



Pre-Testing Print Materials

Pre-testing is done during the process of creating communication materials to assess the extent to which the message and content of the material is well understood by the audience that you aim to reach.

Steps:

1. It is best to have two people conducting the pre-test, one to facilitate and one to take notes.
2. Pre-testing can be done in single sex or mixed groups. However, if the material discusses a very sensitive issue, it may be wise to have single sex groups and age specific groups as this might make participant speak more freely. This is especially true when discussing violence against women.
3. Gather a group of individuals for whom the material is intended to reach. Explain that your staff/community members have made materials to be used in the community and you want to know how they are understood and if they will be effective. Stress to participants that there are no right or wrong answers and that they are the experts.
4. Meet with participants in a quiet place and sit in a circle with the group. Talk with participants briefly to get to know them, if you do not know them already. This will make the group more comfortable and begin to build trust.
5. Remember that throughout the process you are trying to hear the real opinions of the participants, no matter what they have to say. You are not just looking to hear statements that reinforce your own aims and ideas.
6. Ask participants to look at the learning material (e.g., poster, exhibition, booklet, etc.), and then ask open-ended questions to elicit their opinion. It is important that the questions you ask do not lead the participants to answer a certain way. For example, starting with the question "What do you like about the poster?" assumes that they do actually like the poster and influences them to answer positively. Also avoid asking such broad questions that it is difficult for people to understand and respond. For example: "What do you think about the poster?" may be too general and broad for people to answer meaningfully. Consider some of the following:
 - How does this poster make you feel?
 - What do you see in this picture?
 - What does the message/words mean to you?
 - What do you think about the characters?
 - What do you like about the material?
 - What don't you like?
 - What do you think we could change to make the material better?

7. It is important throughout the pre-testing that you remain objective and do not try to convince participants to have a certain opinion about the material. Try to listen to the comments, and resist making any comment or judgment about their opinion or ideas.
8. After the group has discussed the learning material, sit with your co-facilitator and the others who participated in the development of the material to discuss any changes that may be needed.
9. Conduct additional pre-tests to get additional feedback if necessary.
10. Remember that not all suggestions/comments must be incorporated, as sometimes they are a result of people's own perceptions or fears (e.g., not wanting to discuss violence openly, etc.). Instead, think through the ideas and decide on which you feel are important to respond to by making revisions. If major changes are required, you may need to do a second pre-test.