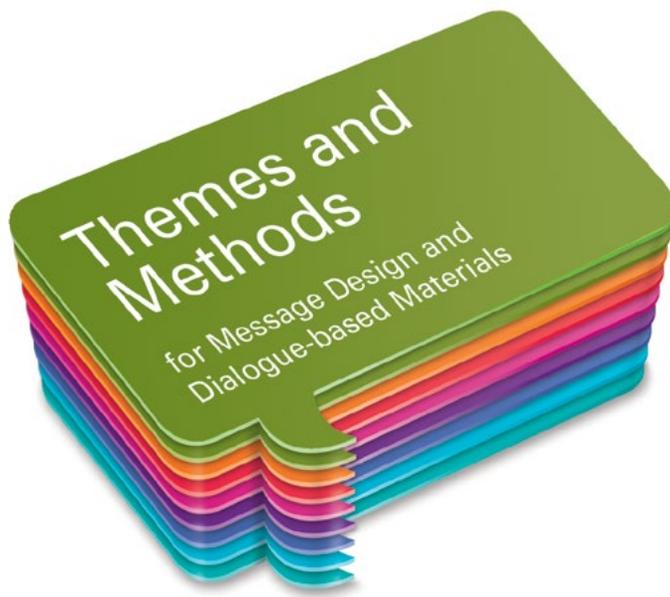


Communication for Social and Behaviour Change Learning Module Series

MODULE 1 MODULE 2 MODULE 3 MODULE 4 MODULE 5 MODULE 6 **MODULE 7** MODULE 8 MODULE 9



MODULE 7



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MODULE 7



MODULE 7

Themes and methods for message design and dialogue-based materials



The goal of this module is to familiarise students with basic ideas and steps in message design and dialogue-based materials. Messages are the arguments for promoting change. Messages construct, modify, and maintain meaning of certain actions in ways that inspire positive actions. Depending on strategic needs and actions, messages may change individual attitudes, social norms, and policies.

Sub-module 7A: Message design

Unit 1 Message design framework

Unit 2 Message appeals

Unit 3 Message treatments and formats

Unit 4 Message (and relative media) development

Unit 5 Message testing

Unit 6 Material production

Sub-module 7B: Dialogue-based methods and materials

Unit 1 Identify themes for dialogue/IPC

Unit 2 Develop IPC and other dialogue-based methods

MODULE 7A

UNIT 1

Message design framework

General introduction

Theory guides message design. Messages are not simply designed based on impressions or preconceived notions. They are embedded in analytical concepts and evidence-based conclusions about what prompts people to pay attention, recall and understand certain arguments and persuasive pitches and be motivated to act. Think about messages as the compelling argument offered to people to consider, pay attention and decide to change.

Message design frameworks provide ideas to address the question: 'What makes messages persuasive?' Several factors need to be considered in message design – the source, receiver, channel, content and context. As they refer to old questions in communication and rhetoric studies, these factors affect the kind of messages and their effectiveness. An underlying principle of message framework is the need for nuanced analysis of why certain messages are more likely to be seen, understood, remembered and acted upon. This idea questions the simple notion that just making messages available, especially if they only reflect experts' expectations and definitions, will result in information leading to significant changes. Indeed, causal evidence suggests that even though populations, particularly in modern societies, are constantly bombarded with all kinds of messages, the fact is that few are comprehended, remembered, or motivate specific actions.

A wealth of evidence shows that not all population groups are the same, vis-à-vis a given issue in terms of interest, identification and prioritisation. This has led to emphasising message segmentation and targeting to increase the likelihood of impact. Therefore, the first and basic principle of message design is to define the 'audiences' carefully, based on specific programmatic needs and objectives. Audience segmentation entails dividing audiences into homogenous subgroups that are internally similar yet, which differ from one another. This principle contradicts the notion that 'one size fits all' – that is, one single message is adequate for all populations/groups.

Because audiences can be segmented across multiple variables, it is necessary to identify what criteria needs to be used for segmentation – demographic (age, gender), geographical, cultural (beliefs, norms, ethics), attitudinal (people’s attitudes vis-à-vis a given issue), behavioural, psychographic (ethnicity, race), 'stage of change' (from opposed to favourable predisposed to practice certain behaviours), communication (styles, channels, influencers), and others. Indeed, there is no single principle to be used in determining how populations should be 'sliced'. Instead, what is important is to understand why given strategic goals, populations need to be segmented in specific ways. At times, segmentation or 'customisation' on the basis of age, race, or gender makes sense, given the characteristics of the population and the different programmatic goals. Other times, it is either not necessary or other criterias weigh more heavily. The question is whether certain similarities or differences need to be considered for message design. Segmentation is about increasing the likelihood that certain 'audiences' would find messages relevant to them and thus are more likely to pay attention, recall and use the information in their decisions. Evidence shows that 'tailored' and 'personalised' messages are more likely to have a positive impact as compared to 'generic' messages.

This finding has not settled the old question about what makes a given message persuasive or effective. Ultimately, the selection of messages is contingent on the underlying models of change and theoretical principles in a given programme. Message design depends on the model of change adopted by an intervention. Should programmes try to promote changes among people who are more likely to practice a given behaviour rather than who never considered the issues at stake? Should they mobilise rational or emotional factors? Should they appeal to 'early adopters' or 'laggards'? Should they reach out to key influencers or different segments of the population? Given these hypothetically different choices and challenges, there is no categorical conclusion about 'best practices' for message design. The literature offers 'rules of thumb', questions that need to be considered, rather than specific formulae to maximise impact.

Several theories explain message processing and impact. For example, the elaboration likelihood model suggests that individuals use two types of message processing – central route and peripheral route. While 'central route processing' is when individuals examine arguments contained within a message, 'peripheral route' processing is when they rely on heuristics or cues that may not be obviously related to the arguments. The latter are 'shortcuts' that people use to listen, understand, recall and act upon messages. The more likely people perceive a message linked to existing concerns, the better chances are that they would use a 'central route', as opposed to when they feel less affected and are more likely to rely on cues. Similarly, the hierarchy of effects model suggests that people go through three stages before adopting a particular

behaviour and any message should address these stages. The stages are: Cognitive or 'thinking' stage in which the message must provide information about the behaviour, the affective or 'feeling' stage in which people develop positive or negative feelings about the behaviour and finally, the conative or 'action' stage where the behaviour is actually carried out.¹

Much has been discussed about whether message design should be based on one or many analytical/theoretical frameworks. One argument is that, rather than being solely determined by the premises and argument of a single theory, what is needed is an open attitude that considers the situation and programmatic goals to determine the principles that should guide message design. Programmes are not mainly concerned with testing theories, but rather achieving specific goals. Therefore, what needs to prevail is a problem-based analysis that is mindful of the conditions while drawing from a range of theories.

Aside from these perceptions about whether the topic is of concern to specific groups, the selection of an appropriate channel is also important for message design. Channels that are regarded as trustworthy are more likely to positively impact message efficacy. Therefore, the same messages sent by trusted and non-trusted sources are likely to have different impact, aside from the specific appeals that they use. Context is important too. When people sense the importance or risk about a given issue, they are more likely to pay attention, recall and use the concerned messages than when such conditions are missing. Messages about issues already perceived as relevant are more likely to have impact on different dimensions. What the context does, in these situations, is to prime people's attention about certain topics. Messages then seep through, in an already conducive context.

Message design needs to consider how context is matched with the information needs and interests of specific groups, the context in which the information is received and the elements (production, design) that may contribute to capturing people's attention, aiding better comprehension and recall. The relevance of a given message depends on whether people feel that it is linked to existing issues and concerns. If people do not think the message is relevant, they are less likely to pay attention and remember the same. Finally, frameworks need to guide the key steps of message design. They must define the intended change/behaviour, identify the salient belief (advantages/disadvantages of current and proposed actions), and determine which salient beliefs should be addressed by messages.

One framework that considers these key steps of message design is human-centred design (HCD). HCD involves designing interventions or products by collaborating

¹<https://www.mbaskool.com/business-concepts/marketing-and-strategy-terms/12173-hierarchy-of-effects-theory.html>

with and learning from the stakeholders/ audience groups the product or solution is intended for. The goal is to develop products or services that match people's practices, needs and preferences.² As identified by Mad*Pow, there are 5 basic principles that govern HCD. These are:

- Great design is based on observed, human need (*human centrality*). In other words, in order to create effective solutions, we have to see and understand the challenges and opportunities that real people encounter in their lives.
- Great design comes from understanding people's behaviours, thoughts (*cognitive empathy*) and emotions (*emotional empathy*). To create solutions that fit into people's lives we need to know about their understandings and perceptions as they encounter related situations. Additionally, because we know emotions play a significant role in behaviour and decision-making, we need to understand how people feel throughout and because of these situations.
- To make good design decisions, we must first *create possibilities* to choose from. When coming up with ideas, the first one you come up with won't always be the best. In fact, it rarely is. To find effective, innovative solutions we need to create a large pool of possible solutions that we can then examine and select from.
- Great design comes from a desire to create *real outcomes*. It isn't enough to just create something that seems new and exciting or looks great. Design is about achieving objectives. If solutions don't achieve what they're intended to then they have not been well designed. Great design understands this and takes into consideration how it will measure and monitor success.
- Great design is *iterative*. It leverages *continuous learning* and never truly ends. The design process doesn't end. A solution, in any form, presents an opportunity to learn more about those who use it, their experiences, and the challenges and opportunities it addresses. These learning should then be used to further refine and evolve the solution.³

Philosophically, HCD and participatory research have similar foundations -- they are both built on the premise that people affected by a given issue are best positioned to understand challenges and solutions by being actively involved in the process of change. There are, however, certain aspects of HCD that distinguish it from participatory research. First, HCD borrows from a host of disciplines such as social sciences, behaviour science, behaviour economics. Second, the HCD process is more rapid than that of participatory research. Finally, HCD places primary emphasis on creating and prototyping tangible products and solutions.⁴

² Marc Steen (2011) Tensions in human-centred design, *CoDesign: International Journal of CoCreation in Design and the Arts*, 7(1), 45-60.

³ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5715100cf8baf3c79d443859/t/57278d9a8a65e2945ad67678/1462209948161/MadPow_HCD_Overview.pdf

⁴ From expert interview

Questions for discussion

- How does theory inform message design?
- Do various theories lead to different messages?
- How are theory and formative data connected in message design?
- How are channels and messages related?
- What is public/stakeholder segmentation?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of human-centred design?

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Learning activities

The learning activities should be aimed at developing the following competencies:

- Understand how theories are used in message design.
- Understand problem-based message design.
- Identify messages suitable for segmented audiences.
- Explain the ideas of incentives and motivations in message design.
- Develop messages based on data and theoretical arguments.

Lectures, small group discussions, debates and presentations

1. Based on specific programmatic objectives for a real or hypothetical project, groups discuss possible messages for different audiences and present justifications based on theoretical insights and data analysis.
2. Discuss how data and theory guided message design in polio immunization campaigns in India.
3. Discuss incentives and motivations for specific populations to and how motivations promote certain programmatic goals.

Unit assessment/evaluation methods

- In-class exercises
- Case study/scenario analysis and challenge
- Assignments: Oral and written presentations

MODULE 7A

UNIT 2

Message appeals

General introduction

Message appeal refers to the kind of argument made by specific messages in order to elicit response/s from populations.

The kind of appeal to move population groups in a certain direction can be classified into three types depending on the kind of expected response, namely awareness, instruction and persuasion. Awareness appeals are aimed at informing people about what to do, when, where and why. They may also encourage people to seek further information and sensitize them to specific issues and problems. They basically seek to promote interest or concern about a given issue and make them aware about the existence and scope of the problem. Instruction appeals are intended to educate people about a certain issue – what they need to do and how to help address/prevent/mitigate problems. Persuasive appeals are aimed at convincing people on why they should adopt certain practices. The specific appeal can be positive or negative based on whether it is assumed that either one would be more effective in affecting beliefs that may promote action.

Message appeals are essentially about showing and tapping into incentives for action. Ideally, they should tap existing values among a given population. To put it differently, see what people care about already and if that may motivate them to learn, take action, change attitudes and other possible goals. Appeals may affect the subjective calculation about the prospects of something happening and affecting a given group. So, if people come to believe that they are very likely to be affected by a problem and that the effect could be significant, they are more likely to be motivated to take action. What messages do, in this case, is to modify subjective expectations about the likelihood that something may happen as well as the subjective perception about the magnitude of the consequences. Here, one emphasizes a 'loss' frame which examines what people would stand to lose if something happens with certain impact.

As part of this approach to message appeals, much has been studied about the impact of fear appeals. Fear appeals are intended to motivate action by highlighting certain threats that exist if people practice or refrain from practicing certain behaviours. Typically, fear appeals combine information that emphasises negative physical/life

consequences with highly emotional presentation. Fear appeals need to be used carefully. They should not exaggerate threats and risks in case people do not find them credible or if the actual risk is significantly less powerful. People may tune out or act defensively if they believe that messages actually exaggerate the consequences. Studies show that, if used strategically, fear appeals can be effective, especially if they provide people with specific directions/instructions about preventive measures – what they need to do to mitigate the chances of being harmed.

A different kind of appeal stresses positive motivations – good, desirable incentives instead of fear and risk. What is important is to understand what people desire enough to be motivated to take action, gain social acceptability and trust from loved ones, conforming with social norms and so on. Appeals also highlight economic benefits, health, time savings, psychological and other consequences that may be deemed important by specific groups.

Designing message appeals on the basis of understanding what drives people to action and what motivates them – it is crucial to avoid common messaging that, while focused on 'technical' questions (e.g. consequences of vaccination, schooling, healthy foods) do not sufficiently foreground 'social' motivations. Too often, it is assumed that people would do something because they care about health, education, the environment and other issues. However, experiences actually show that people typically are moved to learning, knowing, changing and /or acting out of social 'incentives'.

Another important line of inquiry in message appeals is that of framing. Framing refers to how messages make some aspects of a given problem/issue salient. In other words, how they emphasise certain ways of understating and approaching a given issue. Any development issue can be understood in multiple ways. What message frames do is to encourage populations to see them in certain ways, in terms of causes and solutions. Poor child nutrition can be seen as a matter of a mothers' responsibility, community resources, food costs, policies, subsidies and so on. Depending on what kind of action is expected, message frames emphasise certain dimensions at the expense of others. They can highlight internal or external factors to prompt attention, interest and action.

Finally, a key issue is how certain message appeals are constructed – the combination of visual, words and sounds that are put together to anchor a certain appeal. These resources need to be culturally sensitive and mindful of different ways in which they could be interpreted, either individually or collectively.

Questions for discussion

- What are message appeals?
- What are the goals of message appeals?
- What are examples of message appeals?
- Why do messages appeal?
- Are there certain types of messages that seemingly 'work' in all circumstances?
- How are message appeals decided?
- Why are fear appeals used widely? What are their strengths and limitations?
- What is message framing?

Reading list

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Learning activities

The learning activities should be aimed at developing the following competencies:

- Understand the uses of data and theory in message appeals.
- Undertake critical review of message appeals in terms of programmatic objectives and characteristics of selected population groups/stakeholders.
- Demonstrate strategic thinking by drafting illustrative samples of message appeals.

Lectures, small group discussions/activities

1. Group analysis of message appeals of case study to assess strategic justification and effectiveness.
2. Group discussion of possible message appeals to use in a programme and offer justification as to why certain appeals may be more appropriate.
3. Content analysis of programme materials to identify type of message appeals used.
4. Discuss a social marketing campaign or a recent public service ad campaign that uses mixed message appeals, e.g. fear with humour.

Unit assessment/evaluation methods

- In-class exercises
- Case study/scenario analysis and challenge
- Assignments: Oral and written presentations

MODULE 7A

UNIT 3

Message treatments and formats

General introduction

Formats refer to two dimensions of 'how' the message will be presented to specific populations. The same message can be displayed in different ways and through multiple platforms/channels/places and it can be 'delivered' by various sources and styles of presentation.

Evidence does not allow us to draw categorical conclusions about whether certain formats such as radio, digital media and posters are more effective than others. In fact, this question cannot be answered in the abstract. Innovative thoughts and common-sense are needed to select the appropriate formats. What matters is to identify platforms that people use every day for exchanging information on a range of issues (not only the specific issues addressed by the programme). Also, identify other places where people can be exposed to and discuss messages with others. So, identifying platforms commonly used is a rule of thumb to decide whether they are appropriate. This should not be narrowly identified with 'mass media' (print, broadcasting and digital), but more broadly in terms of public spaces (open-air markets, schools, streets, billboards, means of transportation, clothing, etc.) and private spaces (cafes, bars, hair salons, clubs) that could become a vehicle for messaging. Ambient media illustrates this method of communication. Focused in areas which garner lots of attention, advertising and messaging of this form can be encountered on a regular basis. For example, messages printed along staircases or doors of elevators, on handles of train carriages and sides of buildings. The selection is contingent on the communication preferences of the population segment. This is why understanding daily communicative habits are critical to identifying possible spots/channels that may not otherwise be obvious.

One issue to consider is whether single or multiple platforms should be used to maximise reach, intensity and duration. Research is not conclusive about these questions since answers depend on specific characteristics of the programme, populations and objectives. Programmes should be mindful of the twin problems of weak presence and saturation of messages essentially because both present problems for effectiveness. Endless repetition does not ensure understanding, recall or actions.

Weak visibility makes it difficult to reach out to populations. The same conclusion is applied to frequency. Frequent messages may result in populations tuning out or becoming inoculated to the intended meaning and actions, but sporadic messages may not generate the kind of momentum recall and behavioural cues that may encourage significant changes.

Formats also refer to the way the message is delivered. This refers to messages that are essentially factual or narrative. Factual messages feature basic data about the issue at stake, with the hope that plain information would encourage people to change attitudes and actions. Narrative refers to storytelling which brings out plots and stories that may make the message memorable. Again, there are no shortcuts or easy conclusions to understanding this topic, as the selection is contingent on the population, communicative styles, 'stages of behaviour change' and particular context (political, cultural) of a given group and so on. For example, when populations have increased risk perception about a certain problem, straight facts can be sufficient to promote actions. Instead, when risk perception is low, other formats may be needed to encourage attention and action. Typically, preparing factual messages demand less work and human resources even though they need to be vetted by experts to ensure accuracy. Narratives, instead, demand the contributions from specialists who can produce compelling, interesting and resonant stories.

A field worth exploring in understanding efficient paths of communication is integrated mediated communication. Computer mediated communication, or simply mediated communication, is described as text-based or symbol-reliant. This is different from face-to-face communication which is supported by a collection of non-verbal cues, such as posture and facial expression. Both models differ in the processing and interpretation of information with respect to cognition. At the intersection of these concepts, timed with increased dispersion of smartphone usage, emoticons have been studied as an integrated approach to mediated communication. Research concludes that they offer a greater social and emotional tone of text-based channels by delivering expressivity. Integrated mediated communication therefore remains a powerful resource to spread a message that merges a personal and technological approach.

Another important consideration is to see who delivers the message – the spokesperson/celebrity and/or source. Certainly, this selection widely varies depending on the needs of the programme, population characteristics and opportunities. Approaches that focus on interpersonal communication may select sources that are known and/or trusted by specific population groups such as local leaders, health workers, opinion leaders, spouses/relatives and neighbours. Media campaigns, instead, rely on high-profile individuals who can increase the visibility and recall of messages by virtue of their name recognition and ability to stand out and attract broad attention.

With the emphasis on target populations and context, we can consider the Kan Khujura Tesan campaign that was launched by Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL). India's leading FMCG company recognised a media blind spot in one of their largest rural markets in Bihar. Motivated to circumvent the poor access to television and newspapers and the media-dark nature of the state, they initiated a free on-demand mobile radio station in 2014. The service required the customers to give a missed call to a specific number, after which they would get a call back. It featured free entertainment services like jokes, music and news. The content was heavily branded, interspersed with advertising. The platform was an enormous success as it reached 8 million customers within its first 6 months of launch. HUL generated valuable data regarding the use of the platform. They could identify trends in call frequency, repeat callers and the points at which listeners decided to hang up, to develop their communication strategy.

Questions for discussion

- What are message formats?
- What are the different types of formats?
- Why do formats matter in message design?
- Share examples of appropriate message formats in terms of specific programmatic objectives and public/stakeholders?
- Discuss some advantages and disadvantages of newer message formats such as ambient media or integrated mediated communication.

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Learning activities

The learning activities should be aimed at developing the following competencies:

- Identify message formats.
- Select suitable message formats in terms of programmatic objectives.
- Critically review message formats used by C4D programmes.
- Develop innovative and creative message formats.

Lectures, small group discussions/activities

1. Thematic analysis of message formats of a C4D programme to assess suitability in terms of programmatic objectives and selected public population groups. Offer an alternative format that could have been used for similar objectives.
2. Identify suitable message formats for 'hard-to-reach' audiences that are not integrated into conventional media systems for specific development programmes (e.g. immunization, malaria control).
3. Identify the strengths and limitations of mobile telephony formats for effective messaging in terms of specific objectives and public population groups.

Unit assessment/evaluation methods

- In-class exercises
- Case study/scenario analysis and challenges
- Assignments: Oral and written presentations

MODULE 7A

UNIT 4

Message (and relative media) development

General introduction

Messaging is an iterative process of creating, disseminating and sharing meaning. Message content should draw from data collected in formative research. It is not based on what experts believe are powerful, persuasive arguments, but based on theoretical insights and information about key populations.

Several issues need to be considered for successful messages during the development phase. Once the key population groups are defined, it is necessary to identify relevant concepts based on knowledge about salient issues (what matters to people). Relevant concepts are the core of the messages that include stimuli, motivational cues and assessment of context and other factors (organisational, cultural).

The concept of 'stimuli' refers to factors that encourage populations to pay attention to the message - why would the message stand out among the plethora of messages that typically surround people. If the message is not salient, it is unlikely that people would attend, assimilate and recall. Getting people's attention is certainly not easy, particularly as they are subjected to all kinds of stimuli from interpersonal to mediated messages. In selecting messages that may be effective, it is important to consider different ways to capture attention such as humour, fear, facts, language, slogans, suspense, fear, wordplay, visuals and other factors that determine whether people pay attention and recall key ideas.

'Motivational cues' is what is assumed would persuade people to act. It features the appeals that are considered potentially persuasive such as perceived fear, severity of problem, susceptibility to being affected by a problem, existing threats, benefits from acting and other motivational factors.

'Context assessment' alludes to the environment and resources that could be mobilised and need to be considered as they affect message impact. Issues include people's perceived efficacy (self and collective), subjective and objective norms and

beliefs about barriers and motivations to action. A critical consideration is cultural factors, such as local values promoting or discouraging specific actions. Messages that carefully considered cultural contexts are more likely to be effective in terms of recall, understanding and action if they integrate issues such as rules, beliefs, power, spirituality, gender roles, socio-economic differences and education.

The human-centred design process of message development considers the importance of context assessment and broadly involves the following steps:

1. Observation: The first step involves observing the beneficiary populations to identify patterns of behaviour, underlying beliefs and pain points. This can be done through various means including, but not limited to, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, or literature reviews.
2. Ideation: Based on insights from the observation stage, this stage involves brainstorming as many message ideas as possible.
3. Rapid prototyping: The next step is to develop simple prototypes of the message so that the beneficiaries can give feedback on tangible (even if rough) message designs.
4. Feedback: This is the most critical stage of the development process as it is focused on understanding directly from the beneficiary whether the message is on target, relatable and effective.
5. Iteration: In this stage, feedback from the beneficiaries is incorporated to optimise the messages.
6. Implementation: Finally, once the message has been validated by the beneficiaries, it can be moved to the implementation stage which involves various steps including target populations, delivery channels and message formats.⁵

It is important to note here that, as of now, the HCD process has been mainly used to develop products and solutions rather than messages. However, it also has the potential to improve the message development process to design communication strategies that are appealing and effective.

Another similar process of message development is the ADDIE method which stands for Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation.⁶

Beyond understanding various aspects of a message as well as development processes, messages should have the following requisites: they need to be clear to ensure that population groups understand them, with a few, if any, technical/scientific terms; are consistent to avoid confusion and misunderstanding; focused to avoid ambiguous interpretations; appealing to the intended group; and are honest and truthful.

⁵ <https://www.usertesting.com/blog/how-ideo-uses-customer-insights-to-design-innovative-products-users-love/>

⁶ <https://www.instructionaldesign.org/models/addie/>

Once the key concepts are identified and message drafts have been elaborated, it is necessary to review and summarise the information by asking the following questions:

- Why would people pay attention to the message? Would they be interested?
- What is the right tone to address specific populations?
- Who is the source of the message?
- What is the appeal?
- Would people be motivated to engage in change?
- Does the message address barriers to actions and ways to overcome them?
- Is the message clear in terms of what is expected? What are the actionable points?
- Does the message resonate with the diverse groups within the population? Would they agree?
- Is the message consistent?
- Does the message tap into existing values?
- Why would people be receptive to the message?
- What existing ideas are retrieved by messages to lead to action?

Answers to these questions should be summarised in a creative brief that provides a summary of the key components of the messages and guides the selection and production of materials.

Questions for discussion

- What are the key components of message development?
- What factors should be considered to determine the key message content?
- What information should guide the analysis?
- Why are the 'technical' messages insufficient for persuasive action?
- Why are messages unlikely to be similarly effective across populations?
- What factors make messages salient?
- What are the similarities and differences between the HCD process of message development and the ADDIE model? Analyse the effectiveness of one process vis-a-vis the other.

Reading list

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<https://www.marketing-partners.com/conversations2/a-3-step-guide-to-message-triangles/>

Case studies

UNICEF 2013, An entertainment-education radio initiative, Meena Ki Duniya, The Production Process http://www.kcci.org.in/_layouts/ContentManagement/KnowledgeRepository.aspx?Theme=Communication

UNICEF 2013, Kyunki Jeena Isi Ka Nam Hai Teleserial, A Glimpse into the Production Process

http://www.kcci.org.in/_layouts/ContentManagement/KnowledgeRepository.aspx?Theme=Communication

Learning activities

The learning activities should be aimed at developing the following competencies:

- Understand critical components of message development.
- Know the importance of motivational cues and benefits.
- Know 'contextual factors' that need to be addressed in messages.
- Identify suitable spokesperson for various public/stakeholders.
- Design messages that foreground different appeals.

Lectures, small group discussions/activities

1. Group discussion of motivational cues in messages developed/used by various C4D programmes. Discuss strengths and limitations of various messages in terms of their intended publics/ and objectives.
2. Develop a set of arguments to persuade 'technical' experts about social aspects of messages that need to be integrated. Let us assume that technical experts are not familiar or are not convinced that contextual factors, motivational cues and other aspects need to be salient in messages and that they prefer that messages are

- solely focused on technical aspects (public health, agricultural, educational). Draft a set of arguments and a 'role play' debate about the pros and cons of messages.
3. Design a message development plan keeping in mind a specific behavioural problem (e.g. low uptake of IFA pill among adolescent girls) using either the ADDIE model or the HCD process.

Unit assessment/evaluation methods

- In-class exercises
- Case study/scenario analysis and challenge
- Assignments: Oral and written presentations

MODULE 7A

UNIT 5

Message testing

General introduction

Messages need to be validated to ensure they are appealing, understood and have the potential to motivate people to action. Testing is a type of formative evaluation that takes place once the programme is well under way. Key issues to consider are whether the messages are relevant, clear, attractive, get attention, memorable, credible, resonate with key populations and are acceptable. Here, every component of the message should be tested in terms of words, images, appeal and format.

Various methods can be used to test messages. Commonly used methods include, self-administered questionnaires, intercept interviews in central public spaces, focus groups and gatekeeper reviews.

Self-administered questionnaires allow programmes to elicit detailed information that may not be easily accessible, keep anonymity, have time to think carefully about answers and be responded by several people at the same time. Depending on local conditions, they can be administered in different spaces (public and private) and through different methods (personal, mail, electronic mail). One advantage is that they are not expensive and can reach a good number of people. Questionnaires should be short and piloted before they are widely distributed to ensure that they are helpful to get the information needed to assess the relevance of the messages. They need to be clear as there is no interviewer present to assist the respondents. In terms of question design, open-ended questions may provide more information but would require more time for analysis. Multiple-choice questions are easier to evaluate, but they may not provide nuanced information to assess the quality of the message. Experience shows that self-administered questionnaires may have low response rate, so it is important to distribute a good quantity to ensure a respectable number of returned answers. Also, the type of respondents willing to fill out questionnaires, may not reflect the intended population. It is therefore important to determine if the sample of effective answers is representative of the population.

Intercept interviews in central public spaces require deploying interviews in streets, markets, squares, hospitals, bus stations, fairs and other locations to ask people to

'pre-test' messages. The advantages of this method are the ability to gather input from a significant number of people in a relatively short period of time and to reach groups that reflect the intended population segments. It is a low-cost method to gather information. The interviews should be brief and offer multiple-choice answers to expedite the interview and data analysis. Since most of us are on-the-go, we are unlikely to have a significant amount of time. Open-ended questions therefore should be few, covering the following topics: understanding, relevance, credibility recall and motivation. Depending on the site, the programme may need to seek official permission. The number of interviews should depend on the complexity of the issue and responses. Typically, if a certain number of responses (between 30 and 40) give similar answers and clear patterns, that should be sufficient.

Focus group discussion is a method to gain insights into how a given group reacts to a certain topic, in this case, messages. The size should be between 6 and 10. They are moderated by someone with experience in the technique (and preferably the subject, as well) who facilitates questions and encourages respondents to engage in a comfortable and free-flowing conversation. The moderator should probe for reactions and thoughts that may necessarily be spontaneously volunteered by the participants. Focus groups are useful to identify reactions, questions, misperceptions and attitudes. In contrast to questionnaires and surveys, they provide more in-depth knowledge about the interaction between groups and messages. Participants should not know each other and nor should they be experts in the subject, but should reflect the intended population.

Gatekeeper Review is a technique used to testing conducted with informants who know the 'target' population and may provide valuable insights about how that population reacts to messages. They do not provide 'technical' assessments, but rather, offer ideas into the social, cultural, informational/, or educational aspects of the population that may (or may not) resonate with the message drafts. Here individual meetings or groups discussions with the gatekeeper can be used. Questions to be asked include: How do you think a specific group will react to this message? Are there any aspects of the message that are complex, sensitive, controversial and hard to understand? Are people's motivations sufficiently emphasised? What mistakes can be made? Typically, this method is helpful yet insufficient to test messages and formats and should be supplemented with data from other methods.

Representative testing involves generating a sample of people as closely representative of the entire population as one can get. This is ideally achieved through randomly sampling members. However, in practice, researchers aim to get a group that is not biased or skewed towards a demographic—for example, ensuring an equal distribution of men and women. Target population testing is required when the research calls for a demographic, wherein the sample is purposefully selected from the population.

To elaborate, suppose a message is to be modified and presented so as to cater to school children between the age of 8 and 12, testing methodologies will be used for a sample of exactly that demographic to gauge specific insights about their target audience.

An up-and-coming iterative approach to message testing is 'responsive feedback' or 'feedback loops'. This involves getting timely and actionable feedback on messages that have already been implemented in order to course-correct and optimise. Interventions informed by Responsive Feedback Mechanisms (RFMs) are:

1. Agile and flexible so that changes can be quickly captured based on feedback received
2. Adaptive to feedback
3. Iterative because one message will be subject to multiple rounds of feedback loops throughout implementation

Currently, RFMs have not been used much due to challenges such as inflexible implementation timelines, lack of adequate resources, limited skills amongst existing professionals to implement RFMs and expense. However, RFMs will increasingly become integral to the message testing process as there is a shift among development practitioners towards participatory, actionable and adaptive testing.

Increasingly, quantitative methods are being employed to test messaging at the concept stage rather than for fully developed rough drafts. For instance, advertising firms, television networks and other content providers such as film-makers are increasingly using techniques such as prediction markets, implicit testing and neuroscience-based methods to test hundreds of concepts before zeroing in on a few. These few are then developed into pilots or rough animatics to further field test with target audiences before the final message or content is developed.

Information gathered from these methods need to be used to refine and adjust messages in ways that reflect the concerns that were raised. It is also suggested that revised versions are tested to ensure they adequately address the problems identified in the original testing. In order to define the messages, it is necessary to assess whether they command attention; are clear, simple and direct; communicate benefits; are consistent; build trust/are embedded in local expectations and norms; and call to action with concrete, doable steps.

Questions for discussion

- What is the purpose of message testing?
- What are the key steps of message testing?
- What methodologies can be used for message testing? What are their comparative strengths and limitations?
- How are the findings from message testing used?

Reading list

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Anjali Monteiro. 1998 Freedom Run: The Torch Song from Doordarshan <http://gate.blogspot.in/2008/02/freedom-run-torch-song-from-doordarshan.html>

Learning activities

The learning activities should be aimed at developing the following competencies:

- What is the purpose of message testing?
- What methods can be used for message testing?
- What information should be gathered in the testing process?
- How is that information used?
- What aspects of messages should be verified once the testing data are incorporated and messages are adjusted?

Lectures, small group discussions/activities

Groups conduct message testing by assessing the accuracy and relevance of message. They should either choose existing messages from C4D programmes, or based on previous work, design messages with specific objective for public/stakeholders. After testing, produce recommendations or changes/adjustments based on the findings.

Unit assessment/evaluation methods

- In-class exercises
- Case study/scenario analysis and challenge
- Assignments: Oral and written presentations

MODULE 7A

UNIT 6

Material production

General introduction

The first step for material production is to develop a **creative brief** – a short description that summarises the information gathered in the previous steps of message design needed to guide the development of the materials. The same brief could be used for the production of various materials (print, broadcast, digital) if they deal with the same objectives and publics/stakeholders. Creative briefs are also common guides for action that result from dialogues and consensus among partners. Typically, creative briefs include the following sections: objectives/intended publics (including primary, secondary and tertiary); expected changes/obstacles; message (promise, support statement, call to action, impression); content and tone; and media mix.

The production of some materials (e.g. radio/television spots, comics) requires the elaboration of 'storyboard' which feature the core components of the story/messages. As discussed in message format section, storytelling is central to the way people communicate across cultures. Thus, telling stories/narratives may be compelling forms to put messages forward. They can be factual/fictional, include characters, drama, personal experience, well-known stories, interactive. They need to be designed with the intended public in mind and use written and visual language that is deemed appropriate. Typically, they should have limited number of ideas/concept, stimulate dialogue/reaction, feature culturally relevant themes/words.

Based on the 'creative briefs', the next step is to decide what materials are needed depending on the communication approaches and objectives previously selected. One key step here is to assess whether there are already materials that could be adapted based on the strategic needs of the programme as identified in the brief. Material adaptation may save time and resources. It is the process of modifying existing materials for various publics/stakeholders and objectives. Sometimes, parts of the existing materials (e.g. language, artwork) may be used/adapted as well as messages used in different contexts/cultures.

Based on the creative brief, it is necessary to select suitable materials. Materials include print (posters, pamphlet, comics, booklets, documents/reports), broadcasting spots (announcements), and merchandising (t-shirt, novelties, souvenirs) that can be

eventually produced in different physical materials or digitally (press releases, mobile reminders). The selection of materials depends on the communication approaches and population characteristics. Depending on the material selected (print, audio, video), different criteria need to be kept in mind. Print materials, for example, need to display the important points first; clear actionable points, minimal number of words, short words and sentences, use active voice, use images to reinforce/anchor words and viceversa.

The next step is to design and pre-produce mock-ups of materials for various channels/platforms. Material producers should produce drafts that should be considered for testing to ensure their strengths and weakness, relevance, suitability and ease of use/access. This is a particularly critical step given that material production can be costly. To avoid mistakes, it is important to test materials before final productions by using mock-ups and illustrative samples. Drafts should be as close as possible to the intended final version without expensive production costs. Partners would need to review and discuss mock-ups to decide which one/s should be moved to pre-production and testing. Depending on costs, more than one may be necessary to assess the strengths and limitations of various possibilities. Just like with message testing, after materials are designed, it is necessary to test them with the intended publics/audiences to ensure that they are relevant and appropriate. Here it is necessary to identify with whom the material drafts need to be tested, what methodologies should be used and testing plans and adjustments.

Questions for discussion

- What is the purpose of the creative brief? How are they related to material production?
- What are the components of the creative briefs?
- What are examples of adequate materials for selected publics/stakeholders and programmatic objectives?
- What are the different requirements for various materials/formats?

Reading list

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Case studies

Paul Suggett, How to Write a Creative Brief <http://advertising.about.com/od/tipoftheweek/ht/How-To-Write-A-Creative-Brief.htm>

Learning activities

The learning activities should be aimed at developing the following competencies:

- Identify components of creative briefs
- Understand how brief guided material production
- Produce creative brief
- Critical analysis of materials

Lectures, small group discussions/activities

1. Group analysis of creative brief to discuss whether it provides a comprehensive summary of necessary information for material production.
2. Group analysis of communication materials for a C4D programme. The exercise should be focused on 'reverse engineering'/'working backwards' planning process: intended publics (who is it for), expected actions and ways to overcome obstacles, message characteristics, tone, relevant platforms/channels. Groups present results of their deliberations and the class comments on their assessments.

Unit assesment/evaluation methods

- In-class exercises
- Case study/scenario analysis and challenge
- Assignments: Oral and written presentations

MODULE 7B

UNIT 1

Identify themes for dialogue/IPC

General introduction

Unlike informational approaches to message design that basically limit the role of community members to specific instances (such as formative research and message testing), community dialogue (CD) approaches to the identification of the themes for C4D are premised on the notions of participation, self-determination and local ownership. Messages are not designed by experts based on the data about publics/stakeholders' preferences and incentives with sporadic input from communities, but rather, they are defined as 'themes' that emerged during CD. There are no 'message experts', instead, communities themselves define the themes through a dialogic, critical process.

The purpose of CD is to provide spaces for democratic expression and social connectivity that build trust and respect. CD consists of regular forums that draw participants to exchange information, share experiences, identify problems and develop solutions to common concerns. What is unique about this approach is that it is aimed at eliciting ideas, promote listening and encouraging collective understanding of the situation. It is a way of building a sense of common learning and action towards common goals. This is why dialogue is not simply about assessing problems or expressing personal views and stories. It is a platform for reasoned conversations and action and finding points of contact among people and shared viewpoints. It is a mechanism for people to recognise and address their differences in order to move forward by building relationships and common goals.

The goal is to have 'safe' spaces for people to express their views, particularly those who are disempowered and are likely to feel comfortable communicating with others about sensitive matters. Dialogues could be tag to existing forms of collective conversations (e.g. workplaces, community talks in schools and clinics, youth clubs) and public spaces (parks, streets, markets), or in separate spaces with specific meeting times.

In summary, fostering spaces for communities to discuss their concerns is a powerful mechanism for bringing people together. Dialogues are more informal, open-ended and moderated discussions that can take place in various spaces such as markets, schools and offices. The purpose is to identify concerns and collective problem-solving.

Questions for discussion

- What are the principles of community dialogue?
- What are the indicators of success?
- What are the requirements for successful dialogue?
- Does community dialogue operate by consensus or simple majority? Why?
- What are potential problems for community dialogue? How can they be overcome?
- How does community dialogue contribute to the identification of suitable themes?

Reading list

Canada's Rural Partnership. Community Dialogue Adapted from Community Dialogue Toolkit www.rural.gc.ca

Gender-Based Violence Network. 1999. Community Dialogue Guide Men and Women Joining Hands to Prevent Violence and HIV/AIDS.

Holloway, David. 2004. A Practical Guide to Dialogue. The Community Dialogue Critical Issues Series: Volume Two.

Case studies

UNICEF 2010, Kyunki Jeena Isi ka naam hai, Ammaji Kehti Hain, Facilitator's Guidebook for Group Discussion, Facts for life videos series

Oken Jeet Sandham. Communitization of Institutions in Nagaland. http://www.e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news_section.opinions.Communitization_of_Institutions_in_Nagaland

Learning activities

The learning activities should be aimed at developing the following competencies:

- Identify the principles of community dialogue
- Understand how community dialogue contributes to theme identification
- Design community dialogue activities
- Analyse community dialogue proceedings
- Assess the uses of community dialogue for C4D

Lectures, small group discussions/activities

1. Groups will perform a 'role play' on community dialogues. They should identify a community and an issue, designate one or two moderators and conduct dialogue in front of the class. Then, the class will discuss the experience in terms of the principles of community dialogue and the identification of themes, as well as the performance of the moderator.
2. Group analysis of a case study of community dialogue to assess its strengths in terms of the identification of relevant themes.
3. Comparative analysis of informational approaches to message design and community dialogue and their applicability to a specific case. How would these two approaches go about the identification of 'messages' and 'themes' for C4D?

Unit assessment/evaluation methods

- In-class exercises
- Case study/scenario analysis
- Assignments: Oral and written presentations

MODULE 7B

UNIT 2

Develop IPC and other dialogue-based methods

General introduction

CD demands specific tools and techniques to facilitate conversations and foster critical skills to identify problems and solutions. Methods need to be sensitive to local communication preferences and language and be flexible to adapt to demands and requirements. For example, some tools may be valuable to energize and build trust among participants, spark conversations, discover information, promote consensus and move the dialogue towards conclusions and actionable points.

All methods have their strengths and limitations or biases. Therefore, it is important to understand when certain methods may be applicable and be aware of the type of information that they may produce. Visual tools such as mapping exercises, may be useful to identify specific sites, actions and resources. Transect walks allow for collective identification of issues and conditions that produce needs assessments. Communication networks offer insights into social networks for understanding when and how people talk about specific issues and the role of key influencers and opinion leaders.

CD methods require the participation of local facilitators who are deemed to be trusted and considered to have impartial voices by community members. They are trained on both conversational methods/moderation as well as specific technical matters to be able to guide/move the conversation. Moderators are not technical experts – rather, they are individuals who can ably steer the conversations, understand people’s concerns, integrate people’s views in the dialogue and create a pleasant and safe atmosphere for people to participate.

CD requires special materials that can be used to promote conversations, elicit opinions and reach agreements. Materials may include comic books, leaflets, fact sheets, posters, discussion cubes, cards and others. They may be designed with specific goals in mind, or can be more generic. Participatory design of the materials can be helpful as a previous step to the actual dialogue to assess suitable materials, images and words/phrases.

Typical approaches identify several steps for successful community dialogue.

- Recognise a problem. Here the purpose is to understand how problems are recognised, what prompts people to think that something needs public attention.
- Communicating concerns. What happens once someone raises questions or expresses concerns about problems – who gets involve? What are the channels of communication? Who defines something as a problem?
- Clarify perceptions and beliefs about concerns/problems. The purpose is to develop a common framework to understand/interpret the situation – What is happening? What are the causes? What are the various ways of making sense of the situation?
- Ensuring wide expression of views. It is important to ensure that multiples views are expressed to avoid problem definition that reflects particular, narrow concerns. Whose views need to be integrated? Whose voices are central? How is it possible to involve different community members?
- Scope of the problem. Community members should understand the scope, magnitude and urgency of the problem at stake.
- Envisioning solutions. The goal is to develop a common sense of shared future that address concerns/problems previously identified. What kind of solution/ community reflects widely shared beliefs and desires?
- Setting objectives. Communities define expectations and objectives based on common concerns, resources and priorities. It is important that the goals reflect wide expectations and demands and are sensitive to the broad needs and priorities already in place.
- Options for action. This step deals with identifying possible courses of action based on community resources and opportunities. What to do? Why? What are the alternatives? Why certain actions are best-suited given the goals and other circumstances?
- Consensus and plan for action. After options are identified, communities need to come together around actions that truly reflect their needs. It is important that selected actions are supported to ensure ownership and commitment across various sectors of the population. Actions need to be organised in time sequence and appropriately organised on the basis of priorities and other considerations.

Questions for discussion

- What are the methods used in community dialogue?
- What are their strengths in terms of the principles of community dialogue?
- How are they useful to define dialogue themes?
- What are the requirements for community dialogue moderators?
- What kind of knowledge and conversations can be promoted through the use of various methods?

Reading list

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Case studies

UNICEF. 2009. Field Notes: Community approaches to total sanitation. http://www.unicef.org/innovations/files/CATS_field_note.pdf

Learning activities

The learning activities should be aimed at developing the following competencies:

- Identify examples of methods used in community dialogue
- Understand the uses of various CD methods
- Use CD methods
- Analyse data produced by using different CD methods

Lectures, small group discussions/activities

1. Group review of data produced using various CD methods to determine the process of data gathering and analysis. Discuss how the data are used for assessing situations/problems and identifying courses of action.
2. Present different scenarios of community dialogue that require the use of various methods (e.g. members reluctant to participate/talk/address specific issues/identify causes and responsibilities) and discuss how moderators should proceed.
3. Compare methodologies used in case studies (community-led total sanitation) to understand differences across methods and their usefulness in different settings.

Unit assessment/evaluation methods

- In-class exercises
- Case study/scenario analysis
- Assignments: Oral and written presentations

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