

The Characteristics of Different Communication Channels

Channel	Coverage/Reach	Type of information	Level of interaction	Cost
BROADCAST MEDIA				
TV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TV can reach a lot of people quickly and at the same time. - Combination of audio and visual element has high impact on viewers - Requires electricity and TV sets so access may be limited in low income areas. - Viewers tend to be more urban than rural. - Reach depends on distribution channel (terrestrial, satellite, cable) - Well suited to communication with large population groups - Reaches communities to which physical access is difficult or impossible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simple messages can be passed through Public Service Announcements (PSA) or messages read out by a presenter - Complex messages can be transmitted through feature programmes, drama, talk shows and info-tainment. 	Can be interactive with a live studio audience or if viewers call or send a text message in a live show.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Higher production cost than radio - Higher air time cost than radio for sponsored programming
Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can reach large numbers of people in all income groups quickly and at the same time - Most radio sets are small, light and portable and can operate on batteries if there is no mains electricity supply. - Reaches communities to which physical access is difficult or impossible - Can target audiences in small communities with information of local relevance if local stations are available - Well adapted to oral societies - Easy medium for communication in local languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simple messages through PSAs or scripts read out by a presenter - More complex messages can be transmitted via feature programmes, talk-shows and drama. 	High level of interaction possible. This can be done through live debate or a discussion programme with a phone-in or text-in facility. Reading and answering listeners' letters is also possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lower production costs than TV. - Lower airtime costs than TV for sponsored programming
DVD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Combination of audio and visual element has high impact on viewers - Relies on physical distribution of DVDs. - Coverage depends on how many DVDs can be produced/distributed - Requires DVD player or computer with electricity supply to play - Can be made for generalised or specific target audiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can convey simple or complex messages. 	Can be highly interactive if used in a community setting where there is discussion or Q and A afterwards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High production cost. - Distribution cost depends on ease of physical access to target audiences
Loud speakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coverage depends on physical access. - Good for targeting high density population groups concentrated in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better suited to short simple messages. 	Limited. No formal channel for immediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cheap

Adapted from JHU-CCP and UNICEF C4D Orientation module (2009)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> large villages, urban areas or camps - Loudspeakers can either be static (eg market or mosque) or mobile (hand-held megaphone or loudspeaker van) - Can take messages right into the heart of the community. - Reaches population groups without access to radio or TV - Easy to broadcast messages in local languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can adapt the message and the language to each locality 	feedback	
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PRINT MEDIA				
Newspaper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution of paper copies depends on physical access and existence of functioning distribution channels. - Online version can instantly reach people with internet access everywhere - Well suited for communicating with large groups of literate people in areas of high-density population - Difficult to distribute in rural areas - The same text can be read and re-read by many different people over a period of time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Simple or complex messages - Visual illustrations can support text – pictures, cartoons, graphics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited scope with newspapers distributed as paper copies. Readers can give feedback via letters. - Online version can easily attract comment and information updates, photos and video from readers with internet access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adverts and sponsored articles may be expensive, depending on the size and circulation of the newspaper. - Messages can be distributed free of charge if they are published in the form of a news story.
Leaflet/ flyer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be distributed intensively in targeted locations. - Physical access to the target community is necessary for distribution - Limited impact on low literacy populations unless the message is conveyed clearly in pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be used to convey more complex information. - Can combine messages in text with pictures, diagrams and cartoons. 	Limited	Cheap to produce, but time-consuming and potentially expensive to distribute
Billboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High coverage if billboard is well located where many people in the target audience will see it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Message should be simple and have a long shelf life. - Can combine text with pictures 	None	Cost depends on size and location
Poster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coverage can be good if posters are distributed widely and are well placed where they will be seen by the target audience. - Time-consuming to distribute to remote areas. - Distribution depends on physical access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good for simple messages. - Can be adapted for illiterate populations by using pictures /diagrams 	None	Relatively cheap
Notice-board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited geographic coverage. - Location is normally in closed areas such as camps or settlements or small villages. - Good way to disseminate information of strictly local relevance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good for both simple and complex messages. - Can use text and pictures. - Easy to update with new material but labour intensive. 	Community can post feedback messages (on noticeboard or in suggestion box which can be attached)	Very cheap

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Best suited to communities where a large proportion of people are literate- .		
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MOBILE TELEPHONE				
Blast SMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wide coverage. - Fast and easy. - Requires mobile network coverage, which may be restricted in isolated areas. - Requires widespread mobile phone ownership in the targeted population group. - Limited impact in low literacy societies - Government may shut down SMS network in times of conflict or political tension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Message must be simple and restricted to 160 characters. - Unsuitable for confidential information. 	Limited unless you have the capacity to respond rapidly and effectively to high volume feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cost depends on, frequency of use of charges levied by network operator. Occasional high priority messages may be offered free of charge
Targeted SMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Geographically targeted. - Fast and easy. - List of telephone numbers of targeted contacts required - Government may shut down SMS network in times of conflict or political tension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Message must be simple and restricted to 160 characters. 	Can be if feedback is requested. However this is advisable only if you have the capacity to respond rapidly and effectively to incoming messages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cost depends on numbers of recipients and local SMS charges. - Costs can be reduced if working in partnership with mobile phone companies
INTERNET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires widespread internet access and high rates of online usage - Relies on functioning telecoms infrastructure - Internet users are mainly educated, higher income people in urban areas - Low penetration of low income groups in rural areas. - Unsuitable for communication with low literacy groups. - Passive information option (websites). - Pro-active information option (email). - Good channel for reaching the diaspora overseas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good for both simple and complex messages. - Integration of video, pictures and audio with text. 	Can be highly interactive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Websites are fast and easy to create and update, but large numbers of skilled staff may be required to create web content and process incoming information.

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FACE TO FACE				
Peer educators, community based workers, volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Time-consuming and labour intensive. - Requires large numbers of people with physical access to the target community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Face-to-face is the strongest and most persuasive form of communication. - Good for complex information exchange tailored to individual needs. - Works best when the communicator is known and respected by the target community. - Risk of message distortion due to communicators being either poorly or having a hidden agenda. 	Interactive with immediate feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be expensive. - Costs can include training, transport, materials and salaries/incentives.
TRADITIONAL MEDIA				
Theatre, community meetings, songs, dance, poetry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited geographic coverage. - Good for hard to reach communities if you have access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good for simple, easily understood messages. - Good for sensitising community on sensitive issues within an entertaining format. 	Can be highly interactive if audience is allowed to participate either during or at the end of the performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cost depends on size of performance group, sophistication of production and distances travelled between performance venues.