
UNIT 12 PROGRAMMES FOR WOMEN, CHILDREN, YOUTH AND OTHER SPECIFIC AUDIENCES

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12.0 INTRODUCTION

Programmes directed towards a well defined group of listeners are termed as 'Special Audience Programmes'. In the previous unit of this block, we have discussed the programme components of Agriculture and Educational Programmes. We have learnt that the programme structure of these special audience programmes may be more or less the same but the choice of subjects varies according to the needs of the specific target group.

In this unit, we will elaborate upon the important features to be kept in mind while preparing programmes for certain special or specific audience such as, women, children, youth, senior citizens industrial workers and the armed forces. We hope that after going through this unit, you will be able to understand and produce programmes according to the needs of the specific target. It will be a good idea if you listen to the programmes for specific audience being broadcast by the radio station in your area and examine the emphasis in these programmes and how they differ from each other.

12.1 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- discuss the need and role of Special Audience Programmes;
- describe the components of Special Audience Programmes; and
- plan and produce Special Audience Programmes.

12.2 THE NEED AND OBJECTIVES OF SPECIAL AUDIENCE PROGRAMMES

You may ask that if plays, features, talks, discussions of interest are being broadcast to all the listeners, why should there be different programmes for different audiences? Interests and communication needs of the people in different walks of life or stages of development vary. They have their own needs, which have to be catered to by various programmes. The programmes for general audience are broadcast with a view to catering to the mass of people. The topics dealt within these programmes are largely of general interest covering a wide range of subjects including literature, science, finance and economics, politics and public administration, current issues, sports etc. However, the communication needs of certain audience groups are not fully met through those for the general audiences.

Specific information of interest to special targets such as youth, women, children, can be given more elaborately in greater detail only through the programmes earmarked for them. The listeners develop a kind of intimacy with the programmes broadcast specially for them as their special queries and problems are addressed. These programmes facilitate two-way interaction between the programme presenter and the listener and facilitate larger participation of the specific audience. These programmes are generally compered and presented by a member belonging to the target group.

12.3 PROGRAMMES FOR SPECIFIC AUDIENCE

For a programme of this nature, the target audience for which you are going to broadcast the programme e.g. women, children, youth, etc. has to be decided. The communication needs of these groups seem to be alike, but a lot of care has to be taken while planning these programmes. Knowledge of such a group's socio-economic background, level of understanding likes/dislikes etc. helps in designing programmes for them. For example, in a programme for rural women, we cannot talk about the expensive and fashionable clothes of the elite. Similarly, the interests of a working woman are different from that of a homemaker. A programme for youth needs to cater to their likes/dislikes and the general problems being faced by them.

Let us take a look at different categories of the audience.

12.3.1 Women

The general policy of the broadcasting media regarding programmes relating to women has been that the issues concerning them including gender equity and their empowerment must permeate the programmes meant for the general audience. Women are featured in discussion-panels along with men so that the discussions reflect a wide spectrum of views. But such participation has been few and far between and the broadcasts are made often at timings not convenient to women. Recognising this, broadcasting organisations provide separate slots for women in which they arrange programmes exclusively for women at a time when they are free from their daily routine.

The programmes cater to the specific areas of interest to women. A homemaker has limited time at her disposal after attending to household chores. Programmes meant for them aim to provide information and entertainment to women at home. Earlier these programmes had a narrow focus, highlighting topics like cookery, embroidery, sewing and household hints, handling of children and their problems at home. Now, the focus has shifted to more serious issues such as reproductive health of women, importance of nutrition, education of children, problems of working women, their legal rights and gender equality. However, these efforts need to be stepped up by placing greater stress on making the woman aware of her status in society. There is a need to highlight the positive role she can play in decision making in and outside home and the contributions of women in various fields and nation building.

These programme can also be used to create an awareness among women of the special facilities and schemes carried out by various agencies for their empowerment. The changing social values, the importance of girl child and her education, utilisation of spare time by proper time management for women needs to be highlighted. There is a growing recognition that women must have access to the radio-microphone for voicing their views on subjects that concern not only them as women but the entire society. Role models who could be ordinary women but have been able to make some changes to improve the quality of their own life as well as those around them should be brought to the mike to share their experiences with others. The Deccan Development Society (DDS) has done a pioneering work in this area by bringing mike to rural women to articulate their needs, hopes and concerns.

Issues relating to gender equality should form an integral part of programming, so that both men and women are made aware of these issues. However in order to reach out to working women, homemakers and rural women, separate time slots are also required. To encourage listening and listener's participation in programmes, listening clubs can be formed. The members can be involved in planning, presentation and production of these programmes. Field visits have to be made as often as possible so that the voice of the women in rural and semi-urban areas is captured for broadcast.

12.3.2 Children

Children constitute an important segment of the country's population. They account for 41% of the total population, and demand larger attention of the media. Their problems are wide and varied. Statistics reveal that 53% of young children suffer from malnutrition; above 17.5 million are working children; 33% of children in the age-group of 6-14 years are out of school. This is the situation in spite of India being a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The rights of the child include legal, survival and development rights. Article 12 of the convention states "state parties shall ensure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child.....".

The radio medium has a three-fold role to play: first, help children develop on the right lines; second, facilitate articulation of their views freely; and third, focus on their problems. The third is done through programmes addressed to the general audience while the other two are done through programmes for children. These programmes for children are divided into two age-groups, one is upto the age of 8 years and the other upto 15 years of age. The content and style for these programmes are different. For the younger group, short and interesting items are kept as the interest span of the child is very small and often the mind tends to wander. Items in these programmes can be based on a story-telling manner. Fairy tales and tales from the *Panchtantra*, *Hitopadesh* etc. help bring home certain life truths to children. Short plays, features, choral songs, stories from epics from different regions can also be included in these programmes. Stress should also be laid on creating consciousness about health, hygiene, cleanliness and good habits.

The programmes for the grown up children are largely participatory in nature. The subjects relevant to their interests, their hopes and plans for the future are included. Group singing, quiz contests, music lessons and symposia on everyday science, travelogues etc. are some components of the programmes for teenagers. While producing programmes for rural children, care should be taken to ensure that the messages and language are relevant to them. Programmes for rural children are recorded by the teams visiting villages. Motivation to children needs to be given for improving their educational and literary status in order to become better citizens. The rights of children in various aspects of social and economic activities should also be highlighted. Reinforcement of messages helps to create lasting impressions in the young minds.



Programme for rural children being recorded

Children's programmes need not necessarily be presented by children but they should have contents which are meant for children. It is very important for the presenter of these programmes to have a pleasant personality with a flair for communicating with children. They have impressionable minds which can be easily moulded. The programmes must help in developing in children a spirit of enquiry and quest for knowledge and for achieving that a great deal of creativity is required.

12.3.3 Youth

It was felt that the youth of the country need a platform to express themselves, hence, special programmes for the youth were started to provide an outlet for the expression of the young people. Inaugurating the *Yuv Vani* Channel in Delhi in 1969 the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi observed "Young people everywhere have a feeling of unrest. They have been feeling that something is wanting. They do not know what it is. But they are groping for it. Sometimes it takes strange directions, strange forms which we, who are older, do not understand. But that does not give the right to reject these"

Through programmes meant for the youth between the age of 15-30 years, young people are encouraged to express their opinions on matters concerning them and the society they live in. Efforts are made to capture the adventurous spirit and initiative of the youth of the country. These programmes introduce them to the history and culture of the country while opening a window on the world. The programmes help to inculcate a sense of purpose, foster a scientific spirit and involve them in the task of nation-building. Items of educational value give direction to the youth for the improvement of their future prospects. Vocational guidance programme, hazards of drug addiction, smoking and other vices are also discussed in these programmes.

The involvement of youth in such programmes can provide them opportunities for a career with the media. Many youths who have been actively participating in the *Yuv Vani* programmes of All India Radio earlier are today well known newscasters and presenters in the various media units.

Some radio stations choose one or two programmes from *Yuv Vani* and re-broadcast them for the general audience so that the latter becomes aware of the thinking of the younger generation in various social issues. The local or community radio stations that are coming up in the country can provide excellent opportunities of participation for the youth in rural and semi-urban areas.

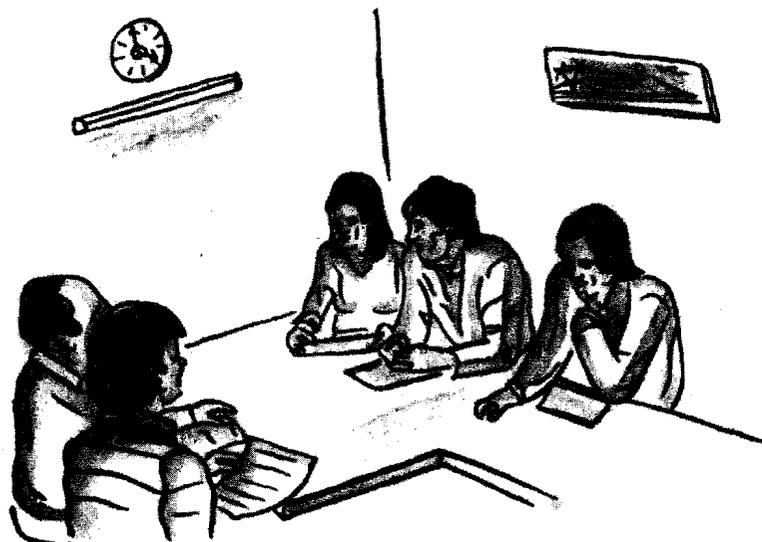
12.3.4 Other Specific Audiences

These programmes, as the very name suggests, are meant for the benefit of the specific audiences such as industrial workers, senior citizens and the armed forces.

Industrial Workers

You may have come across programmes such as *Shramikon ke liye*, *Udyog Mandal*, *Kamkaro ke liye* etc. being broadcast from a number of radio stations. The main purpose of these programmes is to create an awareness among workers about the various schemes being started for their benefit. These programmes are directed towards the interests of the organized labour as well as unorganized labour.

The main issues of these programmes can concentrate on information regarding Payment of Wages Act, Factories' Act, Industrial Disputes Act, Employees State Insurance Act, Maternity Benefit Act, Provident Fund Act, Bonus Act, etc. Programmes on labour laws, safety regulations, health hazards faced by these workers and the safety precautions which can be taken for avoiding accidents at workplace should also be planned. There can be specific information about the welfare schemes for women and children of the workers. The ways and means of increasing productivity may be discussed. Help hints, safety advice, guidance for handling equipment etc. can also be included in programmes. The importance of education, specially adult education can be stressed. The listeners can be made aware of the new developments in the industrial sector in the country and abroad and the need for skill up-gradation. Modernisation of production is part of the new economic policy. The workers have to keep pace with the changes taking place around them. Programmes in imparting new skills in different areas can be launched from time to time.



A programme advisory committee panel engaged in discussion

Shramik Vidyapeeths, trade unions and workers need to be involved in these programmes to make them more participatory in nature. These programmes can be interspersed with folk music of the area concerned to make it entertaining for the listeners. Recreation clubs of industrial establishments can serve as listening clubs, which could organise a variety of programmes for broadcast. The stations broadcasting programmes for industrial workers must have a consultative panel to advise them on various aspect of programming. The panel among others can include representatives of labour/trade unions and the commissioner of labour of the State Government and some workers. One area which is perhaps neglected is the unorganised labour engaged in industrial and construction activities. There is a felt need for organising programmes for this segment of audience.

Senior Citizens

Programming for senior citizens is a relatively recent concept in Indian broadcasting. The breakdown of the joint family system has led to the isolation of the older generation. As in the western countries, a number of Old Age Homes are coming up in various Indian cities, since more and more old people are left without anybody to care about them. Radio devotes some specific time to the senior citizens to add colour to their lives.

In old age there is a tendency to look back, hence, these programmes can include some talks or interviews which are reminiscential in nature. Old songs can be used imaginatively in these programmes. Facilities being offered to senior citizens of the country such as old-age pension, travel concessions, medical facilities can be included in these programmes. Information about welfare activities, religious congregations, various social activities in the area can be regularly conveyed to the senior citizens. The importance of diet and exercise according to the age can be highlighted.

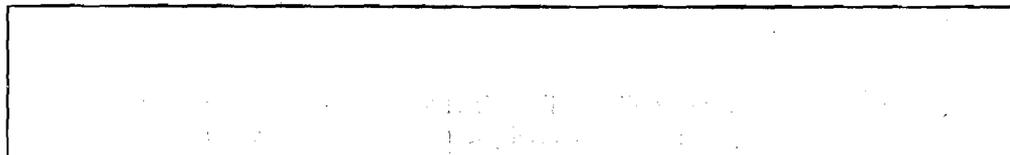


An elderly couple listening to programmes for senior citizens

Dealing with day-to-day problems such as maintaining good relations at home, creating a bond and bridging the gap with the younger generation can also be the subjects of these programmes. Information on camps organized by the health authorities specifically for the senior citizens such as eye camps, health check-ups, etc. can be given regularly.

Armed Forces

The armed force of the country comprising *jawans* and officers drawn from different parts of the country are deployed all over the country including far-flung and isolated areas. They do not have easy access to entertainment. Several stations of AIR including the Vividh Bharati Channel provide separate programmes for the armed forces which are primarily entertainment programme. However, they also carry items of relevance to them. Separate messages addressed to them as a group are also included. Functions organised by various units are covered in the broadcasts to give the members of the armed forces an idea as to what is happening elsewhere.



12.4 PLANNING

The most important aspect of a programme is the concept-development and generation of ideas. Large radio stations have advisory committees and consultative panels consisting of members who are specialists in various aspects of human activity. There are social scientists, social workers and academicians who discuss and offer valuable suggestions for programme making. The other major source of idea is reading news stories which can offer great ideas for programmes. Newspapers, journals, specialist magazines and books often provide ideas suitable for broadcasting. Ideas do not come from printed matter alone, watching television and listening to radio also gives ideas. You may use it as a starting point for a documentary programme or a magazine item. The same applies to films, theatre or any form of public entertainment. Sometimes good programme ideas are found with family or friends. You should listen to what people discuss among themselves: it could be problems with local transport, shortages in the food shops, physical changes in the street etc. Something may emerge out of a simple conversation, which may be developed into an effective programme. Government departments, NGO's, Universities and researchers publish many reports full of statistics. Ordinary readers are not likely to see or read them. However, they offer rich source of information for a programme. Letters to the editor in newspapers and magazines in which readers air their concerns may also provide programme ideas. What is important is that as a producer you should keep your eyes and ears open and be receptive to ideas. These ideas should be written down and kept in a file to be used later.

12.4.1 Programme Objectives

As a producer you should be clear about what you are trying to achieve in the programme. An outline plan helps to limit the scope of a programme. This would help in deciding the kind of material to include in the basic structure of your programme, type of music and effects to be used and so on. Without an outline plan, you may end up with much material that would require editing. Planning helps in imposing a discipline on yourself to think ideas through.

The programmes can be informative as well as educative. It can inform listeners about an issue, idea or event. Radio makes an ideal medium to spread information widely which people can easily understand. We have natural curiosity in other people's lives and experiences. An interview with a role model might be an opportunity to ask him/her about the difficulties s/he overcame in life. Subjects such as health, legal rights, social benefits available to listeners need not be tackled in a dull manner. These can be taken up by combining music and chat shows.

12.4.2 Composition of Programmes

The Special Audience Programmes are usually for a longer duration than ordinary talks, discussions, etc. Each programme is in the nature of a magazine comprising a number of items with an announcer compering them. Experience has revealed stock characters have proved to be popular. Stock characters are comperes who appear in these programmes regularly, strike a rapport with the listeners, link various items and present these programmes in a manner which is interesting as well as informative. These items are in various formats such as discussions, talks, interviews, plays, features, etc.

Proper attention has to be devoted to the selection of items for the special audience programmes. In addition, the item order is equally important. For example, the spoken-word items should not be clubbed together, some music or appropriate song can be given in between. Whatever the structure you choose, the final programme must make sense to the listener and come out as a composite whole.

12.4.3 Language

As you have already learnt, language plays a very important role in broadcasting. Studies reveal that simple language is more suited to microphone. Radio is a means of communication, the listener has to understand by simply listening to a broadcast only once. So the language spoken must be easily intelligible and should not sound artificial. The target group of the programme should be able to understand what is being said. Not only the language should be simple but short sentences should be used for Radio. In a long drawn out sentence, the listener tends to miss the point. This is particularly important in the programmes meant for children.

12.4.4 Transmission Time

The most important thing about Special Audience Programmes is that these should be broadcast at a time which is suitable to the target group to which the programmes is beamed. Your whole effort will be lost if you prepare a good programme but the audience for which it is meant are not able to listen to it. Before scheduling these programmes, the suitable time slot has to be decided which is often done on the basis of the specific area concerned. Transmission time is a crucial factor in deciding what programme to make and what its style should be.

In a multi-channel television scenario, it has become extremely complex to identify a perfect time slot, nonetheless, studies have identified certain time slots which have been found appropriate for specific segments. The farmers programme broadcast when they are out in the fields or a women's programme scheduled when mothers are busy making food for the family are a waste of time and effort. For example, a rural programme broadcast for the audience in the north-east region after 8.30 PM. would be a sheer wastage of time as the local rural people finish their day very early and retire by 7.30 PM. or so. Programmes for women are broadcast between 12.30 and 1.30 PM. with the assumption that women at home are free to listen to these programmes.

Similarly, programmes for children have to be broadcast at a time when they are free to listen to these programmes. As far as the special audiences are concerned, effort should be made to keep the language close to the spoken language of the area. Sometimes, for explaining certain concepts, some commonplace expressions are easily understood by the listeners and often a literal/ academic translation makes it difficult for a listener to follow them.

Check Your Progress: 2

- Note: 1) Use the space below for your answers.
2) Compare your answers with those given at the end of this unit.

1) What could be the possible sources for programme ideas for specific audience programmes?

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2) Explain the importance of an appropriate transmission time for special audience programmes.

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12.5 PRODUCTION

Good ideas and planning result in good programmes. The time spent in thinking about your programme will save hours of muddle later and your programmes will be sharp and focussed. The technique of production is akin to that of magazines production which is discussed under a different unit in this block.

The next important step is to decide upon the presenter, whether it has to be a single person or two stock characters. How are they going to address so that the listener identifies with them? Care has to be taken to ensure that the presenter has the necessary background and the language of the area in which the programme is going to be broadcast. The radio presenter has the additional advantage of using the local dialects to explain a difficult subject.

A programme should have a number of items catering to the taste of the people. The format has to be clearly worked out and the various items have to be well knitted so that one automatically leads to the other. It should leave the listeners satisfied that what they have heard has been of some gain to them. The opening sequences can make or break a programme; and so can the endings. The programme should end with a brief round up by the presenter followed by the signature tune.

A listener identifies the programme by its signature tune. A lot of attention has to be taken while preparing the signature tune. It should be catchy and apt. For example, for women's programmes signature tunes based upon some popular folk songs can be selected, similarly the signature tune for tiny tots could be based on some lilting lively tunes.

12.6 LISTENERS' PARTICIPATION

Programmes for
Women, Children,
Youth and other
Specific Audiences

The best way of getting feedback and to gauge the popularity of the programme is the listeners' participation which can be obtained by making provision for:

- Programmes of Listener's Requests Letters from the listeners provide an insight into their tastes, their likes/dislikes. Programmes on health specially draw a lot of letters from listeners.
- Listeners' participation in programmes by arranging quiz, letter writing competitions etc.
- Phone-in programmes have registered tremendous popularity lately. This format facilitates an immediate involvement of the listeners in which the listener is able to get answers to their questions or problems.
- Helping listeners to form listeners' clubs and offering opportunities to these clubs to plan and present their cultural programmes.



Listeners mail being analysed

12.7 LET US SUM UP

Programmes directed towards a well defined group of listeners are termed as 'Special Audience Programmes'. In this unit, we have discussed the role, need and importance of Special Audience Programmes. The various groups of people such as children, women, youth, industrial workers, the armed forces and the senior citizens need a forum where they can look forward to programmes catering to their specific interests and needs. There is another important segment of special audience – the rural audience including agriculturists which we have discussed in a separate unit. We have also learnt the importance of the requirements and the needs of the audience to which these programmes are beamed. The identification of the listener with these programmes is very important. The presenter plays an important role in the popularity of these programmes. The programme structure and the linking style is crucial. One of the most important factors for these Special Audience Programmes is an appropriate time slot. The audience for which the programme is being broadcast should be available at that time to listen to the programme; otherwise the whole effort will be wasted. These programmes are mostly participatory in nature because the listeners can be involved in various ways. The language should be kept close to the spoken language of the area, using the local dialects whenever necessary.

12.8 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS: POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Check Your Progress: 1

- 1) Special Audience Programmes need to be arranged to meet the communication needs of different segments such as; women, children, youth, senior citizens and armed forces etc. They need programmes to address their specific queries and problems which can be met through programmes specifically designed for them.
- 2) In a programme for industrial workers, issues relating to labour laws, safety regulations against health hazards, precautions to avoid accidents at workplace and welfare schemes for workers as well their families need to be covered. Focus on workers in both organised as well as unorganised sectors should be given.

Check Your Progress: 2

- 1) Careful reading of newspaper columns and magazines, watching television, listening to radio, conversations among people and discussions with the specific targets may result in ideas for programmes. Sensitivity toward the target listener would result in effective programming.
- 2) Appropriate time slot needs to be identified so that the target audience would be available to listen. In a multi-channel television scenario, it has become extremely complex to identify a perfect time slot, nonetheless, studies have identified certain time slots which have been found appropriate for specific segments.