increased the number of women reached, from 20% of women recalling family planning messages from one media source to 32% from two media, 41% from three media and 47% from four media. Multiple media sources appear to be complementary and reinforcing rather than duplicative.

We also found that exposure to more media sources had an incremental effect on contraceptive use. In general, the more media sources a woman is exposed to, the greater the likelihood that she will use a modern contraceptive method. Thus, women exposed to one media source have higher contraceptive prevalence than those with no media exposure, but prevalence is higher among women exposed to two media sources than among those exposed to one. The highest contraceptive prevalence is found among women exposed to six media sources. Not surprisingly, adding a seventh media source (television) did not raise prevalence, due to the limited access to television.

The programmatic implications of these findings are that multiple media channels should continue to be used to promote family planning and other reproductive health issues. The difference in contraceptive use between women exposed to 1–2 media sources and those exposed to 3–4 sources is striking. Priority should be given to media channels that reach large numbers of the intended audience, but supporting channels (such as print and interpersonal communication) should also be included in the media mix.

Among the media sources analyzed, radio reached the most women; nine out of 10 of those who recalled family planning messages in the media cited radio as one of their media sources. The benefits of specially produced materials can be seen in the effects of the radio drama Zinduka! Women who recalled it were more likely to talk about family planning with their spouses, to visit health facilities and to use contraceptives. These were the specific messages emphasized in Zinduka!

Although the family planning logo campaign reached fewer women than radio or newspapers, its close association with visits to family planning service sites suggests that community campaigns are worthwhile, and that visual symbols such as the logo help to publicize service sites. Recognizing the need to reach rural communities, the Ministry of Health is expanding logo promotion activities to more regions.

The opportunity for innovative communications programs remains. The family planning communications interventions in Tanzania reached at least 55% of reproductive-age women—a major accomplishment in a predominantly rural, media-poor country. Nevertheless, additional efforts are needed to reach the remaining 45% of women in this age-group. Furthermore, the number of young women entering their reproductive years is growing. Providing appropriate information to women in various stages of their life cycle is a further challenge for communicators.

Our findings suggest some new directions for communications research. While women can be motivated to adopt family planning after hearing a single message, the impact appears much greater when they are exposed to multiple sources of information about family planning over months and even years. The association between single message and single media source and impact is also contradicted by the gap between exposure and practice. Additional research is needed to determine how to meet women’s information needs most efficiently and how to provide a continuous flow of information that is lively and interesting. Contraceptive use often entails a lengthy process of information-seeking and decision-making, and continued use requires regular reinforcement and renewed commitment. Thus, scattered family planning messages and short-lived campaigns are unlikely to provide adequate support to current or prospective contraceptive users.

Some media exposure appears to compensate for low educational attainment in raising levels of contraceptive use. While media promotion of health issues is no substitute for formal education, which has multiple benefits for women, it would be useful to learn more about ways to use radio and other media to provide information to illiterate women.

### References