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# Defining the message

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# Introduction

- Your messages are a summary of the change you want to bring about and by when.
  - They may also include the reasons why you feel the change is important and the action you would like the audience to take in response, but they must be brief and concise to have the maximum impact.
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- You need to be able to summarise in one or two
  - sentences what your advocacy work is all about – as if you have 30 seconds on national TV to make your case.
  - Whether you ultimately get the chance to talk on TV or not, defining your advocacy messages is an important part of crystallising what you are aiming for and summarising the most significant
  - aspects.
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- Your messages may vary depending on the audience to whom you are presenting them.
  - Whilst your overall position on the advocacy issue will not change, you will probably have to adapt the way you present your message to achieve the greatest impact on different audiences. This is called 'framing' the message.
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- Framing an issue is not distorting the facts, but simply taking into account the
  - preferences and position of the target audience, and presenting it in a way that will reach them.
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- Advocacy issue: lack of clean water and sanitation facilities in rural Tanzania
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## Message Should:

- simple and easily understandable
  - culturally and socially appropriate
  - technically correct
  - brief
  - relevant
  - practical
  - positive74
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- You need to be able to back your message up with an illustration – descriptions of the extent of the problem, success stories showing what can be done, or human-interest stories.
  - Any data included in the message should be as localised as possible – for example, for a national campaign on sanitation, the key figures should be the level of sanitation coverage in that country, rather than the global picture.





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# Message Pre-testing

- Whenever possible, messages should be pre-tested with representatives of the intended audience, especially when pictures and other visual materials are to be used, which are easily misunderstood.
  - Pre-testing materials helps to determine whether the target audience understands the message; can grasp and verbalise the meaning of pictures or audio-visual material easily and quickly; and finds the pictures culturally acceptable.
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## What to write for whom: example

WHO?	ACTIONS	Form of written communication
Health ministry	<i>adopt a policy</i> to provide the new vaccine in hospitals and health centres	professionally written report(s)
Newspapers, radio, television	<i>promote awareness</i> with informative and interesting features for the public	feature articles or press releases
Parents	<i>be aware/informed</i> about the benefits	leaflets, posters, pamphlets, public meetings
Parents	<i>demand</i> health centres to provide the vaccine for their children	leaflets, posters, pamphlets, public meetings, newsletters
Public	<i>call for</i> the adoption of the new vaccine	leaflets, posters, pamphlets, public meetings
Health professionals	<i>support your</i> cause	pamphlets, newsletters, professional reports/publications
Health scientists	<i>confirm your</i> findings	publications
Teachers	<i>educate</i> students about the benefits	pamphlets, newsletters, posters, leaflets
Local leaders	<i>promote awareness</i> through public meetings	pamphlets, newsletters, posters, leaflets

# ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

WHO?	ACTIONS
Health ministry	<i>adopt a policy</i> to provide the new vaccine in hospitals and health centres
Newspapers, radio, television	<i>promote awareness</i> with informative and interesting features for the public
Parents	<i>be aware/informed</i> about the benefits
Parents	<i>demand</i> health centres to provide the vaccines for their children
Public	<i>call for</i> the adoption of the new vaccine
Health professionals	<i>support</i> your cause
Health scientists	<i>confirm</i> your findings
Teachers	<i>educate</i> students about the benefits
Local leaders	<i>promote awareness</i> through public meetings

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## APPEALING TO HEARTS AND MINDS

- Different audiences have different priorities. They have their own agendas, objectives and values. So they will be impressed by different things. A government committee may be impressed by pages of statistics, but such material is unlikely to win you support at the grassroots.
  - Like all of us, however, people whose attention we are trying to attract have other things on their mind. There may be many others who are competing for their attention. Why should they read what you have written? What's so special about you? Even if they see what you write, will they read it? And if they read it, will they understand it? And if they understand it, will they do what you want them to do?
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