



COMMUNICATION/BEHAVIOR CHANGE TOOLS

Programme Briefs

No. 1-Entertainment-Education

WHAT IS ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION ?

Entertainment-Education [EE] is an approach in which social messages are incorporated into entertainment programmes. The strategy is to combine the efforts of (1) a *creative team* that designs the storyline, incorporating socially informative messages, and (2) an *evaluation team* that uses communication and behavioural theories to achieve and measure behaviour change.

“Entertainment-Education is the process of purposively designing and implementing a media message both to entertain and educate, in order to increase audience member’s knowledge about an educational issue, create favourable attitudes, and change overt behaviour.”¹

An actor in a radio or TV soap opera or a cartoon may serve as a role model who demonstrates the positive or negative consequences of his/her character’s actions. A role model’s greatest impact occurs when the audience identifies with the character and follows the character’s positive example. People often want to emulate a role model’s behaviour. By following a character through a storyline, a listener can be motivated to adopt prevention techniques, and can learn the importance of education, getting tested for STI’s and so on.

Entertainment-education comes in many forms including serial dramas broadcast on TV and radio, cartoons, interactive “talk” shows and folk media. It allows the audience to make decisions on their own without being preached to. Framing messages in a popular, entertaining format helps create an environment where people of all ages can carry on conversations about topics discussed in the latest episode of their favorite soap opera or cartoon. In some cases such as RH, EE is used to legitimize sensitive topics for public discussion, giving people the positive reinforcement they need to talk about the issues with family and friends. Interpersonal communication becomes more feasible and acceptable, and positive learning and

¹ Singhal & Rogers, 1999, Entertainment Education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change, L. Erlbaum Assoc.

“Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector should make greater and more effective use of the entertainment media, including radio and television soap operas and drama, folk theatre and other traditional media to encourage public discussion of important but sometimes sensitive topics related to the implementation of the present Programme of Action. When the entertainment media—especially dramas—are used for advocacy purposes or to promote lifestyles, the public should be so informed, and in each case the identity of sponsors should be indicated in an appropriate manner.” Chapter XI Population information, Education and Communication section B 11.23

-ICPD ON ENTERTAINMENT EDUCATION

decision-making are more likely to follow. EE programmes using the “talk show” format allow questions to be asked and talked about freely. They may inspire listeners to advocate for change, increase their knowledge or change their attitude towards a topic, and they empower audiences to change their own behaviour.

WHY FOCUS ON EE APPROACHES FOR ADVOCACY AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE?

UNFPA assistance to countries in population and RH deals with many issues that may be sensitive and difficult to advocate for or provide information about. Entertainment-education is a way to communicate with people about real life issues that concern them, their families and communities. It can also act as a powerful tool for advocating to gatekeepers and people in positions of power.

EE is especially relevant for population, reproductive health and gender issues that require changes in social and cultural norms such as gender-based violence, socialization of boys, partnership with men, prevention of STDs/HIV/AIDS, client-provider interactions, adolescent sexual and reproductive health, reducing causes of maternal mortality and morbidity, reducing unwanted pregnancies, civic participation in policy making and in community financing.

Benefits of EE

- EE has been demonstrated to have a wide range of public acceptance and the ability to reach several audiences. It promotes interpersonal and group communication and debate after exposure, thereby enhancing learning and behavior change. It is not restricted to one form of media, can be cost-effective and has been proven successful when implemented properly.

Limitations of EE

- The cost of EE depends upon the chosen medium of entertainment, and its ability to be competitive must be considered when choosing which medium to use. Otherwise, the audience may decide to look elsewhere.
- EE must not be looked at as the sole approach to advocacy or BCC or education.
- There are ethical considerations: it is vital that the motives of those producing the activities be unquestionable.
- Those that control the airwaves have the ability to remove a programme that they deem unacceptable.²

KEY ELEMENTS OF EE

Having effective EE programmes requires a well-planned intervention, including the following components:

Collection of Baseline Information & Needs Assessment

In order to produce an EE programme, data on the target audience and baseline information must be gathered. A needs assessment of the extent of the problem will identify the main issues that need to be addressed and help prepare scriptwriters.

Research & Evaluation

Careful research of the storyline and characters, as well as formative evaluation, are important for preventing adverse effects, e.g. giving viewers the wrong “message”.

Research via focus groups, pre-testing and interviews gathers information on socially learned roles, notes what is culturally relevant and appealing, and identifies what is needed to make the script, images and dialogue accurate and credible.

Evaluation is also necessary in order track successful activities (soap operas, talk shows...) so that they may be repeated or changed as needed. Without evaluation, programme planners will not know what is worth replicating. Evaluation need not be looked at as a threat. It is a valuable tool to improve programme performance. Evaluation need not be complex; simple forms may be effective.

- *Formative evaluation* is conducted while an activity is being developed or is ongoing, to make adjustments, if necessary, to improve effectiveness.
- *Process evaluation* examines whether the programme procedures were followed
- *Outcome evaluation* measures the changes produced by the activity.

All three forms of evaluation are necessary for an EE activity to be implemented effectively and to measure its degree of effectiveness.

Quality Production

Public health and population programmes must be based on gaining the trust of the public. For this reason, choice of actors is important since they are to become role models. For example, a rock music campaign in Mexico lost credibility when its role model demonstrated, in “real life,” that he was not sexually responsible.

In order to survive in a competitive market the programme must have the best scriptwriters, actors and creative teams.

In both live performance and broadcast entertainment, actors must be briefed on the issues they are working with in order to answer questions accurately to an audience that may look to them for answers or where to go to get information.

Rigorous Dissemination Plan

For maximum audience exposure and impact, the programme must be put in a primetime slot and broadcast regularly and sequentially.

EXPERIENCES TO DATE

A radio soap opera in **Tanzania** “*Twende na Wakati*”, partly funded by UNFPA and aired twice daily, provides evidence that one of the main ways in which entertainment education has its effects is by stimulating interpersonal peer communication. The behaviour change effects of entertainment-education occurred not through direct exposure to the radio broadcasts, but from such exposure coupled with peer discussion of the episodes.³ Research also confirmed the importance of the entertainment dimension, indicating that at least a quarter of all those who adopted family planning reported that they did so because of listening to the soap opera⁴. Listeners were more likely than non-listeners to discuss family planning with their spouses/partners, and the programme had a positive effect on the degree to which listeners believed that they can control their own future.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Progress UNFPA Tanzania

² Ibid.

In **Nigeria**, a 30-minute 52 episode family television series “*I Need to Know*” on adolescent health issues was sponsored by UNFPA. It was aimed at bridging the communication gap between parent and child, while encouraging open dialogue on adolescent sexual health issues as well as encouraging policy makers to provide adolescents access to information and youth friendly services. The storyline follows seven secondary school students dealing with topics such as HIV/AIDs, and depicts the benefits of knowing the right information and consequences of not knowing. Previous programmes on this topic had failed. This one succeeded because its content was detailed enough to encourage a change in reproductive health behaviour, and it gave parents enough information to educate their teenagers.

The **Maldives** experienced similar success with television.

A radio talk show “*Window of Love*” was used in **Viet Nam** to educate adolescents on sensitive aspects of reproductive health. Results of its’ evaluation indicated that the programme, comparatively to other programmes, was popular among adolescents. More letters were received from this age group, and more urban educated listeners tended to be aware of day, time, and duration of radio broadcast contrary to the thought that more rural listeners would be more interested from lack of access to RH information. Variation in interest of the RH topic was dependent on listener age. The majority of those who were surveyed felt the programme content was useful.

A comic book character in **Cameroon** tells the story of a young woman that overcomes the stigma of HIV and comes to terms with her situation to become a HIV/AIDs awareness advocate. The UNFPA-sponsored production promotes positive youth action and awareness on the issue. An educational brochure providing basic knowledge and preventative information was also published in collaboration with a national NGO, ASIPAC.

In **India** theatre was used because of its traditional popularity and cost effectiveness. Research confirmed its effectiveness in communicating HIV/AIDs information, particularly with audiences having limited formal education.

A number of other, similarly successful EE activities, not funded by UNFPA, are in operation in countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Some of them use a multi-media approach. Some of the best known of these activities are Soul City in South Africa and Puntos de Encuentro in Nicaragua.

Puntos de Encuentros in **Nicaragua** uses entertainment-education to promote its basic message of empowerment of youth and women. It talks about issues such as sexual health and sexual relations, gender relations and violence, even if that means risking confrontation with the beliefs of the target population. Human dramas that people can relate to

can achieve the right mix of accommodation and confrontation. In a country where most of the population avidly watches television, Puntos’ core medium is a television soap opera, *Sexto Sentido* (“Sixth Sense”). The weekly broadcast is supported by local radio shows and followed up by various education and support activities from community-based organizations.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE SOAP OPERAS PRE-PRODUCTION, PRODUCTION AND POST-PRODUCTION

1. “Conduct formative research to design the programme.
2. Identify the central educational value and establish a moral framework.
3. Evaluate the role of television (or radio) in society, the television production and broadcast facilities, and the availability and appropriateness of commercial advertisers.
4. Evaluate the infrastructure that supports the educational issue to be sure it is adequate to meet expected demand.
5. Assess the appropriateness of the entertainment-education format, in light of the demographic and socio-cultural characteristics of the audience
6. Assess the physical characteristics of the intended audience to design life-like characters, sets and costumes.
7. Collaborate with social scientists and formative researchers to inform the production team about the educational issue to be promoted.
8. Facilitate cooperation between the creative and production personnel.
9. Design character profiles and paths based on the moral/values framework, and write the scenes, episodes, scripts and epilogues accordingly.
10. Shoot (or tape) the episode.
11. Assess the effects of the entertainment education soap opera.”¹

Puntos de Encuentro coordinates with the media and many local institutions that share its perspectives, taking advantage of each organization’s separate strategies and strengths for community mobilization.

The Soul City experience in **South Africa**, which uses a multi-pronged and on-going national mass media campaign coupled with community mobilization, illustrates the effectiveness of using several forms of media (television, radio, comic strip), each carrying a different storyline, but in all cases reinforcing the programme objective. It also illustrates the importance of solid audience research and of partnerships among public and private institutions, and local networks and community organizations. As in the Maldives the popularity of the cast helped make the show popular, which in turn helped recruit the most popular actors.

WORKING WITH LOCAL FOLK MEDIA ARTISTS

Workshops can help tap into local artistic talents. In Malawi, artists were selected for a workshop, based upon their popularity and resemblance to the target audience. Working groups produced communication materials (songs, plays, stories).

Facilitators kept groups focused on the theme when artists started to move away from it. The tendency to try to put too much information in a song needed to be addressed and artists needed to be assured that additional information would be covered in other communication materials. The more traditional folk artists, who tended to use simple messages in their songs, understood this principle better than some other professionals, drama groups and pop artists.

Another concern was creating messages that appeared to accuse people, implying that they were the cause of the problem. At the end of the workshop more than double the anticipated number of songs were produced and performed publicly.

Songs were **pre-tested** for clarity and audience identification with the issue. After performances, a follow up activity was carried out and contracts were drawn up with the artists for their services, and schedules were set for recording the materials.

Lessons learned: A supportive atmosphere, including flexibility, may be even more important for successful work with creative artists than with other professionals. Facilitators should pay attention to content of message as well as creativity.

Conclusion: This experience reflects only one event in an EE process. However, it demonstrates that local experience can be called upon and that basic communication principles can be followed, like keeping messages clear and simple. And just as with modern communication channels, **pre-testing, research and evaluation** of traditional media are also necessary ingredients.

LESSONS LEARNED FOR EFFECTIVE EE

Using Theories of Change in Message Design

Behaviour change is a process and not an event. Individuals vary in levels of motivation or readiness to change. People at different points in the process of change can benefit from different interventions, matched to their stage at the time. It is therefore important to segment the audience accordingly, and to consider the programme in its entirety rather than as a one-time event.

Interpersonal Communication and Community Mobilization

The mass media alone seldom effect social change, but media programmes can stimulate conversations among listeners that lead to change, and stimulate action from local groups. The results of EE programmes indicate that viewers who engage in interpersonal communication or peer communication after being exposed to the programmes are more likely than others to accept behaviour change. For

instance, in South Africa, after the series on gender-based violence, community members mobilized to neutralize violent men and organized safety nets for endangered and battered women.

Contingency or contextual factors

Entertainment-Education programmes are dependent on a set of contingency factors which include *audience characteristics* (choosing the most appropriate medium for a particular audience), *organizational factors* (support from leaders and other stakeholders), *media environment* (competition or reinforcement from other media, audience access to media), and *infra-structural factors*⁵. These contextual factors upon which planners have no control, combine with *programme-specific factors* such as *audience research* for ensuring a socio-cultural perspective, appropriate use of language, selection of viewing/listening time, mix of entertainment with education, selection of skilled professionals, etc.

Institutional Partnerships

Collaboration amongst the government and government agencies, UN Agencies, NGO's, media leaders, donors and the private sector is necessary in order to maintain commercial and social support.

Linking Demand with Services

Information and RH services must be in place to supply audience members and organizations with the proper training and materials and supplies to meet a demand that may be generated by a programme, e.g. enough SRH booklets, condom outlets or personnel to answer a hotline set up to address teen callers.

MEDIA ADVOCACY VERSUS ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION ?

Both media advocacy and EE, used in proper balance, have an important role to play in making the mass media more responsive to population issues.

Defining Media Advocacy

“Media advocacy is a part of a strategy to exert pressure on those whose decisions influence an environment. It uses the mass media appropriately, aggressively, and effectively to support the development of public...policies.”⁶

⁵ Singhal & Rogers (1999)

⁶ Wallack, Dorfman, Jernigan & Themba, (1993), *Media Advocacy and Public Health: Power for Prevention*, Sage

Main Differences Between Media Advocacy & EE

Media advocacy and Entertainment-Education share the perspective that, because the media are the main source of information about population and reproductive health issues, communication interventions need to focus on the media.

Advocacy requires the mobilization of resources and groups in support of certain issues and policies to change public opinion. Media advocacy is the strategic use of mass media to advance the agenda on social or public policy initiatives. Unlike Entertainment-Education, which is mostly concerned with directly influencing audiences such as clients, service providers or community leaders, media advocacy centers on shaping the public debate about public health, including reproductive health.

Media Advocacy 1) mostly works with the news staff of the media such as: journalists, editors and producers of information broadcast and print media, 2) intends to bring important issues to light, identify responsibility and propose solutions, and put pressure on decision-makers to act, and 3) may not directly craft the media message and commission coverage but rather relies on the goodwill of media gatekeepers to provide adequate content and coverage towards building a favorable public opinion and policy change on the topics considered.

Entertainment Education 1) works with the creative staff of the media industry such as scriptwriters, actors, directors and producers of entertainment media, and with communication researchers 2) produces specific and well timed programmes to inform and educate the general public, leading to interpersonal communication and community reinforcement, with the goal of social and behavioral change and 3) strategically brings the topic of discussion under the public's scrutiny allowing advocates to capitalize on the attention, and thereby legitimizing the problem. 4) Planners need to plan ahead how messages will be disseminated over a relatively long period of time.

WHAT UNFPA CAN DO

In collaboration with partners, UNFPA can build national, regional and community capacity to produce and use accurate and interesting EE media-based programmes, including forms of media that cannot be broadcast like folk media.

Research should be carried out prior to, during and after the activity, and should be reviewed frequently and thoroughly.

It is important to be aware that television and radio projects are more expensive than theatre and folk media. On the other hand, they offer wider coverage and frequency. Start up funding may be high, and considerable time is required, but, on the positive side, entertainment education programmes are cost-effective and may even yield a profit.

It is also important to realize that with the growing popularity of EE, more projects will be initiated and because of this, careful attention needs to be given to quality control in order avoid potentially adverse effects as mentioned in the *Limitations of EE* section above.

Finally, access to the airways, at appropriate times and affordable cost, is crucial, but opening the media policy doors that control access and cost, may require considerable negotiation skills and time.

USEFUL EE WEB-BASED RESOURCES

- <http://www.comminit.com/>
- <http://www.populationmedia.org/>
- <http://www.ohiou.edu/~enteredu/>
- <http://www.jhuccp.org/>
- <http://www.population.org/>
- <http://www.soulcity.org.za/>
- <http://www.puntos.org.ni/>
- <http://bbs.unfpa.org/progress2>

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