



COMMUNICATION Impact!

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Take Services, Stay Well



Bangladesh TV drama depicts health workers, like Bokul, and promotes integrated services.

Bangladesh TV Drama Promotes Integrated Service

Bokul, a dedicated and charming Bangladeshi health worker, is the latest heroine of an Entertainment-Education TV drama and a persuasive role model for thousands of community members and health workers throughout Bangladesh. As the central character in a 13-part TV drama, *Shabuj Shathi*, Bokul inspired the people of Bangladesh to a greater understanding of and respect for health workers. She also helped them to appreciate the importance of using the health systems available to them for family health and family planning purposes.

The TV drama, *Shabuj Shathi*, was a key part of the Providers Campaign, which is a follow-up to the Green Umbrella Campaign launched in Bangladesh in September 1996 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Bangladesh, with technical assistance from the Johns Hopkins University Population Communication Services (JHU/PCS) and managed by the Bangladesh Center for Communication Programs. The focus of this multimedia campaign was to promote, for the first time in Bangladesh, integrated family planning and family health services.

The campaign logo, the green umbrella, represented the overall protection offered by these integrated health services. The slogan "Take Services, Stay Well" stressed the key message of the campaign: "For health and family planning services go to a place where you see the green umbrella." The logo was displayed prominently on all health centers, and more than 40,000 green

umbrellas were distributed to health and family planning workers throughout the country. The green umbrella became a familiar reminder of the presence and importance of local health facilities and providers. The pervasive symbol also reminds people that they are never far from the help it represents.

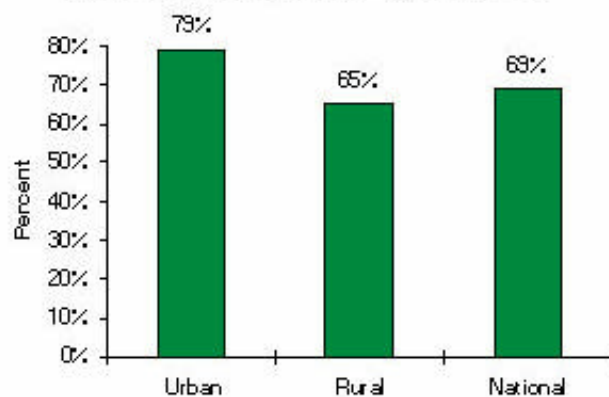
Shabuj Shathi was an important next step in the Green Umbrella Campaign. The drama was designed to enhance the self-image of the field workers themselves and improve the attitude of communities toward health workers. The field workers (as health workers are known) bring health and family planning services to people in their homes and encourage people to go to the health centers as needed. The most powerful way to improve the communities' attitude was through the visual demonstration of the daily life of a respected and admired field worker. Hence, the idea of including a TV drama in the campaign was introduced. *Shabuj Shathi*, with Bokul as the central character, went on national TV (BTV) in October 1997.

The impact of *Shabuj Shathi* is witness to the power of Entertainment-Education drama when it is designed, written and produced with painstaking care. Nationally, the drama was watched by 35% of Bangladeshis 15 years and older. However, 79% of the Bangladesh population in urban areas and 65% in rural areas with access to television watched *Shabuj Shathi*, according to the National Media Survey conducted by Org-Marg Quest Ltd. (OMQ) in 1998 (see Figure 1). More than 50% of

these viewers watched at least half the episodes and almost all indicated that they would like to watch a rebroadcast of the drama. The quality of the writing and production was such that Lever Brothers sponsored the drama by paying for airtime and contributing to production costs.

What made *Shabuj Shathi* so successful? A number of components are essential to the creation of a successful Entertainment-Education drama. First is the design team, which determines the overall focus of the drama and

Figure 1. Percent of those with access to TV who watched *Shabuj Shathi* by residence

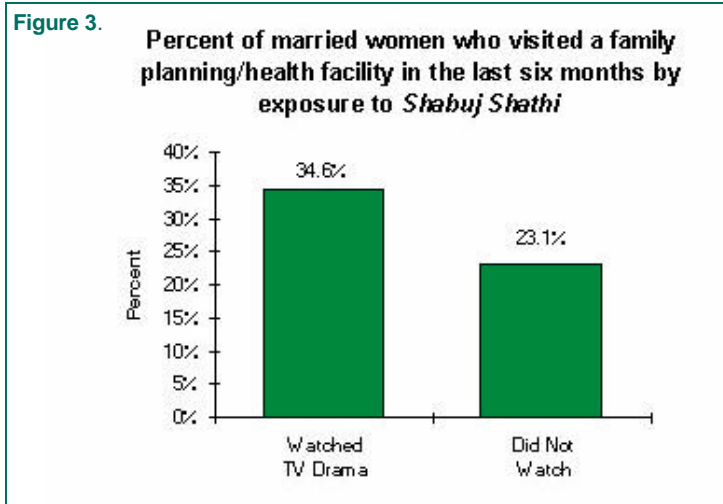
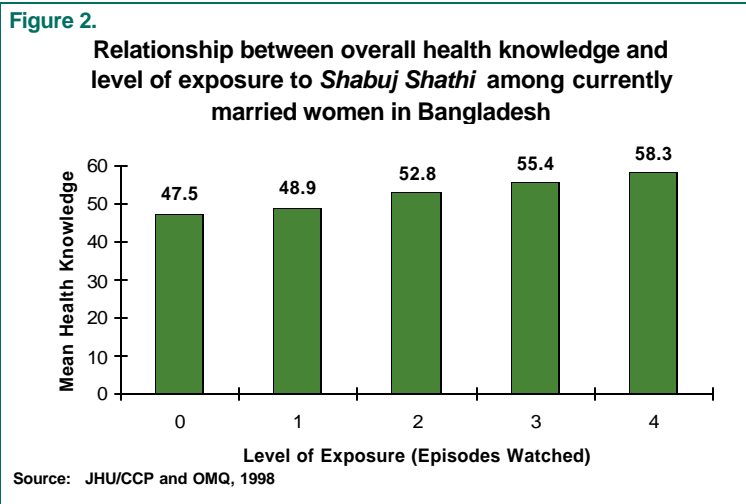


Note: 74% of urban, 38% of rural and 45% of national residences had access to television in 1998.

Source: OMQ, 1998

To learn more about *Shabuj Shathi* and the Green Umbrella Campaign, contact:

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the precise messages to include. The *Shabuj Shathi* design team met together for one week to create the design document that spelled out the messages to be included in each episode. This document became the blueprint for the writer whose task it was to create a truly entertaining story into which the messages could be blended naturally.

Humayun Ahmed, one of Bangladesh's most popular writers, took up the challenge. He created a story containing all the elements that hold an audience: drama, suspense, humor, love, tragedy and—of great importance in Bangladesh—music and poetry. Into the engaging story he blended health messages naturally and subtly. Mr. Ahmed's drama also demonstrated the importance of a realistic main character with human strengths and weaknesses. Bokul appealed to the audience because she suffered the same feelings of hurt, anger, success and joy that anyone can experience. Her realism helped viewers appreciate field workers as "social teachers," and motivated them to take greater advantage of the green umbrella services.

Impact

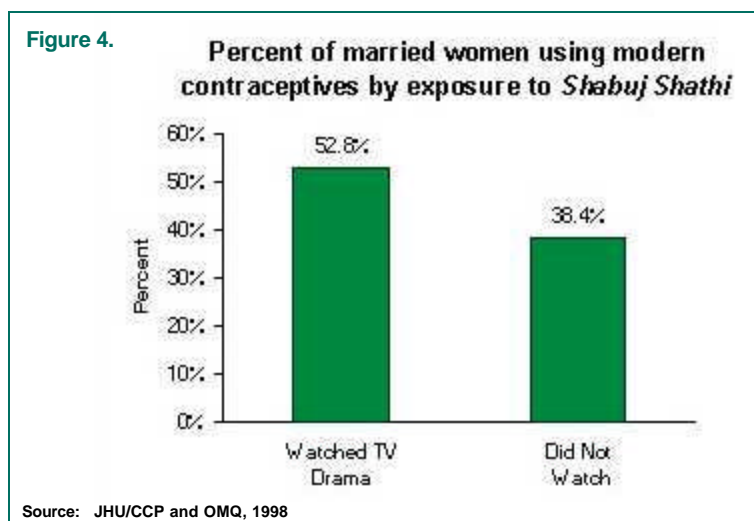
Evaluation of the drama was carried out by a nationally representative sample survey of 10,400 men and women from 15 to 49 years of age (OMQ, 1998). The data were collected from March to May 1998 after the drama had been broadcast.

Analysis of the impact of the drama was conducted on a subsample of 4,566 married women ages 16 to 49, weighted by region and urban/rural residence. An index of overall health knowledge was constructed from a series of questions about safe motherhood, childhood diseases, HIV/AIDS, nutrition and goiters. Overall health knowledge was found to be significantly related to the number of episodes watched and number of messages recalled, after controlling for socio-economic characteristics and other sources of health knowledge (see Figure 2).

Visiting a family planning or health facility was also significantly related to watching the drama. Almost 35% of married women who watched the drama said that they had visited a family planning or health facility within the last 6 months compared to

23% of those who did not watch the drama (see Figure 3). Those who watched the drama also had higher rates of contraceptive use, 53%, compared to 38% who did not watch (see Figure 4). After controlling for socio-economic characteristics and other influences on behavior, married women who saw the drama were found to be 1.8 times more likely to have visited a health facility and 1.6 times more likely to use a modern contraceptive than women who did not watch *Shabuj Shathi*. Watching the TV drama had the third strongest relationship with use of a modern contraceptive, after visitation by a family planning field worker and urban residence.

Shabuj Shathi has been requested by other countries, such as Vietnam. A second Entertainment-Education TV drama is now being produced in Bangladesh for broadcast in early 2000. Based on the success of *Shabuj Shathi*, it is also expected to have a strong, positive impact on individual and social change with regard to family health and family planning.



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Communication Makes the Difference.