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**TRIP REPORT:
VISIT TO MONITOR
LIBERIA COUNTRY PROJECT
AND EXPLORE OTHER PROJECT POSSIBILITIES**

Prepared by: Maxwell S. Senior, JHU/PCS
Regional Program Coordinator
and Cynthia P. Green,
Project Director

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February 22 to March 5, 1985

Population Communication Services
Population Information Program
The Johns Hopkins University
624 N. Broadway
Baltimore, Maryland 21205
USA

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Executive Summary

From February 22 to March 5, 1985, Cynthia P. Green, Project Director for the Johns Hopkins University/Population Communication Services (JHU/PCS) and Maxwell S. Senior, Regional Program Coordinator (RPC), visited Monrovia, Liberia. The purpose of their visit was three-fold:

- (1) To assess the progress of the videotape production on population awareness, modeled after the RAPID II presentation, that was being produced by Medex, Inc. of Liberia with JHU/PCS funding.
- (2) To assist in the development of a plan to evaluate the Medex videotape.
- (3) To follow-up on a proposal that was being developed by participants from Liberia to the Union of National Radio and Television Organizations of Africa (URTNA) workshop held in Nairobi in November 1984.

The JHU/PCS team previewed approximately 75 percent of the taped material for the video production and had several meetings with the producer. It is anticipated that the videotape will be completed by the end of May. In addition, discussions were held with the Liberian Broadcasting System regarding the evaluation of this video production. In terms of follow-up print materials, no agency having the interest and capability to produce such materials was identified. This issue will be explored in future JHU/PCS visits.

The JHU/PCS team also met with the URTNA participants who were in the process of developing a proposal for JHU/PCS for an extensive media campaign. Following discussions with the JHU/PCS team, the URTNA participants decided to focus on two activities: (1) collecting information on the levels of public awareness, knowledge and attitudes regarding family planning, as well as baseline data on media usage in Liberia; and (2) planning a radio drama on family planning, assuming that the results of the initial research indicated that this is a priority for communication efforts.

During visits to other agencies, the Family Life Promotion Program of the National Catholic Secretariat requested assistance in developing print materials for clients on Natural Family Planning. The JHU/PCS team agreed to provide a consultant to assist in materials development. The Family Planning Association of Liberia requested assistance in printing client booklets and in obtaining additional copies of JHU/PCS films. (The FPAL booklets have been printed, and the films have been sent.)

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ELCM	-	Eternal Love from the Catholic Mission
FP	-	Family Planning
FPAL	-	Family Planning Association of Liberia
FLPP	-	Family Life Promotion Program
IEC	-	Information, Education and Communication
JHU/PCS	-	Johns Hopkins University/Population Communication Services
LBS	-	Liberia Broadcasting System
LRCN	-	Liberia Rural Communication Network
MCH	-	Maternal and Child Health
MOE	-	Ministry of Education
MOHSW	-	Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
MOPEA	-	Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs
NFP	-	Natural Family Planning
NPPC	-	National Population Planning Committee
RAPID	-	Resources for the Awareness of Population Impact on Development
RPC	-	Regional Program Coordinator
TBA	-	Traditional Birth Attendant
UNICEF	-	United Nations Children's Fund
URTNA	-	Union of National Radio and Television Organizations of Africa
USAID	-	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction

This report summarizes the visit to Liberia by Cynthia P. Green, JHU/PCS Project Director, and Maxwell S. Senior, Regional Program Coordinator, during the period February 22 to March 5, 1985.

During this visit, the team's attention was mainly focused on three activities: reviewing the videotape production on population awareness by Medex, Inc.; planning the subsequent evaluation by the Liberian Broadcasting System; and reviewing the plans and providing guidance for a proposal by the participants in a broadcasters workshop funded by JHU/PCS. In addition, visits were made to several other agencies.

Medex, Inc.

Medex, Inc., a Liberian media production company, is producing a 30-minute videotape, modeled after the RAPID II presentation on population awareness and funded by JHU/PCS.

The JHU/PCS team met on several occasions with Mrs. Weade Kobbah-Wureh, Director of Medex, Inc. and producer of the video production. Together, they previewed approximately 75% of the pre-edited video material, including scenes highlighting food production, children working in the fields, urban slums, and the impact of population growth on housing, education and food supply. All these scenes were of broadcast quality and adhered to the draft script provided by JHU/PCS and reviewed by Liberian IEC leaders.

The producer, the cameraman and the JHU/PCS team established a realistic production timetable and identified possible difficulties that could delay production. JHU/PCS was able to take the animated segment to the U.S.A. to be developed and have a print made, thus avoiding one source of possible delay. It is anticipated that the production and editing will be completed by the end of May as scheduled. Medex has been able to use the LBS video facilities, as well as the experienced LBS production staff, and LBS' cooperation has been a major factor in keeping to the production schedule.

After its completion, the videotape will be previewed by policy-makers and by representatives from family planning agencies before it is broadcast to the general public. The LBS staff agreed to televise the program at least three times. The videotape will also be transferred to film for use in the schools and with community groups.

During the visit, plans were developed to evaluate public receptivity and comprehension of the videotape. The evaluation would be conducted by LBS under a subcontract with Medex. LBS staff proposed to conduct a survey of 105 households to determine viewers' responses to the content after three broadcasts. The JHU/PCS team suggested that the video be shown to 3-4 groups comprised of 15-20 people to determine their reactions to the video. JHU/PCS plans to provide a consultant to work with LBS to examine research possibilities in more depth and develop a practical plan for the evaluation. LBS has subsequently submitted an outline of the evaluation procedures, including a budget which is presently being reviewed.

Union of National Radio and Television Organizations of Africa (URTNA)

The JHU/PCS team met twice with the participants in the November 1984 Family Health Broadcast Workshop conducted by URTNA. Since their return from Nairobi, the group has been developing a proposal on population awareness in Liberia. At the first meeting the group outlined its plans for the population awareness campaign. It consisted briefly of the following four components:

- 1) A survey to determine the public's attitude and awareness levels on family planning and population issues and to identify the appropriate channels of communication such as radio, television, billboards and folk media.
- 2) A three-day workshop for policy-makers to engender interest and gain support for the FP/population awareness campaign.
- 3) A public awareness media campaign on population utilizing television, radio, billboards and other media.

4) Promotion of specific family planning methods.

The agencies that would be directly responsible for these activities are:

- * Family Planning Association of Liberia - Coordinating agency
- * Ministry of Health - Health activity information
- * National Population Planning Committee - Population policy
- * Liberia Broadcasting System - Survey and media production
- * Liberia Rural Communication Network - Media production and broadcast

Before the second meeting, the JHU/PCS team met with representatives of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs which has responsibility for developing the population policy through the National Population Planning Committee (NPPC). That meeting uncovered new issues that had direct impact on the awareness campaign proposed by the URTNA participants. The primary issues were: that the NPPC was responsible for developing a population policy over the next year or so and that it had also planned a workshop for policy-makers similar to the one proposed by the URTNA group. In view of this new information, the URTNA group decided to shift its focus from population awareness to family planning and to capitalize on the expertise of its members to develop a series of radio plays on family planning. The URTNA group felt that these radio plays could have a strong impact on both urban and rural audiences similar to the skits on breast-feeding developed by the Trow-Trow players, a local dramatic troupe. In addition, it was hoped that by 1986 the proposed World Bank project would have started, thus providing additional funds for more extensive family planning IEC activities.

In order to plan the next phase of its activities, the URTNA group plans to collect information on the levels of public awareness, attitudes and knowledge of family planning and to conduct a survey to gather baseline data on media usage.

Family Life Promotion Program (FLPP)

FLPP is affiliated with the National Catholic Secretariat and promotes Natural Family Planning (NFP). It operates its program in 11 sites in Monrovia and 5 in other areas and plans to add another 2 sites. FLPP trains teachers who go out to villages to teach married couples to use NFP, mainly the Sympto-Thermal Method, although all methods are taught. Over the last year, 27 teachers and 180 couples have been trained, although 30 of the couples subsequently withdrew from the program. By the end of this year the program is expected to train 200 couples who are autonomous, that is, they would not be dependent on the trainers. The target for the next two to three years is to have approximately 800 couples involved in the program. Presently, trainers are required to have a grade 12 level of education, but that is being changed to a grade 9 level.

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The JHU/PCS team met with Mrs. Rosalind Wesley, the Director of the FLPP program, who requested assistance in developing print materials on Natural Family Planning for clients. The JHU/PCS team agreed to provide a consultant to assist in the development of print materials and to explore funding sources for design and printing.

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Family Planning Association of Liberia (FPAL)

The JHU/PCS team met with Mr. Gabriel Hina, IEC Program Officer for the FPAL, and he described some of his current IEC activities:

- Four booklets had been developed: "Health Education," "The Pill," "The Condom" (for non-readers), and "Teaching Family Planning" from a farmer's point of view. The JHU/PCS team agreed to assist FPAL in the printing of these four booklets. (Camera-ready copies were provided by FPAL to JHU/PCS, and the booklets were printed and sent to FPAL on 4/8/85.)
- The annual newsletter was recently published (750 copies were printed).
- A number of posters and calendars have also been produced.

The Association continues its visits to schools and adult groups, giving training talks, showing films and conducting workshops for field health workers.

Due to the IPPF funding cutback, plans to extend outreach programs into several new rural areas and to acquire a billboard in Monrovia were abandoned.

Mr. Hina expressed great appreciation for the two films entitled A Time of Our Lives and Two Roads which JHU/PCS had sent to FPAL. He requested two additional copies of each film. (They were sent April 1985.) Mr. Hina, a delegate to the URTNA workshop in Nairobi, is actively involved with the other URTNA participants in developing the proposal for the radio plays.

Liberia Broadcasting System (LBS)

The JHU/PCS team met with Dr. Peter Naigow, Director General of LBS, and with Dr. Jerome Boikai, Director of Research and Evaluation at LBS. Dr. Boikai is working with the URTNA group to develop the proposal for the radio plays, as well as the design for the media usage survey. He is also responsible for evaluating the video production on population awareness that is being produced by Medex, Inc. Mr. David Washington, LBS Production Director, and other LBS staff members are also working with Medex, Inc. on the video production. Cooperation between LBS and Medex appears to be excellent.

LBS Television Producer Jestina Gibson, one of the URTNA participants, recently produced a ½-hour videotape on the URTNA workshop in Nairobi as part of a local television series called Today's Woman. The program discussed the need for public awareness in Liberia on population and family planning issues. JHU/PCS obtained a copy of the videotape, which was provided to URTNA's Programme Exchange Centre in Nairobi for copying and distribution to African broadcasters. Ms. Gibson also interviewed Cynthia Green for a ½-hour segment of Today's Woman.

National Population Planning Committee (NPPC)

The National Population Planning Committee is a government-appointed committee working within the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs. Eventually this committee will evolve to become the National Population Council that will develop population policies and make recommendations to the government. The JHU/PCS team met with Mr. Abel Massalee, Chairman of the NPPC, and the Deputy Minister of Planning, Mr. Liberty. They informed the team that a three-day seminar for policy-makers has been planned for April of this year. This seminar will include RAPID II presentations and information on other demographic trends such as fertility, housing and migration. Mr. Massalee further explained that a population policy document was expected to be ready and presented to the Government by about March 1986. However, the results of the National Census were still unavailable, and this could further delay the development of the National Population Policy.

The NPPC Chairman expressed a desire to meet with the URTNA group to explore areas of cooperation and expressed optimism that the proposed family planning attitudes and media usage survey could be funded through research funds provided to the NPPC by the Pathfinder Fund. (The URTNA group subsequently met with NPPC and reported that the meeting was positive.)

Ministry of Education (MOE)

Maxwell Senior met with Mrs. Helene Summerville, Assistant Minister of Education for Curriculum and Student Personnel Services, and with Mrs. Barbie Stewart of the Health Education Unit, who outlined the curriculum for Family Life Education for grades 1-9. The curriculum included sex education, parent/childhood relationships and population issues. The students in grades 7-9 covered topics on male and female contraceptive methods. The Health Education Unit planned five workshops for this year, three for teachers and two for handicapped students. Mrs. Stewart felt that the students seemed more receptive to Family Life Education than the teachers, and this sometimes made the task of implementing the curriculum much more difficult. She further expressed a need for IEC material on family life education, especially radio programs for grades 7-12 for evening broadcast.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

In a meeting with Mr. Ofori Akyea, Resident Program Officer for UNICEF, JHU/PCS current activities for Liberia were discussed. Mr. Akyea demonstrated particular interest in the videotape which was being produced by Medex and expressed his desire to be invited to the preview screening.

UNICEF is engaged in family planning activities with a focus on child spacing and childhood diseases.

The following were some of the current UNICEF IEC activities:

- A weekly ½-hour radio program on the Catholic radio station, ELCM. The format of the programs is based on interviews with medical doctors on issues and methods of family planning.
- Daily 10-minute radio-spots in local languages on ELCM and the LBS radio station.
- A ½-hour videotape produced by the Ministry of Information and focused on Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs). This videotape will be broadcast over national television in Liberia. Its aims are: to provide information to midwives; to stimulate awareness of FP/population issues among policy-makers; and to serve as an education instrument for the general public. UNICEF hopes to transfer this tape to 16mm film for use in the rural areas.
- Videotapes of clinics in the rural areas to highlight existing conditions in the clinics and the available services. For example, a recent series of recordings was done about two women covering the period of their pregnancy through birth.
- Slides and still photographs to expose the widespread existence of childhood diseases. These are used in schools and clinics to educate students, teachers, and parents on ways to eliminate childhood diseases such as diarrhea.

- Several newspaper articles focusing on family planning, child spacing and UNICEF's activities.
- A one-day radio workshop for broadcasters and family planning workers which was conducted in February 1985. The objective was to develop a working relationship between the two groups.

United States Agency for International Development

The JHU/PCS team had a debriefing with the Population Officer, Dr. Nancy Pielemeier, prior to her departure for vacation, and on a second occasion Maxwell Senior debriefed the USAID Director, Ms. Lois Richards, and the Health Officer, Dr. Alan Foose. They indicated their support for JHU/PCS efforts in Liberia and emphasized that JHU/PCS should continue to focus on population awareness despite the lack of a government policy on this issue. USAID staff said they look forward to the completion of the videotape and suggested that it be carefully evaluated so as to establish the value of similar efforts in other countries. The Mission Director further suggested that radio be seriously investigated as a communication channel for future endeavors, especially for the rural population; the development of LRCN's network of stations will create numerous broadcast opportunities.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The visitors obtained a fairly comprehensive overview of the status quo of family planning/population IEC activities in Liberia. The contacts made during this visit provided a framework within which the present and future JHU/PCS activities will be structured.

In terms of the Medex videotape, the project is on schedule and the quality of the footage previewed on the JHU/PCS team was good. With editing, the raw footage previewed has the potential to make a memorable and moving documentary on the effects of rapid population growth on Liberia. All concerned family planning agencies expressed interest in the videotape, since it offers, probably for the first time, a direct attempt to address publicly some important issues on population problems. Public reactions to the videotape will provide IEC leaders with some ideas for future IEC programs.

In terms of follow-up materials on population awareness, further information will have to be gathered from the appropriate Liberian agencies regarding the most appropriate content and formats. The decision may not be as simple as it may seem since several complex issues will have to be addressed, including the rate of literacy, available management and production skills, available and appropriate media, and cost factors. The target audience needs further identification before materials can be developed.

The ideas generated by the URTNA group for a radio drama series also seem to offer the prospect of reaching rural audiences with materials in a format that may in some ways reflect some of their own activities and lifestyles. Utilizing drama and folklore may be an appropriate vehicle to reach illiterate couples.

Specific recommendations resulting from this trip are:

1. JHU/PCS should provide a research specialist to work with the Liberian Broadcasting System to develop an evaluation plan for the Medex videotape and to plan a survey of family planning attitudes and media usage in Liberia.
2. JHU/PCS should assist the Family Life Promotion Program (FLPP) to develop a booklet on Natural Family Planning.
3. JHU/PCS should encourage the URTNA participants to finalize their proposal for the production of a series of radio programs.
4. The potential use of follow-up material on population awareness should be carefully assessed and a Liberian agency should be identified to handle production and distribution before JHU/PCS commits resources to this effort.

List of Contacts

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Monrovia

local mailing address: c/o U.S. Embassy

P.O. Box 1445

Monrovia Liberia

Tel: 2622038, 262043, 262883

USA mailing address: APO New York 09155

Ms. Lois Richards, Mission Director

Dr. Alan Foose, Director of Health, Population and Nutrition

Dr. Nancy Pielemeier, Population Officer

Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs (MOPEA)

P.O. Box 9016

Monrovia

Mr. Liberty, Deputy Minister

Mr. Abel Massalee, Director - Population Division

Tel: 223402

Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW)

Maternal and Child Health/Family Planning Services

P.O. Box 9009

Monrovia, Liberia

Tel: 224221, 261395

Mrs. Joyce W.D. Sherman, R.N., M.P.H.

Mrs. Bradley (World Bank)

Ministry of Education (MOE)

P.O. Box 9012

Monrovia, Liberia

Tel: 222654, 221613

Mrs. Helene Summerville,

Assistant Minister of Curriculum Development and Student

Personnel Services

Mrs. Barbie Stewart,

Coordinator Health/Special Education Division

Personnel Services

Family Planning Association of Liberia (FPAL)

P.O. Box 938

Monrovia, Liberia

Tel: 262008

Mr. Gabriel M. Hina, IEC Program Officer

Mrs. Lois Nyema, National Program Coordinator

List of Contacts

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Family Life Promotion Program

National Catholic Secretariat

P.O. Box 3569

Monrovia, Liberia

Tel: 261610

Mrs. Rosalind Wesley, Director

Liberian Broadcasting System (LBS)

P.O. Box 594

Monrovia (Paynesville), Liberia

Tel: 271146, 271250, 271425

Dr. Peter Naigow, Director General

Mr. Eustance Smith, Assistant Director General - Broadcasting

Dr. Jerome Boikai, Assistant Director General - Research, Planning and Development

Ms. Jestina W. Gibson, Program Producer

Mr. David Washington, Production Director

Medex International Corporation (Medex)

E.J. Roye Building

Ashmun Street

P.O. Box 146

Monrovia, Liberia

Tel: 224411

Mrs. Weade Kobbah-Wureh, President

Liberia Rural Communication Network (LRCN)

P.O. Box 2176

Monrovia, Liberia

Tel: 261740

Mrs. Florida Traub, Project Director

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

P.O. Box 274

Monrovia, Liberia

Tel: 262751, 262118

Mr. E. Ofori Akyea, Resident Program Officer

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