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<th>Title</th>
<th>Child family health and the media in Thailand.</th>
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Child/Family Health And The Media In Thailand

By

Niramon Prudtatorn
1 Situation. Health problems in Thailand in general are heart disease, accident, cancer and others. As far as the family health is concerned, what West said constantly are family planning, breast feeding, nutrition, child mortality rate, immunization, drugs and latest is about aids.

Aids becomes the burning issue at present as well as prostitution and child prostitution which related to unwanted pregnancy, abortion, V.D. and aids.

Women, especially mothers are considered as health provider and promoter of health care but women's role is not well enough promoted and also get less education especially in the rural area. At times, girls are sold to child prostitutes. Many young girls migrate to work in the city and often in unhealthy work places.

2. What is the role of Media on Child/Family Health?

So far, media both printed and electronic media have played a big role as a watchdog to warn and to inform the public as well as to educate people such as news coverage on different areas and encourage people about how to get good health.

However, sometimes media are complained by health agencies that their roles to promote good health is inadequate, on other words, media would pay more attention whenever there is crisis or critical issues rather than being issues oriented systematically which could be more effective in the long term.

On the negative side, sometimes media could also be temptations to promote modernization and consumerism due to it's and business oriented in the competitive world. Such media may not be able to educate or convince or promote the primary or self reliance case to the poor people as expected. For example, space for ORS information could be put in a smallest column than the "Buy me" advertisement space which would be shown much more times and be powerful enough to get "yes" finally. Likely in the slum areas in Bangkok, people there, are observed that instead of earning for good food, they prefer to buy a television set instead.

3. Media's capacity in Thailand

The mass media are highly developed in Thailand and also they influence a lot of audiences. Radio coverage is nationwide through 301 Government-owned and managed stations. According to the National Bureau of Statistics there was an average of one radio receiver for every 6 people in 1985. The 10 government-owned television stations so far only reach 65% of the country but these is already an average of one set fro every 13 people.
As far as the programming content is concerned, both radio and television devote 20% of their time to public service education. Both have regionally-based services which transmit some programmes of more local interest, often using local dialects, but the national news is broadcast and relayed regularly throughout the kingdom.

Thailand's newspaper and periodical press is one of the most vibrant in the region, so the printed media can play a significant role in social communication. Readership of the 20 major national daily newspapers is approximately 10 million per day. The government support village reading centers throughout the country. These are very simple shelters where the community can go to read the daily newspapers, most of which have a section on women's and children's issues.

4 What should be done in the future?

As far as the health promotion is concerned, Thailand does not have problem on media's capacity but it's the question of social awareness of private-owned media and health agencies' approaching.

Therefore, suggestion has been made as follows: (1) mass media's leaders should be requested to encourage more health issues, (2) information center on children/family health should be established in locally, nationally level, (3) health agencies both from Gos and NGOs should consider new strategies on media to promote Child/Family Health such as alternative media or advanced media, and (5) arrange child/family health education for media people.