

Brief 6: Media engagement

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL TO ACCOMPANY CHAPTER 6 (SEE ALSO BRIEF 8: DEVELOPMENT OF ADVOCACY EVENTS AND MATERIALS)

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1. Mass media as an ally

Mass media, both electronic (television, radio) and print (newspapers, magazines) is a valuable ally before and during ITN distribution campaigns, as well as to promote malaria prevention and treatment on a continuous basis. Mass media can be mobilized to promote a campaign's communication goals for pre, during and post-distribution phases, including in the areas of:

- Reinforcing social mobilization to achieve effective registration, distribution and post-distribution objectives
- Promoting behaviour change (net use, proper care and repair, etc.) as well as supportive social norms
- Propagating a campaign's brand themes including its umbrella narrative

Media institutions can be important vehicles for health communication. Because of their significant role as key gatekeepers for disseminating information and as socializing agents, media institutions have a powerful impact in terms of legitimizing behaviour and social norms. Messages conveyed through the mass media can have an effect on motivations, involvement, attitudes and behaviours of the media consumer. Media success in creating

support among the public for ITN distribution campaigns and other malaria interventions may be an important advocacy tool, as politicians, policy makers and other decision-makers are likely to be influenced by informed public opinion.

Because of their capacity to create compelling content and focus the public's attention on malaria issues, broadcasters and journalists are potentially powerful allies in influencing government, traditional and religious leaders, families, communities and individuals to take actions designed to prevent malaria. Social and behaviour change communication (SBCC) programmes have had success in working with these media when they are approached as a partner under a shared vision of eliminating/reducing malaria. Establishing this partnership is an important first step.

Journalists with a national reach, moreover, can help with ITN distribution campaign branding objectives, magnify the reach of national figures championing the campaign, and help promote an advocacy agenda of political and financial support for campaigns. In addition, local journalists and broadcasters, who often have a profound knowledge of the cultural, religious and political complexities in which they are operating, can be real communication assets to campaigns. It is important that campaign spokespersons and communication experts establish strong working relationships with journalists and broadcasters at all levels, so that they will be responsive to press releases and requests for coverage, as well as produce content that is aligned with the malaria programme's core messages. If a relationship has been established, often a telephone call to a reporter will suffice to get the coverage that the campaign needs. In addition, where a relationship has been established, it may be possible to mobilize mass media support more quickly in an effort to address negative community perceptions or miscommunication during a mass campaign distribution of ITNs.

2. Choosing appropriate media

In most countries affected by malaria, radio reaches a much larger proportion of the population than television, and is a more cost-effective method of disseminating information to the general population. Television is often more appropriate for reaching urban populations and higher income households that may be difficult to access through door-to-door social mobilization approaches. Television is a particularly important medium for reaching populations in relatively highly urbanized countries like Angola and Nigeria.

Typically, there are several types of radio stations that can be deployed for a communication campaign: public (state-owned) stations, private commercial stations, faith-based stations and community radio stations. In choosing which stations to engage, a number of factors need to be considered:

- Signal reach
- Rating or popularity
- Market share
- Audience size and demographics
- Language(s) of broadcast
- Costs

Data on audience market share and listening and viewing habits, which can inform selection decisions, are often supplied by stations and/or market research firms, but these types of data may also be accessed through an online search. Demographic data, e.g. gender and age, are critical for determining when best to broadcast a spot or a programme to maximize the exposure of the messages to a specific target audience. This information on stations available, reach, demographics and language should be collected as early in the planning of the ITN campaign as possible (e.g. during development of the macro planning documents) and should be verified during microplanning using information collected from the operational levels that reflects the actual situation (e.g. which stations are the most regularly listened to and when, etc.).

Costs may vary and should be considered in relation to the size of the target audience reached by a station as well as the type of radio piece being produced. Often public stations have an official mandate to broadcast public health programmes free of charge, and an understanding between the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Communication (or its equivalent institution) may help facilitate a no-cost broadcasting agreement. Frequently, when budgets are being drafted for ITN distribution campaigns, the costs for communication, including for media engagement, are underestimated. Without a strong media component, the communication activities may be less effective. Therefore, a careful step-by-step approach to media budget forecasting is required during the initial planning (e.g. grant submission) period.

SEE BRIEF 2: PLANNING AND BUDGETING COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

There are two basic types of broadcast media interventions:

- i. Pre-packaged television and radio spots developed by the malaria programme or a partner/agency (also known as Public Service Announcements), that can be aired on given stations, often at cost
- ii. Programmes and announcements planned and produced by television and radio stations themselves, in partnership with, and based on guidance from, the malaria programme

3. Pre-packaged spots

An advantage of pre-packaged spots is that ITN distribution campaign planners can ensure that the formats and content of the messages are consistent with best SBCC practices and with public health strategic objectives. In contracting a publicity agency or SBCC partner for producing such spots or when producing a music video or a song, it is good practice to develop a creative brief

that informs competing agencies and musical artists of the messages, production values and languages that are to be included in the final products.

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

See also the resource on preparing a [creative brief](#). The bidding and selection process should begin early so that the ITN distribution campaign communication budget accurately reflects costs.

One of the challenges in deploying centrally produced spots is the need to tailor messages and production approaches to communities of diverse ethno-linguistic, income and cultural contexts. It is also difficult to rely on pre-packaged spots to give the public accurate information on dates and locations for registration activities and distribution. Local stations, however, can fill in this gap with more interactive communication that adapts programmes and announcements to their communities, incorporates the use of local voices and promotes a sense of local ownership over a campaign. Developing a set of talking points for local presenters and announcers is crucial to ensure that messaging is consistent.

4. Station-produced programmes and announcements

Many local journalists and broadcasters have good knowledge of their local society. However, they may be deficient in their knowledge of malaria issues and specific ways to promote an ITN distribution campaign. To mitigate this challenge, the malaria programme should arrange short workshops or orientations for them and support them to be more effective allies in a campaign's advocacy agenda and branding, including the brand's unifying concept, umbrella narrative and its branding guidelines.

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

The malaria programme can also provide journalists and broadcasters with key talking points, briefs about malaria, the desired behaviours to promote, visibility materials, and the ITN campaign details, especially when, where and how to register for the distribution.

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

Workshops for local journalists and broadcasters are vital for effective social mobilization and behaviour change. These workshops, held at the provincial (or region/state) level, should seek to:

- Obtain local and regional stations' commitment to all phases of an ITN distribution campaign
- Promote the ownership, use and care of ITNs
- Create or strengthen the relationship between local public health officials, journalists and broadcasters so that local officials will be included in awareness-raising programmes, and facilitate the updating of announcements on registration and distribution locations and dates as well as to counter false rumours that may arise
- Communicate that registration is an important determinant of ITN distribution campaign coverage, and as the media, they have an important role to play in informing their audiences about registration
- Ask participants to develop a plan, tied to the campaign, for a series of effective programmes on malaria prevention and treatment that reflect their knowledge of and experience with their audiences
- Encourage participants to adopt the prevention of malaria as a cause for their stations

In all workshops and orientations, it is important to encourage participants to use effective programming formats and content that will help promote behaviour change and the public's participation in registration and distribution. Such formats include call-in shows, short serial

dramas, interviews and panels with public health officials, with respected public figures and leaders and with ordinary people who practise the prescribed behaviour. Generally, programming that will put a human face on malaria issues will be the most effective.

5. Do's and don'ts for mass media communication¹

While mass media can be an excellent source of information and an effective vehicle for getting key messages out, there are some do's and don'ts that should be considered:

DO:

- **Develop a detailed plan for media and define its role in the broader communication plan:** carry out a deliberate strategic communication planning process to devise and write down a communication strategy.
- **Understand your target audience:** undertake research to define your target audience precisely, then choose the communication channels, techniques and tools most likely to reach them. Note the range of settings and situations in which your target audience operates and adapt your message and combine different communication channels to reach them. For example, messages that are broadcast via mass media are more likely to lead to lasting behaviour change when combined with interpersonal communication.
- **Keep abreast of new modes of communicating:** the Internet, SMS messaging and other modern technologies provide many opportunities to reach the target audience and may be more cost-effective than, for example, television.
- **Pre-test:** plan for sufficient time to pre-test all messaging and communication materials with stakeholders, partners and members of your target audiences, through consultations, focus groups, feedback sessions, etc.
- **Call for behaviour change action in a straightforward way:** one to three simple

messages that call for clear action have a better chance of being understood and acted on than complex, multiple messages.

- **Be prepared for the unexpected:** communication opportunities and emergencies are likely to arise during the planning and implementation of a mass ITN distribution campaign. It is important that the communication planning include preparation of response messaging to react quickly, in order to either seize opportunities or mitigate crises. The communication strategy should outline a number of potential unforeseen scenarios and include specific related action plans to respond decisively.

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

DON'T:

- **Exclude people:** a well-developed communication plan will ensure that all populations, including those with barriers to uptake of services related to access or socio-cultural issues, are included and accounted for in the key activities and messages.
- **Adopt a negative or confrontational stance:** positive messaging to encourage people to adopt the ITNs available and hang and use them will be more effective than negative messages. Build on experience accumulated in the past by others and explore constructive ways in which existing efforts can be improved and errors corrected.
- **Make up information in response to questions:** if the interviewee is asked questions that s/he is unable to answer, they should indicate that they will seek the information and provide accurate information to the media as a follow-up to their interview.

1. Adapted from: www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/1234-dos-and-donts.html.

6. Creating a dissemination plan and monitoring messages

Whether working with pre-packaged radio and television materials, radio and television materials planned and produced by stations themselves, or any other kind of mass media, it is important to create a dissemination plan for messages. These plans should be developed by the communication subcommittee and in the case of television and radio, include what type of material, the airing frequency, and what time of day they are to be

aired. The right timing of messages, whether pre-, during or post- ITN distribution is vital for maximum impact. All supervisors and monitors should be informed of the dissemination plan and should monitor the broadcasting stations to ensure proper implementation of the dissemination plan. As much as possible, the supervision and monitoring checklists should include elements related to the monitoring of mass media dissemination of pre-packaged spots or radio programmes and announcements.