

COMMUNICATION FOR IMMUNIZATION

E-LEARNING RESOURCES

09 | CREATING KEY MESSAGES

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Messages are the core of communication activities. They motivate people to understand issues and to take action. The key messages, once tested and agreed, can be inserted into any communication materials – whether speeches, presentations, media interviews, fact sheets, or IEC materials.

Messages should be:

- **Simple** – to understand and remember.
- **Brief** – A few words is enough.
- **Addressing gaps in knowledge.**
- **A call to action.**
- **Culturally relevant** using local idioms.
- **Culturally acceptable** - not offensive.
- **Consistent** – everywhere they are used.
- **Persuasive and appeal to emotion.**
- **Positive in tone** and stressing benefits.
- **Backed by supporting facts.**

To create a message, ask first, what do you want your audience to do after hearing it?

- Immunize their children on time?
- Perform their jobs better?
- Mobilize their communities?
- Provide funding?
- Change a policy?



Then create a message map, including the issue or concern, three key messages that address the concern including the call to action, and supporting facts. Here is a sample you can adapt.

Stakeholder/Audience: Caretakers Issue or concern (based on evidence): 35% of caretakers from x minority in X district(s) don't complete immunization for their children because they report minor side effects after immunization		
Key Message 1 Take your child to be fully immunized and protected from diseases.	Key Message 2 Vaccines are safe and effective.	Key Message 3 It is normal that vaccine injections cause minor irritation for a child.
<i>Supporting Fact 1.1</i> Full immunization requires (5) visits to the health centre in the first year of life.	<i>Supporting Fact 1.1</i> Health workers are trained to provide vaccines safely.	<i>Supporting Fact 1.3</i> Common side effects for vaccines include soreness around the area of injection, or a low-grade fever.
<i>Supporting Fact 1.2</i> Where all parents take their children for full immunization vaccine preventable diseases have almost disappeared.	<i>Supporting Fact 2.2</i> Vaccines are delivered with a sterilized needle that is used only once and then safely disposed.	<i>Supporting Fact 2.3</i> Other normal side effects can include a headache, runny nose, or drowsiness.
<i>Supporting Fact 1.3</i> Vaccines are the best way to protect children from diseases like measles, whooping cough and polio.	<i>Supporting Fact 2.3</i> The national regulator (works with UNICEF and WHO) to only approve vaccines that are proven safe and effective.	<i>Supporting Fact 3.3</i> Very rarely, a child may have an allergic reaction. If a child is very sick following vaccination, see a doctor immediately.



Key messages for different audiences: Messages must be tailored to a country's local needs and context. The following provides overall guidelines on the kinds of messages different audiences require.

Political leaders will want to know how immunization can benefit their constituents (and possibly their own careers.) For example:

- *“Support investment in immunization because your constituents will be healthier more productive. Your investment to protect their children’s health will make them more confident in your leadership.”*

Policy and decision-makers need evidence-based arguments to support immunization, including cost-benefit arguments. For example:

- *“Invest in immunization as it is one of the most cost-effective investments you can make in the nation’s health. For every dollar spent on immunization you will save direct costs in health care and treatment, and indirect costs in productivity and lost wages.*
- *“Invest in immunization to reduce child deaths by another 25% in the next decade, and help to meet our country’s national and global commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals.”*

Partners/donors need the same kind of information as policy and decision-makers.

Religious and traditional leaders will want to know the benefits for their communities; and may want to know how immunization is supported by religious scriptures. For example:

- *“Mobilise your communities for immunization because it will protect children from dangerous, preventable diseases.”*
- *“Immunization is supported in XX scriptures in XX book. Global leaders in xx religion are encouraging all children to be immunized.”*

Community leaders will want to know the benefits and effort required by their communities. For example:

- *“Mobilize the caretakers in your community to have their children fully immunized so the children are protected from dangerous disease.”*
- *“Work with the community health worker to track newborns in the community, and encourage their caretakers to have the child fully immunized.”*

Health workers need to know why they are administering vaccines, how to do it safely, and what to tell caretakers. For example:

- *“The HPV vaccine will protect girls from most cervical cancer. Your job is to provide two doses of this vaccine for all girls aged 10.”*
- *“Treat caretakers with respect when they bring their child for vaccination, and be sure to tell them when to come back.”*

Caretakers do not usually require detailed technical information about the vaccines and diseases prevented to generate demand for immunization services. **Parents do need to be reassured that immunization is:**

- good for your child: the safest way to protect your child against infectious diseases;
- a key parental role like providing love and care for your child; e.g. *“Protect your precious children.”*
- a normal practice and an essential part of growing up safely; and
- a civic duty and a ‘public good’ because it prevents disease through the community



There is *standard information* for immunization activities that should almost always be included in immunization messages for different audiences.

The way this information is packaged into messages will vary from country to country. Here is a summary:

	Routine Immunization	Supplementary Immunization Activity	New Vaccine Introduction	Crisis
Policy/ Decision makers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the imperative to reach nationally and globally agreed coverage goals - cost-benefit - progress and challenges in achieving results - current and desired coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -evidence of why required - cost-benefit - need for high quality - importance of investment in community mobilization - post SIA- report back on results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evidence of disease burden and potential impact of vaccine - evidence of safety and efficacy of new vaccine - what vaccine will, and won't do - cost-benefit 	<p>The importance of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preparedness - speed and accuracy in investigation and communication - listening to partner, HW and community concerns - transparency - communicating regularly with all stakeholders including media
Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - same as above - the funds and support required and why 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - same as above - funds/support required and why - post SIA- report back on results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - same as above - funds/support required and why 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - should receive regular factual updates - clarity on partner roles and responsibilities
Health Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - threat of disease - benefits of vaccine - how and when to administer the vaccine <p>The importance of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vaccine safety and safe injection - reaching coverage targets - IPC with caretakers on why vaccine, side effects, when to return - community partnership - planning, mapping, record keeping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - why an SIA? - threat of disease and benefits of the vaccine - their role in the SIA <p>The importance of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - community mobilization - preparation, record keeping - vaccine safety and safe injection - IPC with caretakers including on why vaccine, side effects, and to go for RI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - evidence of disease burden - evidence of safety-efficacy of new vaccine - importance of communicating about new vaccine with the community and caretakers - what vaccine will and won't do (eg. prevent some diarrhea, pneumonia, HPV) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - facts on what is known, what is not known - clarity on their roles and responsibilities - clear message on what action they should take - updated, key information to give to community - encouragement to give feedback
Community leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - threat of disease and benefits of vaccine - vaccine safe and effective - immunization services are free - common side effects - importance of their leadership and participation to ensure community is aware and immunized - importance of their feedback and dialogue to health workers and leaders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Why the SIA? (threat of disease and benefits of the vaccine) - safety/efficacy of the vaccine - side effects - where, when, who, how often - immunization is free - importance of their role to mobilize the community - importance of continued RI 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - threat of disease and benefits of the new vaccine - evidence of safety/efficacy of the new vaccine - importance of their role to mobilize the community - what vaccine will and won't do (eg. prevent some diarrhea, pneumonia, HPV) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - facts on what is known, what is not known - clarity on their roles and responsibilities - the actions they should take - updated, key information to give to community - encouragement to give feedback



	Routine Immunization	Supplementary Immunization Activity	New Vaccine Introduction	Crisis
Caretakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - threat of disease and benefits of vaccine - Where, when, who, how often to go for immunization - vaccine safe and effective - vaccine side effects - immunization services are free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Why the SIA? (threat of disease and benefits of the vaccine) - where, when, who, how often - importance of continued RI - vaccine safe and effective - vaccine side effects - immunization services are free 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - threat of disease and benefits of the new vaccine - where, when, who, how often - vaccine safe and effective - vaccine side effects - immunization services are free - what vaccine will and won't do (eg. prevent some diarrhea, pneumonia, HPV) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - updated information of what to do, what not to do and why - encouragement to give feedback to leader
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Immunization coverage - cost-benefit - success and challenges - Information about the disease and the prevalence - Information about the vaccine and its benefits - where, when, who, how often to go for immunization - vaccine safe and effective - standard vaccine side effects - immunization services are free - list of the partners involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why the SIA? (threat of disease and benefits of the vaccine) - where, when, who, how often - Importance of continued RI - vaccine safe and effective - vaccine side effects - immunization services are free - the partners involved - Post SIA- report back on results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - explanation of the disease targeted and the burden -explanation and evidence of safety- efficacy of new vaccine - importance of media role in providing correct, information - what vaccine will and won't do (eg. prevent some diarrhea, pneumonia, HPV) - the partners involved - report on progress, challenges in introduction including coverage rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - timely facts on what is known and what is not known -importance of media's role in providing clear, accurate information - information about what the public should do to avoid / help manage the crisis (eg. get vaccinated, report cases) - regular updates on progress and challenge - acknowledgement of partners and community role - announcement of when crisis is over

