Background

The Information, education and Communication (IEC) Division of the National Family Planning Board has produced a large variety of audio-visuals since its inception in 1967. However, it was only from 1974 that the production process began to take into consideration the target audiences’ ‘human values’ so that materials production could be tailored to some extent to meet the needs of both the source and the receiver. The production process since then has included pre and post tests of dummies before mass production. Although this method seemed a little more scientific with the exercises of pre and post test, the whole process was still traditional in that the first stage of production in the designing of material was still based on available hearsay information of the target audience, their values as well as their perceptions towards the programme. The limitations of producing materials based assumptions such as what sort of the format to be designed, colors, illustrations, the language etc., the readers would prefer are obvious especially in a society facing such a rapid environmental change as in Malaysia. The other limitations would be that the written word and the symbolic aspects of family planning messages might not be perceived as intended.

IEC education, informational and motivational materials could create a favorable perception of the concept of planned parenthood among target audiences only if the messages are perceived as relevant to their daily experience. To ensure this, the production process needs as much accurate information as possible not only of the patterns and channels of communication among the target audience, their values, attitudes and perception etc., but also the roles of the materials in enhancing this communication system. Such information can only be obtained through scientific studies. In the meantime materials need to be produced.

The first step towards a better understanding of the target audience was taken with the carrying out of a Communication Analysis Study to trace the flow of information and the role of influential in message transmission—Eight Felda Schemes and more than 800 settlers were selected for the survey. Next, it was
decided to have an in-depth evaluation of IEC materials which could help give direction for future production. Hence this study would represent a major effort by the IEC Division to determine the extent to which IEC materials utilized in the programme provide information on the concept of planned parenthood to the target audience and its impact on attitudinal change. The study should also give an insight into the actual needs of the people with regards to motivational materials. This vital information can be utilized by the IEC division in the production of materials geared to meet future needs.