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# TRIP REPORT

# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MISSION TO EL SALVADOR

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Dates of In-Country Work:
December 13-18, 1985

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Johns Hopkins University/Population Communication Services (JHU/PCS) Regional Program Coordinator, Patrick L. Coleman, visited El Salvador from December 13-18, 1985. The scope of work included working with the Salvadorean Demographic Association (SDA) to assess the: 1) Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Department's mass media activities; 2) Social Marketing Department's mass media activities; and 3) advertising agency, Publicidad Comercial.

The IEC Department has developed a series of general family planning and "well-being" messages. The IEC Department has also developed a series of population and development messages around themes such as ecology, water, education and nutrition. The messages are very soft and are presented in a non-threatening way. The IEC Chief is pleased with the development of the campaign; he feels that the present communication activities are productive for the institution.

The Social Marketing Department has recently been re-organized and the new chief has been in her position for approximately six months. The Social Marketing Department uses radio, television, posters and point-of-purchase materials to support its product line. Specific brands are promoted via the media, except for pills, which are promoted generically. The Social Marketing chief is also content with the promotion/advertising activities.

Publicidad Comercial had been selected as the SDA's advertising agency about one year prior to this visit. The SDA has worked with approximately six different advertising agencies, dating back to the early 1970s. Its relationship with Publicidad Comercial is very cordial, and there seems to be very good communication between them. Publicidad Comercial feels they can do more in communicating family planning messages to the public, but the SDA keeps them a bit restrained.

During this visit it was apparent that the SDA has regressed from the aggressive stance of the late 1970s to a more passive, non-controversial use of the media to promote family planning. I told both the SDA and its advertising agency that the Salvadorean people have been receiving family planning messages

via the media for more than ten years. This exposure has created a general awareness about the importance of family planning. More creative, aggressive advertising is now needed to reach those who are not yet convinced of the value family planning has for them and their families.

It is recommended that the SDA, Publicidad Comercial, and the Agency for International Development/El Salvador (AID/El Salvador) work together to improve the family planning communication programs managed by the SDA in the following ways:

1) develop more aggressive advertising;
2) bring in outside experts to assist the SDA and Publicidad Comercial, especially in the areas of baseline research, pre-testing and creativity;
3) focus on better segmentation of the audience to which each message is aimed;
4) develop better quality products and depend less upon quantity (over-saturation); and
5) attempt to be less rigid in managerial structure so that quick approvals can be facilitated.

## INTRODUCTION

The Johns Hopkins University/Population Communication Services (JHU/PCS) Regional Program Coordinator, Patrick L. Coleman, visited El Salvador from December 13-18, 1985. The purpose of the trip was to work with the Salvadorean Demographic Association (SDA) in assessing the: 1) Information, Education and Communication (IEC) mass media activities; 2) Social Marketing mass media activities; and 3) SDA's advertising agency, Publicidad Comercial.

## SALVADOREAN DEMOGRAPHIC ASSOCIATION

The Population Officer for the Agency for International Development (AID) in El Salvador, Kevin Armstrong, asked me to make a short visit to El Salvador to provide him with an assessment of the family planning communication activities managed by the Salvadorean Demographic Association (SDA). Because I worked two and a half years as the SDA's Communication Advisor in the late 1970s, I am familiar with the SDA and El Salvador. The current executive director, Dr. Enrique Henriquez, and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) chief, Martín Caballero, were both known to me. However, the SDA's Social Marketing chief, Dora de Escolan, was new, having assumed this position six months prior to my visit.

Dr. Enrique Henriquez is the former Medical Director of the SDA and has little training in administration and even less in the area of communication. While IEC remains a chief activity of the SDA, it was apparent during this short visit that Dr. Henriquez was not very interested in this area. During a short introductory meeting with Dr. Henriquez, Martín, Dora, and David Arraya, SDA's Evaluation chief, Dr. Henriquez disappeared and was not present to discuss the purpose of my mission, nor did he seem interested.

Overall, the SDA currently has responsibility for two family planning communication programs, one in IEC and the other in Social Marketing, and they will assume a leadership role in an expanded communication program which will also encompass the Salvadorean Social Security Institute and the Ministry of Health. AID is committing substantial resources, through the SDA, for family planning communication. A team of experts is to review this early in 1986 as

part of an overall assessment of the El Salvador family planning program. However, Kevin requested a pre-assessment in order to give the communication expert on the evaluation team areas to focus on. Dr. Henriquez had instituted a rather formal system which restricted my initial access to his staff. Dr. Henriquez has prohibited all outside contacts with SDA personnel unless previously cleared with him. This precludes AID and foreign advisors from making direct contact with SDA staff members. This was especially inhibiting for me during this short visit. One whole day was lost because contact with Dr. Henriquez had not been made to approve my visit until late on Friday afternoon. When questioned about this, staff members stated that this formal management style limited them and did not enhance their work performance.

## INFORMATION, EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT

Several long discussions were held with Martín Caballero about the development of IEC activities over the last five years. The IEC program has focused on a very soft-sell approach. Radio, television and newspaper ads are used to provide general information about family planning. Additional information is also provided on population and development issues such as ecology, housing, water and education. The IEC Department uses the same advertising agency, Publicidad Comercial, as the Social Marketing Department. However, little effort is made to coordinate the two campaigns or to see that the themes of the two departments are interwoven into a unified mass communication program.

Martín stated that he was very pleased with the advertising agency and the IEC program. He informed me that during the last several years the SDA has faced criticism by influential sectors of the Salvadorean society for the type and style of its advertisements. This led the SDA to re-evaluate its publicity program and to change to its current advertising agency.

## SOCIAL MARKETING DEPARTMENT

Dora de Escolan informed me that the Social Marketing Program was just beginning to come out from under a "dark cloud" caused by the previous Social Marketing chiefs. Dora had introduced several new condoms and was attempting to revitalize a program that had begun during my stay in El Salvador in 1977.

The Social Marketing Department currently has five condoms, one pill and a foaming tablet as part of its product line. Four of the condom products are advertised and the publicity for the fifth is being developed. Dora believes there is a large enough market for five condom products. The marketing strategy is to position the condoms, both price- and publicity-wise, for each particular segment of the target audience.

The Social Marketing Department has developed a series of product-support items--from key rings, to ash trays, to writing blocks. They are provided at a minimal cost to pharmacists and distributors as an income-generating device. Dora informed me that these items are in demand. In addition, the social marketing mass communication program includes radio, television, posters, and point-of-purchase support materials. I asked Dora about the social marketing communication program, whether she thought it was paying dividends. She felt that, because there had been an increase in sales in the short time that she had been managing the program, the publicity was on-track and very helpful.

## PUBLICIDAD COMERCIAL

Publicidad Comercial has been working for the SDA for approximately one year. They have assigned one account executive, Carlos Gil, for both the IEC and social marketing campaigns. Carlos is the former creative director at McCann-Erickson/El Salvador, which was the SDA's advertising agency when I was the SDA's Communication Advisor. Carlos felt that his creative background and experience with the SDA was beneficial to the development of both communication programs.

Publicidad Comercial demonstrated their current and future television commercials for both the social marketing and IEC programs. In the meeting with Carlos, Dora and Martín, we discussed the flavor, style, format, themes and purpose of these materials. From these discussions, it was very apparent that the agency is grateful to have the SDA as a client and is striving to give the SDA what it wanted. When asked if the SDA is Publicidad Comercial's largest client, they stated, "within the top three." The SDA and the agency appeared to work very well together.

I asked Carlos if he felt the agency was given sufficient creative leeway to design a communication program which would fulfill the client's expectations. He indicated, yes, up to a certain point, but that the SDA is a little hesitant about extending itself into areas which could be considered controversial. The SDA and family planning in general had not had full support of the public sector until recently. Without this support, the SDA had taken a low-key, non-offensive approach to family planning communication. At the same time, the media materials could be considered dull and non-creative. I suggested several ways in which the ads could be more exciting and more dynamic, yet still avoid controversy.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Any assessment based upon two working days is probably superficial. However, due to my previous experience in El Salvador and with the SDA, I was able to meet with people during off hours and over the weekend. This enabled me to make an accurate evaluation of the shortcomings of the El Salvador family planning mass communication program.

It is apparent from listening to the radio and watching television that social advertising dominates the airwaves. More than half of all commercials are public service announcements and approximately half of the public service announcements are family planning commercials. Is this saturation? Or over-saturation? The SDA was unsure when asked this question. Publicidad Comercial felt the media programming schedule was appropriate. I have my doubts! It appears to me that the SDA has settled for quantity rather than quality in its family planning mass communication efforts. However, ten years of this kind of advertising has reached most of the people who would readily accept family planning. Now, messages and materials must be developed to reach the indifferent segment of Salvadorean society. In order to do this, the SDA must coordinate its mass communication activities and develop a comprehensive communication strategy.

It is recommended that the SDA, Publicidad Comercial, and AID/El Salvador work together to improve the family planning mass communication programs managed by the SDA in the following ways:

1) develop more aggressive advertising;
2) bring in outside experts to assist the SDA and Publicidad Comercial, especially in the areas of baseline research, pre-testing and creativity;
3) focus on better segmentation of the audience to which each message is aimed;
4) develop better quality products and depend less upon quantity (over-saturation); and
5) attempt to be less rigid in managerial structure so that quick approvals can be facilitated.

APPENDIX A

## LIST OF CONTACTS

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