



Session 6: Poverty Reduction and Inclusion – Messages from NPRS and PRF Poverty Funds Initiatives

TARGETING, INCLUSION AND EQUITY: USING CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE COMMUNICATION TO REDUCE RISKS OF HIV/AIDS, HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND NON-TRADITIONAL-DRUG ABUSE AMONG ETHNIC MINORITIES

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1. The Mekong region has formed a coherent cultural, ecological and economic zone for centuries. Historical trade and migration networks have continued into the present. The opening of borders to tourism and trade in the region has increased the flow of populations across borders for trade (legal and illegal) and employment, with major implications for both the epidemiology and prevention of HIV/AIDS. However, the Mekong Region is also a region characterized by wide-ranging ethnic diversity, cultural pluralism and linguistic complexity. Both UNESCO and ADB have recognized the threats of unintended consequences of accelerated development in the region – in particular, the potential threats to the physical and cultural survival of highland minority populations.

2. UNESCO addresses HIV and AIDS as part of a linked triad of problems: HIV/AIDS, Human Trafficking and non-traditional Drug Abuse. Research by UNESCO has shown that minorities are disproportionately represented among both HIV positive people and victims of human trafficking. Throughout the GMS, national prevention strategies proved ineffective in addressing the needs of linguistic and cultural minorities. With few exceptions, minorities received little or no usable preventive education in their own tongue. While good information does not guarantee good choices, no information virtually guarantees bad choices. Moreover, while lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate information places everyone at risk, it has a differential impact on minority women. Women are less likely to be fluent or literate in the national language, and are often more cut off from outside sources of information.

3. Drawing on a UNESCO pilot prevention radio project in the Shan language, ADB and UNESCO partnered under two RETA projects to reach unreached ethnic minority

populations in Thailand, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and China in ten languages: Akha, Lahu, Hmong, Jingpo, Tai Nua, Tai Lue, Naxi, Khmu, Kreung, and the original Shan. In addition, populations in Myanmar were impacted as the broadcasts reached across borders. All of the programs are multi-episodes, with the length conforming to the established broadcast timing of the particular station. The selection languages was based on prioritization by participating government partners. It was a function of groups size, intensity of present risk and vulnerability to future developmental impact. For example, a smaller group might be prioritized if it was seen to be at greater risk than a larger group.

4. The methodology used during UNESCO's Shan pilot project has been further tested and refined during its partnership with ADB.

UNESCO Methodology for Minority Language Prevention Radio Drama

- 1) All programs use drama as the format. Drama has been found to be the most effective vehicle for reaching young people among these groups, who are frequently unresponsive to Public Service Announcements (PSAs) or didactic programs;
- 2) All programs are research based;
- 3) Intensive grounded research is carried out in local communities, including focus groups, to collect life stories, issues and concerns. These form the basis for the radio dramas, allowing increased audience identification;
- 4) Programs are *written in the local languages*, by native speakers, rather than simply translated from English or the national language (Chinese, Thai, Lao, etc.). This is essential if they are to be culturally as well as linguistically acceptable to the audience;
- 5) The programs are back- translated into English and the national language to check for scientific accuracy.
- 6) Music is composed or collected that is listened to and enjoyed by the local communities. Sometimes local musicians are commissioned to compose music and songs, which underline themes of the shows. A theme song is generally composed for each series, which is tested for popularity with local audiences
- 7) Locally recorded soundscapes and actualities are used to ensure authenticity.
- 8) A pilot program is produced and tested with villagers; revisions are made as necessary;
- 9) The programs are broadcast on stations with an existing capacity for minority language programming, already listened to and trusted by highland people. These include Radio Chiang Mai – broadcasting in seven languages, Yunnan People's Broadcasting Station in Kunming – broadcasting in five languages, Lao National Radio broadcasting in three languages in Vientiane, Lijiang Municipal Radio Station in Lijiang; and Xishuangbanna Prefecture Radio Station in Jinghong, which broadcasts in five languages.
- 10) Alternative technology is used to produce radio drama in low resource settings, where established infrastructure is limited or unavailable
- 11) Follow-up audience research is conducted in villages, and the stations collect audience feedback. In this regard, the stations have been creative in developing various formats (quiz shows, call-in programs, etc.) to promote engagement with their audience.

12) Tapes and CDs of the program are produced, made available, and distributed for community use.

5. The emphasis of the UNESCO-ADB program has been on developing culturally appropriate prevention materials, authored in minority languages. Our experience over the past six years shows the necessity such a grounded, culturally based approach..Radio has proved to be the most cost effective medium for reaching people in remote areas or migrants on the move. The programs were praised at the National Peoples Congress in China as a model for prevention among ethnic minorities. The Jingpo programs won a Yunnan provincial drama prize. It should also be noted that this approach to narrative intervention is also applicable to other areas of health promotion, rights education, and environmental protection, which often fail for lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate materials..

6. As a focus group of Jingpo villagers in Yunnan told us, “Han officials told us about AIDS, but until we heard your programs in Jingpo, we never understood what they were talking about.”

Furthermore, the research process to develop the programs makes people aware of local vulnerability issues, which they incorporate into scripts. (e.g., high rates of rape, domestic violence and land seizures in Ratanakiri, Cambodia; lack of citizenship and birth registration in Thailand; etc.) The techniques developed here could be expanded to other fields.

7. Many ADB infrastructure projects impact on ethnic minority regions. Moreover, ADB’s tourism strategy has targeted previously remote regions for tourism development, heralding an influx of new influences and change. All of this is taking place in areas of poverty and scarcity, which are in need of help. The GMS strategy, programs, and studies supported by ADB (as well as outside critiques) have emphasized the need to ameliorate the negative consequences of rapid change, so that economic growth does not become destructive development.

8. The present RETA 6247 was made possible by DFID’s Poverty Reduction Cooperation Fund. The PRF resources were essential to the project not only in their own right, but also to free UNESCO matching resources. The ADB - UNESCO projects have shown – for the first time – that it is possible, practical, and effective to develop culturally appropriate HIV/AIDS prevention materials for highland minorities in their own languages. The successful collaboration of UNESCO and the Asian Development Bank, working with our local research and broadcast partners, has allowed us to reach out to groups that have been disproportionately impacted by the AIDS pandemic, and remain vulnerable to the linked triad of problems which threaten their survival: HIV/AIDS, trafficking, and non-traditional drug use.

9. The new emphasis on “inclusive growth” sounds fine, but it is as yet unclear how minority inclusion will be assured. Past history is not encouraging. Without resources like the PRF, there is a good chance that the needs of the most vulnerable will be unaddressed.