

**Broadcast Media Coverage Of The AIDS Issue In Malaysia**

**By**

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RTM/RADIO TELEVISION MALAYSIA

## INTRODUCTION

Malaysia begins to feel the threat of AIDS when a child who died on April 1987 was identified as being infected by AIDS. Till May 1990, 14 cases have been identified and a few more are under observation. Till now, 10 out of the 14 cases have died. The first case to be identified on December 1985 was a drug addict which was followed by another case on November 1986 when AIDS was detected on a man who just came back from the U.S. From then on, the Government has taken serious steps towards AIDS by forming a special task force under the Ministry of Health to combat the disease.

The Ministry of Health has taken several steps in creating awareness and providing information on AIDS besides identifying cases of AIDS and preventing it from spreading through blood transfers and other measures. Special Equipments to detect AIDS were procured and blood samples were analyzed. There are now many government and private hospitals which have the facilities to determine AIDS virus in the blood. In an effort to monitor the widespread of AIDS, a total of 24 blood testing centres were established throughout the country. At the same time, information on AIDS are disseminated through talks, seminars, pamphlets, newspapers, radio and television.

As an integrated effort to combat AIDS, the roles of broadcast media are important. In this connection, radio and television are given the task to inform

and educate the public regarding AIDS. Declaration of 1988 as the year of Communication and Cooperation on AIDS and December 1, 1988 as the World AIDS Day by WHO, make it even pertinent for the broadcast media to play more vigorous roles.

## ROLE AND DEVELOPMENT OF RADIO

Radio was first set up in 1946. Today, Radio Malaysia which is Government-owned has 24 radio stations which are strategically located in the various state capitals and towns. Its main role is to provide information and entertainment. Radio Malaysia broadcasts through six main networks namely 'Radio 1', which broadcast in national language 'Bahasa Malaysia', 'Radio 3' for Capital City Broadcast and regional stations where the programmes aired are more localised and relevant to the region, 'Radio 4' broadcast in English, 'Radio 5' in Mandarin, 'Radio 6' in Tamil and 'Radio Music'.

By the end of August 1994, a new private Radio network called 'Time Radio' will begin its transmission in two languages; English and Malay. Its main purpose is to disseminate the latest happenings in the country and throughout the world and information on tourism in Malaysia. At the same time the Time Radio will give advice and educate the road users on road safety and keep them entertained with music and songs.

## RADIO PROGRAMMING

All the radio networks focus on entertainment, information and education and news in line with the main roles of Radio. Besides that, there are also other category of programs being broadcasts such as youth, children, women, drama, sports, agriculture and religious. See Table 1.

**TABLE I**  
**CATEGORY OF PROGRAMS AND NUMBER OF HOURS PER WEEK**  
**FOR 1993**

STATION							
CATEGORY PROG.	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7
RELIGIOUS	08:40 (5.2%)	-	2:00 (1.6%)	5:15 (4.2%)	1:45 (1.4%)	6:37 (5.3%)	-
YOUTH	01:00 (0.6%)	-	7:00 (5.6%)	1:15 (1.0%)	0:30 (0.4%)	5:30 (4.4%)	1:00 (7.1%)
NEWS	15:05 (9.0%)	11:05 (8.8%)	13:00 (10.3%)	11:35 (9.2%)	14:35 (11.6%)	9:20 (7.4%)	1:10 (8.3%)
DRAMA	1:45 (1.0%)	-	-	-	0:30 (0.4%)	1:15 (1.0%)	0:20 (2.4%)
ENTERTAINMENT	83:50 (49.9%)	114:55 (91.7%)	50:00 (39.7%)	68:40 (54.5%)	53:35 (42.5%)	86:06 (68.3%)	4:10 (29.8%)
CHILDREN	1:00 (0.6%)	-	7:00 (5.5%)	0:30 (0.4%)	1:50 (1.5%)	0:45 (0.6%)	-
AGRICULTURE	2:00 (1.2%)	-	-	-	-	0:15 (0.2%)	-
INFORMATION AND EDUCATION	35:10 (20.9%)	-	33:40 (26.7%)	3:55 (3.1%)	17:55 (14.2%)	1:40 (1.3%)	6:40 (47.6%)
SPORTS	3:10 (1.9%)	-	0:20 (0.3%)	2:20 (1.8%)	2:55 (2.3%)	1:45 (1.4%)	-
WOMEN	4:00 (2.4%)	-	7:00 (5.5%)	1:00 (0.8%)	10:25 (8.3%)	3:30 (2.8%)	0:40 (4.8%)
ADVERTISEMENT	12:20 (7.3%)	-	06:00 (4.8%)	3:30 (2.8%)	14:00 (11.1%)	1:17 (1.0%)	-
TOTAL HOURS PER WEEK	168:00 (100%)	126:00 (100%)	126:00 (100%)	126:00 (100%)	126:00 (100%)	126:00 (100%)	14:00 (100%)
TOTAL HOURS PER YEAR	8736:00	6552:00	6552:00	6552:00	6552:00	6552:00	728:00

## ROLE AND DEVELOPMENT OF TELEVISION

Television was introduced in 1963 and a second TV network was set up in 1969. As a state-run broadcasting media, RTM's main preoccupation has been with national development, given the multi racial and multi religious character of the Malaysian society. The roles have changed over the years though, in line with other development.

Today, TV1 the Premier Channel has been committed to promoting unity, security, development, nation building, consolidating loyalty and national integration. It is thus a channel of communication between the government and the people.

Whereas TV2, the Golden Channel does not only inform and educate the public but also acts as motivator and entertainer.

The launch of TV3 as a privatised channel in 1984 was a momentous decision by the government that broke the government monopoly in broadcasting. And it was timely too. It came at a time when the public was hungry for more choices and more entertainment. Its objectives now is for people to tune in to the station 'like a radio', all day and all night long.

In 1988 the Government stations responded to the growth of the commercial station by taking on a commercially-orientate attitude whilst never deviating from its supraordinate goals of 'infotainment' (information and entertainment). Armed with the philosophies and strategies of Malaysia Incorporated, RTM privatised its commercial operations whilst retaining absolute control on programming needs of the population. A 'MEMO' philosophy was observed, i.e

'Message first, Money second' maintaining the principle that the Government had bigger priorities towards the development of the people and the country than making money.

There is no cable or satellite TV yet in Malaysia. However, the broadcasting environment is changing now. By next year, 1995, there will be at least four additional TV channels where the Government has already awarded the licence for a fourth channel, TV4 which will begin operating by early 1995. And the Government has also called for proposals on the subscription services called SNS (Satellite Network Service) which would carry two news, one entertainment, one movie and one sports channel.

#### PLAYERS IN THE MALAYSIAN TELEVISION INDUSTRY

The three existing television networks, TV1, TV2 and TV3 are interlinked with other stakeholders: regulators, policy makers, advertisers, advertising agencies, programme suppliers, producers and of course viewers. And broadcasting considerations in turn are linked to audience demands, programming contents, consumer interests, advertising interests, national interests, the network's image and the financial investment of the networks. Therefore, the players play a very important roles in determining the broadcasting media environment and programming.

## TELEVISION PROGRAMMING

The programs over RTM's two networks and TV3 are received throughout the whole country and each TV channel is now on air at the average of 18 hours a day. TV1 carries most of the locally produced programs and news in the national language 'Bahasa Malaysia' together with a number of imported and syndicated films with subtitles or dubbed in Malay. TV2 screens fewer locally-produced programs but more foreign movies and entertainment programs. TV2 also telecasts local programs and news in the other officially recognized Malaysian languages such as English, Mandarin and Tamil which is done specifically for the benefit of the non-indigenous communities. TV3 carries both the local and internationally syndicated programs in Malay and English. The three networks allocate a considerable percentage of airtime to information and educational programs besides drama/movies and entertainment. See Table 2.

**TABLE II**  
**CATEGORY OF PROGRAMS AND**  
**TOTAL NUMBER OF HOURS IN A YEAR**  
**FOR 1993**

STATION	TV1	TV2	TV3
CATEGORY OF PROGRAM			
RELIGIOUS	489:20'49" (10.1%)	64:03'43" (1.5%)	
DRAMA	1252:32'06" (25.9%)	1554:34'28" (36.6%)	
ENTERTAINMENT	452:18'30" (9.4%)	682:08'37" (16.0%)	
CHILDREN	566:09'24" (11.7%)	314:41'05" (7.4%)	
SPORTS	316:20'29" (6.5%)	20:35'13" (0.5%)	
INFORMATION & EDUCATION	1475:18'28" (30.5%)	1202:30'20" (28.3%)	
ADVERTISEMENTS	282:58'08" (5.8%)	410:41'05" (9.7%)	
<b>TOTAL NO. OF HOURS IN A YEAR</b>	<b>4834:57'54"</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>4249:15'12"</b> <b>(100%)</b>	

## CAMPAIGNS ON AIDS

Radio and Television have undertake several responsibilities towards the public :

- a) To create awareness
- b) To inform
- c) To educate
- d) To persuade/change attitude
- e) To change behaviour

### Target Audience:

AIDS prevention is such a wide topic that can be addressed at many groups in society. The main target groups are married men, married women, unmarried men, unmarried women, homosexuals, medical practitioners, teenagers and even children.

### Main Message:

AIDS is a fatal and incurable disease which is passed on mainly by sexual intercourse. Intercourse is safe if both partners are free of infection and if they only have sex with each other. If in doubt, sexual intercourse can be made safer by using condoms.

### Objective:

To raise public awareness on how to stop AIDS by changing some social habits that help spread the virus.

### Duration/Length of Campaign:

AIDS campaign have been implemented since January, 1992. See Table 3 and Table 4 for 1993 and 1994 Campaigns.

TABLE III  
AIDS CAMPAIGN OVER RADIO & TELEVISION IN 1993

STATION MONTH	R1	R4	R5	R6	TV1	TV2	TV3
JANUARY	67	30	192	12	11	12	—
FEBRUARY	78	28	140	12	2	18	—
MARCH	119	31	133	12	1	8	—
APRIL	142	30	120	12	10	12	—
MAY	86	31	124	12	3	5	—
JUNE	90	30	121	12	1	11	—
JULY	93	31	125	12	4	9	—
AUGUST	93	60	109	12	4	3	—
SEPTEMBER	120	30	109	12	4	6	—
OKTOBER	87	31	110	12	5	6	—
NOVEMBER	62	30	30	12	8	4	—
DECEMBER	65	31	31	12	10	14	—
TOTAL NUMBER OF CAMPAIGN	1102	362	1344	144	63	108	—

TABLE IV  
AIDS CAMPAIGN OVER RADIO & TELEVISION IN 1994

STATION MONTH	R1	R4	R5	R6	TV1	TV2	TV3
JANUARY	82	62	12	8	12	14	—
FEBRUARY	73	56	12	8	5	5	—
MARCH	86	31	8	8	3	8	—
APRIL	88	30	8	8	7	4	—
MAY	91	124	6	8	7	4	—
JUNE							
JULY							
AUGUST							
SEPTEMBER							
OKTOBER							
NOVEMBER							
DECEMBER							
TOTAL NUMBER OF CAMPAIGN							

### Radio AIDS Campaign

Target Audience : General  
Adult  
Youth

Time : Morning  
Evening  
Night

Frequency : 1-3 times a day

### Television AIDS Campaign

Target Audience : General  
Adult

Time : Prime Time (7.00pm-11.00pm)

Frequency : 1-2 times a week

### How effective are the campaigns?

Evaluation can play an important part if it is a legitimate measurement of the people in the target audience that the campaigns intend to impact. Evaluation carried out immediately after a message is communicated has some value but the most valuable evaluation is done over time. However due to lack of adequate money for evaluation, RTM has not been able to do that. Therefore, the effectiveness of our campaigns are open to question.

Campaigns are good primarily for creating awareness rather than changing attitudes and behaviour. And experience with children and television shows that the media intrinsically are a very powerful influence on people's attitudes but typically not on their behaviour because changing behaviour requires that people give up something that is giving them pleasure and substitute for it another behaviour that gives less pleasure or no pleasure.

## Programs on AIDS

Besides Campaign on AIDS, a number of programs on AIDS are broadcast either weekly or when such programs are available.

### Weekly Magazines:

- a) 'Selamat Pagi Malaysia' (Good Morning Malaysia) ... TV1
- b) 'Majalah 3' (Magazine) ... TV3
- c) 'Nona' (Women's Program) ... TV3
- d) 'Sekapur Sireh' (Morning Show) ... TV3

### Documentary:

- a) 'Talking About AIDS' ... TV3
- b) 'Born in Africa' ... TV3
- c) 'AIDS - the Global Explosion' ... TV3
- d) 'AIDS - What will we teach our children' ... TV3
- e) 'AIDS Alive' ... TV2
- f) 'Breakthrough' ... TV2

### Drama & Movies

- a) 'An early frost' ... TV3
- b) 'Life Goes On' ... TV3
- c) 'Kisah Benar' ... TV3
- d) 'Sempadan Kasih' ... TV3
- e) 'Kerana Kau' ... TV3
- f) 'Pasrah' ... TV1
- g) 'Titik yang rapuh' ... TV1
- h) 'Antara Insaf dan Sedar' ... TV1

## CONCLUSION

Both radio and television play vital and numerous roles in the development of our country. And the Government has realised that the problem of acquired immune deficiency syndrome is not just medical but also a development concern. As broadcast media, we fully support the government's efforts by emphasizing on our social responsibilities in the programming. However each medium of communication has its own strengths and weaknesses. It would be too much to expect media like radio and television to bring about lasting and enduring change in the complex behaviour of the people through transmitting information.

Radio and television can have a wide physical reach though their mental reach is limited because of the obvious inadequacies of the medium to provide sufficient feedback to the various messages passed on to the people. What is more important and relevant now is to recognise the importance of evolving and developing an appropriate media mix for successful campaigns/information. Combinations of communication sources are invariably more effective than any single source of communication in changing attitudes and behaviour of the people.