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<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Biketi, Teiabauri.</td>
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Health And The Media

By

Teiabauri Biketi
INTRODUCTION:

Kiribati is an island country in the Central Pacific with a population of 63,045 (1985 census), 726,345 square kilometers of land and a sea area of about 5 million square kilometers. It consists of 33 small coral islands with lagoon except one. Twenty-two of the islands are inhabited, and the population density in 88 per square kilometer. The country has gained its independence since 1979 and is now a republic with a president as head of state.

BACKGROUND:

Communication methods used in mass media in the country are the newspapers and the radio. However, radio is the most popular one. The coverage to the total population is greater than the national newspapers. Furthermore, radio is the most effective and efficient channel of disseminating information to the community. The circulation of the local newspapers are mainly to money earners and to influence key people in the community.

HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING EDUCATION:

The H.F.P.E. section within the Ministry of Health and Family Planning is the main disseminator on education to health to the community. Its main objective is "to provide education support to the implementation of the NHFPSPD in overcoming the 39 Family Planning and priority diseases to educate the health staff, school staff and the public on the necessary family planning and health related causes of problems, their effects on the community, possible solutions and how to obtain those solutions by well-organized educational programs for the whole country through the national radio, newspaper, health bulletin, school health programs and public education..."

The H.F.P.E. section is utilizing mass media into four communication approaches.

The four approaches are as follows:

RADIO KIRIBATI:

Radio health education talk is usually broadcasted on Radio Kiribati every Tuesday night—a 15-minute program.
The type of health education messages disseminated on the radio is arranged according to the 13 Family Planning and priority diseases. However, the arrangement can be changed if there is an outbreak of a disease such as flu, conjunctivitis. The target audience of the health message is mainly geared to the community as a whole. The nature of the health topic emphasize the harm of the problem, cause of the problem, solution of the problem, and the methods to obtain the solution. The most common technique in presenting health education talks through the radio is the interview between the producer and the health personnel. Occasionally other methods were also practiced such as panel discussions, dramatization, radio spot and announcements. Radio health programs and other programs which are broadcasted on Radio Kiribati are carried out without any cost.

NATIONAL NEWSPAPER:
The national newspaper "Te Uekeræ" is usually published every week. Thus education on health also contribute occasionally to the newspaper by the HFPE staff. The selection of the health topic is based according to the 13 Family Planning and priority diseases and the emphasis mainly a stimulation approach. Reporters of the national newspaper also contribute in writing or abstracting other health related information to the national newspaper. This also gives a great impact of disseminating health-related information to the community.

KIRIBATI HEALTH BULLETIN:
This bulletin is published quarterly in the HFPE section. The aim of the bulletin is to convey and promote education on health to health workers and the village welfare groups. The content of the bulletin includes local health news, simple health techniques and information of VWG health related activities. The contribution to the bulletin articles is collected by health staff and the VWG members and some from abstracting health information from other health journals. The circulation of the bulletin is given to VWG chairman and health staff freely.

NUTRITION:
The dissemination of nutrition education on Radio Kiribati has been implemented by two government departments Health and Agriculture
and a non-government organization called AMAK (Aia Maea Aine Kiribati). The function of three disseminators on nutrition education are listed below:

a. Agriculture—emphasize how to grow nutritional crops
b. Health—emphasize health education on nutrition aspects
c. AMAK—emphasize how to cook nutritional food.

The AMAK have produced its own posters on local foods in relation to the three types of food and the Ministry of Health and Family Planning is currently reviewing its local posters for health education purposes.

CONCLUSION:

Attribution to the utilization of mass media have shown significant improvement and achievement in the Health and Family Planning services. Some of the Health and Family Planning services improvements are listed below:

a. an increase in disease detection and treatment
b. more types of health problems were attended to
c. increase of family planning acceptors
d. increased coverage of health care services

It is shown that the mass media have contributed in a practical implementation of the improvement of health services as a whole.

13 Priority Health Problems

1. Population (conception diseases)
2. Respiratory Tract Infection
3. Diarrhoeal Diseases
4. Wounds and sores/accidents
5. Skin diseases
6. Eye diseases
7. Ear diseases
8. Communicable diseases
9. Anemia and nutritional disorders
10. Fish poisoning
11. Parasitic infestation
12. Dental diseases
13. Non-communicable diseases