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REPORT OF A
SITE VISIT TO
LIBERIA

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Executive Summary

This is the report of a site visit to Liberia by Steven C. Smith, Regional Program Coordinator, and Philippe Langlois, JHU/PCS consultant, from July 6-11, 1984. During the site visit, they developed a proposal for a 30-minute television documentary to be produced in Liberia based on the RAPID/Liberia presentation.

The script for this documentary will be prepared by JHU/PCS based on a "brainstorming" session to be held September 17, 1984 in Monrovia. This session will start with a treatment previously prepared by JHU/PCS with input from Philander P. Claxton, Jr. of The Futures Group, RAPID Project.

Medex, Inc., a local media production agency, will produce the documentary using equipment and technical personnel from the Liberian Broadcasting System (LBS). LBS will then provide free air time for broadcasting the documentary at least three times within three months. There will be pre-broadcast publicity in both the TV and newspapers. A package of "non-electronic" materials, including flipbooks and leaflets, will also be developed carrying the same messages, to be used in schools and training institutions. The impact of this project will then be evaluated by the LBS Research, Development and Planning Department.

The site visitors also met with the Family Planning Association of Liberia (FPAL), the government World Bank Project Preparation Coordinating Committee and USAID/Monrovia.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FP	- Family Planning
FPAL	- Family Planning Association of Liberia
IEC	- Information, Education and Communication
JHU/PCS	- The Johns Hopkins University/Population Communication Services
LBS	- Liberia Broadcasting System
LRCN	- Liberia Rural Communications Network
MCH	- Maternal and child health
Medex, Inc.	- Medex International Corporation
MOH&SW	- Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
MOI	- Ministry of Information
MOPEA	- Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs
PPCC	- Project Preparation Coordinating Committee
RAPID	- Resources for Awareness of Population Impact on Development
USAID	- United States Agency for International Development
USIS	- United States Information Service

INTRODUCTION

This site visit was JHU/PCS's third visit to Monrovia, Liberia. The site visitors main objective was to develop a proposal for the production of a television documentary based on the RAPID presentation for Liberia. The idea for this was initiated in late 1983 and the possibilities were explored by Dr. Nancy Pielemeier, a JHU/PCS consultant in Liberia. The site visitors met with her and then with Ms. Weade Kobah-Wureh of Medex, Inc. and the senior staff of the Liberian Broadcasting System. Thereafter, they developed a project proposal for the TV documentary production. Mr. Andrew Voros, another JHU/PCS in-country consultant, assisted in this.

The site visitors also met with the Family Planning Association of Liberia (FPAL) and the USAID Mission to Liberia. Steve Smith met with the Project Preparation Coordinating Committee (PPCC) to discuss finalization of JHU/PCS consultant Nancy Pielemeier's work for them.

I. TELEVISION PROGRAM BASED ON THE RAPID/LIBERIA PRESENTATION

The site visitor team's primary assignment during this visit was to investigate the possibility of producing a television program based on the content of the Liberian RAPID presentation in Liberia using local production resources.

A. Background

RAPID presentations to small groups of top government officials, have been held in a number of countries. In several of those countries, including Liberia, USAID personnel and local government officials have expressed an interest in having a simpler, more visually-oriented and "telegenic" presentation which could be shown on national television and reach a far wider audience.

Such a program would keep the essence of RAPID's messages: that the growth of agricultural, educational and health facilities cannot keep pace with the population growth rate, and the overall relationship between national development and population. However, the television program would include few, if any, of the charts and graphs. It would replace them with footage of real people and real situations shot on location in the fields, schools, and clinics.

The television program would be aimed at the television viewing audience. This mainly consists of the upperstratum of the population--opinion leaders, decision makers, professionals, and educators. It would be simple and clear enough so that members of the general public who also have access to a television set (and who know English) understand most of it.

B. Television production in Liberia: "pros" and "cons"

Liberia is neither the easiest nor the most difficult country in which to attempt the production of RAPID television program. Based on this and other visits, the following "plus" factors should be taken into account:

1. The overall chain of command within and between ministries and organizations in Liberia is relatively simple; thus, it is possible to obtain authorizations and collaboration, commitment and/or involvement of people at the highest level.
2. RAPID presentations made in Liberia were very well received by senior officials in the Liberia Government.

3. Population and family planning can be discussed openly on the Liberian airwaves. In recent months, four programs supplied by JHU/PCS have been broadcast and received with great interest. They include two videotapes - one on the census in the Cameroons and the IPPF film entitled "Strong and Healthy Mothers and Children." Both showings were followed by in-studio discussions. Furthermore, two films entitled, "Two Paths" and "A Time of Our Lives" were broadcast in collaboration with the Family Planning Association of Liberia.
4. Production standards at LBS seem to be of acceptable quality for the purpose of a RAPID TV program.
5. LBS has agreed to give strong support to the project. It will provide free broadcast time, pre-broadcast publicity and technical assistance in the form of equipment and personnel.

There are also some difficulties to be foreseen when producing in Liberia:

1. LBS owns the only available television/video equipment in the country. These production facilities are used at almost maximum capacity. Only one of the two LBS television studios is currently operational. The other is being cannibalized for spare parts. The same problem exists for the portable units for on-location shooting. There is only one available unit, and priority is always given to news and current events. There are editing facilities at LBS and at the Ministry of Information, but they are booked all day long. Any editing of a RAPID program would have to be done in the evening or during the night.

2. The logistics of producing everything could be rather tricky as many parties would be involved: LBS, several ministries (Information, Health, Planning), Medex, Inc. (a private company), JHU/PCS and several individual consultants.

C. Production Protocol

In the area of audio-visual production, the options are limited in Liberia. As mentioned previously, LBS has a monopoly on technical equipment. There is virtually no commercial production capability. LBS, with much of its equipment in dire need of upgrading, is operating at almost full capacity simply to meet its basic television commitments. It would be difficult for LBS to take on the added responsibility of a relatively sophisticated and time-consuming production such as the RAPID television program. For this reason, after careful investigation, the JHU/PCS site visitors propose that the production of the rapid television program be coordinated by a private Liberian company, Medex, Inc.

1. Medex International Corporation (Medex, Inc.)

Medex is a Liberian company specializing in media consulting and placement (advertising, public relations, communications). It was incorporated in February, 1984. The driving force behind the company is Mrs. Weade Kobbah-Wureh. Her talents and her expertise would be needed to produce the RAPID TV documentary.

The JHU/PCS representatives met with her several times during this visit. Mrs. Wureh holds a Master's degree in Mass Communications from the American University in Washington, D.C. She was Assistant Minister of Information for Public Affairs at the Ministry of Information, until she went into private business. Before that she was Assistant Director General of LBS, following a rapid rise through the ranks.

She also has very good "hands on" experience, having done a number of programs. A JHU/PCS representative saw a 30-minute feature presentation she wrote and produced on "The UN in Liberia. Considering that it was shot and edited in five days, that there are numerous locations, and that it was done with limited facilities, this program reaches quite respectable production standards. She has also produced several other films and videos.

2. The Liberian Broadcasting System (LBS)

JHU/PCS representatives met with the top management of LBS. The same people are responsible for ELBC (the national radio network) and ELTV (the national television station). Present at the meetings were Dr. Peter Naigow, Director General; Eustace Smith, Assistant Director General for Programming; Dr. Jerome Boikai, Assistant Director General for Research, Planning and Development; and Moses Washington, Administrative Assistant.

LBS top management agreed enthusiastically to collaborate on the project, despite the difficult financial constraints LBS is currently facing, and the very real demands on their limited resources. LBS will make the following personnel and equipment available to assist in the production:

- a scriptwriter
- a camera crew, equipment and studio as needed
- a videotape editor and equipment
- an announcer

LBS will have non-exclusive ownership of the final documentary, along with original footage tapes and credit for the program.

LBS will provide free air time for broadcasting the program and for pre-broadcast publicity. The documentary will be aired at least three times in the first three months following its completion. LBS also intends to establish a lending library which will make copies of the program available to interested Liberian agencies and key individuals.

3. The Johns Hopkins University/Population Communication Services (JHU/PCS)

JHU/PCS will provide the content for the television program. This content --a digest of the RAPID presentation messages--will, at first, be prepared in the form of a treatment or synopsis of the subject. It will include a proposed structure for the script with the basic messages, short samples of narration/dialogue, as well as suggestions to illustrate the ideas. JHU/PCS will later supply a complete script based on the outcome of "brainstorming" and pre-production sessions in Liberia with agencies involved with the project.

JHU/PCS will provide the funds for the actual production by Medex, including a suitable quantity of blank video cassettes.

4. Others Involved in the Documentary Production

While Medex, Inc., LBS, and JHU/PCS are the most visible participants in the project, other organizations and individuals could have important roles to play. Possible collaborating organizations and individuals include:

a. Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOH&SW)

The MOH&SW has an overall view of the picture in Liberia. These topics are important components of the RAPID TV program and the Ministry's suggestions on how to deal with them would be most welcome.

b. The Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs

LBS suggested that since population is a responsibility of that ministry, it should be invited to send a representative to the script preparation sessions.

c. The Family Planning Association of Liberia (FPAL)

Because of its knowledge of the Liberian FP situation and grass-root attitudes, FPAL's input at the preparatory stage would be useful. Also the involvement of a representative of FPAL in the production process would be a useful in-service experience for him/her, as FPAL focuses on IEC as one of its main activities and has never done anything of this scope before. The site visitors met with FPAL leaders and asked them to send a representative to assist with the production process. (See Section IV).

d. Wan-Ldy Paye

Mr. Paye is the director of the Trow Trow Artist Workshop which has written and produced numerous radio, TV and theater programs on health themes, including a series sponsored by UNICEF. Mr. Paye's contribution would be especially useful if there is a need for drama writing or acting. Among other assignments, he could assist in finalizing the script.

e. Mr. Andrew Voros

Mr. Voros was engaged as an in-country consultant to JHU/PCS during this site visit and assisted in the development of this project. He was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Liberia until recently. He has stayed in Liberia to produce a television program on Liberian deforestation for the Forest Development Authority, with technical assistance from LBS. Much of the content is based on the RAPID messages. His outsider's point of view together with his production experience in Liberia have proved very useful in the preparatory stage of this project. It is anticipated to use his services further in the development of the documentary script. An in-country consultant such as Mr. Paye or Mr. Voros would be hired directly by JHU/PCS.

Tentatively, it is hoped that the television program will be ready sometime by the middle of December 1984, when the Liberian Government is scheduled to hold a "Population Week." However, this schedule may be somewhat optimistic in view of the inevitable time delays during preparation and approval of the project proposal, writing of the script and approval by authorities, and the production itself which must be carried out with the limited resources of LBS.

D. A "Non-electronic" Materials Package

During discussions with USAID/Monrovia, it was suggested that the RAPID television program could be extended by a package of "non-electronic" media teaching material. These materials could further extend the audience that could be reached with the RAPID message and could perhaps be used in schools and training institutions.

This area was not fully investigated during this recent visit. During a forthcoming visit, it will be possible to ascertain what materials would be needed (perhaps a flip-book and leaflets) and who the users of these materials would be.

E. Evaluation

It was agreed that an evaluation of the impact of the RAPID TV program will be necessary. The process of development, production and broadcasting of RAPID messages to a larger audience in Liberia is a model that may be repeated in other countries. As such it is important to know how successful this effort was and how to improve or modify it in the future in other countries for maximum impact.

The evaluation would be carried out by an appropriate Liberian organization--perhaps LBS, which has a Research, Development and Planning Department--with technical assistance from JHU/PCS. The funding for the evaluation would be included in the Medex budget. Medex would then subcontract the assignment to LBS.

F. Recommendations

1. JHU/PCS should provide financial and technical assistance for the production in Liberia of a television program based on the content of the Liberian RAPID presentation. The making of the program would be coordinated by Medex, Inc. under the direction of its present, Mrs. Weade Kobbah-Wureh. It would be based on a script to be prepared during another site visit to Liberia in September 1984.

*Synopsis only
done* ←

2. JHU/PCS should investigate, during the next visit to Liberia, the need for a composition of a "non-electronic" package of materials to convey the messages of this TV documentary for use in training institutions and schools. JHU/PCS should also investigate how, where, and by whom this package would be used.
3. JHU/PCS should develop, also during the next visit to Liberia, a plan of action to evaluate the impact of this TV documentary and parallel non-electronic package of materials.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL IEC NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND PLAN

JHU/PCS, through its consultant Dr. Nancy Pielemeier, has been involved in the development of a national IEC needs assessment and plan of action. This has been JHU/PCS's main activity to date in Liberia. One of the site visitors met with the Government of Liberia's World Bank Project Preparation Coordination Committee (PPCC) which will be using Dr. Pielemeier's report. The July 10, 1984 PPCC meeting was attended by representatives of FPAL, the MOPEA, MOH&SW, Ministry of Education and the Liberian Rural Communications Network (LRCN). This was the final review meeting on Dr. Pielemeier's report. The last few sections were discussed and finalized. The PPCC representatives expressed their satisfaction with Dr. Pielemeier's work and thanked JHU/PCS very much for supporting her to do this consultancy. JHU/PCS will now submit the report to AID and supply the PPCC with 60 copies. (Sixty copies were later delivered to the PPCC in mid-September 1984.)

III. URTNA FAMILY HEALTH BROADCASTING PROJECT

Recently, JHU/PCS initiated a pan-African population communication project in collaboration with URTNA, the union of national radio and television broadcasting agencies of Africa). The project will involve the preparation of ready-to-air material, population seminar/workshops, and a monthly population information bulletin for broadcasters.

(Lois Richards ?)

The USAID representative in Monrovia¹ was not aware of this upcoming project, but was pleased to hear about it, thought it an excellent idea, and looked forward to its implementation.

The top management of LBS was also briefed on the matter. Their reaction was also very favorable. LBS used to produce its own weekly "Radio Doctor" show in collaboration with the MOH, but for budgetary reasons, it has been cancelled.

LBS has participated in similar collaborative ventures before, including the broadcast of a pre-recorded program supplied by USIS, "Focus on your Health." It has also aired on a UNICEF-sponsored health program featuring the previously-mentioned Trow Trow Artists Workshop. This program used a variety of approaches: mini-dramas, spots, interviews, and discussions. These programs were broadcast free of charge. However, LBS has charged the MOH and FPAL for air time in the past.

Family planning has been discussed openly on the airwaves without negative feedback. LBS would be open to receiving material in whatever format: spots, mini-dramas, discussion guidelines, questions and answers. It would be preferable to send the material in print form rather than on cassette; this would allow LBS to tailor the material to the needs of its audiences.

The LBS managers likes the idea of a periodic bulletin/newsletter, especially as a vehicle for the exchange of ideas. The broadcasting seminar also appeals to them. If they had the choice to send two persons, they would select one producer and one management person. They suggested that seminar topics include program planning, research, principles of communication--in short, a comprehensive course.

Recommendation

It is recommended that at least two Liberians be invited to attend the English-language URTNA workshop. One should be a representative of the FPAL and one or two should be representatives from LBS.

IV. FAMILY PLANNING ASSOCIATION OF LIBERIA (FPAL)

The site visitors met with Mrs. Wokie Stewart, Executive Director of FPAL, and Mr. Hina, IEC Director. As previously mentioned, FPAL was invited to send a representative to join with Medex, Inc., LBS and JHU/PCS in the development and production of a 30-minute TV documentary based on the Liberia RAPID presentation. They thanked JHU/PCS for the invitation and will consider it in the context of available personnel. They agreed that it would be a useful in-service training experience and that it would be good to have FPAL included in the credits of the documentary. Also, they made some very useful suggestions about the organization of this effort.

FPAL reported that the two films supplied to them by JHU/PCS --"Two Paths" and "A Time of Our Lives" were received. FPAL then finalized an agreement with LBS and had both films broadcast on national television. It was planned that a caption card, giving credit to FPAL and listing addresses of its FP clinics, would be shown on the broadcast immediately after the film, but this appears not to have happened with these first two broadcasts. It is hoped to extend this FPAL-LBS arrangement. FPAL will soon send a report of these activities to JHU/PCS and request more films to broadcast on LBS.

LIST OF CONTACTS

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