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MATERIAL DESIGN MADE SIMPLE



The ABC's of Intervention Material Design  
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There are different forms of communication materials that can be used to convey information and messages to the community. These are in three broad categories

### 1. Print communications

These are materials that use print media and include newspapers, pens, murals, caps, mugs, stickers, comic sheets, newsletters, pamphlets, scarves, umbrellas, t-shirts, picture codes, arm bands, story boards, bags, bandanas, name tags, flyers, banners, bags, leaflets, key holders and posters. These materials can be developed both for literate and low literate communities.

### 2. Electronic communications

In this strategy electronic media is used to communicate with others through the internet/computers, radio/radio call, video, televisions, text messages, neon signs, transparency slides, films, neon signs, fax and telegraphs. Electronic communication can be expensive and should be carefully packaged to get value for money.

### 3. Popular communications

Popular communications involve direct interaction with people and include things like dramas, community dialogues, songs and community meetings. This can be effective for engaging ordinary community members and has the advantage of flexibility.

The different communication styles imply that different methods can be used for different intended audiences, although these can as well be used concurrently. Using different methods for different groups or communicating in different forms helps reinforce the issues being raised. People were more likely to reflect on an issue if they repeatedly got exposed to it from various sources.

The process of designing materials for an intervention involves a number of steps that are geared toward the development of a concept, product, dispersal mechanism and appropriately matched channels. The purpose of this guide is to engage the body of steps into a methodology that can be easily replicated and followed in future. The process involves a number of basic segments that ensure the process is logical and brings about the desired outcomes.

Research of the initial target group is a key component of the material design process. It is critical to the process to have a clearly defined target group to start with. There must be an understanding of the age, ethnic composition, norms, language, beliefs and living situations that are an everyday reality for the intended recipients of the materials.

The information provided would aid in the shaping of an effective profile of the target group to give the material context and ensure that it is relevant to the population. A



review of most recent research done on the target group usually provides the aforementioned information in clear and easy to understand terms. Such research usually also gives the issues that are pertinent to the target group and provides direction on what can be targeted in the material to be designed.

Gathering data should also include community consultations and focus groups where possible so as to gather additional data and also give some context to the information that would have been in research documents. There may be important nuances that are gathered within the consultation such as key aspirations of the target population that can be used in materials to give greater connectivity with the target group when rendered.

The intent of the material is the next important step that must be taken. It is key beforehand to know the intention of the materials to be developed. The intention can vary depending on the nature and dimensions of the intervention under consideration. Material can be used to do any number of the following:

- Sensitize on an issue by bringing facts and stats to the fore
- Provide support for face to face and interpersonal communication as interaction pieces used in sessions

- Be summative and informative as content to support when left with the target group after interactions
- Provide the impetus for behavior modification
- Provide credibility support for interventions by providing official sanction from a necessary entity
- Give instructions that are part of an emergency response mechanism
- Provide reinforcement to skill building concepts

Once determined, the intention of the material gives guidance on the format the necessary material will take. The use of the material will guide the choice of media and the rendering of the final output. The use of audio-visual media, large posters, small posters, hand outs or interactive card and board based activity centered materials are decided based on the intent and desired impact.

Next on the agenda will be the use of the issues and or behavior to be addressed in the material. It is key to note that the topics to be dealt with should be clearly outlined and stated to ensure that there is no confusion regarding what they are. The topics to be dealt with in the materials need to be prioritized to ensure that the urgent ones are stated and the secondary ones that need less focus or that can be dealt with as secondary issues are separated.



The importance of this measure becomes more apparent as the budget allocated for material production and the data gathered during research review and community collaboration are gelled further. There may be issues that are popularly on the lips of some, but upon further analysis may not prove to be real or immediately pertinent to the wellbeing of the target group.

The development of key messages is the next step in the process. The key messages will be used to ensure that there is a take home point to any material designed within the context of the intervention. The determination of which key messages best suit the media and distribution channel of the material also influence if a part of the message will be the use of a slogan or Catch phrase. The slogan or catch phrase is used to tie the various messages within an intervention together, since it is quite common to produce a number of pieces of material that are a part of the same campaign or intervention. The harmonization of the materials is a part of ensuring that the enabling environment that is a part of especially Behavior Change Communication methodologies is supported by addressing different messages or skill building needs under a single umbrella.

When designing materials under the ambit of BCC it is important to keep in mind the creation of the enabling environment. The enabling environment composes of: skill, knowledge and support. Materials must be in keeping with these principles at all times. This is done by the avoidance of judgmental terms and language that can discriminate against target group members. The maintenance of this environment is also done by the use of positive messages with an invitation to the individual or group to do what they can.

Messages on HIV testing like 'Knowing your status helps to prepare, do it for yourself, your future and your family', combine the idea of testing being a worthwhile activity with the knowledge that for his target population family preservation is of paramount importance. It utilizes positive reinforcement of the desired behavior and places the impetus within an invitation to do it for the listed reasons.

The use of images and renderings must be cautiously undertaken. If there are issues of identifying people with a negative then using faces of people in a community may not be the best thing. Photographs of rear views or upper perspectives that show the actions or convey the scene without showing faces would then be more appropriate. When using images it is important to note that images must reflect the people they are targeting and their culture. Without this there will be a failure to connect with the target group and the message would have been lost.



