

Using the mass media for hygiene education

Mass media

Face-to-face education in the community can be supported by mass media such as radio, television and newspapers if initial surveys show that they are watched, listened to or read by the community. Carefully designed and tested mass media, such as radio, can be used for rapidly spreading simple information to large numbers of people, increasing awareness and interest in improved hygiene.

Mass media include broadcast media (radio and television) as well as print media (newspapers, books, leaflets and wall posters). Television involves both sound and visual dimensions. Radio involves sound only. Radio ownership is high, even in countries where television is uncommon, which makes it a particularly valuable medium where literacy is low. Print media, such as newspapers, books and leaflets, use the written word and require familiarity in understanding pictures, thus they are only appropriate for audiences who can read.

Formats on radio and television

There are many different formats which can be used in radio and television, including dramas, quizzes, songs and interviews with members of the community.

News. On most radio and television stations, news bulletins are an important part of the daily output. If it is a local radio station, local news will also be included. To have a health education activity mentioned in a news bulletin is highly desirable because it gives it widespread coverage, credibility, importance and does not cost anything.

Spot announcements. These can be public service announcements, such as clinic opening times, immunization sessions and emergency announcements. They will usually be broadcast free. On commercial stations it is also possible to buy time in the form of commercials. This could be useful for a campaign.

Slogans and jingles. Slogans are catchy short sentences, designed to attract attention, usually based on well known sayings or rhymes. They can help to identify a campaign. Jingles are slogans set to music. They can make a slogan more memorable and be used to identify a programme, person, radio station or theme.

Discussions. There are many kinds of discussion programmes. The one most commonly used on radio is the group or round table discussion. A group of people of different opinions, and possibly from different backgrounds, discuss a common subject under the guidance of a chairperson.

Phone-in programme. A programme in which listeners ring in to the studio, either “live” or “off the air”, and give their views, ask questions or ask for advice. Their calls are dealt with either by the broadcaster alone, by an expert in the studio or by a panel involved in a discussion.

Interview. A discussion in question and answer form between the broadcaster and one (or two) guests. The interview can also be used to find out opinions of ordinary people either in a studio situation or outside in the community (when it is then called “vox pop”).

Talks and documentaries. A 5 to 15 minute talk by one person is occasionally used, but unless the broadcaster is very skilled, it can be boring. Documentaries explore a single topic and include different effects, for example, drama, music, interview, story telling, descriptions and sound effects.

Drama. This includes long or short plays, “soap opera”, comedy sketches, serials and drama documentaries. “Soap opera” is the name for a weekly or even daily drama series using the same characters. Drama has enormous potential for health education because the audience can identify with the characters and their problems. “Soap operas” are even more powerful because the characters can become like family friends.

Music. Music is an essential part of broadcasting whether it is traditional music, or popular local music, musical jingles or background music to programmes. Music will attract people to watch and listen, and “spot” announcements, public service messages and slogans can be inserted in music programmes. Jingles or songs with a message can become very popular, and people will sing them and remember the message.

Quizzes and panel games. Quizzes with panels of guests are popular, and most people watching or listening try to answer the questions themselves and learn something from the answers. One useful method is to ask questions and invite listeners to write in with the correct answer for a prize. This gives feedback on how many people heard the programme and understood the message.

Magazine programme. This popular format combines different short elements : music, drama, stories, sketches, interviews, comedy and discussion. They are linked by a presenter and are sometimes aimed at a particular audience, such as women, farmers or young people.

Audiocassettes

As mass media are aimed at a large audience, it is difficult to make the message specific to local communities. A useful approach is to prepare radio programmes on cassettes that can be played to small groups or through loudspeakers in public places.

Getting the press to cover activities

It is worthwhile trying to encourage newspapers, radio and television to take up diarrhoea prevention in their general news and programme content. To receive media coverage two conditions will have to be fulfilled : the activity has to be something that the media will see as newsworthy ; and the media have to be told what is happening.

Look out for activities in the diarrhoea prevention programme which might be of interest to the media. It is even possible deliberately to include media events in the programme to attract the press. Media events should be fun, lively and of general interest. Some examples of what can be done are : a ceremony with invited guests to launch a new campaign ; a celebration with invited guests to mark an anniversary - for instance the first year free of cholera or the hundredth latrine to be completed ; an exhibition with an official opening ceremony ; and a presentation of prizes for a competition.

Look for ways of making activities visually interesting so that newspapers will want to include a photograph. People can be dressed in costumes ; there can be a procession carrying a coffin bearing the number of children who have died of the disease ; or a latrine or toilet can be carried on the back of a truck through the town.

As part of the media event, there could be a press conference. This is a meeting where journalists can ask questions and find out information. It is always a good idea to put important information on a sheet of paper, as reporters can easily make mistakes in reporting technical information.

The best way to let the media know what is being done is by preparing a press release. This is a written document of not more than one page in length, neatly typed, with an attention-getting headline. It should provide information on what is being done by answering these questions :

- *What will be happening ?* Describe the event. Give names of important people participating and details of activities which might make a good photograph.
- *Why will it take place ?* Give background details and explain why the activity is taking place. Supply some facts and figures that they can quote in a story - for example how many children died of cholera last year in that community.

- *Where* will it take place ? Give precise details of how to get there.
- *When* will it take place ? Give the date and time of day.

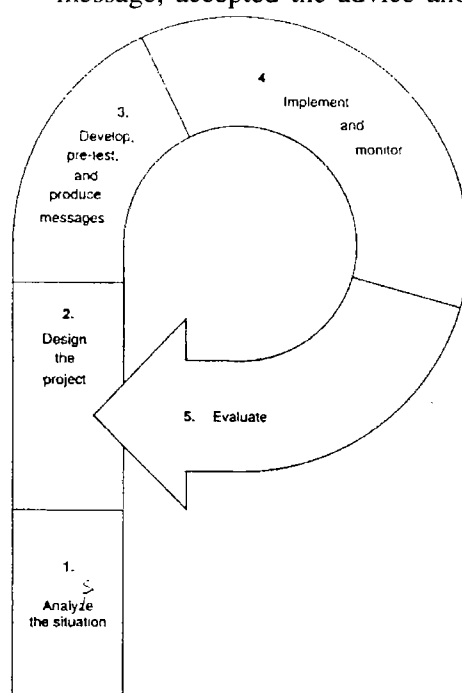
Besides background information on the topic, the press release should also give an address and telephone number of someone to contact if they need further information.

General guidelines on mass media

- Decide at the outset what can be realistically achieved by each medium and what cannot. Aim for what can be achieved. Set specific, measurable objectives.
- Base the programme on an analysis of the health issue and its causes. Make sure that the advice given is accurate, relevant and feasible.
- Decide which sections of the public to try to reach and find out what media they watch, listen to and read. Carry out a simple study on what they believe, feel and know about the health issue. Use this information to make the message specific to the particular audience's needs and to decide on the timing, location and content of activities.
- Make friends with journalists and media producers. If they can be provided with interesting stories, they will report the activities and provide free publicity.
- Make the programmes entertaining and avoid preaching. Include popular media such as songs, drama and puppets (see Fact Sheet 4.11). If dramas and stories are used, build up the characters and human interest first before including health messages. Wherever possible, involve people with experience in media in producing programmes. Use sources that are trusted by the community.
- Do not put too many messages into each programme. Always pre-test the programmes and messages with a sample of the target audience before they are broadcast to make sure they are properly understood and accepted.
- Broadcast programmes as often as possible. Make them available in other formats - distribute the radio programme on audio-cassettes, the TV programme on video, the newspaper article as a leaflet.
- Try to identify person-to-person advice systems in the community that could be mobilized to reinforce the media activities. Hold discussions with them before the campaign and, if necessary, arrange for some training. Provide written materials to accompany the broadcasts, such as a

leaflet.

- When using radio or television, prepare reinforcing media such as listening guides, workbooks or simple booklets. A multi-media approach will usually do better than a single channel.
- Always include a way by which the audience can obtain help or further information - either an address to write to or a telephone number.
- Try to build in some mechanism for audience feedback, such as letters, and include some method of evaluation. In the short term, try to find out how many watched, heard or read about the programmes and understood the messages. In the longer term, find out if people remembered the message, accepted the advice and if any change in behav-



your took place.

Planning media production using the “ P ” approach

The “ P ” approach is a helpful guide to remembering the steps in preparing media communication. It was developed by the Population Communication Center at Johns Hopkins University in the United States, and is as follows :

Analysis

Review potential audiences,
Assess existing policies and programmes,
Select sponsoring institutions,
Evaluate communication resources.

Design

Decide on objectives,
Identify audiences,
Develop messages,
Select media,
Plan for face-to-face reinforcement,
Draw up action plan.

Development, pre-testing and revision

Develop message concepts,
Pre-test with audience,
Complete message and materials,
Pre-test with audience.

Implementation

Implement action plan,
Monitor outputs,
Measure impact.

Review and re-planning

Analyse overall impact,
Re-plan future activities,
Adjust for changing audience needs.