

Note for the Record

LIMITATIONS OF RADIO IN PSC -
EXPECIALLY IN REGARD TO NUTRITION

In view of the strong recommendations that have frequently been made concerning greater use of radio in project support communications in the developing countries, it is worth setting out the views of Mr. J.R. Kangwana, Director of Broadcasting, Voice of Kenya, as brought forward at the FAO/SIDA Regional Workshop on Food Promotion in East Africa, on the morning of 25 April, 1974. The following is a summary of his remarks.

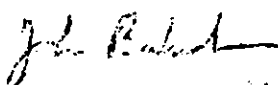
Broadcasting in Kenya and other countries of the region is public service broadcasting. VOK sells time to commercial sponsors, but it also gets a Government subsidy and is thus pledged to support development. As was pointed out by Dr. Shawki Barghouti, of PBFL, however, nutrition information materials are best prepared at local level in consultation among field workers and beneficiary groups. In a country like Kenya with many different ecological zones, national nutrition messages are of little value. They have to be adapted to dietary needs and food capabilities of different zones.

This limits the usefulness of broadcasting as it is presently organized. It is now centralized in Nairobi (and in other countries, in their capital cities). On the other hand, the centres of cultural diffusion are zonal. From a development point of view, it would be well to decentralize broadcasting. This would be expensive, however, and there are political objections. The first task of broadcasting in newly independent countries has been to promote national unity. The central Government is not at all keen on decentralizing broadcasting, though with increasing confidence it might experiment with a degree of decentralization.

There are one and a quarter million radio sets in Kenya and 40,000 television sets. Kenya has the advantage of an almost universally understood lingua franca, Swahili, but sometimes country people complain they can't understand the Nairobi Swahili. The real mass medium of communication is still word of mouth. Radio can help change behaviour if a person is already inclined to do something new. It can't do the job alone, nor can any other modern mass medium.

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The memo sets out the views of JR Kagwana, Director of Broadcasting, Voice of Kenya: national messages about nutrition are of little value in a country like Kenya with so many different ecological zones. They have to be adapted to dietary needs and food capabilities of the different zones.

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