Evaluation of IEC Materials

Taking into consideration implementers' limited time and resources, the tools in Pathfinder International's *Straight to the Point* Series provide clear, concise guidance on a variety of issues related to program design, implementation, and evaluation.

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Print materials such as posters, brochures, flyers, billboards, etc. that are intended to draw attention to information about disease or risks to health are often called "information, education, and communication" (IEC) materials. Some electronic media can be IEC-focused as well. Public service announcements and radio, television, and video programs that disseminate information—whether as a straightforward explanation or in the form of stories—are also IEC materials. Most IEC materials do not aim to just draw attention to an issue—they aim to provide *usable* information and help the reader/viewer take some kind of action.

The effectiveness of these materials depends on many things, and in the *ideal situation*, IEC materials would be 1) based on formative research suggesting that there is an informational gap that needs to be filled, and 2) pre-tested/piloted to ensure that the reader/viewer of these materials understands the message(s) being conveyed by them. However, these two basic criteria are often not met, usually because a lack of planning, resources, or expertise makes it difficult to under-take formative research and pre-testing/piloting.

However, even if these criteria cannot be met, it is still possible to ask some simple questions about existing IEC materials' appropriateness just by looking at them and spending a few minutes reflecting on them. This "straight to the point" evaluation looks at the communicative aspects listed on the checklist and rates the material in question on each of the aspects. (Note that Question 2—about the location where materials are posted—must be done in the field, but most of the other questions can be adequately addressed as part of a desk review.)

As you perform any evaluation of IEC materials, keep in mind that you probably are not a member of the target audience. You are probably better educated, more literate, more economically secure, and perhaps more urban than many of the people for

whom the materials were designed. When making your assessment, try to put yourself in the place of someone who may not read well, may not have money even for basic things, and may not live in an area where services are readily available. *Even better than just mentally taking this into account, you can conduct the evaluation with a member or members of the target population at your side.* Ask them what the key "messages" are, what information the pictures are conveying, if they know what to do next, etc. Do not "lead" them to any conclusions—let them answer as if they are looking at the materials alone.

Keep in mind that you are probably not a member of the target population. If possible, conduct the evaluation with a member of the target population at your side.

If you find in your evaluation that a particular piece of IEC does poorly in several aspects of communication, you then have to decide what to do about this. Do you contact the producer of the IEC material and politely ask them if they agree with your assessment? Do you offer to help them revise the material? Do you communicate your assessment to a supervisor and await instructions? It depends on the producer of the IEC material, your supervisors, and other factors.

Two important things to remember are: 1) "straight to the point" evaluations are *not* scientific and you have not "proven" anything with your evaluation, and 2) materials that score poorly need more formal attention and should be further examined.

"Straight to the Point" Checklist for Evaluating IEC Materials

Date:_____ Reviewer:_____

IEC material reviewed:_____

	COMMUNICATIVE ASPECT	DEFINITION/DETAIL	VERY POOR	NEEDS MAJOR IMPROVEMENT	NEEDS MINOR IMPROVEMENT	VERY GOOD
1	Appropriate format for the target audience	What kind of media does the target audience for this information typically use? Is it likely that members of the target audience will be exposed to this kind of medium? Do you know of any media consumption research that might confirm your opinion?				
2	Location where print materials are posted	If they are print materials, where are they posted? Are they in places where large numbers of the target audience can actually stop to look at them? Are they at the eye level of the intended audience? Are they in public spaces and/or easily accessible?				
3	Text-heaviness	If something is to be read "in passing" (i.e., it is publicly posted and not intended to be read at home), it should not have a lot of text that cannot be read quickly.				
4	Graphic appeal and use of pictures to convey information	Do the colors and images seem interesting, or are they somewhat boring? Do images clearly convey information or are they just decoration?				
5	Careful selection of information	Does it look like the information presented has been carefully chosen to convey only the *most important* information? Relatively unimportant information hurts materials' usability. It is *worse* than no information at all.				
6	Language appropriateness	Is the written/spoken language appropriate (in terms of level of sophistication, difficulty of vocabulary, national language vs. vernacular) for the people you are trying to reach?				
7	Suggests next steps	If appropriate, does the material make clear what the reader/viewer should do to act on the information?				

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