

Roundtable Session: “Entertainers and Educators”

May I Have This Dance?

Identifying the Audience is Key

“If we ignore audience participation, maybe the only people we’re entertaining is ourselves,” said Warren Parker (South Africa). Speaking at the roundtable session on entertainers and educators, Parker suggested that while partnerships between communication and media professionals are crucial for the success of EE programs, “the key problem facing us as media producers is trying to objectively identify our audience.”

Asking the Audience to Dance

A vivid image of entertainment and education moving toward an embrace on the dance floor was presented in the keynote presentation. Practitioners and scholars agreed that communication and media professionals should also begin to move toward the dance floor. Participants in this session suggested that perhaps EE projects could achieve even greater success if the audience is also invited to join this “dance.”

Put the Audience in the Process

“When we develop material, we tend to rely on expert sources. Our assumption is that the audience is unsophisticated,” said Parker. He explained how focus groups can sometimes be more useful than classic questionnaires and how it is “possible to take your preferred audience and integrate them into the process.”

Elaine Perkins (Jamaica) shared her experiences of integrating the audience into her radio dramas. Perkins talked about her methodology of participant observation to glean information

about audience knowledge and values. “I would go on the bus and listen to the latest slang and dialect and ease myself into people’s conversation,” said Perkins.

Victor Regis (St. Lucia) supported the importance of “getting into” the audience and explained how projects that he has worked on have placed satellite listeners in every community. These listeners keep a notebook that contains their reflections on a drama, and the scriptwriters subsequently review the notebook.

Media Partnerships

The group also discussed partnerships with the media. Minou Fuglesang (Sweden) explained how “a sustainability base can be introduced into (our) programs by working with the commercial sector.” Speaking about the introduction of sexuality issues into *Femina* magazine in Tanzania, Fuglesang explained that “partnerships between publishers of magazines and NGO topic experts” should be developed.

Negotiation Strategies

Whichever type of partnerships one is considering, negotiation strategies are important to reach some kind of “negotiated settlement,” said panelist Tony Sierra (Honduras). One never gets a salary raise, probably because one has never planned how to get one, he commented. In the same way, you have to plan your partnerships with others. Sierra advised participants to try to think like those they’re targeting, to follow a coherent process, and to prepare an outstanding presentation.