for a radio program (or for any IEC program) must understand their audience in terms of what they know and how they feel about a wide range of issues that will be addressed by the program. The research should determine qualitatively who the primary audience is, as well as the social and cultural environment in which they live their lives and their lifestyles. The formative research should reveal the potential audience’s media consumption habits, their attitudes about existing programs, their musical preferences, their level of education, their employment type and income level, the typical material possessions they own, the nature of the family unit, their cultural and religious practices, the values of the culture that tend to support HIV/AIDS prevention practices, and values of the culture that tend to undermine HIV/AIDS prevention practices.

Those trying to combat HIV and AIDS need to know the society’s relevant practices concerning sexual relations and condom use. How are relationships formed and who makes the decisions within relationships in the society? How do men and women in the society select a partner? What are the characteristics of a “good” partner? How are decisions made about whether and when to have sex and with whom? How are decisions made by sexually active people about whether or not to use contraception and/or condoms? What are the most common sources of family/partner conflict; who serve as role models for family harmony and harmony in relationships? What are attitudes in the culture regarding adolescent parenthood, out-of-wedlock parenthood, domestic violence,

date violence, family life, and the future? What are attitudes of the target populations regarding leadership groups, and who are seen as credible sources of information? What is the role and status of women and girls within the family and within society? What is the role of men in decision making about childbearing decisions and use of family planning? How frequent is spousal and partner communication about family issues? What are the aspirations of boys and girls regarding adulthood? Who are the positive icons and role models within the culture? What are the common attitudes about masculinity and femininity? What are the target populations' health concerns (how do the target populations feel about violence, HIV, exercise, adolescent parenthood, malaria and other major health concerns)?

There are a variety of means to gather this information, which I could make for an entire week's forum. But, once you have the information, how do you use it to create an effective radio intervention? During week 1 (March 28), Tim commented that there is evidence that soap operas and telenovelas are known to be effective interventions. Let's look at why they work.

One of the resources that is available on this week's resource page is the ICPD Programme of Action excerpt on the use of IEC. One of my favorite sections of the ICPD Programme of Action is article 11.23. It says, "Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector should make greater and more effective use of the entertainment media, including radio and television soap operas and drama, folk theatre and other traditional media to encourage public discussion of important but sometimes sensitive topics related to the implementation of the present Programme of Action. When the entertainment media - especially dramas - are used for advocacy purposes or to promote particular lifestyles, the public should be so informed, and in each case the identity of sponsors should be indicated in an appropriate manner."

Why is this important? One of the principles of communication is that, to communicate, you must have an audience. Entertainment programming attracts the biggest audiences. But entertainment-education, and particularly drama, has another advantage over pure information. It is filled with emotion. As a result, the audience becomes involved emotionally with the program – and, in the case of drama, with the characters and their lives. Serialized dramas (sometimes called soap operas or *novelas*) can lead an audience to discover solutions to the problems in their lives by showing characters solving problems, rather than telling the audience what to do. And the emotional attachment of the audience to the characters makes them very powerful as potential role models for the audience. The ICPD Programme of Action recognized this power with the statement, "The media also offer many potentially powerful role models."

We all know from our life experiences that people are very influenced by role models, especially children, adolescents and young adults. In fact, the influence of role models is often more important than information in shaping attitudes and behavior. Serialized dramas have the advantage of allowing time for the audience to form bonds with the characters and allow characters to evolve in their thinking and behavior with regard to various issues at a gradual and believable pace in response to problems that have been

well illustrated in the story line. By having characters who change, the audience learns how to overcome the obstacles to change.

I encourage you to take a look at information about the strategy of long-running serial dramas in “Soap Operas for Social Change to Prevent HIV/AIDS: a Training Guide for Journalists and Media Personnel, which can be found on PMC’s website home page at www.populationmedia.org or can be obtained by contacting us at PMC. Chapter 2 spells out in some detail the serial drama strategy created by Miguel Sabido of Mexico and some of the results of using that strategy in various countries.

For example, in the Ethiopian radio serial *Yeken Kignit* (“Looking Over One’s Daily Life”) broadcast in 257 episodes by Population Media Center (PMC) between 2002 and 2004, one of the main story lines addressed HIV/AIDS – specifically the need for early detection (testing) and prevention. The story is of Anguach and Demlew. Anguach and Demlew are a loving young couple with a bright future. Then, Demlew’s mother, who never liked Anguach very much, begins to meddle and pushes a neighbor to seduce Demlew. He succumbs, sleeps with the neighbor, and gets infected with HIV. Anguach is devastated, but forgives him, and cares for him until he dies. Although she is terrified that she might be HIV positive, Anguach goes to get tested and finds out that she is negative. Anguach eventually marries again (this time, a man without a meddling mother!) and lives happily ever after. Touching story, but did it motivate any behavior change in the audience?

Yep! First, we found through nationwide surveys conducted before and after the serial was broadcast that there was a significant decrease in the percentage of listeners (as compared to non-listeners) who do not know there is a means of determining one’s HIV status. Listeners included 47% of all men in the country and 45% of women. We found significant increases in the percentage of listeners who actually got tested for HIV. In fact, male listeners got tested at four times the rate of non-listeners, and female listeners got tested at three times the rate of non-listeners. Listeners had fallen in love with Anguach and followed her example of getting tested for HIV. As you will see in one of the resource materials for this week, “Selected Results of PMC’s Program in Ethiopia: Stigma Reduction Data,” there was also a significant reduction in stigma against those living with HIV/AIDS among listeners, contrasted with non-listeners. This data is an illustration of the fact that good formative research can lead to good results.

There is a lot of information about the psychology of role modeling in the published works of Stanford University psychologist Albert Bandura, who serves as a member of PMC’s Program Advisory Board. You can see Bandura’s publications at <http://www.des.emory.edu/mfp/Bandura/>.

Best wishes,

Bill