

Brief 1: Key communication recommendations

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL TO ACCOMPANY CHAPTER 6, COMMUNICATION

Often the importance of communication activities is underestimated and undervalued by countries, implementing partners and donors. When there is a shortage of funds for implementation of all activities, it is often activities related to communication that are first reduced in an effort to work within the existing budget. Equally often, countries are not collecting communication-specific data to give an evidence base for future planning and are recycling communication plans and messages from previous routine and campaign ITN distribution without considering what could be improved to achieve higher coverage and use. Additionally, changes in disease burden, as well as improvements in communication infrastructure, are happening in most countries and communication planning is often not being updated to take these into account.

Campaigns implemented to date have led to clear lessons learned. Based on these, recommendations for communication activities include:

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1. Planning and budgeting

**SEE BRIEF 2:
PLANNING AND BUDGETING
COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES**

- The importance of appropriate communication activities at all phases of the campaign should not be underestimated and sufficient funding must be included in the budget.
- The NMCP/NMEP should establish a coordination structure for all participating partners. At a meeting of all communication partners, the reach, activities and scope of all should be mapped to maximize resources and avoid duplication of effort as well as identify any gaps.
- A communication subcommittee should be set up early in the planning process and its terms of reference agreed. Members of the subcommittee can split up into smaller technical working groups focusing on specific aspects of the communication strategy (e.g. development of the creative brief or the visual materials) where there is sufficient membership. A timeline, integrated into the overall campaign implementation timeline, and detailing roles and responsibilities, should be agreed.
- The communication subcommittee should convene a workshop with representatives from all communication partners to share initial ideas about communication planning as well as to review data, research and available information, including the previous campaign report, about channels and/or messages that have worked or not worked in the past. The workshop should be used to discuss a branding strategy and to develop a comprehensive communication plan with its objectives defined and clearly aligned with the overall campaign objectives. Progress against objectives should be able to be verified through supervision and monitoring data.

- The communication sections of the campaign plan of action should contain information on the messaging for each phase of the campaign, designed to reach the widest audience possible. For this, target audiences and key population groups need to be identified. Channels for dissemination of messages should be decided based on the information collected, target audiences, special populations, and any barriers to ITN take-up identified. Both technical and motivational messages are required and communication messages must take into account rural and urban differences. Messages should be pre-tested.
- A brand for the campaign may need to be designed and materials included in the budget and produced early enough. Materials will include visibility items, such as aprons, caps and t-shirts. The wearing of visibility materials by campaign personnel will project their authority.

**SEE BRIEF 5:
BRANDING AND PROMOTING
SOCIAL NORMS**

- Advocacy is critical throughout all phases of the campaign. Advocacy packages should be produced early and key audiences for advocacy activities identified.

**SEE BRIEF 4:
PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT**

**SEE BRIEF 7:
DEVELOPMENT OF ADVOCACY
EVENTS AND MATERIALS**

- Media engagement is vital. Television, radio, newspapers, magazines, social media, SMS messaging, etc. can all be useful to publicize the campaign brand.

**SEE BRIEF 6:
MEDIA ENGAGEMENT**

Launch events can also serve to give publicity to the campaign and to reinforce the main messages and these should be well-publicized. The timing of mass media communication must be carefully considered.

- Social mobilization and behaviour change communication (SBCC) may include a variety of activities. It is necessary to know in advance what kind of activity is likely to have the highest impact for the target audience(s), and is most effective in getting the messages across. All opportunities for SBCC should be taken, such as during household registration, at distribution points and post-distribution. Staff must be well trained on the key messages.

**SEE BRIEF 5:
BRANDING AND PROMOTING
SOCIAL NORMS**

**SEE BRIEF 9:
PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING
SOCIAL MOBILIZATION AND BEHAVIOUR
CHANGE COMMUNICATION**

It is important to identify potential risks in communication, such as rumours or misinformation, and to plan for mitigation of those risks.

- Supervision and monitoring tools should be developed for each phase of the campaign and should include all communication activities. The training of supervisors and monitors should be part of the initial communication planning.

- Microplanning is a vital activity in planning and communication staff must be adequately represented at the microplanning workshops. See [Microplanning guidelines](http://allianceformalariaprevention.com/amp-tools/tools-resources/) (allianceformalariaprevention.com/amp-tools/tools-resources/).
- It is critical that the communication subcommittee plays an active role during the development of the training materials as well as the data collection tools to ensure that appropriate communication questions are included on supervision and monitoring checklists. The training should include hands-on practice with the job aids that will be provided to campaign personnel.
- Supervision and monitoring of communication activities during each phase of the campaign should receive sufficient focus, including monitoring of broadcasts.
- Wrap-up meetings should be held to get a full picture of lessons learned and to obtain recommendations for future activities.
- Sufficient budget for all communication activities is vital. Countries are encouraged to generate an evidence base for the communication activities planned and implemented during campaigns in order to advocate for changes (increases) to the communication budget. Note that social mobilization costs in urban settings may be higher than in other areas, and adequate funding is required.

**SEE BRIEF 8:
SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS OF SOCIAL
MOBILIZATION IN URBAN AREAS**

- In countries where the operating environment is extremely complex (for example where there is ongoing conflict), communication costs are also likely to be higher. Where a full campaign communication plan cannot be funded, it will be important to undertake focused resource mobilization to generate sufficient resources and, where needed, to prioritize activities with maximum reach.

See: [Operational guidance for ITNs in complex operating environments](#).

2. Existing research

**SEE BRIEF 3:
USING RESEARCH AND DATA TO PLAN
EFFECTIVE SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR
CHANGE COMMUNICATION**

- Existing research from national surveys, ITN routine distribution data, mass distribution data, survey reports, and published and grey literature can be used to inform the communication plan. The NMCP/NMEP should establish a repository of such data.
- The malaria indicator survey (MIS) and demographic health survey (DHS) are conducted every three to five years, and can provide valuable information on household ownership and access to ITNs and their use, although the information may be outdated if much time has passed since the surveys were carried out. The [ITN Access and Use report](#), updated regularly, is another useful resource, showing access and use trends over time.
- Data coming from the routine health system can give valuable information on access and use of ITNs.
- ITN distribution and survey reports, national and from different countries, often supply information on what has and has not worked in terms of communication and behavioural reasons for non-use of ITNs.
- A review of published and grey literature can provide good information on ITN preferences, ITN repurposing and potential misuse of ITNs (e.g. for fishing). Published literature is a good source for cross-country sharing of experience and countries should consider how to ensure their innovations and lessons learned become widely available.
- Investment in research is necessary to avoid stagnation in message development. Regular assessment of research on behaviours can lead to better message specificity.

3. The private sector

SEE BRIEF 4: PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

- It is in the interests of the private sector to support malaria control and elimination activities as part of a strategy for economic growth. The private sector can engage in malaria prevention through the adoption of workplace policies and other actions to protect employees from malaria.
- The private sector can also contribute to mobilizing the community by producing and disseminating messages via print, radio, television, SMS and social media.
- Companies can be approached through their membership of business associations.
- Many companies seek to practise good corporate citizenship, and supporting an ITN distribution campaign would be a good way of developing a positive relationship with the local community.
- Companies may also be approached to provide funding to underwrite the cost of campaigns.

4. Branding and social norms

SEE BRIEF 5: BRANDING AND PROMOTING SOCIAL NORMS

- The creation of a national brand for the malaria programme allows the public to develop a nationwide identification of the effort to reduce and, eventually, eliminate malaria. Communication should attempt to reinforce social norm building and behaviour change. Branding motivates desired action, such as seeking early treatment, sleeping under an ITN at all times and proper care and repair of ITNs. See also: www.vector-works.org/resources/net-care-and-repair-online-toolkit/.

- The national brand, consisting of a logo, slogan and song or jingle should eventually become instantly recognizable and be used in every single communication activity related to the overall malaria programme. There should be an umbrella narrative behind the logo and slogan, giving the main messages. Country-specific research into knowledge, attitudes and practice concerning malaria should help to promote positive social norms. Research findings can provide information on how best to develop a unifying concept and umbrella narrative.
- A creative brief is important as it gives the fundamental requirements for creating the branding strategy and materials: it outlines the target audiences and behaviours that need to be adopted and sustained. The creative brief is the basis upon which a tendering process can be undertaken for the appropriate agency to develop the branding materials.
- The branded logo and slogan should be displayed on all malaria printed materials and signs produced by all malaria partners and incorporated into audio-visual productions that will be broadcast through the mass media or made accessible on the Internet.

5. Branding and social norms

SEE BRIEF 6: MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

- The mass media is a valuable ally to promote malaria prevention and treatment on a continuous basis, as well as during an ITN distribution campaign. Media institutions have a powerful impact in legitimizing behaviour and social norms.
- Data are necessary to decide the most appropriate media to get the right messages across, in terms of reach, popularity, audience size and cost. Data on audience market share and listening and viewing habits, which can inform selection decisions, should be

reviewed (supplied by stations and/or market research firms, accessed through an online search, etc.).

- Pre-packaged spots can ensure that messages are consistent with best social and behaviour change communication practices, and can be put out to tender to publicity agencies. A challenge, however, is to produce something in advance that has the immediacy necessary, such as information on dates and locations.
- Journalists and broadcasters can be very helpful but need to have information given to them to ensure their messages are correct and consistent. Holding workshops for them to promote the key messages is an effective method of gaining their commitment.
- There are a number of do's and don'ts that should be considered when engaging with the media. Do's include defining the role of the media, understanding the target audience, using new modes of communication, pre-testing, developing simple messages and being prepared for the unexpected, such as rumours or misinformation.
- Don'ts include excluding any populations, adopting a negative stance and making up information in response to questions.

6. Advocacy

SEE BRIEF 7: DEVELOPMENT OF ADVOCACY EVENTS AND MATERIALS

- Advocacy events can be planned to convey key messages and engage leaders at all levels – from community to national. At the level of government, it is essential to involve their own public relations staff with the planning of events.
- At the events, kits should be made available that include FAQs, key points and press releases. In addition, other materials should be supplied with the kit, such as the visual aids developed for the campaign – caps, t-shirts, posters, etc.

7. Social mobilization in urban areas

SEE BRIEF 8: SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS OF SOCIAL MOBILIZATION IN URBAN AREAS

- In general, people living in urban areas are more familiar with malaria protection actions, so messages should focus more on using ITNs at all times rather than on malaria causes. Text messages, television and radio are important media for reinforcing positive behaviours.
- Household registration may be a challenge for a number of reasons. Typically, householders will not know the registrars personally: easily recognizable means of associating registrars with the campaign, such as t-shirts, caps or badges, should be provided.
- Household registration may also be a challenge because people are out at work, so it is important to plan registration activities when they are most likely to be home. Households may also contain individuals other than family members, so registrars should be well trained on the definition of a household in order to know how to correctly allocate nets.
- At distribution sites, efficient crowd control is vital because of the large numbers of people attending.
- The communication personnel involved in the distribution of ITNs must have information about what is to be done in the case of ITN shortages so that people coming to distribution points get immediate information.
- Costs may be higher than in rural areas, so careful planning and budgeting is critical to success.

8. Social mobilization and behaviour change communication

**SEE BRIEF 9:
PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING SOCIAL
MOBILIZATION AND BEHAVIOUR
CHANGE COMMUNICATION**

- Social mobilization and behaviour change communication are two interlocking approaches that must be integrated for a campaign to meet its objectives.
- Effective social mobilization messages include information on malaria and how to protect oneself, the campaign and ITNs, household registration and distribution, care, repair and repurposing of ITNs, and any follow-up activities.
- SBCC strategies should reinforce already adopted positive behaviours and inspire new healthy behaviours. Research should inform what kinds of motivational approaches are likely to be most effective.
- Common channels of communication include the mass media, community health workers and volunteers, health facility workers and a variety of others. Information available should be used to select channels that will ensure that the main messages reach the maximum number of people.
- Building on the existing knowledge base is important and will help to reinforce existing health systems. Local health education/promotion staff and volunteers can assist with identification of potential barriers to ITN use in specific areas. With their knowledge of the local community, they should be involved in collecting information for microplanning and in the microplanning workshops themselves.
- Job aids, containing key messages promoting ITN use, care and repair, as well as providing information on what to do with old nets, will help community leaders and workers/volunteers to stay on message, once they are trained to use them appropriately.
- Supervisors and monitors should be trained to scrutinize all elements of a campaign's implementation, including SBCC, in order to look for solutions to any problems that are being reported.
- It is important that campaign staff are trained in ways to counter misinformation or false rumours and that counter action is taken as quickly as possible.
- The communication strategy should include plans for post-distribution activities, such as using community health workers to reinforce the key messages about use of ITNs and their care and repair.

9. Hang-up

**SEE BRIEF 10:
HANG-UP**

- The most recent evidence regarding the effectiveness of hang-up campaigns is mixed. It is likely that as countries implement their second, third and fourth rounds of mass campaigns, people are used to ITNs and know how to hang and use them. In general, hang-up campaigns targeting an entire country are no longer necessary or advisable, as they do not demonstrate value for money.
- Where data show that low ITN use is primarily due to low access, increasing funding to improve coverage is the most appropriate investment strategy.
- If hang-up is deemed necessary in some parts of a country, appropriate planning and good training is crucial to ensure that volunteers going door to door are knowledgeable about the messages they deliver.
- In urban areas, the door to door strategy should be weighed against other approaches, such as SMS, social media, radio and television.

10. Repurposing of ITNs

See: www.vector-works.org/wp-content/uploads/Consensus-Statement-Repurposing-of-ITNs-2018-11-28.pdf (English)

www.vector-works.org/wp-content/uploads/FR-Consensus-Statement-Repurposing-of-ITNs-2018-11-28.pdf (French)

- Where there have been previous campaigns, it is critical for the communication planning team to ensure that messages are developed to provide information to households and communities about appropriate and inappropriate repurposing and disposal of ITNs that are no longer considered “viable”. These messages need to reflect the policy adopted by the NMCP/NMEP for this purpose.
- As ITNs wear out, they are sometimes used for other purposes. It occasionally happens that new ITNs are also used for other purposes. Some purposes are not acceptable, for example, using ITNs for fishing (this is called “misuse”). Repurposing of an ITN that is still useful for sleeping under is also not acceptable if the household does not have

sufficient ITNs for all members to sleep under. However, repurposing of older or worn-out ITNs for window screens, curtains, blocking holes in eaves, patching other ITNs, or other uses that prevent mosquito entry into households is helpful (this is called “beneficial repurposing”, as the ITN material still has the ability to act as a barrier against mosquitos). As long as households have sufficient ITNs to sleep under, any repurposing of old or worn-out ITNs that does not harm the environment, e.g. as latrine screens, garden coverings, soccer balls, etc., is acceptable. This is called “neutral repurposing” but it is recommended that “beneficial repurposing” should be strongly promoted.

- Households will recycle materials once they are worn out, so communication messages on what is and what is not acceptable repurposing can help to clarify any misunderstandings at community level. It is important that they understand their main priority is to protect themselves from mosquito bites by sleeping under an ITN which is not worn out.