

HOW TO DEVELOP SMART BEHAVIOURAL OBJECTIVES / RESULTS

Be smart. Always define SMART behavioural objectives or, in the context of the results-based management approach - SMART behavioural results - that are specific to a problem (like reducing diarrhoea outbreaks in a community). Avoid citing generic behaviour results like "to raise awareness" or "to improve knowledge". These are useful only if they lead to behavioural results. The rapid changes that are characteristic in emergencies make your planning and results-setting imperative. It is therefore a **MUST** for you to define behavioural results in specific terms before you develop your strategy and begin to implement.³

Avoid the tendency to proceed with your communication strategy without the benefit of evidence-based planning. The inexperienced would go ahead and say "Let's print a poster to address people's lack of knowledge". Also avoid this mode of thinking: "Let's use the same strategy for polio eradication for our hand-washing campaign". Both approaches are doomed to failure and are not sustainable. Achieving behavioural impact, maintaining the intended behaviour and influencing others to follow suit in a sustained manner - require research and consultation with the participant actors within their own environment. This entails far more than simply printing a poster.⁴

How to do it

1. Answer the following questions to help you develop behaviour

objectives/results. To do so, you and your team need to work with the affected community.

- Whose behaviour needs to change to bring about a given desired health or social outcome in the emergency (mothers'; primary caregivers'; fathers'; neighbours'; volunteers'; health workers'; religious leaders', teachers'; politicians')?
- What are the current behaviours? Why are people currently doing it all the time; doing it sometimes, or not doing it at all? What factors account for the difference?
- If they are not doing it now, why not? Are they practising a similar desired behaviour? How can you best influence and support that behaviour? What are the barriers to change?
- What factors - social, cultural, economic, environmental, psychological, physiological, etc. - and who, what, where are the most influential channels that can motivate changing or maintaining the behaviour?
- What skills and resources are needed for the affected groups to practice the desired behaviours?

2. Conduct a rapid communication assessment using a combination

(triangulation) of techniques. The rapid assessment will give you the answers to

the above questions and will help you define your SMART behavioural results. To do this, you can conduct exploratory or transect walks and participant or non-participant observations. You can also engage in discussions with key informants and opinion leaders such as religious and secular heads, community opinion leaders – usually the elders and local leaders - service providers, relief workers and others. You can further gain insights into people's social habits, attitudes, risk behaviours and underlying vulnerabilities of families and communities through community mapping, network analysis, focus group discussions (men, women and children) and other participatory learning approaches or PLA tools. While they participate in these activities, they too gain collective insights about themselves and their own communities. You can perform these rapid assessment techniques easily and quickly in an emergency setting.

3. Analyse, prioritise, and finalise the statement of behavioural results

after you have collected the information you need. Do so with representatives from the affected groups. Remember to keep the list short – too many behavioural expectations are as bad as none at all. Target a few behaviours, if possible not more than three behaviours that are feasible for the intended participant actors to practice.

What is a SMART behaviour objective/result?

Behavioural results are best stated in terms of the **intended behaviour change or the maintenance of an existing desired behaviour**. A behavioural result usually has at least three features, which makes it a **SMART result**:

- Clear identification of the participant group.
- Detailed description of the promoted behaviour (appropriate and realistic); and how many times the behaviour should take place.
- The measurable result you hope to observe over a specific time period.

Examples of SMART behavioural objectives and results:

Behaviour Objective:

Within two weeks from the start of the emergency, to increase from 30 percent to 60 percent the number of caregivers who wash hands with soap or ash and water before preparing food, after going to the toilet and after washing the baby.

Behaviour Result:

Within six weeks from the start of an emergency, the number of Community Nutrition Promoters who provide friendly and accurate answers to questions at every nutrition education session would have increased from 30 percent to 60 percent.

Footnotes

- ¹ SMART is an abbreviation for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound. See Chapter 2 for more information.
- ² *Adapted from Parks, W., et al., Planning Social Mobilization and Communication for Dengue Fever Prevention and Control, WHO, Geneva, 2004, p. 35.*
- ³ *Adapted from Oxfam UK, Guidelines for Public Health Promotion in Emergencies, Oxfam, London, 2001, p. 34.*
- ⁴ *Adapted from Parks, et al., op.cit., pp. 35-36.*
- ⁵ *Graeff, J., Programme Communication Advisor, UNICEF, Bangladesh Final Report on Behavioural Monitoring Workshop, UNICEF, Dhaka, 2005.*

