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The Role Of The Fiji Broadcasting Commission
In Promoting Public Health And Nutrition In Fiji

By

Apakuki Coka
THE ROLE OF THE
FIJI BROADCASTING COMMISSION
IN PROMOTING
PUBLIC HEALTH AND NUTRITION
IN FIJI

BY

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FIJI.

Saptambar 1986.
FBC BACKGROUND

The Fiji Broadcasting Commission is a statutory body set up through the Broadcasting Act of 1953 with the responsibility of providing the nation with a Radio service with three main areas of broadcasting - entertainment, information and education. Established in 1954 the FBC has been developing slowly over the years and its responsibilities are very wide in serving the 699,000 population of the country.

Radio Fiji transmits through 2 National networks of AM STATIONS and one Suva FM Transmitter.

Programmes are produced and presented in the 3 main languages English, Fijian, and Hindustani. Transmissions run from 5.30 a.m. till 11.00 p.m.

Radio Fiji is aware of its responsibility to support the development of the country and her people being the only Radio Station that could reach the whole population all over the country.

The FBC is also aware of the commitment of the Ministry of Health to the attainment of the Global target of Health for all by the year 2000 as set out in the Government Development Plan Nine (1986 - 1990). As a part of its educational role the FBC collaborates with the Ministry of Health in promoting Good Health for all.

The 3 language programmes of Radio Fiji allocate various times to Health officials for Family Doctor service, Red Cross, Diet Nutrition, Counselling Beautification and Primary Health Care.

The large part of these health programmes are broadcast during our Women's Programmes between 9.00 a.m. and Noon and summarised overleaf are the various Health programmes in the 3 Languages.

ENGLISH

The English Programme allocates certain times each day for Health talks which include Family Doctor Advice in the Breakfast Programme.

In the MAINLY FOR WOMEN programme the following topics are covered in their allocated times each day of the week.

a. THE MILKY WAY - A telephone talkback in which mothers discuss breast feeding with the experts.

b. MATERNAL CARE
c. FOOD AND NUTRITION
d. COUNSELLING
e. RED CROSS TIPS
f. WATER SAFETY
g. BEAUTIFICATION and
h. A SERIES OF GENERAL HEALTH TALKS.

The various officials come with prepared talks which are recorded and broadcast later.
FIJIAN PROGRAMMES

The Family Doctor appears regularly at 6.45 a.m. for 6 days a week and again the large part of Fijian Health programmes are injected into the Women’s Programmes. The Doctors advice tries to explain more the causes of illness than the cure.

A Health Sister presents a **Health Talk** every Wednesday for the duration of 15 minutes and she covers a wide range of topics including:

i) Maternal and Child Health
ii) Family Planning
iii) Prevention of diseases
iv) Food and Nutrition
v) Care for the Old
vi) Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

The Fijian version of ‘THE MILKY WAY’ also comes on when the experts are available.

HINDUSTANI PROGRAMMES:

The Industani Women’s Programme regularly plays a RADIO NETHERLAND Produced tape of short talks and advice of general health tips – sanitation, child growth, school children care, day care centres, gardening, food and nutrition. She has not been very successful with getting Health Officials to present talks and useful advice. Health workers participate in Hindustani Women’s Programmes on invitation with support from the Red Cross, on brief first aid hints. She’s been successful however in convincing a few doctors to regularly appear on her programme and deliver talks on some serious subjects such as miscarriage, pregnancy, diet and others.

The Family Doctors’ script in English is translated by the staff and read by one of them every morning throughout the week.

LOCAL FOODS

Apart from special health advice supplied by Health Officials the FBC has been supporting the National Food and Nutrition Committee in their campaigns to promote an awareness of the nutritional value and the fine flavour of local food. Recent campaigns have always been successful judging from the participation of the general public. The same campaign is now being planned for mid October 1986.

WOMEN’S INTEREST DEPARTMENT

The Women’s Interest Office - a section of the Department of Rural Development - works jointly with Family Health Officials to co-ordinate the women’s participation in the family planning programmes and they have their weekly reports from all parts of Fiji reported in the Women’s Programme.

But, other Health related programmes do not all congregate in the Women’s Programme because they receive the same exposure in other programmes such as Youth, Children and the Ministry of Information Weekly Magazine.

The FBC is instrumental in the expansion and formation of many Womens Clubs around the Country. The influence of the Womens Programme Officers has been to that extent and they have contributed a lot in the development of women in Fiji.
CONCLUSION

i. Discussion Panels are always difficult to organise. This is a forum where a lot of these important subjects like Health can be well covered. We try all the time, on public demand, to have more of it but we have been only partially successful. The reluctance of qualified and knowledgeable people to air their views is most discouraging. Some of our Producers end up with frustration in trying to explain Hospital Services available, and other useful information, and so they keep going back to old recordings which have been repeated many times.

ii. Another very big problem is Translation - the translation of Western concepts and Health Information into the Pacific language. There are traditional TABOOS which complicates the problem of translation and you are limited with the things you can talk about.

iii. Some of these topics are heavy and serious and it won’t be easy to hold the attention of listeners for too long while the talks are aired along these subjects. However, one of the reasons for including them in the Women’s Programme is that they come among their Request sessions, stories, Recipe and Talk back so they are being broadcast when the women are held with interest to their Radio sets.

iv. We have also in the past, worked with the Health Officials in successful campaigns for breast feeding, filarises, guarding against breast cancer and water pollution and it has proved how we can use Radio to air Health Information for the good of all.

Most of the programmes mentioned earlier come in straight talks of 5 to 7 minutes. Programme Officers and Producers have for quite some time been trying to change the pattern and style these important messages are put across. It would be impossible to do so without the help and effort of the people concerned. There has been some plans and discussions for the Health Officials to relay these messages in drama, poem and song. Hopefully these will come about shortly.

FBC FUTURE OBJECTIVES ARE TO:

a. Maintain and improve the standards of programme services currently provided.

b. Improve, consolidate and expand those services which can play a larger role in national development.

c. Increase the level of rural coverage.

d. Provide accurate and balanced coverage of news.

The Ministry of Health is set to concentrate its efforts in achieving the goal of HEALTH FOR ALL by the year 2000 and by the same plan, FBC services will continue to improve, and existing Health Programmes, hopefully would improve likewise.

18 September 1986.