

## The role of the media

The media plays an important role in society. It informs, educates and entertains the population. This makes the media an important partner in development, and a key ally in delivering messages to the public.

## Media and disease control

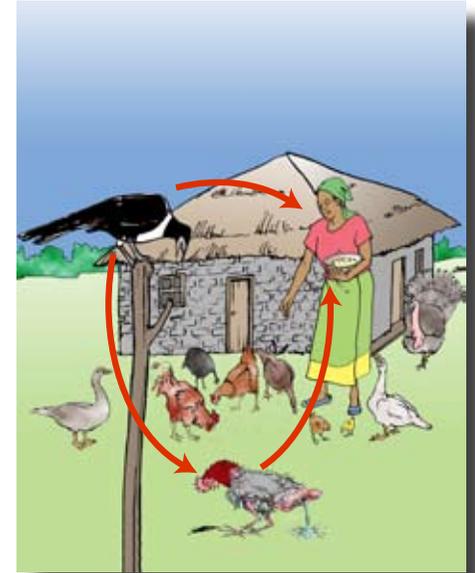
When diseases occur, they put us all at risk. Diseases can infect and kill anybody, so all people need the information that they can use to protect themselves and their families from diseases.



## Human and animal health

Domestic and wild animals make an important contribution to the economies of nations and feed many families. But the close proximity between animals and human beings sometimes leads to people getting infected with diseases from animals. Diseases which infect both animals and human beings are called zoonotic diseases. There are many zoonotic diseases in the world. These include rinderpest, anthrax, foot-and-mouth disease, Rift Valley Fever and bird flu.

Some of the zoonotic diseases can be very vicious, and can kill both animals and humans on a large scale in a very short time. Injected in mice and guinea pigs under laboratory conditions, for example, anthrax bacteria have been shown to double their numbers in 50 minutes, and to kill the victim in 10-14 hours. The Rift Valley Fever (RVF) outbreak in Egypt in 1977, affected 200,000 people, killing 600 of them. In Tanzania, the RVF outbreak of January 13 -May 3, 2007 infected a total of 264 people killing 109 of them and the RVF outbreak in Kenya (between November 30, 2006 and March 2007) affected 684 people leading to 155 deaths. The RVF outbreak in Somalia (December 19, 2006 to February 20, 2007) affected 114 people leaving 51 of them dead (WHO Factsheet, May 9, 2007).



We need to educate our people on how to protect themselves against these and other diseases.

## Role of the media

The media is best placed to disseminate the information that the people need to prevent diseases and enjoy a good life. The media reaches all the corners of the country. It is a powerful, respected and trusted tool for change. To play the information and behaviour moulding role effectively, the media needs to:

- Acknowledge the importance of human and animal health to the economy and livelihood of families.
- Acknowledge that people can contract diseases from animals with devastating effects
- Work closely with experts and content specialists to understand the issues around animal and human health
- Gather, package and disseminate the information that people need to prevent and contain diseases.

# Media And Disease Control

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