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Developing a Creative Brief

This *C-Bulletin* provides SBCC practitioners with an overview of how to develop a creative brief. A creative brief serves as a tool that helps guide the development of SBCC materials or activities for audiences with lower literacy.

What Is a Creative Brief and Why Use One?

In one short document (usually two-to-three pages), a creative brief explains crucial details of the design concept and content. The creative brief states the intended audience, desired change, barriers to change, and what can help facilitate change.

An effective creative brief summarizes what is most essential and provides additional detail to guide the work of the creative team, including writers, graphic designers, representatives of advertising agencies, and producers of audio and audiovisual materials. The creative brief states who the intended audience is, what the barriers to change are, and what can help facilitate change, e.g., a support network, a policy that creates an enabling environment, or access to services. It also states the communication objectives, messages, key content, and tone.

The creative brief usually flows from a marketing plan or communication strategy and addresses each material or activity named in the strategy. The brief makes sure that support materials or activities relate to one another since it is based on and contributes to existing communication strategies. A creative brief is also used to explain to stakeholders why a certain SBCC material or activity has been conceptualized in a certain way. Sharing the brief can help to build stakeholder and team consensus about the material or activity being developed. A single creative brief can be developed for a set of SBCC materials or activities, but only if all of them share communication objectives and are designed for the same audience (or audiences). For all of these reasons, SBCC practitioners should not skip over the step of writing and using a creative brief.

How Is A Creative Brief Developed?

A good creative brief needs to balance brevity with adequate detail. The brief must be comprehensive, but should leave room for creative interpretation. When developing a creative brief, the SBCC practitioner should review and discuss with key program staff the overall goal of the material or activity, the intended audience or audiences, and the communication objectives that flow from an existing marketing plan or communication strategy. This should be followed by filling out the creative brief template like the one below that considers five broad areas. Finally, a draft of the creative brief should be shared with the whole team. This includes sharing it with key stakeholders to build consensus and support for the materials or activity (see *C-Bulletin 9*).

CREATIVE BRIEF TEMPLATE

Benefits of a Creative Brief

- Serves as a point of reference during material or activity development to help SBCC practitioners stick to their original objectives
- Helps ensure buy-in and support when shared with key stakeholders and partners
- Is a handy two- to three-page document that guides the creative team as they develop and execute concepts

Category	What to Fill In
1. Goal and Audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall aim of the material or activity • Selected audience(s)
2. Communication Objectives (based on confronting desired changes and barriers to change)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desired changes • Barriers to change • Communication objectives addressing these barriers
3. Message Brief (explained further in Module 3 of the C-Modules , cited in the reference list at the end of this document)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Key Promise • The Support Statement • A Call to Action • Lasting Impression • Perception of Someone Who Changes
4. Tone and Key Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tone for the material or activity, based on the message brief • Key content of the material or activity
5. Other Creative Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the material or activity complements or is supported by other materials and activities • Cost • Launch opportunities, literacy levels, local languages, etc.

Follow these steps when developing a creative brief:


Step 1: Review and discuss with key program staff the overall goal of the material or activity, the intended audience or audiences, and the communication objectives that flow from an existing marketing plan or communication strategy.

Step 2: Use a template like the one on the next page and fill out the right column.

Step 3: Share the draft of the brief with the whole team; then share it with stakeholders to build consensus and support for the materials or activity (see [C-Bulletin 9](#)).

CREATIVE BRIEF EXAMPLE: VIDEOS PROMOTING VOLUNTARY MEDICAL MALE CIRCUMCISION (VMMC) IN KENYA IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE WORLD CUP

Category	What to Fill In
1. Goal and Audience	<p>Goal</p> <p>To promote VMMC as a healthy lifestyle choice and support community understanding of how it fits into the context of broader HIV prevention and gender issues</p> <p>Selected Audiences</p> <p>Potential and past VMMC clients: circumcised and uncircumcised Luo men ages 15–49, particularly those ages 20–35, as noted in Nyanza VMMC Communication Guide (http://www.c-hubonline.org/sites/default/files/resources/main/NYANZA_COMMUNICATION_GUIDE.pdf)</p>
2. Communication Objectives (based on confronting desired changes and barriers to change)	<p>Desired Changes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go for VMMC • Accept an HIV test as part of the VMMC process • Heal safely and postpone sex for six weeks • Protect oneself and sexual partners by maintaining other HIV prevention behaviors • Become a champion of VMMC <p>Barriers</p> <p>Lack of knowledge about VMMC and the level of protection it provides against HIV infection; loss of income during the healing period; fear of stigma, pain, or complications; embarrassment; concerns about interruption to sex life; no tradition of circumcision among Luo</p> <p>Communication Objectives (by audience)</p> <p>An increase in the proportion of men who trust that the benefits of VMMC make it worth overcoming fear and some pain and who understand the importance of using other HIV-prevention methods.</p>
3. Message Brief (explained further in Module 3 of the C-Modules , cited in the reference list at the end of this document)	<p>Key Promise</p> <p>Men who get circumcised will be cleaner, fitter, and more attractive</p> <p>Support Statement</p> <p>Because a man makes good decisions and is not afraid</p> <p>Call to Action (with link to services)</p> <p>Go to your nearest clinic for VMMC services</p> <p>Lasting Impression</p> <p>An intelligent, healthy, circumcised man</p> <p>Perception of Someone Who Changed</p> <p>A wise man who is in control of his life</p>

Category	What to Fill In
4. Tone and Key Content	<p>Tone</p> <p>Present key promise and other message brief elements with humor</p> <p>Key Content</p> <p>A brief outline of key issues to be communicated in three or four short videos shown at community centers and local TV channels. Each story or vignette should last between three and five minutes and include key facts about VMMC. They should be gripping and entertaining. While each video should be self-contained, they should also fit together in a series.</p> <p>Part 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is VMMC? • The benefits of VMMC • Encourage friends to opt for VMMC <p>Part 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are VMMC services available? <p>Part 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happens after VMMC? <p>Part 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VMMC provides partial protection against HIV infection 
5. Other Creative Considerations	<p>Media Mix</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community mobilization, community theater, community dialogues • Client leaflet, general information leaflet • Two 30-second radio spots • Exterior wall poster that lasts for at least a year <p>Opening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution via clinical sites and peer educators in association with World Cup events <p>Cost</p> <p>Not to exceed total budget of US\$40,000</p> <p>Creative Considerations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 10- to 20-minute DVD, playable in any DVD player • A football theme throughout • Introduction by an actor in clinical dress • Excerpts of songs or plays by popular Luo entertainers; jokes or skits by local actors or celebrities • Luo, with English subtitles

What is the Value Added of a Creative Brief?

It is a complete and detailed tool to share with the team, it starts the material development process, it provides guidance, and it ensures consistency along the way.

Has the Creative Brief Met These Standards?

- ☐ Provides a clear definition of the goal, intended audience or audiences, and communication objectives of the SBCC activity or material
- ☐ Explains the desired change and barriers to change
- ☐ Describes key content, tone, and the message brief
- ☐ Describes the format of the SBCC materials and activities and outlines dissemination opportunities

CommunicationBulletins

- 0 INTRODUCTION
- 1 UNDERSTANDING LITERACY, HOW ADULTS LEARN, AND WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SBCC PRACTITIONERS
- 2 SBCC MATERIAL AND ACTIVITY FORMATS FOR AUDIENCES WITH LOWER LITERACY SKILLS
- 3 DEVELOPING A CREATIVE BRIEF**
- 4 USING PARTICIPATORY PROCESSES TO DEVELOP SBCC MATERIALS
- 5 WRITING TEXT TO REACH AUDIENCES WITH LOWER LITERACY SKILLS
- 6 VISUAL AND WEB DESIGN FOR AUDIENCES WITH LOWER LITERACY SKILLS
- 7 WORKING WITH A CREATIVE TEAM
- 8 TESTING SBCC MATERIALS
- 9 CONDUCTING A STAKEHOLDER REVIEW
- 10 ADAPTING MATERIALS FOR AUDIENCES WITH LOWER LITERACY SKILLS

Resources for More Information

- C-Change. 2012. *C-Modules: A Learning Package for Social and Behavior Change Communication*. Version 3. Washington, DC: FHI 360/C-Change.
- Greenberg, R., et al. 1996. *How to Select and Work with an Advertising Agency, Handbook for Population and Health Communication Programs*. Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, Center for Communication Programs.
- National Cancer Institute. 2008. *Pink Book: Making Health Communication Programs Work*. Bethesda, Md: National Institutes of Health.

Acknowledgments

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*Feel free to make copies.
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of resources.*



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