

CHAPTER THREE

COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOUR AND EXPOSURE TO HEALTH MESSAGES

At the outset, it is to be remembered that the communication can play an important educative role if the media system can fulfill the information needs of the target population. For an effective and sustainable communication system, the messages communicated need to be understandable, target oriented, purposive and easily adaptable with relevance to the time and community concerned. There should be no gap between the perceptions and practices, objectives and accomplishments. The communication mechanism should not only be effective but also be of long lasting value. Every communication network has three components, the message designer, disseminator and the beneficiary. For the success of effective communication the well trained communicators are required to constantly and continuously interact with the groups. This may bring only desired changes among the target population. Moreover, the information needs could only be ascertained after reviewing the communication behaviour of the target population. That could be done periodically and contents and channels may be modified accordingly (*Rao, 1998*).

In absence of medicine for cure, prevention is the most effective strategy in the fight against HIV/AIDS. In India, majority of the population is still unaffected. It therefore becomes imperative to continue intensive communication efforts that will not only raise awareness levels but also bring out behavioural change.

To have an effective communication system, it must be in the local languages, keeping in mind the social norms, cultural beliefs and sensitivities of the community. Above all, communication programs must give space for interaction, clarifying doubts, addressing misgivings on the issues of sex and sexuality which are not traditionally discussed openly in a conservative society.

In India, therefore development of appropriate, effective and sustained communication system to bring about changes in behaviour to prevent further infection is, of a crying need. Since the daily life of army men in a unit has bindings with time not akin to other population of the society, it is important to examine the possibility of exposure of such people to print or electronic media and their actual involvement. To disseminate health related messages to army personnel; there is a need to understand their time schedule in using those media. Media persons also can not ignore this very aspect particularly when it is said that important messages are normally transmitted at the time when the target group is not available to receive it. Let us look into the characteristics of effective health communication.

Characteristics of effective Health Communication

It promotes actions that are realistic and feasible within the constraints faced by the community. It builds on ideas, concepts and practices that people already have. Health communication to be effective its needs to be repeated and reinforced over time using different methods. It should be adaptable using existing channels of communication – for example songs, drama and story telling. Communication should be entertaining drawing community's attention. The language used for communication should be clear and simple with local expressions. The communication system should provide opportunities for dialogue and discussions to allow learner participation and feed back on understanding and implementation. There should be demonstrations to show benefits of adopted practices. For example in this case, use of 'condom' can be demonstrated to encourage the population to execute in practice.

Use of Mass Media

More and more people in the world have access to some form of mass media or other such as Television, Newspapers and Radio. Mass media are often used poorly to promote one way 'top-down' communication. However, it is possible to make effective use of media for the promotion of health by applying the guidelines described in earlier chapters, including understanding the audience,

pretesting the message and evaluating its impact. In this context the user of mass media has to ensure (a) how and in which way radio, TV and newspapers can be/should be used in army units to communicate health messages (b) how a media program regarding the concerned subject can be produced (c) how media can be influenced to publicize health education messages on AIDS/HIV to enable the community to grow awareness (d) and how mass media can be used as contact source with the community i.e. the army personnel.

Mass Media and its Effectiveness on Communication Behaviour

Mass media messages tend to be general and are not always relevant to the needs of individual communities. It is also difficult to be selective and target one age group only. Unless there is a face to face communication, there is no direct feed back. However if carried out well, mass media has the advantage of being able to reach a large-audience rapidly which does not require infrastructure of field workers. Although many people prefer face to face communication – lack of time, shortage of field workers and difficulties of transport can make mass media the only realistic way of working.

Mass media are sometimes used poorly with a lack of audience resource, dull programs and inapplicable messages. In fact, ^{with} well planned mass media, health education programme can achieve a great deal of success :-

Behaviour Change – When the behaviour is a ‘one time’ behaviour such as attending an immunization clinic, simple to perform or the community is favourably disposed, implement it and is merely requiring a trigger for action.

Agenda Setting – Bringing an issue to the public attention so that they begin talking about it raising it at the meetings.

Creating Favourable of Knowledge and Opinion – Media can provide specific knowledge about the issues that will influence felt needs of communications. They can provide a forward back ground for community based programs and health education activities at clinic.

Telling people about new ideas – media can make people aware of new discoveries on ‘innovation’s such as oral rehydration. Whether people will actually act on this information depends on the idea, its complexity and whether it meets a perceived need in the community.

Influencing Media – Can media be influenced for the purpose of useful practices on health matters ? Some one may not be in a position to prepare radio or Television programs, and feel that much what is described is not relevant to the needed situation. However making your own program is only one of many different ways of using media. Indeed, it can be easier, cheaper and more effective to encourage news papers, radio and television to voice on health issues, specially about AIDS/HIV awareness program.

Though for many reasons army population need not search to know about the journalists for coverage on health issues, the PR departments can always keep liaison with media and (a) suggest them of some messages on AIDS/HIV infection (b) Send them some leaflets etc as back ground support. Incase interviews are required of any personnel by them, they should be made available (c) some most important questions can be sent to be included in such quiz programs.

To influence media, the organization should basically bear in mind that AIDS related messages are to be given to the media, are news worthy and also one should ensure that the media should be informed about the latest score on the subject and exactly what is happening in the army as regards dissemination of information on AIDS/HIV infection, characteristics of effective health communication.

Using Media

Mass media is accessible to most of the people in the world. Mass media are often poorly used towards health education. However it can be effectively used by including understanding the audience, pretesting the message and evaluating impact.

Though in day to day culture of army unit life, mass media are extensively used, yet it may not be in an organized way to promote health education. So how radio, television and news papers can be best used to communicate health, is the mother of prime concern. Some guide lines need to be worked out as to how such media programs can be produced. Suggestions of ways how media publicizes the health education and health promotion work. Media should be utilized as a resource in building contacts with the community (*Shankar Chowdhury : 1998*).

Media Revolution

The society of India has undergone major changes in 1990s. Ability of people has increased towards acces to media. Many problems of visual literacy and unfamiliarity with conventions of films, television have disappeared as more people got exposed to different kinds of media.

For example in the context of this study radio along with television are the popular media for army personnel. Though it is used at times under constraints like non-availability of battery, obstruction of signals in thick jungles, defiles and caves, yet the local regional programs easily reach and are entertaining and educative.

In the 1980s the number of televisions doubled in developing countries. At that in Asia, Latin America and Caribbean became one in every 12 persons.

As the statistics signify that there has been a media revolution in 1980s, there evolved a gradual social changes among developing countries mainly in the communication aspects. Communication has been more accessible, versatile and attractive. It has been able to create transparency between the sender and receiver. The AIDS/HIV infection related messages are so important that the earlier it is communicated, the better was the proposal.

As the Literacy and Education increase in a society, so does the potential of print media such news papers, books and magazines.

Popular Media

While talking about communication a question normally arises what are the popular media ?

There are certain media which are traditionally established. The popularity of media will depend on certain factors :-

(a) Their entertainment value, (b) Their coverage of ideas and issues of universal concern, such as love marriages, honour, failure, success, gealousy, revenge, wealth, poverty, power, family and group conflicts and religion, (c) The fact that even though they are based on tradition they change and adapt to deal with new situations and incorporate the issues and concerns of the day.

Before dealing with different forms of folk media in more detail, let us consider some examples of different popular media.

(a) *The calypso* is a type of song that has become highly popular in the Caribbean, both through live performances, radio broadcasts and on records. The music has a fast popular beat and contain words that comment on current issues. They often criticize the govt actions and make fun of national institutions.

(b) *The Ram Lilas* – In India ‘Ram Lila’ take place every year in many villages. Members of the community participate in acting out scenes from Ramayana, the Hindu epic poem that describes the life of Lord Rama and his battle with evil in the form of demon king Ravana. The performances are often in the open air involving the whole community.

(c) *Ngonjera* is a form of written and spoken poetry in the local kishwahithi language, that become popular in Tanzania in the early 1970s. So two or three actors act out the poem which is often on political or social events. Media such as charts, photographs and real objectives are often incorporated. Poetry is so popular that many Sowahili news papers reserve a page for reader’s poems.

(d) In the 1960s among the TIV people in Nigeria a new style of theatre, kwag-hir evolved, combining traditional and ritual elements with a story teller, acrobats, dances, puppet shows, stories and tales. In open air performances themes dealing with traditionalism and modernization are performed. The TIV people also use singing, dancing, music drama and story telling in their rituals, feasts and leisure activities to express their traditions. For many years the drum beats of 'talking drums' were used to communicate over hundreds of miles and many people today still understand this language. In their music, the rhythms of the drum beats can communicate messages to the audience.

(e) In state of Kerala in Southern India trucks are elaborately decorated with folk paintings and proverbs. The decorations vary from elaborate and intricate flower designs to characters from western cartoons.

(f) The medicos in Mexico are medicine men who set up stalls at markets and other public places and use ventriloquism, mind reading, snake handling and other arts to sell medical products. They are treated with respect by the community. The medicinemen communicate information about health in their performance.

(g) In west African towns and villages, important announcements are traditionally made by a town crier. Folk media that have used in health education include :

(i) Story telling – oral or written

(ii) drama – theatre as performance, participatory, theatre puppets.

(iii) songs – pop songs, Folk songs

(iv) pictures – art cloth designs

Though such traditional methods may not be adoptable for communicating health messages to army personnel, in a unit, story telling, pictures and songs can always be edited incorporating such messages (*John Hubley : 1993*).

While composing any such media to administer them, it should be borne in mind that the message as intended should be conveyed in its true spirit. It should be simple and interesting, it should be short which are easy to understand and entertaining. In this context, AIDS being a disease with unfamiliar terminology, the best possible interpretation is required to be made while presenting any health related message. Associated with this are the social factors which are unwritten taboos on sex related messages. These are to be conveyed with cultural care and privacy respecting feelings of individuals and communities.

Since AIDS is a disease, which always links up with explanation of 'sex' and 'sexuality' and that these are not openly discussed in the society even today, lot of care and attention to be taken before administering any health related message to the people.

While discussing the popular media, the words and music of songs have a powerful effect on the emotion of human beings. Musicians carry great influence in a community and therefore songs can be used to rouse people to action.

In many countries like Uganda, Nigeria, Zaire there are popular songs which carry health messages.

In a nutrition project in Uganda, a popular ballad singer was asked to compose a song about Kwashiorkar and its prevention. The song is prepared, called 'kitoboro' was made available as a record and was a great success. Songs have been used in education of the public on AIDS in many countries and are particularly valuable in reaching young people.

One project in Zaire recorded songs about AIDS and installed cassette recorders on public buses to play the songs to the passengers.

Songs were also an important part of health education program directed at young people aged 13-18 years in 11 countries including Mexico, Peru and Bolivia. The message 'its ok to say no' was the theme of the campaign that was directed at reducing the incidence of teenage pregnancies.

Following initial research, it was found that the most important interest of the young people was music and the project produced two songs, one of each side of a record, with a colour record jacket which opened into an attractive poster.

The singers were carefully chosen to appeal to the young people, who accepted the main messages in their own lives.

Songs play an effective role in army community. Such songs carefully composed of health message will go a long way to carry the actual theme. As the living barracks of army units are provided with public address system and during breaks and leisure hours songs are played as a matter of routine programme, such songs serve both the purposes of entertainment and education simultaneously.

Nature and Extent of Exposure to Mass Media

Initially an assessment was made to know as to how many of the respondents were exposed to TV and video. Was there any variation in the extent of exposure of the army personnel to TV and video by their rank? The quantitative findings have been presented in Table 8.

Table : 8 **EXTENT OF EXPOSURE OF THE RESPONDENTS TO TV**

RANK	NO ANSWER	NEVER	SOME TIMES	REGULAR	TOTAL
Officers	0 —	0 —	6 (37)	10 (62)	16 (100)
Junior Leaders	0 —	0 —	22 (95)	1 (4)	23 (100)
Jawans	2 (1)	4 (2)	143 (88)	13 (8)	162 (100)
Total	2 (1)	4 (1)	171 (85)	24 (11)	201 (100)

Figures in the parenthesis denote percentage.

Table 9 shows that majority (86%) of the respondents watch TV programs at evening. Keeping in view their duty hours they found evening is the most convenient time for TV watching. Moreover, the evening programs of TV are considered more attractive and entertaining. These respondents out of their routine day to day life find time to watch such programs in the evening only. The daily working hours and duty schedule including night duty allotted to unit personnel stands in their way to watch TV anytime as they desire. It is rather the specified duty hours which determines the exact spare time that are and may be available to most of them for watching TV programs.

Officers watch TV as per their fair choice. As such, there is no specific bar, which restricts them to watch TV program at any time. However, only 25 per cent of them have been found to watch TV anytime. On the other hand only 9 per cent junior leaders and 4 per cent jawans watch TV anytime. Thus if the educative programs conveying health related messages are telecast at the evening, there is a possibility that a majority of the army personnel may be exposed to such messages. However, the problem lies elsewhere. The advertising houses may not like the idea to telecast health related educative messages during prime time of TV programmes for commercial reasons. The mass media communication can enable an individual to focus on various social issues. Such exposure provides them education and entertainment with variety. It also updates them with various national and international programs; subjects and issues as per their choice. Army personnel confined to border areas pass through a life with boundaries who get least chance to be exposed to media variety. But those posted at peace establishments and staying in cantonments get better media exposure through cable TV and radio in addition to some print media also. The visual medium or audio programs can be a suitable release mechanism for such group of people who feel burden of boredom in unit life. Visual media programs entertain them with dance, music and movies and it imparts them with the messages to make them aware about certain subjects of concern. Community Health Education is an essential program undertaken through audio and visual media as a matter of national policy. For army personnel such programs are of immense value.

While programs on health related matters are transmitted, topics on AIDS and HIV infection are often included to make people aware about such a fatal disease. However, the health related

messages disseminated through TV programs particularly on AIDS and HIV infection often do not appear all that interesting to the liking of an army man as compared to other entertainment programs. Since AIDS/HIV is an alarming disease, it concerns the whole society. Those belonging to 'high-risk' category like army personnel; need to look into this aspect more seriously. The role of TV in this particular sphere should always be considered to be typically important. It can be added in this context that television has emerged as a revolutionary medium in the world of mass communication. The television came to India as late as in 1959. It started as a part of All India Radio on an experimental basis. The UNESCO decided to grant \$ 20,000 for setting up a pilot project to study the use of TV as a medium of social education, rural upliftment and community development. In this context TV has been considered as the prime and potent mass medium to disseminate health related messages to the society (Chauhan, 1998)

Despite advanced communication network developed along with the introduction of TV, the role of another medium i.e. radio is none the less important and attractive. Though audiovisual medium has its typical attraction and significance, the audio communication skill retains its unique role to play in the context of communication. Therefore, the study also enquires about the exposure of army personnel to radio as another communication medium.

Table : 10 **DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS**
BY THE TIME OR RADIO LISTENING

RANK	EVENING	NIGHT	ANY TIME	TOTAL
Officers	2 (12)	2 (12)	12 (75)	16 (100)
Junior Leaders	6 (26)	3 (13)	14 (60)	23 (100)
Jawans	22 (13)	12 (7)	128 (79)	162 (100)
Total	30 (14)	17 (8)	154 (76)	201 (100)

Figures in the parenthesis denote percentage.

Table 10 shows that among the respondents there is as such no specific time for listening to radio. Radio offers more liberty of its use to a jawan suiting best to his opportunity and time, than any other media tool. While discussing about the TV program, it was observed that the army personnel enjoy TV programs mostly in the evening. In contrast, the situation is altogether different in the case of radio. For army men a radio set is almost an inseparable part of his personal kit like any other essentials. It has been observed that 80 per cent of army personnel own a transistor set. It is a commodity, which they can afford to own individually as a tool of entertainment. This apart, a transistor set is portable and does not require much space and effort to carry. Radio is such an item, which can be carried on pouches (part of army combat dress) while an army man moves from one place to another, or he is even at one place. Whether in peace or at war, a soldier finds a best friend in a radio/transistor. It provides him the variety of programs with an open choice of time and frequency. To operate a radio it is easy to switch on/off and a radio can be listened in any posture. It also does not occupy much space and it never becomes an awkward load.

Radio plays a vital role in generating social education. Radio programs of educative nature disseminated through AIR (All India Radio) help developing perception on many specific matters including those of health and diseases. Listeners of radio programs can also get some knowledge about AIDS and HIV infection and its preventive measures, if national programs on such diseases are centrally transmitted as a matter of policy. Since radio listening is regular among the army personnel, it is expected that this may help in growing knowledge and generating in them awareness about this particular disease through many such special radio programs.

According to some media experts, radio can be used in many different ways to educate the people about AIDS and HIV infection (*Huble, Chowdhury and Chandramouli : 1993*). These are through (a) interviews with local communities, (b) panel discussions, question answer with health workers and other listeners, (c) short spot announcements, (d) magazine programs with music and information, (e) short dramas on AIDS education themes built into 'Soap Operas' and (f) competitions where the audience is asked to send correct answers.

Present study shows that 90 per cent officers consider TV as the major tool of mass medium through which health related messages could be communicated effectively. As per their views the interpersonal channels can also be a potent source for disseminating health messages. On the other hand, about 75 per cent of junior leaders are of the opinion that alongwith TV, for the growth of knowledge on AIDS and HIV infection, interpersonal channels, could pay better dividends. About 68 per cent of jawans expressed their views in favour of both types of communication. Some of them considered that communication through daily lectures, briefings etc, could also meaningfully disseminate health-related messages in addition to those which are transmitted through audio visual means as a matter of policy. Such a media mix may help the receiver group to assimilate and register important health related messages in a better way.

Because of their daily commitments, most of the jawans have no time to go through newspapers. Therefore, question of going through health messages published in Newspapers in case of jawans is hardly applicable. It is the verbal orders, lectures, briefings etc, which make an easy impact on them about such health related issues/matters. They usually keep themselves busy throughout the day as per work schedule and do not find much time to go through such reading materials, even if they desire to do so.

As far as the sources of information are concerned, 90 per cent army officers have identified TV and various literature on AIDS and HIV infection as the best source to make people aware about the said disease, its causes and prevention. About 67 per cent junior leaders felt that periodic lectures and demonstrations by the medical officers to be the effective channel to educate the population about the disease. About 90 per cent jawans have also shared the similar view. It was suggested that such lectures should be conducted by the Regiment Medical Officers (RMO) for men folk and by lady medical officers for their wives. Interestingly, each respondent was keen enough to be administered with educational matters in the unit with the aim of achieving better awareness about AIDS/HIV concerning them and their families and children.

The study shows mixed reactions on the question of using TV merely as a source of programmed entertainment. Among officers, 81 per cent were in favour and 9 per cent were against using such an effective medium for entertainment purpose only. It has been observed that TV and magazines (including cheap porno type) are sources of entertainment to 81 per cent of the respondents. Among the junior leaders 75 per cent get them entertained with TV programs whereas the corresponding proportion of jawans was 89 per cent. In addition to TV for 85 per cent of jawans, gossip is another important and favourite source of entertainment for them.

It has been accepted by most of the respondents that TV programs are always constructive. Those can promote awareness by inculcating specific knowledge on health matters. The social responsibility of national TV programs to educate masses about AIDS and HIV infection, has been endorsed by 99 percent of officers, 93 per cent of junior leaders and 96 per cent of jawans. As per their perceptions we find that, TV programs can carry messages for health education effectively and usefully.

According to the views of 92 per cent of army personnel it is the mass communication system that intends to keep everybody updated with modern way of life including entertainment, politics, consumer market policies, share and stock exchanges, sports and games and several other matters. It also disseminates various health-related messages including news and views on immunization of children, causes of infection and prevention against AIDS/HIV etc.

Though the jawans form the grass root level of army organization, they however, lack requisite knowledge about their overall health observing various preventions. Therefore, there is a need to communicate more to them the messages related to health so that they can develop adequate knowledge about AIDS and HIV infection without any misconceptions, and can adopt all possible preventive measures to keep themselves guarded against further aggravation with this disease.

In the army unit under study a number of TV sets are found to be in use for the entertainment of jawans. In addition to such common arrangement, many jawans were found to possess their personal

transistor sets also. A sizeable proportion (94 per cent) of jawans stated that they entertain themselves regularly enjoying movies in 'defence cinema halls'. Among the jawans, they confirmed that only 10 to 15 per cent visit the city to see movies in public theatres.

These are major sources of entertainment available to the jawans and through these, they get exposed to the outside world of entertainment sitting in their unit lines, branches and bunkers.

Books, magazines, newspapers are also adequately stocked in unit libraries, information rooms for those who love reading. The sole purpose of unit Library and Information Rooms is to keep their unit life updated with current affairs and news providing them with enough scope to maintain reading habit during leisure hours. Present survey reveals that about 99 per cent officers read newspapers regularly. They also read different types of magazines and periodicals. Among the junior leaders 20 per cent read news papers regularly. The corresponding proportion of the jawans was only 12 per cent. Such a low percentage of reading habit obviously weakens the channel of dissemination of information through newspapers particularly to jawans and junior leaders.

As far as media exposure of army population is concerned, the younger generation of jawans are found relatively better exposed to mass media and are more keen to adopt modern ways of life than their senior colleagues. The low percentage of readership of newspapers and magazines among this group does not convey the meaning that they are least interested in print media. It is their nature of job, restricted availability of time for reading news papers, circumstantial lethargy grown out of physical exertion are some of the factors that do not allow them in developing reading habit, which needs more time and concentration. Therefore, they generally like to be entertained with the means which are quick and easy available. For example, TV serials, songs in TV and partly radio programs which can provide instant entertainment to them. In promoting health education among the army personnel, training kits like posters, flip charts etc can be used and be made available at the unit common place i.e. unit information rooms. The display of items of educational information. act as permanent impersonal source of knowledge for the unit personnel. The Education department of

army units are entrusted with the responsibility to develop and maintain a well stocked and rich information rooms in units displaying all information including that of diseases like AIDS and HIV which are of fatal and infective nature. Army as an organization equally extends facilities to all its members to grow reading habit, though they have many constraints as discussed above.

Most of the army personnel stated that they watch Indian doordarshan and other TV programs regularly. It was brought out by the respondents that official advertisements in TV on AIDS and HIV were rare or non existent. The disadvantage with print media in this regard is that some statutory instructions for adopting preventive measures on AIDS are mostly published in regional languages and do not carry message for the community of cosmopolitan population. The publications in English attract only few readers where as books, journals and news paper in Hindi or regional languages attract more subscribers' attention. This fact brings out the exact medium required to disseminate health education curriculum in units.

While identifying the sources of information received by unit personnel about different diseases it was understood that 50 per cent of them had received some information about AIDS/HIV from TV/Radio. Friends were the first source of information about AIDS and HIV for 27 per cent of the personnel. Another study among personnel of the Indian Navy however shows that 81.30 per cent of them came to know about AIDS and HIV infection through lectures and only 29.59 per cent through TV and radio. It is due to the fact that the said study was conducted in 1991 when the Indian media campaigns on AIDS were in their formative stage, and also TV viewing was not as popular and versatile in the Army as among the naval personnel.

Though the health related messages are communicated through TV advertisements, short plays, talks on TV and Radio, yet such messages are often legitimized and disseminated by the commanders at all levels through counselling and addresses. It has been observed that in educating the people about health related matters, interpersonal communication plays a major role. About 95 percent of

army people prefer to know about AIDS and HIV from face to face communication. It provides them wide scope of clarification, repetition and easy understanding. Above all interpersonal communication has more human touch and as such for a receiver it is easy to perceive and assimilate the messages transmitted from the source. Thus, interpersonal communication system is often found to be a successful medium for transmission of valued information. All army units have unique system of passing verbal instructions/orders on many matters including those of health and hygiene. While holding daily 'Roll Call' parade by the duty officer in a unit or conducting a monthly "Sainik Sammelan" by the Commanding Officer, messages on AIDS/HIV, infection often gets a priority among other points concerning the troops.

The interpersonal communication through "Sammelán" etc are unique of army life and it forms an integrated part of communication system in the organization. Such communication system is also utilized to carry health-related messages slowly among this population to develop knowledge about various subjects including AIDS and HIV infection.

To grow awareness about AIDS/HIV it is contextual to build up knowledge about this disease. Once specific knowledge about the disease is developed, exact perception will automatically grow to change and modify their behaviour pattern towards sex. This particular behavioural change may act as a full-fledged prevention method, which help to obviate further spread of this disease. So the important area identified in this regard is the knowledge, perception and behaviour as regards the AIDS/HIV infection which has been analyzed in the succeeding paragraph.