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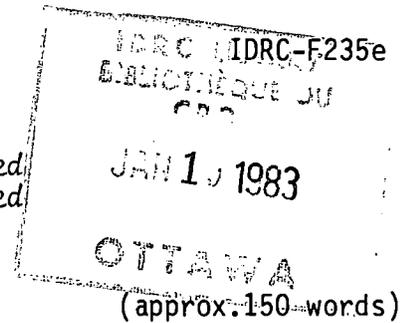
FEATURE

ARCSER

A monthly features service about science, technology, and development

SCIENCE WORLD

(a collection of development-oriented science news briefs that may be used as a column, or as separate items)



FAMILY PLANNING ON THE AIRWAVES

In most developing countries newspapers and magazines are still rarities outside of the urban areas, and the majority of the people are illiterate. Small wonder that radio is regarded by many communicators as the mass medium.

The importance of radio as a means of getting development messages across is well demonstrated in Bangladesh, where several radio programmes promote family planning. Syed Ashraf Ali, director of population planning of Radio Bangladesh, says radio has "a very important and definite motivational role."

One of the most popular radio programmes in the country (86 percent of listeners surveyed said they were aware of it) is called "Sukhi Sangsar" (Happy Family). Created in 1975, the 20-minute programme is broadcast at 8 in the morning, six days a week. Its aim is to inform, educate and motivate couples to accept modern family planning methods. So successful has it been that it has now been joined by two new programmes, bringing the total airtime for "family planning radio" to 70 minutes a day.

SATELLITE LINKS THE ISLANDS

(approx. 200 words)

A new satellite-based audio teleconferencing system now being installed at the University of the West Indies (UWI) will expand UWI's ability to provide education, agricultural extension and other development-related services to its campuses and extension centres throughout the island nations of the Caribbean.

The teleconferencing system will initially link UWI's three main campuses - Mona, Jamaica; Cave Hill, Barbados; St Augustine, Trinidad - with extension centres in St Lucia and Dominica. First-year students will no longer have to move to the campus, instead the courses will be brought to a central location in each of the areas involved in the pilot project. Each location will have a teleconferencing room for 20-30 people, equipped with a voice circuit, speaker system, microphones, and other equipment.

The system, which should be operational in 1983, will be completely interactive: students, tutors and instructors at any of the locations will be able to talk to and be heard by all of the people at all of the other classroom sites. It will also make agricultural information more easily available to some of the less-developed islands in the region.

Supported by the Agency for International Development, the UWI pilot project is one of several being planned to explore the use of satellite technologies to provide domestic communications to meet the social and economic needs of the developing world.

INFORMATION FOR ALL THE WORLD

(approx.200 words)

Communication only happens when information reaches people. Getting the right information to the right people when they need it is one of the biggest tasks facing research librarians all over the world, but nowhere more than in the developing countries.

Nepal is one of the many developing countries in recent years that have taken the important step of joining the FAO's global information network for the agricultural sciences, AGRIS. But first Nepal had to establish its own national agricultural information service - a service that was capable of both collecting and disseminating information for the use of students, extension workers and agricultural scientists.

The Nepal Agricultural Documentation Centre (NADC) provides that service. Established in 1978, the NADC is a major step forward in a country where public libraries were illegal only 30 years ago. With some support from Canada's International Development Research Centre, the NADC has expanded to become both a national centre and AGRIS liaison office, and has the most complete collection of agricultural documentation ever assembled in Nepal.

With the aid of a mini-computer, NADC librarians can now search the world for information to assist the country's agricultural scientists and provide answers in hours instead of weeks or months.

KIDS GET "ANTS" IN THREE LANGUAGES

(approx.150 words)

Most children in Zimbabwe find it difficult to understand the magazines available in their country, because publications written for young people usually come from Europe. But now they can get "Ants", a new children's magazine produced in Zimbabwe and published in the country's three official languages - Shona, Ndebele and English.

The unusual name was chosen because of the cooperative nature of the tiny ant. The magazine promotes the exchange of culture and ideas in the racially mixed country. Letters, puzzles and drawings sent in by children fill most of its 16 pages. But the final decision on the content of each issue rests with the editorial board consisting of an 11-year-old and a 12-year-old, two "senior" advisors who are 14, and a graphic artist.

"Ants" is being financed for its first year by Canada's Overseas Book Centre as part of its efforts to support indigenous publishing in the Third World. Even at its low price of 15c, the organizers believe the magazine will be self-sufficient in a year.

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