

MASS MEDIA & HEALTH PRACTICES

ISBN-36756

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Academy for Educational Development, Inc.

Sponsored by the Office of Health and Office of Education
Development Support Bureau
UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

CONSULTANT REPORT

MASS MEDIA FOR INFANT HEALTH

THE GAMBIA

March 12-16, 1982

Prepared for:

The Academy for Educational Development
1414 22nd Street, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20037

By:

Esta de Fossard
7929 Cooper Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45242

April 8, 1982

MASS MEDIA FOR INFANT HEALTH - THE RADIO COMPONENT

SYNOPSIS

The use of radio as a medium for the dissemination of information on the symptoms and treatment of infant diarrhea would seem to be feasible and effective. The cooperative effort with Radio Gambia has some real advantages, and some obvious difficulties, that are outlined in this report.

The two strongest needs at this stage are for an overall plan for the total radio campaign, and for the appointment of a logistics coordinator who can assist the radio production team. Decisions have yet to be made about who will be the chief or only writer, and what changes will need to be made in programming subsequent to field testing - which has yet to be implemented.

My two week period in The Gambia gave me useful insight for assisting in the determination of needs and methods of procedure for the June seminar, suggestions for which are included in this report.

The plans that were to be put into effect following my departure are outlined in this report, together with some comments about work that was done with other sections of Radio Gambia.

Earlier reports submitted give precise details of the programs that were produced and planned during this time.

The Mass Media for Infant Health Project seems to be working efficiently overall. Work is well under way in the design and testing of the informational posters, and in the organization of the training seminars for health workers.

It would appear to be essential that there be very close coordination among the various communication components of the project, and there is considerable work to be done with the radio programming to bring it up to an acceptable level.

I found Radio Gambia staff to be very cooperative and pleasant to work with, but there are some obvious disadvantages to a cooperative venture of this type. The chief difficulty is that the Project has no effective control over the production and presentation of the radio programs, since the Radio Gambia staff believe justifiably that it is their prerogative to determine scheduling, production techniques and quality control for radio programming. In the following areas, I would find the standards somewhat lacking:

- Technical Quality. There is considerable laxity in microphone quality, both in the studio and in the field. Some of this is occasioned by poor quality field microphones, that are lacking effective wind screens, but the studio quality suffers, not so much from poor equipment, as from inappropriate use of it. There is insufficient attention paid to voice level balancing; smooth feed in of pre-recorded materials and music, and unnecessary ambient noise. There is considerable noise in the control room throughout recording sessions which makes it particularly difficult for a producer or technician to ensure top quality sound.
- Time Control. There seems to be little awareness of how to prepare a program to a required length. Indeed, it would seem that under most circumstances precise timing is not an important aspect of radio programming at Radio Gambia. I saw no attempts at controlling timing during rehearsal or recording, and the general philosophy seems to be that the length is determined by the product, rather than having the length an integral part of the product.
- Time Management. Attempting to maintain a controlled time line presents real difficulties for Radio Gambia. They are very short staffed, and a scheduled recording may have to be set aside indefinitely if a studio announcer or host is called away for another job. Clearly, from the perspective of Radio Gambia, the Mass Media for Infant Health Project does not carry the same importance as their regularly scheduled local programming.

Further to this is the realization that keeping appointments does not appear to hold the same relevance for The Gambians as it does in the Western world. It is not uncommon for people to fail to turn up for an appointment, without any warning. Recording sessions are often cancelled or delayed because artists fail to show up on scheduled days. Because of the lack of telephone communication, it is often impossible to give much warning, or to attempt to reschedule an appointment.

Radio Gambia, on the other hand, does have some strengths which can work to the advantage of the Mass Media for Infant Health Project. They have two very strong producers - Ami and Seringh, and some strong radio "personalities," such as Maimuna, who have been made available to work with the project. The station as a whole is clearly anxious to assist in this project and there is a feeling among the staff that they can both contribute and learn a great deal from participation in this project.

On my last morning at Radio Gambia (March 24th), Mark and I had a discussion with Ami and Ibraihma - who was acting on behalf of Bemba and Mr. Thomasi who were both out of town - in which it was suggested that an approach would be made to Mr. Thomasi to see if it would be possible to free up more of Ami's time, so that she could work more exclusively with the Project, in a sort of executive producer role. Mark believes that he could - and would like to - handle most of the scripting, and he and I further discussed together, and ultimately with Ami, the possibility of having the Project provide someone as Logistics Coordinator who could handle such things as the scheduling (and/or re-scheduling) of appointments; the maintenance of the time line; the delivery of people and scripts to the studio, and the considerable general running around that is required for the smooth running of a project of this nature and scope. Mark's suggestion is that this person should be his wife, Laurel, and I would concur in this suggestion, provided that her work was restricted to logistics. Laurel has no radio experience and I think it would be disturbing to the staff of Radio Gambia if they felt that she had been given any authority to make decisions about the radio side of the work. Laurel does appear to have organizing abilities, she can speak some Wolof, and she knows her way around Banjul and the surrounding areas very well. Furthermore, she is not hesitant about working with local citizens and she has a research mind - she will seek until she finds, if what we need is not immediately at hand. A necessary quality in such a project.

THE NEXT STEPS

In the previous report, I have detailed the experiments we conducted into various types of possible programming. We did some very informal "testing" of some of these programs shortly before I left The Gambia, but I think it would be both necessary and important to conduct some more formal field testing on these programs before going into full scale production. Perhaps Peter Spain could assist in the preparation of more precise test instruments that would assist in determining the strengths and weaknesses of the programs.

I believe it would be advantageous to continue with the idea of using a variety of program formats. Because there is so much informational material delivered by radio in The Gambia, the audience is gaining a selective sophistication that may well incline them to become impervious to messages that are repeated in the same manner too often.

It is important that a "master plan" be developed before any further production is undertaken. This master plan would give a detailed description of the campaign, showing the day by day alignment of the programs throughout the campaign period, together with a precise content description for each program.

From the master plan a time line can be developed that would allow the logistics coordinator, the writer and the producer to create a working schedule that would allow all programs to be produced on time and up to standard. I think there would be some real advantages for all concerned if this project were to produce programs of a higher caliber than anything currently produced by Radio Gambia, and this can only be accomplished by careful scheduling that will allow the necessary time for the production of quality work.

Following the development of the time line, the work can be broken down into smaller segments - perhaps monthly allotments. We can then determine whether it will be feasible for Mark to undertake all the writing himself, or whether it will be necessary to seek assistance for him from another team member or a Radio Gambia writer. It would be advantageous to have scripts prepared in one month "blocks," so that time, money and effort could be saved by collecting and/or producing materials for more than one program at a time.

It will be essential for programs to be produced sufficiently far in advance to allow for field testing and re-write time before broadcasting. In this way we would have a chance to make a significant contribution to radio as a mass communications medium by providing some detailed and tested information on its areas of strongest efficacy. It is important - if we wish to amass such information - that detailed notes be kept on the processes involved, and this archival and anecdotal recording may well be something that Laurel could also handle.

THE JUNE SEMINAR

During this two week visit to The Gambia I had excellent opportunities to observe particular needs that could be handled during the June seminar. Some of these needs were specifically delineated by people within and without Radio Gambia; others I observed from working personally with these people. Everyone that I spoke to about the seminar evidenced a keen desire to learn more about the applications of radio to their particular communications area, and I believe the seminar will provide us with an excellent opportunity to provide effective and relevant training for many people.

Radio Gambia in general is looking for more varied ways of using radio; they are anxious to update their approach, without being "glossy." I found Ami to be particularly anxious to learn more about alternate methods of using radio for information dissemination. She has learned much from Radio Nederlands about drama, and from the BBC about general programming, but she is anxious to find ways of allying her knowledge to the specific needs and environment of The Gambia. Her most pressing need is for a new approach to the Agricbantaba programming, and during the short visit I had, I was able to give her some significant suggestions for reshaping this programming. It is probable that this can be further developed during the June seminar. **

I found the School's Broadcasting division most anxious for help with ideas for more arresting educational programs. Again, I was able to leave some concrete suggestions with them, which they will be working on between the first visit and the seminar, and I am sure that the seminar will be of very real benefit to people involved in educational radio-- both those from Radio Gambia and those from the Education Department.

I had several meetings with Tom Winn from C.L.U.S.A., and he has made it very clear to me that the seminar is an important event for all the people from his department, who are hoping to learn more about programming, writing, and in particular, the use of radio programs in the village.

My own observation is that in The Gambia, as in other countries, one of the strongest unidentified needs is for some assistance in how to wed the radio station and the various departments who want to use radio as a dissemination tool into a harmonious partnership. It is clear that the various departments who contribute to the Agricbantaba programs, and the various curriculum experts from the Education Department believe that, because they obviously must have content control, they therefore have total control of the program. On the other hand, the radio people believe that, because they have broadcast quality control, they should have total control of the program. Both sides need considerable guidance and assistance to develop a method whereby each "side" retains control of their particular domain, and yet both work together for the development and presentation of effective programming. The business of station management, program design and control and effective co-operation with outside departments is something that is not sufficiently often presented in seminars of this kind.

**My suggestion for the redesign of the agricultural programming was contained in an earlier report.

If you were to consider the employment of an "expert" in station management and running for this- or any subsequent seminar, I would most highly recommend Mr. Charles W. Vaughn, President and General Manager of WCET/TV 48 in Cincinnati, Ohio. While he is currently the manager of a very successful PBS television station, his background is very solidly in radio, which is still his first love. Even if you just wanted to get some ideas from him, he would be worth talking to. He can be reached at WCET/TV 48, 1223 Central Parkway, Cincinnati, Ohio, 45214. (513) 381-4033.

I also observed that there is a need for further instruction in some of the technical aspects of radio production - most notably in control room management, and in field recording. Nobody at Radio Gambia indicated a need for help in these areas, and it is my guess that they are not truly conscious of their weaknesses here. Perhaps we can include some of this instruction in other areas of the seminar so that it does not come through as being a deliberate criticism from us.

PLANS IN EFFECT

As I left The Gambia, Mark and I had agreed that we make the suggestion - as outlined in another report - that the programs that had been begun during my visit, be completed, tested, and then used for both April and May broadcast. In the light of the restrictions of time and production capability this would seem preferable to trying to construct a whole new set of programs for May. (In subsequent discussions with Bill Smith, I would agree with him that it might be better not to even begin broadcasting until May.) The intention - when I left The Gambia - was for Mark to begin to plot out an overall scheme for the broadcasting portion of the campaign, and for some scripting to be done for subsequent programs and for the half hour magazine program before my return in June.

I think it is possible that some real learning relevant to this Project could take place at the seminar, and that the two or three weeks immediately following the seminar could be put to effective use in scripting, preparing and producing the next batch of programs.

I am confident that the use of radio in this Project will be both feasible and profitable - in terms of disseminating information. I feel sure that the aural message can be most effective in assisting the understanding of the visual messages that will be delivered by flyer and by the lottery tickets.

I would like to see more work done in the area of determining the potential audience for these programs, and in exploring the listening habits in the compounds. We need to be more aware of whether listening is a total group activity; whether radios are the exclusive domain of the men or the elders in the village; and whether - if the men are the prime audience- there is more that the radio messages need to do to encourage the men to share the information with the women, or to encourage the women to listen with them.

It would be helpful if we could devise some type of a "listening poll" to determine the audience for the various spots and the different times of day, but this might be an undertaking for which we have neither the time, the money, nor the personnel. I think, however, we do need some systematized method of collecting data of this type.

OTHER REPORTS

More detailed descriptions of the types of programs we attempted during the March - April visit have been attached in Appendix A, along with some suggestions for the half hour magazine program; the suggested format for the agricultural program; a job description for the logistics coordinator, and the scripts of the trial programs.

APPENDIX A

The aims of this trip were:

1. To assist in the planning, writing, production and testing of four 10 minute mini programmes and four, 3 minute "spots" and to assist in the preparation of four mini programmes and four spots more up to the production stage.
2. To assess the capabilities of the Mass Media staff and the Radio Gambia staff in terms of the number and quality of programmes they could be reasonably expected to turn out.
3. To make some determinations about the types of materials and presentations that could be useful in the forthcoming May - June workshop.
4. To offer what other help possible to members of Radio Gambia staff and Mass Media staff.

ACHIEVEMENTS

1. On Monday March 15th we held a combined meeting of Mass Media for Health and Radio Gambia staff to determine the type of programming we would attempt for the April mini programmes and spots.

In the interests of determining potential, I suggested that we try 4 different types of mini programmes:

actuality
interview
drama
quiz

and that each of these be produced in Wolof and Mandinka.

I further suggested that we try four different types of "spots" - music, "Jingle" - which is actually a short dialogue, hard sell and news report.

2. On Tuesday, March 16th, we went to Bakau Health Center to tape record participants in the Actuality Broadcast. Maimuna and Ami conducted interviews in both Wolof and Mandinka with mothers, nurses and health workers.

I was impressed with the way both these women worked and with the high degree of co-operation they achieved from everyone at the health centre.

I was disturbed, however, by the poor technical quality of the material they taped, and by their apparent lack of knowledge in such areas as hand-held microphones; ambient sound; microphone baffling. It was also immediately apparent to me that timing was not a production element that was given any consideration at all. It was obvious that the amount of material we had on tape was not more than 6 minutes in all and that when this had been edited to remove the interviewers voices (this being an actuality broadcast and not an interview) the total programme length would be barely 4 minutes for a 10 minute slot. I therefore went ahead and wrote a "wrap around" for these actuality broadcasts, in which an announcer would give a lead in to each recorded voice and a summary after each one, thus bringing the programme closer to its ten minute goal.

Ami edited both language versions of the interviews soon after they were recorded and that week-end (March 20th) we had both versions of the actuality broadcasts ready for use - including theme music and slogan, wrap around announcements and actuality speeches. The Wolof version came to 11 minutes; the Mandinka to 8.5 minutes, but nobody seemed to be the least concerned either about the discrepancy or about the fact that neither programme met the required time allotment!

INTERVIEW

This lack of time precision was apparent in everything we did, and was clearly evident in the attempted "interview" programmes. Our original intention had been to interview some of the "authorities" from the actuality programme, together with a religious leader and a medical doctor, with some very precise questions of the type that village mothers might want to ask.

I was quickly aware that the interviewers had no notion of how to tailor questions to a time limit, and that they considered it in very poor taste to request such people as religious leaders or medical men to restrict their remarks to a predetermined time limit. Consequently, we settled on only two speakers in each language interview - Dr. Cunteh from MRC and two Imams - one Mandinka speaker one Wolof, (Cunteh conveniently speaks both languages!) At the time of writing of this report, the interviews with the Imam have still not been completed, and I do not hold out very high hopes for these programmes being effectively edited to the requisite times.

DRAMA

We already had on hand some scripts that had been previously written by Bette Booth, and as each of these scripts was about four minutes in length, I was able to combine them with a short bridge speech and a closing statement, to make them into a 10 minute programme, We are told by the Radio Gambia staff that radio dramas are extremely popular with the rural audiences.

There are, however, considerable difficulties in the area of drama. First, the actors cannot read. They are professional actors who work with a national troupe, and they are very accustomed to working extemporaneously - with the producer going over the ideas of a scene with them which they then translate into speeches. This is very impressive to watch, but it has the disadvantages of needing considerable rehearsal time and the possibility that important messages will not be delivered exactly as required.

Because local producers are inexperienced in the preparation of pre-production sound effects tapes, and because they lack a good sound effects record library, drama production presents the added burden of the need for considerable editing time.

Added to all this is the difficulty of actually getting the actors to the studio at the required time. Telephone contact is impossible, and there is always the strong probability (a reality during my visit) that they will simply fail to turn up on the appointed recording day. Alternatively some may turn up and others may not, necessitating a mad scramble to find replacements, or an on the spot "rewrite" of the script.

The Mandinka version of the drama was recorded on the evening of Friday, March 19th, but the Wolof actors failed to turn up to their Saturday appointment. This brings to mind the further difficulty that the actors seem to be available only in the evenings - which necessitates having the producers return in the evening or stay through the day, and further necessitates someone (usually Mark) acting as transport for the actors from and to Banjul.

The Wolof actors are currently scheduled to make their recording on Tuesday, March 23rd at 5:30 p.m.

THE QUIZ

The idea of a quiz met with favorable response from everyone working on the project and radio team, but because they were unsure how this would work on an adult level, I undertook to prepare the script for them. This type of a programme is obviously enhanced when presented by a well-known "personality" and Maimuna Barr was the obvious and unanimous choice for this. Unfortunately, Maimuna was called out of town to go on trek for some agricultural programmes from March 22nd through 26th, so we were unable to record this programme before my departure. However, because it is something that can be done in the studio by Maimuna and another announcer, I do not think it will present any production problems.

SHORT SPOTS

Ami informed us that there were already some musicians working on musical "spots" to convey the basic messages of the campaign. She - and others - seemed to think that these musical messages would be more like five than three minutes.

A group of Mandinka musicians came to the studio on Saturday night and recorded a number of "songs"; the main message running somewhere between six and seven minutes - which puts it - lengthwise - right between a spot and a mini programme. We have not yet heard the finished version, but once again, it seems to be of little import to Radio Gambia people, that it is not of correct length for either of our appointed slots.

The idea of the 'musical message' seems to be very popular with The Gambians and I am concerned that it will not be taken as a serious message; I hope that it will not be considered as only light entertainment.

There is no doubt that this particular group of musicians - about six in all - is very talented and the music they have written is appealing and catchy.

Recording the presentation certainly offers problems, because Radio Gambia does not have facilities for recording and mixing individual tracks, and it is very difficult to create an effective balance with their limited facilities.

Nevertheless, as Radio Gambia audiences are probably accustomed to this standard of 'live' musical production, this may not be a real problem.

I have yet to determine how economically feasible this musical presentation is. Do the musicians require to be paid, and will there ever be a request for residuals?

Indeed, the whole question of payments, permissions and contracts seems to be something that has so far not been broached at all. I suggest that some agreement or contract be drawn up with all performers ahead of broadcast - just

in case they decide to apply for greater recompense at a later date.

It also bothers me that we do not have any sort of a signed "permission" release from people who are appearing in actuality broadcasts and interviews. I certainly would not think of using anyone's voice on a programme in the U.S.A. or Australia without such a signed permission, I do not want to create difficulties or problems of this nature unnecessarily in The Gambia. I think we need to give this some serious consideration.

As far as I can determine, there is no date fixed for the recording of Wolof music, and it may well be that no Wolof group has as yet been identified to do this work. In any case, it is clear that we will not have both recordings completed by the time I leave on March 25th.

JINGLE

At Radio Gambia, the word "jingle" is used to describe a short dramatic dialogue, which is usually 'performed' by Radio Gambia announcers who can read and translate the script at the same time. Announcers are accustomed to and adept at doing instant translation from English scripts.

It was agreed that Sayhoo would create the "jingle" for this spot, but as of March 23rd, he seems not to have had time to complete this. Today, March 23rd, both he and Mark have been fully occupied with Dr. Gowers all day, and I can see that trying to use either of them (or even both of them) as full time scriptwriter/coordinators for the radio programmes will probably not be a feasible idea. Unless the 'jingle' is forthcoming within the next 12 hours, it will not be possible to have it edited, revised, and recorded before my departure.

HARD SELL

This is a hard hitting message spot, along the lines of a commercial or public service announcement. It is probably the type of thing that Dr. Thomasi has been most wary of, but as he has been in Kenya all the time I have been in The Gambia, I have not had the opportunity on this trip to discuss this type of programme with him. I am guessing, however, that when he hears this, he will realize, that we are not being too commercialized in our approach.

I prepared the script for this, and it is my understanding that by this evening (March 23rd) it will be recorded (by a Radio Gambia announcer) in both Wolof and Mandinka.

The presentation and recording of this type of programme presents no difficulties - the one problem I can see is finding the person who can write these materials.

The same comment applies to the

NEWS ITEM SPOT

This is presented as a "special" from the news department and highlights the campaign, together with some recorded comments from Dr. Cunteh. Because we already had him recorded for an interview, it was not difficult to edit out some of his remarks and to add to this news special. Again, this type of thing is easy to record and present in the studio, and I am led to believe that this one, too, will be completely recorded - in both languages - by March 24th.

Writing and accurate timing are my only problems with this type of script.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Is there any advantage to be gained by doing a new lot of programmes for the month of May, or would it be better to continue to use those we've made for two months, and use my return visit and the workshop experience to start on the next lot and the half hour magazine programmes?

It is clear that you need ONE person to oversee, control and guide the radio programming. Currently it seems that no-one on the present staff has either the time or the expertise to do this.

I believe it is imperative that the campaign be mapped out as a whole, before proceeding any further; that time lines and objectives be clearly spelled out, and that one person be put in charge of writing (or being sure that someone else writes) all the programs, and having them quality controlled and time controlled from start to finish.

Without overall control and adequate supervision, you will waste a lot of time and money. For example, if the programmes are planned out well in advance, you give yourself the chance of recording material for more than one programme at a time - in the same location.

If you are planning to prepare new programmes every month, or even every couple of months, it is imperative that a schedule be developed FIRST and that long term and short term campaign goals be spelled out before any further work is done.

It would seem to me that there is no-one at Radio Gambia with the time to undertake this as a personal job, and ideally it should be done by someone with a real knowledge of radio, who can be instilling some good standards of writing, production, timing, techniques etc., while doing this work.