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# UNIT 16 NUTRITION EDUCATION COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME: FORMULATION

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## 16.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous unit, we briefly discussed about the process of Nutrition Education Communication (NEC). These processes are conceptualization, formulation, implementation and evaluation. We discussed in detail about the conceptualization and enumerated different elements of nutrition education communication. In this unit, we will study in detail about formulation of nutrition education programme. Formulation here means to give shape and structure to the different elements conceptualized during the process of nutrition education. Thus we would learn how we design a nutrition education programme. We will begin by learning how specific objectives of a nutrition education programme should be set. How to identify the target audience for nutrition education? How to design messages and choose media for delivery of messages? These are the other aspects covered in this unit. We will conclude this unit by discussing how we can develop a strategy to communicate our messages to the target audience.

### Objectives

After studying this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the importance of setting objectives for nutrition education communication (NEC) programme,
- identify the target audience for NEC, based on specific criteria,
- enumerate the criteria for designing effective communication messages and selecting appropriate channels, and
- develop skills to develop a communication strategy.

## 16.2 SETTING OBJECTIVES OF A NUTRITION EDUCATION COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME

We have read in the previous unit and also earlier in Unit 7 that for identifying an **existing** problem, we conduct a nutritional assessment. Nutritional assessment of the **community** can give us information on the existing nutrition and health **problems** in terms of quantitative data. For example, if through the nutritional assessment we determine that only "3% of infants 6-9 months of age are initiated into complementary foods in a particular community", then we may like to see an improvement in this practice in a given period of **time** as a result of our nutrition education programmes. So we may set up an objective saying that at the end of two years 35% of infants 6-9 months of age would initiate complementary foods. However, you would realize that, objectives of the NEC programme can be set at different levels like nutritional, educational and communication. These objectives must be quantifiable and consistent over the life of the programme. Let us study in detail about the different levels of these objectives. We shall begin with nutritional objectives.

### A. Nutritional objectives

The primary objective of a nutrition intervention programme is the nutritional improvement of the target group as measured by the indicator's of nutritional status. Nutritional status is a complex phenomenon which is influenced by many factors external to an educational intervention. The time frame within which different indicators are affected by interventions differ. The nutritional objectives would therefore be defined with short term and long term objectives. If we design an educational programme aimed to change behaviour in the short term ( for example, improving complementary feeding practices of 6-9 months old infants) within the long term objective of improving nutritional status ( for example improving weight for age), then we will have to see that the external factors which affect the nutritional status are favourable. These external factors, for example , are, improved food production, availability of food and improved health facilities. You know that **all** these are conditions which are outside the control of communication intervention. Thus, short term objectives can be achieved based on the interventions which are **independent** of external factors. For example, improving awareness in mothers in nutrition. You may realize that it is important to set nutritional objectives in measurable terms but **understand** that the long term objectives will be achieved only when factors **external** to communication interventions are conducive to their achievement.

Let us look at the educational objectives, now:

### B. Educational objectives

These objectives are concerned with changes in **behaviours** of the target population. The specific objective of a NEC programme is to bring about lasting changes in the **behaviour** affecting nutritional status. Adoption of new behaviour depends upon many factors external to communication programme. Educational objectives should be operationalized as far as possible. These provide the basis for preparation of an objective evaluation of the intervention. To be operational, an educational objective should state clearly the following points:

- what observable behaviours will indicate that the objective has been achieved'?
- who will show the various behaviours?
- what will be the results of the new behaviour?
- under what conditions will the behaviour be shown?, **and**
- what criteria determine that the desired result has been achieved?

We can also have intermediate objectives, which are concerned with changes in motivation, knowledge, self efficacy and the skills required. These objectives can be achieved independent of the external factors.

Let us next look at the communication objectives.

### C. Communication objectives

The communication objectives relate to exposure of the target population to the message and its retention through various channels of communication. The goal of any communication programme, you would agree, should be to bring about a lasting change in the behaviour of the population. You should remember that in the field of communication, the methods are as important as the results. For example, we can have two communication programmes which achieve the same objectives of message retention. The first programme may do so due to authoritarian approach which results in a relationship of dependence on the media while the second programme may be participatory and encourages the population itself to make informed decisions to solve their problems. We would prefer the second communication programme. Having learnt about different kinds of objectives, we can develop a hierarchy of objectives as shown in Table 16.1.

**Table 16.1: Hierarchy of objectives in a nutrition education communication programme**

Types of objectives	Examples
<i>General objectives</i> (long term, nutritional)	● x% of target audience would have improved nutritional status by the end of five years.
<i>Specific educational objectives</i> (change in behaviour, short term nutritional)	● x% more of the target audience compared to baseline will report introducing their children to complementary foods at 6 months.
<i>Intermediate objectives</i> (changes in knowledge, motivation etc.)	● x% more of the target audience compared to baseline will state that children need to start on top foods (complementary foods) at 6 months or will state where to obtain ORS packets or will demonstrate knowledge of the growth monitoring chart and state that when the curve begins to descend and the child needs special help in feeding.
<i>Communication objectives</i> (exposure and retention of messages)	● Compared to baseline, x% more in the target audience would have heard a radio programme, or possess a growth chart, or have attended anganwadi sessions within x months of communication activities start-up.

Thus, you learnt that we can set *nutritional*, *educative* and *communicative* objectives depending upon the problems identified in the nutritional assessment. These objectives could relate to exposure to media, knowledge, behaviour and outcomes of nutritional situation. Every NEC programme should specify quantifiable objectives in the beginning of the programme.

You can see in the cited example above, that we are using the term target audience in our objectives. You learnt in the previous unit that we generally name vulnerable groups for nutrition education as target audience. There may be other groups also in the community who may be considered as target audience. Let us learn more about this in the coming section.

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## 16.3 IDENTIFYING A TARGET AUDIENCE

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The formulation phase, we learnt earlier, also deals with identification of target audience. What do we mean by target audience? *Target audience is the population with whom we communicate for change in behaviours.* You know that an individual's behaviour is extremely important for his or her health. However, it is not always the individual who makes the decisions. We often find that other persons in the family and community influence a person's behaviour. For example, mother or mother-in-law will influence what food should or should not be given to an infant. Communications should thus be also directed at the persons who make the key decisions in the family and community i.e. the 'gate keepers'. The target population of a NEC programme is, therefore, made up of different groups. These can be *vulnerable groups* and *target groups*. The vulnerable group in fact may be the target group but now always it is so. For example, pregnant women in a NEC programme are the vulnerable population, as well as, the target audience for education. But this is not the case for vulnerable population of 0-5 year old children. The target audience for this group is their mothers or grandmothers. The target audience can be further divided into three segments. These are primary, secondary and tertiary audiences. Let us review these in a little detail.

- 1) *The primary target audience:* These are the individuals who would actually change their nutrition health practices. For example, mothers of young children who would modify their behaviour to feed their children.
- 2) *The secondary audience:* These are the people who can be motivated to teach, support, and reinforce the practices and beliefs of the primary audiences. Examples of secondary audience are health care providers, family and friends, and popular public figures. Few communication programmes are successful if they ignore the potential of these groups.
- 3) *The tertiary audience:* These are the decision-makers, financial supporters, and other influential people in the community such as pradhan or school teachers. They can facilitate the communication process and behaviour change and make the programme a success.

Thus target audience consists of primary, secondary and tertiary audience. Nutrition education communication planners must use the results of demographic, socio-economic, and epidemiological research to determine different types of audiences. We need to clearly spell out the specific audience we need to target during the NEC programme.

In child survival and nutrition programmes, the primary audience generally consists of caretakers (mothers), grandmothers, and sometime - older siblings. However, in an area where service providers have limited knowledge and acceptance of these skills related to the new practices, planners may also want to consider health workers, supervisors, or other opinion leaders as the primary audience for the first stage of the programme. Since there is a large category of people involved with programme implementation, planners usually segment these audiences. For example, urban mothers may need a different communication strategy and different educational materials than rural mothers. Given limited time and resources, planners must designate the audience segment most critical to programme success. This may be a geographic or socio-economic group considered at highest risk, one with low access to nutrition care services, one which can be most effectively reached with limited resources or an existing outreach system, or the segment which is most inclined towards initial adoption of new behaviours.

In our discussion so far, we have studied about how to set objectives and identify target audience. The next step in formulation is how to *design messages*. We will study this in the next section. But first let us recapitulate what we have learnt so far in the check your progress exercise 1.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 1**

1. What is the formulation phase of nutrition education communication process?  
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.....  
.....
2. Enumerate the different types of objectives one need to set for a NEC programme.  
.....  
.....  
.....
3. Mention the different types of audience who can be targeted for nutrition education  
.....  
.....

**16.4 DESIGN MESSAGES**

We studied earlier that formative research is crucial and it helps to determine the current behaviours of the target audience and the factors affecting these behaviours. As a result, we identify the gaps and give recommendations for desirable behaviours. Now comes the challenging task as to how do we put these recommendations across to the people. We want the target audience to improve upon the current behaviours so that it leads to improved nutritional and health status. You may recall studying earlier that results of formative research also help us to identify different channels of communication for the target audience. We are now ready to develop appropriate messages and support materials for the nutrition education programme.

Before we go any further, we need to first understand, what we mean by messages, media and support materials. Let us find out.

- Message is the formulation of an idea or concept to be transmitted to a specific population ( for example, breast milk is the best food for infants)
- *Media* is the channel of communication through which the message is transmitted ( for example, counseling, group discussion etc.), and
- *Supports* are the materials on which the message is transmitted (for example, flip charts, radio programme etc.)

Having distinguished between message, media and support materials, let us now review the process of developing these elements. In developing messages, channels of communication and support materials we need to ask certain preliminary questions to ourselves, for example, for developing:

- messages, the first question we could ask is what words should be used and in what order?
- *media*, we could ask, what type of media? What is the optimal media mix for a particular situation?
- support materials- Which materials to use, what colours and what pictures/images? You would realize that all these questions are interrelated. The contents of the message influence the choice of media and support materials. These, in turn influence how the message is formulated. Selection of support materials is dependent on choice of media. For example, if we want to counsel the rural illiterate women, then we may develop poster, flip charts etc. If we want to use mass media such as radio, we may develop script for a radio programme. We will learn about effectiveness of various media to different target groups later in this unit. However, whatever be the message, it is important that the message be persuasive and coherent.

So then how do we design messages. Let us first discuss the essential elements of a message design and how we design persuasive and coherent messages conveying the specific recommendations to the target audience.

### 16.4.1 Essential Elements of a Message Design

For a message to be coherent, persuasive and effective, the essential elements include:

- *Content* – this includes the problem identification, target audience, resistance points, solutions and required action.
- *Design* – the design factors such as use of single ideas, using language that is relevant, portrayal of characters with which the target audience can identify or relate themselves.
- *Persuasion* – that is dispelling doubts and reducing the chances of the doubts acting as a barrier to action.
- *Memorability* – that is, idea reinforcement, minimizing distraction and using repetition as a strategy.

Thus, messages designed should consist of what is actually communicated, including the appeals, words, pictures and sounds that we would use to get the ideas across to the target audience. We would like our messages to be persuasive and coherent so that they are effective in changing attitudes and behaviours of the target population. But then how do we design persuasive and coherent messages? The next section focuses on this aspect.

### 16.4.2 How we Design Persuasive and Coherent Messages?

We learnt earlier that a well designed message should reach the target audience. Although there is no one formula for effective message design, there are several useful guidelines. These are enumerated here for your consideration:

- *Nature of the advice given:* A message will only be effective if the advice presented is relevant, appropriate, and acceptable and put across in an understandable way.
- *The type of appeal:* The appeal is the way we organize the content of the message to persuade or convince people. Let us see the different types of appeals:

*Fear:* A message may try to frighten people into action by emphasizing the serious outcome from not taking action. Symbols such as dying persons, dead child or mother, and skulls may be used.

*Humor:* The message is conveyed in a funny way such as a cartoon or an animation.

*Logical/factual appeal:* The emphasis in the message is on conveying the need for action by giving facts, figures and information. For example giving facts/figures on the causes of anaemia or malnutrition.

*Emotional appeal:* Attempts to convince people by arousing emotions, images and feelings rather than giving facts and figures, e.g. showing smiling babies.

- *One-sided message:* Only presents the advantages of taking action and does not mention any possible disadvantages/limitations that may exist.
- *Two-sided message:* Presents both the benefits and disadvantages ('pros and cons') of taking action.
- *Positive appeals:* Communications that ask people to do something e.g. breastfeed your child as long as possible, give ORS to children suffering from diarrhoea.
- *Negative appeals:* Communications that ask people NOT to do something i.e. do not bottle-feed your child.
- *Actual content of message:* This includes the actual words, pictures, sounds that make up the communication and convey the appeals. In a radio programme the content would be a mix of the advice given, wording, tone of voices and music. A poster would contain the basic appeal, pictures, words, photographs, symbols and colours.

Thus if we follow these guidelines, we will be able to make our messages persuasive and coherent for target population.

Another important point which you need to remember is that we cannot overwhelm the target audience with too many messages, therefore, we need to prioritize the recommendations and limit them to 2 or 3 messages.

Having designed our messages, next we need to decide on the choice of media and then develop support materials. You may recall that design of support materials depends upon the choice of media. Let us now learn about choice of media.

## 16.5 CHOOSING THE MEDIA A M) MULTI-MEDIA COMBINATIONS

You know that the media are the channels of communication through which messages are transmitted. We discussed earlier that information about different communication channels can be obtained during formative research in a community. Thus, while conducting nutrition education programme, we can make use of these channels in a most effective way to transmit the messages. What are the different channels of communication one can use in nutrition education communication? Let us find out.

Nutrition/health information can be communicated through many channels to increase awareness and assess the knowledge of different population about various issues, products and behaviours. Channels might include:

- *Interpersonal – face-to-face or interpersonal methods* include all those forms of communication involving direct interaction between the source and the receiver. For example, individual discussions, counseling sessions or group discussion, community meetings and events.
- Mass Media communication such as newspapers, magazines, booklets, leaflets, exhibitions with charts, models, posters, radio, television and audio visual aids like films and documentaries.
- Traditional channels/folk media such as story telling, play acting, song with a message, hand puppets or string puppets and others.

Figure 16.1 Illustrates the different channels/media one can use for communication

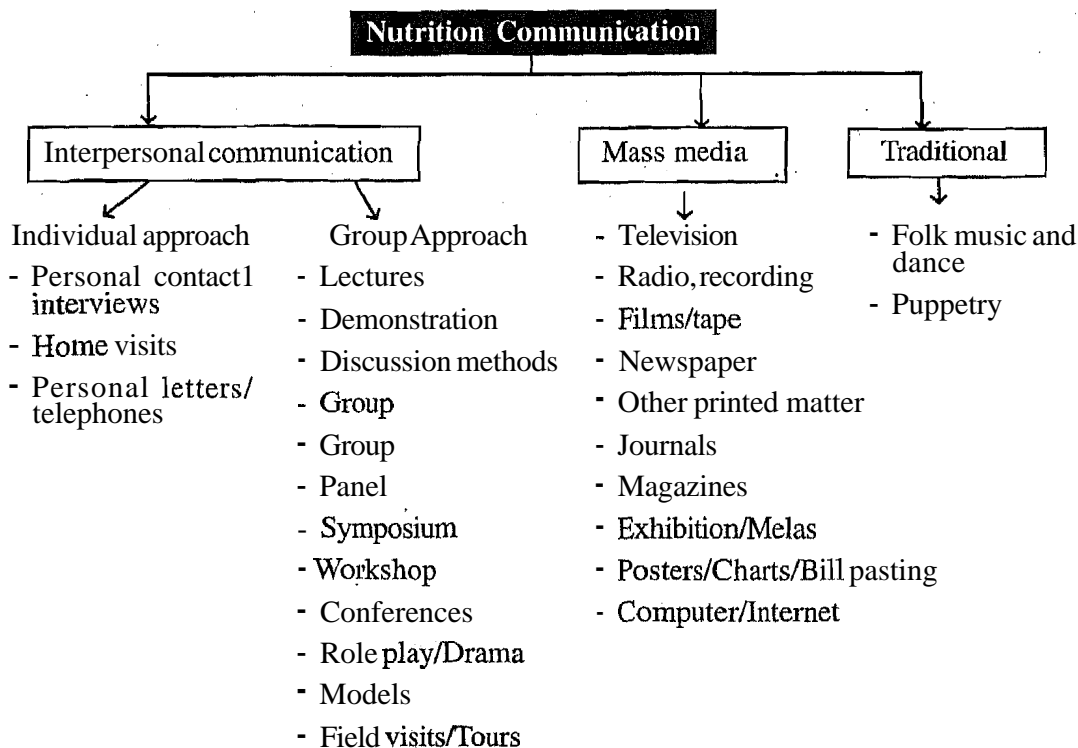


Figure 16.1: Channels of Communication

Let us look at these channels now in detail with their advantages and limitations.

### 16.5.1 Face-to-Face or Interpersonal Methods

As stated above, face-to-face or interpersonal method include all those forms of communication involving direct interaction between the source and receiver. In this method, voice is the main organ of communication, but the use of other support materials is highly recommended. These support materials can be printed, visual, and audiovisuals. They reinforce the oral communication between the educator and the target audience. Interpersonal communication is a very effective way of studying the nutrition problem and for adapting the necessary messages. It is important for you to know that interpersonal communication is of considerable importance in any strategy for public education. In fact, *the most successful attempts to change nutritional habits have been based mainly on interpersonal communication usually used in conjunction with other methods.* Thus, interventions in nutrition education must encourage interpersonal communication. You would realize that most people working in development programmes are involved in interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication may take place in two kinds of circumstances. These are: One-to-one counseling and group situation. Let us understand these in detail. We will look at one-to-one counseling first.

#### a) *One-to-one counseling*

One-to-one counselling can take place when the caregiver or mother visits the doctor, health worker or anganwadi worker. These functionaries can listen to the mother/caregiver's problems and help her find solution to her/his problems. The messages given by them should complement those transmitted via other channels of communication. They can reinforce the messages relevant to the public.

#### b) *Group discussions*

Group discussion involves face-to-face interaction with a group of people. Sometimes it is desirable to work with groups of people not only to save time and money but also to benefit from group dynamics. Examples of face-to-face group discussions are: lecture, demonstration, meetings, community events, role play etc. Face-to-face group discussion can be a small group (less than 12 persons) counseling, intermediate group/lecture (between 12 and 30) and large group lecture/public meeting (more than 30).

We have looked at the different forms of interpersonal methods of communication. Now let us get to know the advantages and limitations of face-to-face method of communication. We shall look at the advantages first.

#### *Advantages of face-to-face methods*

The main advantage of face-to-face methods is that it is possible to contact specific groups, make the advice relevant to their social needs and develop problem-solving skills and community participation. It is also possible to check that you have been understood and give further explanations.

The advantage of face-to-face communication over mass media is that it creates opportunities for questions, discussion, participation and feedback. Let us look at the limitations, next.

#### *Limitations of face-to-face methods*

Face-to-face methods are slower for spreading information in a population because of the need to mobilize field workers and travel to different communities to hold meetings. There are not enough educators for the intensive personal contact needed on a mass scale. Also the communicator may be ineffective if he/she is "ill-informed, uses an unsuitable approach, or holds a status in the community felt to be inconsistent with his/her role". Further, as the size of the group increases, it is more difficult to have feedback and



discussion. In large groups and public meetings usually only a small number take part and many persons feel shy speaking out. Finally, person-to-person education carried out by paid workers is difficult to justify in terms of cost-effectiveness.

Having looked at the interpersonal methods of communication, let us next, study about mass media.

### **16.5.2 Mass Media Methods**

What do we mean by mass media? The term "mass" in mass media means that we *can reach large number of people at a time* through the means of communication employed through this approach. Mass media methods comprise *the institutions and techniques by which specialized groups employ technological devices (press, radio, films, television etc.)* to disseminate symbolic content to large heterogeneous and widely dispersed audiences. Thus in mass media methods, the interaction between source and the receiver is mediated through the visual image, print, verbally or by a combination of these elements. The source and receiver are never in direct contact in mass media methods. Mass media include *broadcast media* such as T.V, radio etc. and *print media* such as newspapers, magazines etc. Mass media plays a very important role in creating awareness and interest in new ideas among general population groups.

You may also be aware about the technological innovations taking place in the world today and we should not forget the presence of *computer* in our daily life. In fact, *computers* in nutrition communication are becoming very important means to disseminate information across the globe. The information can be disseminated through internet, electronic mail (*email*), chat rooms and multimedia. On internet, we have data base of various topics in nutrition, research, and reports of programmes and projects conducted in any part of the world. All these can be downloaded easily on the internet. Nutritional professionals all over the world are using *email* to exchange ideas, documents and data. *Email* is a very fast, easy and inexpensive means of communication. You might have used chat rooms to converse with your friends or relatives electronically. Chat rooms are also a type of electronic communication where several people sitting miles apart from each other can engage in a face-to-face conversation through the computers. Chat rooms can be used to discuss nutritional issues and exchange ideas. You must have heard of multimedia programming used in computers. *Multimedia* is a computer controlled combination of text, graphics, sound, photographs, motion pictures and other types of media. There are many types of multimedia programmes available which can be used in nutrition communication and nutrition training. The programmes can be used by both professionals and consumers. Some of these programmes include food service and recipe management, dietary data collection and nutrient analysis. You might have seen *colourful* brochures on the internet promoting a product or services. These are prepared using multimedia programming. Similarly, nutritional brochures can also be designed using multimedia and distributed to large groups of people accessing the internet. Satellite based interactive teleconferencing can also be arranged to discuss nutrition issues and for teaching students sitting at far off places as is being practiced by IGNOU.

Let us then review the advantages and limitations of mass media. We begin with the advantages first,

#### *Advantages of mass media*

The advantages of mass media include:

- It provides a rapid way to reach a very large (even non-literate) audience.
- It makes good use of scarce manpower.
- a Mass media are not only appropriate to inform and to create or reinforce change, but may also help to motivate and teach.
- It can be inexpensive, at least in terms of cost per person reached.

Next, let us look at the various limitations

### *Limitation of mass media*

Mass media though effective, have certain limitations as well. These are:

- As mass media are broadcast to the whole population, they are not a good method for selectively reaching specific groups, e.g. grandmothers or teenagers. It is difficult to make the message appropriate to the special situation of local communities, whose problems and needs may be different from the rest of the region. Even if a person hears something on the radio and wishes to change, those around them may pressurize him or her against change.
- Particularly for large and diverse audiences, mass media alone cannot persuade people to change deep-rooted attitudes or learn complex skills, since mass communication cannot possibly have the required cultural, linguistic, and social sensitivity nor receive individual feedback that will help assure that messages are relevant, appropriate, and understood by the audience. A well-planned programme involves a carefully chosen mix of both face-to-face and mass media methods, which exploits their different advantages. For example, we can counsel the rural women on child nutrition. We can also present the information on child nutrition through a radio programme so that the messages, which she receives through counseling, get reinforced.

Let us review traditional media now.

### **16.5.3 Traditional Media Methods**

The traditional or folk media are the traditional methods of communication prevalent in a community. In contrast to the modern mass media, the traditional media are personal, familiar and more credible forms with which the majority of literate and illiterate individuals identify easily. There can be three different types of traditional or folk media. These are folk *music*, *ballad forms* of folk and puppetry. In the folk music, there are 300 folk musical styles in India. These folk musical styles are used in all languages and states in India. These are entertaining and invite audience participation. Ballad forms of folk approach involve folk singing. The range of folklore presented through these ballad styles is extensive and full of variety. Some common forms of ballad style include *Burrakatha* (Andhra Pradesh), *Villupattu* (Tamil Nadu), *Alha* (Uttar Pradesh), *Jugani and Vaar* (Punjab), *Powada* (Maharashtra) and many others. Puppetry has fascinated people of all ages but children, in particular, for centuries. Puppet shows are an effective communication folk approach practiced in many cultures. Puppets come in many forms, these are string puppets, rod puppets, shadow puppets and hand puppets,

Community gatherings, religious meetings and ceremonies can also provide opportunities for nutrition-health education. Let us look at some of the advantages of folk or traditional media. These include:

- traditional media is cultural specific and community can easily identify the context and understand the messages,
- it appeals at a personal and intimate level,
- it is available to all at a very low cost,
- it is flexible in adopting new themes, and
- it preserves and disseminates the tradition and culture of our ancestors in a lively manner.

You must be wondering as to how do we choose the right channel of media i.e. face-to-face, mass media or traditional approach for nutrition education programmes. There are some criteria which we follow for choosing the channel of communication. Let us review these next.

## 16.5.4 Criteria for Selecting Methods

We have studied about the different channels of communication in the previous subsection. Now the question arises, which method we should select to **communicate** our messages? Obviously, that would depend upon the various parameters such as what are the objectives? Who is the audience? What is the budgetary allocation? Let us look at these parameters and see how they influence the choice of method.

- *The learning objective:* Our 'learning' objectives would determine if **we** need to convey simple facts, complex information, problem-solving skills, practical manual e.g. psycho-motor skills, or simply target for an **attitudinal** change? For example, if we want to teach mothers to recognize what a malnourished child looks like, we would perhaps use media that include visuals such as posters and chart etc.
- *Characteristics of the audience:* We will have to know what are the characteristics of the audience that will affect choice of channel? e.g. age, experience in life, education level, previous exposure to media, ownership of radio/TV, listening, watching and reading habits, familiarity with different media, traditional communication methods already in use in community.
- *Characteristics of different methods:* We will have to know how much will the different methods cost, including initial costs and operating maintenance? How many staff members and what levels of skill are involved in using the method? What field requirements will affect the use of the equipment, e.g. need for electricity, storage and transport needs.
- *Costs:* We have to ensure availability of funds for initial purchase, spare parts and maintenance, charges for electricity, paying for trained staff for media production, maintenance and implementation.
- *Other programme considerations:* There will be other programme considerations for which you will have to answer many questions like - if you need a visual dimension, e.g. a picture, to explain your point? Is sound necessary? How agreeable is the community of new ideas? Will they be resistant to your advice? How urgent is your time scale? Is it a short or long-term priority? Do you want to develop community participation?

So we have looked at criteria, which when considered, would help decide what communication channel we can choose to communicate our messages. You would realize that it is always better to use several channels to **transmit** the same message than a single channel. Why? Using several channels will reinforce the message delivery and is more likely to be effective for behaviour change. So how do we do that. **There** are two aspects which we can look at to consider which **media** is best suited to bring about a change in behaviour. First is its relative strength and weakness in relation to improving the various parameters of nutrition education and the other is how effective it is with different types of audience. Let us look at each aspect one by one. Let us look at the strengths and weakness of various media.

### A. Strengths and weakness of various **media**

It is important for you to understand that each channel has a specific impact on us. For example, using a specific channel of **communication**, we may gain in knowledge, we may change attitudes **and/or** we may retain a mental image of what we see or develop verbal or demonstration skills. These are the factors or parameters which will contribute to change in behaviour. We may acquire various parameters in varying degrees depending upon the type of media used in the nutrition education programme. This translates into its strengths and weaknesses. Table 16.2 highlights the various parameters and the relative strengths of media in changing various parameters of nutrition education.



**Table 16.3: Methods of communication for different target groups**

Communication Methods	Rural women	Rural men	Urban population	Field workers	Village leaders	School children	General public
<b>Group Communication</b>							
Television			+++				+
Radio	+	+++	+++	+++	+++	+	+++
Written Press			+	+		+	+++
Posters	+	+	+	+++	+	+	+++
Popular theatre	+++	+++	+	+++	+	+++	+
Video			+	+	+		+

**Interpersonal Communication**

Practical demonstration	+++	+	+	+		+++	
Fix film	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++	
Audio cassette	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++		
Personal contact	+++	+++	+++	+++	+	+++	
Flanellographie	+++	+	+++	+++	+	+ f +	
Flip chart	+++	+	+++	+++		+++	
Brochures		+	+	+++	+	+++	t
<b>Institutional Communication</b>							
Meetings				+	+		
Information notes				+	+++		
Inter-village visit	+	+		+	+++	+	

**Key:** Less effective +  
Very effective +++

We can note from Table 16.3 that while using mass media, television as a means to reach urban population is very effective. Similarly, while using interpersonal communication with rural women, demonstration and use of flip charts may be very effective. Thus we may want to use a specific channel of communication for a given target group in order to make the communication effective.

Having learnt about strengths of various media and their effectiveness in reaching different media, we can next move on to learning how we can determine the best multimedia combination.

### C. How to determine the best multimedia combination

First what do we mean by a multimedia combination? A multimedia combination involves a *systematic and organized use of several channels of communication*. If we use several channels of communication in such a way that each one of them reinforces the other, so that their collective impact is greater than the sum of their influence taken separately, their overall impact on the education intervention is increased. This principle is also known as synergy. It is well known that interpersonal communication is the best way of communicating with the target audience. The basis of a media mix is the interaction of interpersonal communication with mass media communication. An essential element of many successful nutrition education programmes has been to use a multimedia combination. We know that each channel of combination is specific in its own way. The challenge is to find the best combination which can result in the realization of objectives. For example, as we would note from Table 16.3 that if we want to reach a group of rural illiterate women, we can use popular theater or traditional/folk music to communicate specific message. We can also communicate the same message through counseling and practical demonstration. This will have a synergic effect and lead to reinforcement of messages. It can, therefore, be seen that the ideal approach is to select not one, but several complementary media to maximize the potential for a successful intervention.

Having looked at the various channels to deliver the messages, we can now look at how we communicate our messages to the target audience in a systematic way. This brings us to a very important step of designing the nutrition education programme, that is, development of a communication strategy for behaviour change. Let us look at this now.

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## 16.6 DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

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A communication strategy is *a planned and systematic way of communicating messages to the target audiences*. We can have a clear and well defined strategy to communicate our messages, based on the key elements discussed above. A communication strategy can guide us about behaviours to be changed in the target audience, and messages and materials to use through various media. There are nine components, which form part of a communication strategy for behaviour change. These components are derived from our discussions above. These also serve as a basis for the detailed implementation plan. These components are:

1. Ideal behaviours
2. Current behaviours
3. Feasible behaviours
4. Barriers to behaviour change
5. Audience
6. Messages
7. Media and materials
8. Activities (e.g. Training, community mobilization, advocacy, counseling, negotiation during group meetings and household visits)
9. Monitoring and evaluation

Let us briefly review these components one by one.

*Ideal behaviours:* Ideal behaviours are the recommended behaviours which the target population should follow to achieve optimum health and nutritional status. These recommendations are those which are suggested by the experts in the area of nutrition and health. For example, a major recommendation for infants 6-9 month old is that "in

addition to breast milk, the child should receive complementary foods at least 3-4 times a day". Ideally, we would like all mothers to follow this recommendation so that the infants are healthy.

*Current behaviours* : Current behaviours are the behaviours currently followed by the target population. It may or may not be ideal. For example, current behaviour of a six month old child may be that he/she has not started any complementary foods yet. He/she is on mother's milk only.

*Feasible behaviours*: Feasible behaviours are the behaviours which have been tried by the target population during trials of improved practices (TIPS) as discussed in the earlier Unit 15 and found acceptable. The feasible behaviours guide us to develop our messages.

*Barriers*: These are the resistance points which need to be overcome while delivering messages during various channels of media. For example the barriers in infant feeding may be lack of awareness and traditional beliefs.

*Audience*: The target audience for communicating messages, as you may recall studying earlier, can be primary, secondary and tertiary. Continuing with the same example of feeding complementary foods to children 6-9 months old, it would be mothers of infants 0-12 months of age, anganwadi workers, mother's groups and families, who would form the target audience.

*Messages*: We can develop our message accordingly. Using the same example as above, our message can be "Start feeding 1-2 tablespoons of soft mashed cereals and vegetables once a day". "Mother's milk alone is not sufficient to meet the growing needs of infants after 6 months - the infants need complementary foods".

*Media and Materials*: From the findings of the formative research, we learnt about the channels of communication most popular in our community. For example, we may determine that the most popular channels of communication are face-to-face or interpersonal methods. Then we use counseling and group meeting as methods to communicate our messages. We can use the materials such as flip charts, flash cards and posters.

*Activities*: When we implement the nutrition education programme in the community, then we will be conducting certain activities such as training, community mobilization, counseling etc. We will discuss some of these activities in detail in the next Unit 17 on implementation of nutrition education programmes. These form a very important part of our communication strategy.

*Monitoring and evaluation*: Finally, we develop a monitoring and evaluation plan and include in the communication strategy. For example, we might organize review meetings with the staff implementing the programme on a regular basis to monitor the programme. For evaluation we might plan an evaluation at the end of the programme to assess if we have achieved the objectives or not. We will discuss this in detail in Unit 17 and 18.

Thus we learnt about how various steps would eventually lead to formation of a communication strategy. We are now ready to implement the nutrition education programme in the field. We will study this in the next Unit 17.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. What are points to be considered for development of effective messages?

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.....

2. Fill in the blanks

- a) The different communication channels are....., .....and ..... media.

b) The main advantage of face-to-face communication over mass media is that it creates opportunities for.....and .....

c) The advantages of mass media is that it makes good use of scarce.....

3. List any three criteria, you would adopt for selection of communication channels?  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

4. What do you understand by the concept of multimedia mix?  
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5. What are the different components of a communication strategy ?  
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## 16.7 LET US SUM UP

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We learnt in this unit that after the conceptualization of a nutrition education programme, next step is to formulate the programme. Formulation gives shape and structure to different elements of a nutrition education programme. There are many steps involved in formulating a nutrition education programme. These steps are: setting measurable and well defined objectives in a nutrition education programme, identification of target audience, designing messages and materials and choosing media and media mix. We studied about how to design persuasive and coherent messages. We learnt that it is always better to use a combination of media mix rather than single media. A combination of media mix helps to increase the impact of nutrition intervention. We concluded the unit by elaborating upon various steps of a communication strategy and we are ready to carry out the programme in the field.

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## 16.8 GLOSSARY

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- Attitudes** : affective, motivational, perceptive and cognitive lasting set of beliefs related to a reference group which predisposes an individual to react positively or negatively to these references.
- Behaviour** : overt action of an individual.
- Culture** : a set of rules or standards shared by members of a society which when acted upon by the members produce behaviour that falls within a range of variation the members consider proper and acceptable.
- Print media** : a medium that disseminates printed matter.



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## 16.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Formulation phase of nutrition education communication signifies giving shape and structure to the different elements conceptualized during the process of nutrition education. It includes elements such as how to set specific objectives of a nutrition education programme, how to identify the target audience for nutrition education, how to design messages and choose media for delivery of messages and develop communication strategy.
2. Different objectives of a nutrition education programme are nutritional objectives, educational objectives and communication objectives. The primary objective of any nutrition intervention programme is the nutritional improvement of the target group as measured by the indicators of nutritional status. Educational objectives are concerned with changes in behaviours of the target population. The communication objectives relate to exposure of the target population to the message through various channels of communication and retention of these messages.
3. Different types of audience who can be targeted for nutrition education are primary target audience (caretakers, mothers etc.), secondary target audience (family, friends etc.) and tertiary target audience. Primary such as decision-makers, financial supporters and other influential persons in the community.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Development of effective messages depends on, nature of the advice given, the type of appeal, and actual content of message.
2.
  - a) face-to-face, mass, traditional
  - b) questions, discussions.
  - c) manpower
3. Three criteria for selection of communication channels are: i) The learning objective, ii) Characteristics of the audience, and iii) Characteristics of different methods.
4. A multimedia mix/combination involves a systematic and organized use of several channels of communication in such a way that each one of them reinforces the other, so that their collective impact is greater than the sum of their influence taken separately, their overall impact on the education intervention is increased. The basis of a media mix is the association of interpersonal communication with mass media communication.
5. Various components of a communication strategy are: ideal behaviours (recommended behaviours), current behaviour ( behaviours currently followed by target audience), feasible behaviour (behaviours found feasible and acceptable by the families ), barriers to behaviour change, audience, messages, media, materials and channels, Activities (e.g. Training, community mobilization, advocacy, counseling, negotiation during group meetings and household visits), and monitoring and evaluation.