

# MeTA Communication Toolkit:

## How to assess, produce and disseminate print materials

---

Vast sums of money are spent every year on producing print materials about a wide range of topics on access to medicines and health care. A large proportion of that spending may be wasted, unless some basic criteria are followed. The checklist below provides 12 questions that can help you to assess print materials.

1. Is it clear who the material is for? (intended audience)
2. Is it clear what problem it is trying to solve or address?
3. Is the information clearly presented?
4. Is it easy to understand?
5. Is it relevant to the target audience?
6. Is the quality good?
7. Is it visually interesting? (design, layout)
8. Can you identify the key message or main point easily?
9. Do you trust the information (is it from a credible source?)
10. Is this relevant for use in your situation?
11. Could you adapt it for use in your situation?
12. What would help to improve this material?

Remember, print materials on their own are rarely effective at changing behaviour or influencing policy. Evidence shows that combining different communication approaches is the most effective way of communicating.

### Pre-testing

Pre-testing is an essential step in the development of any communication intervention. Pre-testing serves two main purposes. It tests draft materials for recognition, acceptability, familiarity and relevance among the intended audience. It also opens a dialogue with the individuals and groups for which the material is being developed, and often gives the pre-tester new knowledge.

Experience shows that pre-testing actually saves time and money. Projects that skip this step often end up with communication material that does not appeal to the intended audience or does not match its views on the problem. That results in wasted resources and time, and can have negative health impacts.

Pre-testing assesses:

- **Recognition:** Have the materials been understood? (Are the contents perceived the way they were intended?)
- **Familiarity and relevance:** Is the problem and situation known to and relevant for the audience? (Do they recognise the personalities and situations and identify with them?)
- **Acceptability:** Are the materials acceptable to the audience? (Is there anything offensive in them? What helps make the material more acceptable from a social, cultural and economic perspective?)

### Production and dissemination

Production and printing processes need careful management. The way the production process is managed will have a significant impact on the quality of the materials, which affects how successful it will be in communicating the necessary information. Some key questions to consider in producing a material are contained in the box below.

#### Key questions about producing print materials

1. Who is responsible for managing the whole production process?
2. Who is responsible for each of the individual tasks, such as design, pre-testing, proof reading, translation if necessary, liaison with printers, and so on?
3. Do you need to obtain permission or approval from anyone before producing materials, for example, permission to reproduce illustrations, logos or particular content?
4. Have you prepared appropriate briefs for any work being done externally? Who is best placed to develop any briefs needed, and to follow up on them to ensure instructions are understood, and followed?
5. Can you produce the materials yourself, or do you need to contract a design and/or print company to do the work?
6. How will you select a printer? Have you obtained quotations and samples of work from more than one printer?
7. What budget is available for printing?
8. What size and quality of paper/material will be used?

It is important to make sure that the material reaches its intended audience. You should have given some thought to dissemination at the planning stage and timing is important. If dissemination takes too long the material might become out of date and lose its value. Without good planning, you might lose good opportunities to promote the material and the issues it raises. The box below sets out some key questions that will help you in planning the distribution of print materials.

## Key questions about disseminating print materials

1. Do you have a dissemination plan and budget?
2. Who will manage the dissemination of the material?
3. How will you publicise the material?
4. How can you ensure that the material and messages reach the intended audience at an appropriate place and time?
5. How and when will the materials be distributed?
6. Can you make use of existing dissemination routes and channels?
7. Do you need to develop a mailing list? How will you do this?
8. Can you combine a print and electronic version and use e-mail as a way of distributing an electronic version of a print material?
9. Can you link the launch/material dissemination with broader local, national or international events or campaigns?
10. Which 'gatekeepers' to the intended audience should you collaborate with? Have you made personal contact with intermediaries and any collaborating individuals and organisations?
11. Do those distributing the material need training, support or follow-up to ensure they do it effectively? Do recipients of the resource need training or support to understand and use it effectively? Would any follow-up be useful?
12. What different factors might affect the dissemination of the material (for example institutional routines, professional biases/opinions and personal contacts)? How could you deal with any potentially negative factors?
13. Have you considered and catered for potential consequences of the material, for example an increase in demand for particular health services or for access to particular medicines?
14. How could you use the media and other potential opportunities to promote the material?

### Sources:

Healthlink Worldwide 2009. *Communication Toolkit*

Healthlink Worldwide 2003. *Quest manual: your guide to developing effective health communications*. London: Healthlink Worldwide <http://www.healthlink.org.uk/resources/quest.html>

Chetley, A. et al. 2007. *How to improve the use of medicines by consumers*. Geneva: World Health Organization [http://www.who.int/medicines/publications/WHO\\_PSM\\_PAR\\_2007.2.pdf](http://www.who.int/medicines/publications/WHO_PSM_PAR_2007.2.pdf)

Fisher, J. Odhiambo, F & Cotton, A. 2003. *Spreading the word further: Guidelines for disseminating development research*. Loughborough: Water, Engineering and Development Centre (WEDC) [www.lboro.ac.uk/wedc/publications/](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/wedc/publications/)