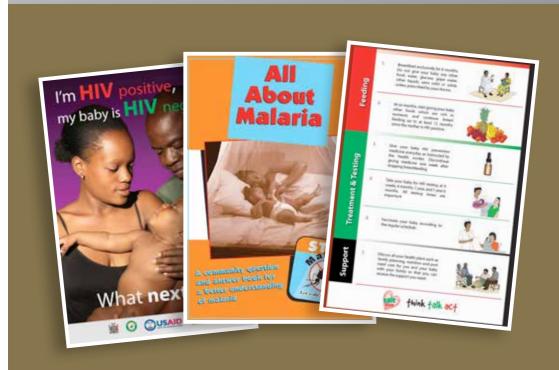**Ministry of Health**

GUIDELINES

FOR PRETESTING AND EVALUATING COMMUNICATION MATERIALS

INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Health (MoH), National AIDS Council (NAC) and National Malaria Control Centre (NMCC) in partnership with Communications Support for Health (CSH) has prepared a set of guidelines for use by partner organizations and programs that are involved in planning, implementing, and evaluating health communications in Zambia.

Regardless of the overall campaign objective and complexity, success of a campaign can be defined by how successful it is communicating the right messages to the right target audience at the right time. Much of this depends on the communication materials. These guidelines provide users with a brief overview of how to go about pretesting and evaluating communication materials, but users should also use their own experiences and judgment to make the best decisions to create the most impact and benefit for the Zambian population.

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

1. To guide the process of pretesting health communication materials; and
2. To guide the process of evaluating communication materials.

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HOW TO USE THE GUIDELINES

The following sections give the user an insight of each guideline, what needs to be done and how to use it. It is advised that the users take time to familiarize themselves with the guidelines before using them.

PRE-TESTING

Pre-testing, sometimes called field testing, helps project staff know whether the intended audience understands the key message(s) and accepts the draft materials before they are produced in final form. In pre-testing, an interviewer shows the draft materials to members of the intended audience and asks open-ended questions to learn if the message is well understood and acceptable -- in sum, if it works.

The objectives of pre-testing include measuring all of the following:
1. Comprehension - clarity of content and presentation
2. Attractiveness - elements that make people want to see/hear the material
3. Acceptance - audience feels they can accept it – not offensive, is believable, does not trigger disagreement
4. Involvement- audience can identify with the materials and recognizes that message is meant for them
5. Call to action- most materials asks, motivates or induces audience to carry out a particular action.

Pretesting process should more or less follow the following steps:
1. Define your sample by characteristics (same group characteristics [e.g. ethnic group, region, etc.], same individual characteristics [e.g. age, number of kids, etc.], and convenience sample). You should work closely with the agency on making this decision.
2. Determine how many people you are going to pre-test with (complexity of the material, complexity of the problem, number of audience segments, number of geographic regions, etc.). You should work closely with the agency on making this decision.
3. Determine the percentage of the pre-testing participants whom you expect to understand the key.
4. Conduct the actual pretest in the field.

After the actual pretest, then communicators may judge how well the pre-test feedback could be used to improve the material to ensure maximum impact on the targets audience.

GUIDE FOR PRE-TESTING IEC/BCC MATERIALS

Name of Interviewer: _____ Date of Interview: _____

Materials being pretested: _____
_____

Province: _____ District: _____ Sex of Respondent: _____

Urban/Peri Urban/Rural _____

LANGUAGE FOR INTERVIEW AND FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Good morning/afternoon. My name is _____ and I will be your moderator for this **focus group discussion.** I work for the MOH/NAC/NMCC/ _____based in Lusaka.
If asked (*explain about your organization and its objectives)*: I am a trained **focus group moderator** and I would like to hear your honest opinions about the topics we will discuss today.
There is no right or wrong answer to the questions I'm going to ask. Please just relax and enjoy the discussion.
Please keep in mind that your participation in this discussion is completely voluntary. If for any reason you wish to leave the discussion, you may do so.
We're doing this as part of a project to develop posters and brochures. I am accompanied by_____ who will be responsible for note taking. Other project staff from MOH/NAC/NMCC/ _____ , will also be in the room observing the **focus group discussion.** Kindly state whether it is okay to continue with the discussion.

RULES OR GUIDELINES
1. You have been invited here to offer your views and opinions.
2. Again, there are no rights or wrong answers and its okay to be critical. I want to hear your views and opinions about whether you like or dislike something you see or hear.
3. There will be observers.
4. You may excuse yourself from the conversation at any time for any reason.
5. Although this session will be audio taped, it will remain confidential and will ONLY be used to capture everything that is being said today, for the purpose of the report to our client. So feel free to say exactly what is on your mind as nothing will be attributed to any particular person in our report.
6. Lastly, please turn off the ringers on your cell phones.

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS
1. Everyone's participation is important.
2. Please speak one at a time and avoid side conversations.
3. Please use any of your names that you comfortable with only during the discussion.
4. Respect each other's opinions.

Any questions before we start?

SECTION 1: PRETESTING PRINT MATERIALS

IMAGE TESTING

1. Please tell me what you see in this image. What does this look like to you?
2. What message do you think the illustration is trying to give?
3. Do you think this message is appropriate?
4. Do you think this the message being communicated can be implemented or adopted into a behavior?
5. What do you (a) like or (b) dislike about the messages in the illustration? What do you think about the picture / illustration?
6. What improvements can be made to make the picture or illustration to communicate the message better?

TESTING THE TEXT PRINT MATERIAL

(Let the respondents read the text and note any words they may find difficult to read)

1. Please state in your own words what they have just read.
2. Would you explain what the text is saying?
3. Are there any words you do not understand in the text?
4. If there are words you do not understand, explain what the word was meant to say and ask them to recommend substitute words
5. Is there anything in the message that you or your neighbors in this community would like to say differently?
6. (If yes, ask for the phrase or wording)
7. Ask the respondent(s) whether the text and the picture complement each other

MESSAGE TESTING (IMPRESSIONS):

1. How would you sum up in just a few words your first impression of this message? Do you like it? Not like it? What makes you say that?
2. What are your reactions to this message?
   - How does it make you feel? Is there anything positive about the message?
   - What positive images do you associate with "[INSERT message/phrase]?"
   - Anything negative?
   - What negative images do you associate with "[INSERT message/phrase]"?
3. Is this an appealing message? What makes the message appealing or unappealing?
4. Was this a new idea or something that you've heard before?
5. Do you strongly agree with any part of this message? If so, what?
6. Do you strongly disagree with anything in this message? If so, what?
7. Is this message believable or not? Why or why not?
8. What additional information would you need in order to more strongly believe this message?

CONTENT AND WORDING:

1. Do you like the way the message is written? [Probe: tone, language/style, etc.] Is the message easy to read?
2. How could the wording of this message be improved?
3. Is there anything you want to know that this item does not tell you? What?
4. If you saw something with this message, would the idea get your attention? Why or why not?

5. Are there any words or phrases here that you think are especially attention-getting or appealing? Why?
6. Are there any words or phrases that bother you or that you think should be said differently? Why?
7. Is there a way to say this differently that would make you personally more likely to notice and think about the message? How?
8. Is there a way to say this differently that would make you personally more likely to take the action recommended in the message? How?
9. Thinking back to the information being conveyed, is there anything else you would add? If yes what?

AUDIENCE AND PERSONAL RELEVANCE:

1. Who would you say they are trying to reach? Does it seem like this message is talking to you, and people like you? Or someone else?
2. What in the message suggested it was talking to you and people like you or someone else?
3. Do you see yourself doing this...or something like it? Why/why not?
4. Who do you believe would benefit most from [insert health behavior]?

UNDERSTANDING:

1. What is the main idea that this message is trying to get across, in your own words?
2. How well do you think the main ideas come across?
3. Is the message trying to get people to do something? What action would the message prompt you to take? Were there any words that were unusual or unfamiliar? Which ones and why?

4. What other words can be used in place of the current words?
5. Is there anything confusing, unclear, or hard to understand? What and why?
6. In your opinion, are the materials saying or suggesting that you must do something? If yes, what?
7. Would you be willing to follow the advice given? Why/Why not?
8. What would cause you to follow the message you have just seen and read (Probe: is there something that would discourage them).
9. Have you seen a material with the same message before? If yes, have you been able to follow any of the advice given in the material? If yes, why? If not, why not? (Probe).
10. Is the message appropriate for this community? Why or why not?
11. Who do you think is the target audience for this message? Explain
12. What changes can be made to improve the message?
13. Is there anything in the message which you think may not be true? (if the response is yes, probe to get details)
14. Do you feel the message contains anything (word or phrase) that might upset or offend people in this community (if the answer is yes, probe to get what is offensive or upsetting)
15. Is there anything in the message which you would like to say or show differently (Ask them to say it if applicable).

SECTION2: PRETESTING SPOTS (RADIO/TV/VIDEO)

Preamble: I am now going to play some spots that will be aired on the radio or TV and based on the spot/s will ask you questions about them.

Pre testing the spot *(Play the radio or TV spot and let the respondent(s) listen and watch the spot in full)*

1. Ask the respondent(s) what message was being transmitted by the spot
2. Ask the respondent(s) for any words in the message whose meaning they did not understand. If there are unclear words, identify the words and ask the respondents what they think the words mean. (If necessary, tell the respondent what was meant by the words and ask for what words they suggest should be used as a better substitute that will be generally understood).
3. Ask the respondent if there is anything in the message that they or other people in neighborhood would say differently?(If yes, ask for the phrase or wording)
4. Ask the respondents whether it would be easier to understand the message if there were pictures or drawings
5. Ask the respondent if there is anything in the message which they think is not true(probe to get details if the response is yes)
6. Ask the respondent if they feel the message said anything that might upset or offend people(if the answer is yes, probe to get what is offensive or upsetting)
7. Ask the respondents what they think this message is asking them to do? (probe their willingness to follow the message)
8. Ask the respondent(s) what they liked most about the message

9. Ask the respondent(s) what would encourage them to follow the message they have just heard(Probe if there is something that would discourage them)
10. Ask the respondents to whom they think this message is directed?
11. Ask if spot says or suggest that they must do something? If yes, what?
12. Ask if they would be willing to follow the advice given? Why/Why not?
13. (For those who have seen the spot before) Have you been able to follow any of the advice given in the spot? If yes, why? If not, why not?
14. Ask the respondent(s) if the message is appropriate for the community
15. Ask the respondent(s) if there is anything in the message which they would say differently (Ask them to say it if applicable).
16. How would you gauge the quality of the radio program in terms of sound (volume) and words spoken?
17. For radio spots, ask the respondent(s) whether the sound level (volume) acceptable
18. For TV spots, ask the respondent(s) whether the sound level (volume) is acceptable? Ask whether the picture is good.
19. Ask the respondent(s) how they would rate the duration of the spot (Probe if too long, too short or just right).
20. Ask the respondents if they have any further questions/observations.

Lessons Learned by the interviewer and/or Suggestions by the respondents

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PRETESTING OBSERVATION GUIDE

If you are watching someone doing individual pretesting, you should observe if the person is or is not doing the actions in the following list. After the pre-testing interview is completed, give feedback to the interviewer so he or she may improve their interviewing technique in the future. Put an "X" in the Yes or No column.

OBSERVATIONS	YES	NO
SITUATION		
Is only one person being interviewed at a time? (Discourage on-lookers)		
Is the pretest situation as close as possible to the real situation in which the material will be used?		
Does the person(s) interviewed fit the profile of the intended audience?		
Is the person a good representative of the intended audience? That is, should not be biased for any reason?		
INITITATING THE INTERVIEW		
Did the interviewer greet the person/s and make them comfortable?		
Did the interviewer explain to the person that he/she is not the expert and that he /she needs help from the audiennce?		
Did the interviewer explain that this is not a test?		
Did the interviewer explain the purpose of the interview?		
Did the interviewer explain how long the interview will take?		
Did the interviewer ask for the person's agreement to participate without pressuring them?		
THE INTERVIEW (general)		
Did the interviewer speak slowly and clearly enough for people to understand?		
Did the interviewer know the questions well enough to avoid reading them?		
Did the interviewer use appropriate language and vocabulary to ensure easy understanding?		
Did the interviewer verify if the person understood the questions correctly?		
Did the interviewer avoid reacting to the responses – either verbally or through body language – in a way that showed agreement or disagreement with the responses?		
Did the interviewer ask open ended questions?		
Did the interviewer avoid asking leading questions?		

	YES	NO
Did the interviewer ask appropriate clarifying or follow-up questions when a response was not clear?		
Did the interviewer ask closed ended questions when a brief reply was necessary?		
Did the interviewer ask one question at a time?		
Did the interviewer make supportive comments (like, "very good," "you are doing a fine job," "this is a great observation," etc.)		
Did the interviewer take accurate and legible notes or use a recorder?		
PRINT MATERIALS		
Did the interviewer get feedback on the visuals (image/illustration)first without the text?		
After reviewing the visuals (image/illustration), did the interviewer ask the participant to read the text and collect feedback on text comprehension?		
Did the interviewer collect feedback on message concurrence between the text and visuals?		
Did the visuals enhance understanding of the text?		
THE RADIO /TV SPOT		
Did the interviewer ask the respondent(s) what message(s) were transmitted by the spot?		
Did interviewer get feed back on any words in the message(s) whose meaning was not understood?		
Did interviewer find out if the message(s) was appropriate for their community?		
Did the interviewer ask the respondent(s) whether the sound level was acceptable?		
Did the interviewer ask the respondent(s) whether the pictures were acceptable? (for TV spot)		
Did the interviewer ask respondent(s) how they would rate the duration of the spot?		
CLOSING AND IN GENERAL		
Was the interviewer professional yet friendly?		
Did the interviewer thank the person/s sufficiently, reiterating the importance of their opinion and input to the program?		

STANDARDS GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATING IEC/BCC MATERIALS

Parts 1, 2, and 3 address the context of the material and the development process. Part 4 addresses the physical properties of the material.

PART 1:
INTRODUCTION

If there was formative research, what was learned about audiences, feasible practices, supports and motivations, and barriers and resistances (external/practical and internal/psychological impediments to carrying out the desirable practices)? What was learned about the role of communication vis a vis other program actions (improving services, products, policies, community action, etc.) that are needed to support the desired practices?

Of course, if no formative research was conducted, this cannot be remedied at the point where the materials are already designed. It should simply be recommended that they do formative research the next time!

PART 2:
THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION MATERIALS AND ACTIVITIES

It would be very useful to have a brief overview of all communication activities and what their roles are. The format can vary, but it should include clearly defined target audience/participant group segments, the actions/practices they hope that each material will support, and the psychological/practical role(s) of each material (to provide scientific information, to provide practical/logistical information, to stimulate reflection/problem-solving, to remind, to motivate, to teach skills, etc.). It should also show exactly WHO will use the material, WHERE, and HOW, and if there is a good plan for getting the materials in a timely fashion to the desired people and places.

If the above information is not available for the materials being reviewed, it is suggested you meet with the designers or producers and try to obtain this information verbally.

It is also important to consider whether or not the mix of materials is appropriate given the communication needs, audiences, budget, etc. of the campaign.

PART 3:
DETAILED PLANS FOR EACH SPECIFIC ITEM

The detailed plans for each specific item include the practical aspects of the material (size, type of paper, etc.), the same information in Part 2, plus the creative considerations. Ideally, all of this is written down in a creative brief, but if not, you can meet with the designers to see if they can provide this information verbally.

PART 4:
CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING IEC/BCC MATERIALS

Most aspects of the material itself are things that should have been thoroughly examined in pre-testing. Verify that each item was pre-tested, and if so, ask to see the pre-test report. Then you may judge how well the pre-test feedback was used to improve the material.

One aspect that may not come out in the pre-testing is the scientific accuracy of the information in the material. This may not always be an obvious thing to detect as it is perfectly appropriate to simplify complex scientific information for the general public. However, the material does need to be accurate, and perhaps most importantly the message should AVOID OVERPROMISING the benefits of following the advice in the material. For example, a product about vitamin-A should never promise that "your child will be healthy if he or she takes vitamin-A drops every 6 months." This is not a valid promise and has ethical implications which could lead to the organization losing credibility when the promise does not come true.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA – CONSIDERATIONS

Parts 1, 2, and 3 address the context of the material and the development process. Part 4 addresses the physical properties of the material.

Identification
a. Does the message seem relevant to the lives of the target audience?
b. Are signs, symbols, language used, and items in pictures relevant to the audience's surroundings?
c. Is the presentation style of the messages appropriate to the audience's preferences? For example, rational versus emotional approach, serious versus light tone.

Comprehension
a. Is the message understandable to its intended audience?
   i. What message is conveyed in the product?
   ii. Does the language (written or spoken) convey the message clearly?
   iii. Are there any words or phrases that might confuse?
   iv. Do the images convey the message?
   v. Are there visual or oral elements that may distract people from the main message?
   vi. Is it grammatically correct?
b. Is the message accurate?

Clarity
a. Are messages simple? Contain as little scientific and technical terms as possible?
b. Do messages state explicitly the action that audiences should take?

c. Do the visual aids, such as photographs and illustrations, reinforce messages to help the audience understand and remember the messages?

Acceptability
a. Are the messages acceptable?
b. Are sensitive and controversial messages presented in ways that do not alienate the audience?
c. Are the messages, colors, pictures, music, presentation, language and format appealing and culturally acceptable?

Motivation
a. Does the message move people to act?
b. Are the desired actions clear?
c. Are the sources of messages believable/authentic?
d. Is the advice feasible for most of the audience to carry out? If there are significant barriers, does this or another material help people address them?

Attractiveness (how well will the material engage its audience?)
a. Is the material attractive to the audience?
b. Do messages stand out and draw the audience's attention?
c. Will the material be enjoyable to the audience? Is it culturally interesting, or otherwise engaging?
d. Is it memorable?

Gender Sensitivity
a. Do messages address inequitable gender roles or stereotypes?
b. Do messages include positive role models?

c. Are the messages, materials, activities appropriate for the needs and circumstances of both women and men? In particular, they consider differences in workload, access to information and services, and mobility?

Production Quality
a. Is the quality of the material acceptable?
   i. Audio Material (radio, music, CDs):
      1. Are the sounds clear?
      2. Are the words spoken too fast? Too slow? Just right?
      3. Is the sound level adequate?
      4. Is the spot too long? Too short? Just right?
   ii. Print Material (posters, fliers, T-shirts, manuals, umbrellas, carrier bags, etc.):
      1. Is the quality of the printing acceptable (clear, sharp, correct colors, etc.)?
      2. Is the formatting/layout appropriate?
      3. Is the paper stock (or other material, e.g. bags, key chains, vinyl signs, t-shirts, etc.) adequate?
      4. Was the correct format selected (e.g. poster vs. flier vs. sticker, etc.)
   iii. Theater (At a minimum, a script should be provided. If possible an audio/video version of the production as well):
      1. Are the key message(s) conveyed clearly?
      2. Are the key messages accurate?
      3. Are the costumes, setting, props, sound effects, and music appropriate?

      4. Is the production too long? Too short? Just right?
      5. Is there a discussion guide to be used at end of the drama?
   iv. TV/Video Materials:
      1. Are the key message(s) conveyed clearly?
      2. Are the key messages accurate?
      3. Are the costumes, setting, props, sound effects, and music appropriate?
      4. Is the quality of the picture adequate?
      5. Is the sound level adequate?
      6. Are the sounds clear?
      7. Is the production too long? Too short? Just right?

b. Branding:
   v. Are the necessary logos on the material?
   vi. Is the correct version of the logo being used?
   vii. Are the logos placed appropriately?
   viii. Are the logos sized appropriately?

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