

Best practices checklist

RADIO CONTENT AND PROGRAM DESIGN

This simple tool is based on international best practices for designing and implementing 'radio for development'. This term refers to radio content and programming that is intended to facilitate learning, social and behavioral change and emergency, risk and accountability communication.

The tool is a checklist to guide effective program and content design and can be used as an analytical framework for assessment.

Who should use this checklist

- Radio station managers / producers / editors / journalists / presenters (community / national etc.) and media production companies
- Community-based organisations (CBOs) / Civil society organisations (CSOs) / Government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) / Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) / International NGOs (INGOs) / UN agencies / Donor partners – those involved in managing, funding or developing radio programs and campaigns as a standalone intervention or as an activity of a larger development program
- Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) teams for development programs that include radio broadcasts
- Communication for Development (C4D) and media development practitioners

How to use this checklist

- Review this checklist upon the commencement of any radio program design
- Use it as a planning tool for radio program content and format design
- Adapt it to your specific programmatic needs - add items to the checklists
- Use it as a framework for assessing a radio program or campaign during or after implementation and to inform future phases

Why use this checklist

- To ensure best practice is applied to the design of radio for development programs
- To increase reach, effectiveness, efficiency and impact of radio programs

1. Objectives	
<p>Make sure the objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly stated Measurable Actionable Realistic <p>Before rolling out a radio program define the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overall purpose of the radio program The main outcomes or changes that the radio program is intended to contribute to 	<p>Use a Theoretical Framework or a Theory of Change to guide radio program design:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there a Theory of Change that maps out how the radio program will achieve the desired outcomes? And/or has a Theoretical Framework been developed to guide the design of the media components including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defining communication objectives - Shaping formative research - Selecting of radio program formats - Treatment of content - Assessment of outcomes
<p><u>CHECKLIST: Objectives</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Objectives are clearly stated, actionable, measurable and realistic</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The purpose of the radio program is clearly stated and understood by the production team, including presenters, scriptwriters and other stakeholders</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> A Theory of Change or a Theoretical Framework has been used to guide the design of the radio program</p>	

2. Target Audience Analysis	
<p>Identify and research the target audience(s), their characteristics and their media access and consumption before content creation is started:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group/participant whose change in learning, participation and/or behaviour is the main determinant of success • Secondary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People from the same cultural and social environment as primary audience, whose behaviour, actions and support greatly influence the primary audience. • Tertiary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have the ability to help or hinder the outcomes and the behaviour change of the primary and secondary groups. - They represent the wider social and cultural group and have the capability to create an enabling environment for change. <p>Determine what type of research will be conducted to define and study the target audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of existing reports / data • Purchased audience data • Qualitative interviews and focus groups • Flash random surveys • Quantitative household surveys • Etc. 	<p>Make sure you <u>know</u> your target audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are they? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Age - Gender - Language spoken – most understood for clear messaging - Geographical location - Education levels • How do they listen to the radio? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solar, battery or electricity radios - Online - On mobile phone • Who do they listen to the radio with? • When do they listen to the radio? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are they doing other tasks when they listen to the radio (working, housework, childcare, driving etc.)? • Do they own a radio or do they share a radio? • Where do they listen to the radio? • What other radio programs do they listen to? • Who do they trust for information on a particular subject? (health, emergencies, education, financial etc.) • How do they normally receive information about your radio program topic?
<p><u>CHECKLIST: Target Audience</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> A research plan to define and study the target audience exists and complies with ethical guidelines</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The target audience characteristics and media access and consumption patterns and preferences are clearly understood</p>	

3. Formative research / assessments

<p>Formative research is conducted to inform the radio content and program design to establish:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> existing levels of knowledge, attitudes and practices of the target audience relating to the intended outcomes of the radio program main factors, especially barriers, that influence the target audience's motivation and ability to learn, participate and/or change their behaviour a baseline from which to measure the impact of the radio program <p>(Formative research may be done in tandem with the target audience analysis/media consumption research in the section above.)</p>	<p>Formative research ensures radio program content is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tailored to the audience's needs and priorities Relevant and engaging for listeners Focused on gaps in knowledge, attitudes and practices Designed to facilitate measurable change in outcomes relating to learning and behaviour changes Scheduled to ensure the greatest amount of reach and listenership <p>Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secondary data/document review Knowledge, attitudes, practices and behaviour (KAPB) survey with the primary target audience Focus group discussions (with primary, secondary and tertiary audience groups) Participatory methods (mapping, life stories etc.) Key informant interviews (e.g. with health workers, teachers, emergency workers)
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<p><u>CHECKLIST: Formative research</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The target audience is involved in the formative research – through participatory engagement – focus group discussions, listener groups, semi-structured interviews or other means <input type="checkbox"/> A desk-based / literature review of existing reports, programs, evaluations, KAP studies, is conducted <input type="checkbox"/> Key stakeholder interviews are carried out <input type="checkbox"/> Key informant interviews are conducted in various locations to capture geographical / community nuances <input type="checkbox"/> Measurable (SMART) indicators are developed to assess the radio program and its effects <input type="checkbox"/> Key characteristics of the target audience are documented to inform the format and content design, scheduling and branding of the radio program
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4. Format	
<p>Select the most appropriate formats to use in the radio programs, which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reflect best practices in terms of style and presentation, drawing on theory and practice e.g. talk shows and call-in shows for discussion and debate; drama for role modeling behavioural change; interactive lessons for educational broadcasts Take into consideration the available budget, timeline, production expertise, technical capacity etc. 	<p>Hold a planning/orientation session with stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Producers Presenters/hosts Journalists Scriptwriters Radio Station management Subject matter specialists <p>Guidance should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Objectives Target Audience media preferences Creative brief Tips for hosting, interviewing and scripting Tips for audience engagement and feedback Sample audios of high quality programmes, if available
<p><u>CHECKLIST: Format</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Best practices are followed for format selection and development – drawing on theory and grounded in evidence from audience research, testing etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Guidance is provided to participating producers, presenters, journalists, guests and radio stations 	

5. Content	
<p>Keep in mind key criteria for developing radio program content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the language simple and free of technical jargon? - Is the most commonly spoken language/dialect used (for the target audience)? - Is the language easy to understand? • Tone and pitch <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the tone and pitch of the content appropriate for the topic (example, comedic elements may not convey the seriousness of a topic) • Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the structure of the content allow the radio program to be followed easily and the key messages clearly heard and repeated? • Messenger <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the presenter / journalist / and guests trusted sources of information or messenger? • Relevance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the references / features relevant to the target audience – for example, does content take into account geographical and cultural contexts and differences? 	<p>Develop guidance to accompany the radio program for participating stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producers • Presenters/hosts • Journalists • Scriptwriters • Radio Station Management • Invited guests/experts <p>Guidance should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of research / Key messages /curriculum • Scripts, including questions to ask on air • Glossary of key terms • Notes about dispelling misinformation or prevalent rumors • Tips for hosting, interviewing and scripting
<p><u>CHECKLIST: Content</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The radio program uses the main languages/dialects spoken and understood by the target audience <input type="checkbox"/> The radio program uses language / terminology that is easy to understand <input type="checkbox"/> Identified trusted sources / guests / presenters / journalists deliver, discuss and recap key content/messages <input type="checkbox"/> Guidance is provided to participating producers, presenters, journalists, guests and radio stations 	

6. Partnerships and communication	
<p>Key stakeholders and groups should be consulted during radio program development to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Content reflects government policy and service availability Buy-in and support from government, civil society and local/community organizations Linkages are made with relevant goods and services and other sources of information and advice Messages are clear and appropriate and complement existing initiatives with the same objectives 	<p>Work with relevant stakeholders to gain on-going support and inputs to program design and content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating radio stations Media organizations Government departments and agencies Non-governmental and community based organizations Local decision-makers/authorities Traditional leaders Subject matter specialists / technical experts Existing listener groups/audience panels <p>Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High level meetings/advisory panels Stakeholder Interviews Community meetings Press briefings Policy reviews Service mapping Feedback and sharing mechanisms e.g. WhatsApp groups
<p><u>CHECKLIST: Partnerships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consultations are conducted with key stakeholders prior to and during program rollout <input type="checkbox"/> Existing and new listener groups have opportunities to make inputs into the radio program content 	

7. Listener engagement

Listeners are encouraged and feel willing to engage with the interactive elements of a radio program:

- Digital and social media channels and platforms are available for listeners to access e.g. SMS / WhatsApp / Facebook page/ Twitter /Station or program website
- Listener call-in segments are planned for programs
- Listeners are requested to send in their messages and questions when the program is both on and off-air
- Formal Listener Groups or fan clubs are set up and regularly convened and consulted

Key considerations:

- Presenters/hosts/producers encourage and facilitate listener engagement on and off-air
- Contact numbers, website and Facebook pages are publicized clearly and frequently
- Security around sharing information / data safeguarding policies is observed
- Anonymity/privacy needs of audience members are respected

Listener engagement allows for:

- Responsive radio programming
 - Content and messaging can be tailored, adjusted and expanded to address specific needs and concerns of the audience
 - Formats can be tweaked in line with audience likes and dislikes
 - Allows for assessment of audiences' understanding of content
 - Allows for rumours, misinformation, and fake news to be rebutted quickly and accurately
- Opportunities for local voices to be heard and acknowledged
- Opportunities to directly hold decision-makers accountable
- Improved monitoring and evaluation including data collated from listener feedback and digital and social media analytics

CHECKLIST: Listener engagement

- The radio program creates opportunities for listeners to actively engage with the program and its content
- Scripts for radio programs take into account the need to encourage listener engagement
- There are mechanisms to capture engagement and feedback to adjust radio program content for future broadcasts, and feed into monitoring and evaluation reports

8. Pre-testing	
<p>Pre-testing of the radio program (full episode(s) if possible), its branding, scheduling/timing as well as its content and format:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main participant groups in more than one location listen to a pilot program and provide feedback Key stakeholders are given an opportunity to listen to the radio program and provide feedback Feedback is incorporated into the radio program prior to its initial broadcast Additional aspects of the program such as scheduling, branding, theme music etc. are shared during pre-test and feedback is gathered and incorporated 	<p>Pre-testing of radio programs prior to broadcasting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases the impact by ensuring that the content is clear, easy to understand, received well, engaging and addresses the concerns of the main participant group Provides value-for-money by allowing for adjustments prior to the investment in multiple broadcasts Helps reduce the listener “drop-out” rate by ensuring the content is appropriate and engaging <p>Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus group discussions with audio playback Community meeting with live airing Individual content expert review Broadcaster program review
<p><u>CHECKLIST: Pre-testing</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> A pilot episode of the radio program (or at least the concept) is pre-tested with the <u>main audience / listener groups</u> prior to broadcasting <input type="checkbox"/> A pilot episode of the radio program (or at least the concept) is pre-tested with <u>key stakeholders</u> prior to broadcasting <input type="checkbox"/> Feedback from pre-testing is documented and incorporated where appropriate prior to the initial broadcasting of the program 	

9. Incorporation of audience feedback	
<p>Audience feedback once programming is on-air:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanisms are put in place to capture on-going audience feedback Mechanisms are put in place to allow for responsive programming (see listener engagement section) 	<p>The incorporation of audience feedback into radio programming supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased impact by ensuring that the content is clear, easy to understand, received well, engaging and addresses the concerns of the main target audience(s) Reduced listener “drop-out” rate by ensuring the content is appropriate and engaging Rapid adjustments to content and format in line with changes in context, especially in emergency settings
<p><u>CHECKLIST: Incorporation of audience feedback</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Audience feedback is collected regularly to create responsive programming <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanisms are in place to collect, review and collate audience feedback <input type="checkbox"/> Feedback is regularly reviewed and incorporated into radio program content <input type="checkbox"/> The initial budget is designed to include edits and changes based on regular feedback 	

10. Monitoring and evaluation

A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework is designed prior to broadcast:

- Monitoring: Programming is assessed at the output level (e.g. quantity and quality of episodes produced and aired, number of listeners reached, quantity and quality of listener engagement) to ensure that it has been effectively implemented.
- Monitoring can be used to identify best practice and lessons for future programming and to facilitate ongoing adaptive programming.
- Evaluation: this seeks to assess whether desired/intended learning, accountability and/or behavioral outcomes have been achieved, and may also explore unintended and negative outcomes

A rigorously designed M&E framework should (ideally):

- Relate to main Theory of Change / theoretical framework and overall program objectives
- **Clearly define outcomes and outputs**
- **Contain a set of indicators** with milestones and targets to be achieved, against baseline data where appropriate
- **Outline the methods** and tools to be used to collect and verify data, and the sources of data
- Ensure the radio program's impact / contribution to change can be **measured and assessed**
- Go beyond anecdotal evidence to examine **actual reach, listener engagement, effectiveness and impact**

CHECKLIST: M&E

- The M&E framework is established prior to the radio program's broadcast
- The M&E framework relates to the overall Theory of Change and theoretical framework
- The M&E framework includes a baseline and milestones against which to measure progress
- Indicators are SMART (especially for quantitative indicators)
- Indicators provide insightful information to assess the radio program's impact and contribution to learning and behavior change outcomes
- The initial budget includes funds allocated to regular M&E

CHECKLIST:

Radio Program Design

1. Objectives

- Objectives are clearly stated, measurable and realistic
- The purpose of the radio program is clearly stated and understood by the production team, including presenters
- A Theory of Change or a Theoretical Framework has been used to guide the design of the radio program

2. Target Audience Analysis

- A research plan exists to define and analyse the target audience which complies with
- The target audience and its characteristics are clearly defined

3. Formative research

- The target audience is involved in the formative research – through participatory engagement – focus group discussions, listener groups, semi-structured interviews or other means
- A desk-based / literature review of existing reports, programs, evaluations, KAP studies, is conducted
- Key stakeholder interviews are carried out
- Key informant interviews are conducted in various locations to capture geographical / community nuances
- Measurable (SMART) indicators are developed to measure the impact of the radio program
- Key aspects about the target audience are documented to inform the format and content design, scheduling and branding the radio program

4. Format

- Best practices are followed for format selection and development – drawing on theory and grounded in evidence from audience research, testing etc.
- Guidance is provided to stakeholders responsible for production

5. Content

- The radio program uses easy to understand language and terminology
- The radio program uses the appropriate language / dialect for the target audience
- Identified trusted messengers / guests / presenters / journalists deliver key messages to the target audience
- Guidance is provided to participating producers, presenters, journalists, guests and radio stations

6. Partnerships and communication

- The radio program is developed in partnership with key stakeholders
- Listeners have opportunities to make inputs into the radio program content

7. Listener engagement

- The radio program creates opportunities for listeners to actively engage with the program and its content
- Scripts for radio programs take into account the need to encourage listener engagement
- There are mechanisms to capture engagement and feedback to adjust radio program content for future broadcasts

8. Pre-testing

- The full radio program (not just a concept) is pilot tested with the **main target groups** prior to broadcasting
- The full radio program (not just a concept) is pilot tested with **key stakeholders** prior to broadcasting
- Feedback from pilot testing is documented and incorporated where appropriate prior to the initial broadcasting of the program

9. Incorporation of audience feedback

- Audience feedback is collected regularly to create responsive programming
- Mechanisms are in place to collect, review and collate audience feedback
- Feedback is regularly reviewed and incorporated into radio program content
- The initial budget is designed to include edits and changes based on regular feedback

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

- The M&E framework is established prior to the radio program's broadcast
- The M&E framework includes a baseline from which to measure progress
- Indicators are SMART
- The M&E framework relates to the overall Theory of Change and/or theoretical framework
- Indicators provide insightful information to assess the radio program's impact and contribution to learning and behavior change
- The initial budget includes fund allocation for regular monitoring and evaluation

Additional resources:

1. Adam and Harford N. Radio and HIV/AIDS: Making a Difference. 1999. UNAIDS
2. Bangladesh Red Crescent Society, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. Broadcasting Live Radio Programs on Disaster Preparedness and Response through Community Radio Stations. Guideline. 2017.
3. BBC Media Action. Research summary: How did local radio stations support their communities during the Ebola crisis? 2016.
4. C-Change (Communications for Change). Developing a Creative Brief. 2012.
5. Catholic Relief Services. Communication Toolbox: Practical guidance for program managers to improve communication with participants and community members. Management Matters. 2013.
6. CDAC. Communicating with Communities and Accountability. Emergency Handbook. :1–10.
7. Daniels L, Petit-Perrot C. Using WhatsApp for Radio: A Toolkit, The Children’s Radio Foundation.
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9. De Fossard E. How to write a Radio Serial Drama for Social Development: a Scriptwriter’s Manual. 1997.
10. Education Development Center (EDC). Learning at Home in Times of Crisis Using Radio. 2020
11. Farm Radio International. Distance Learning in Crisis: Literacy over the radio [Internet]. 2020 [cited 2020 Dec 23]. Available from: <https://farmradio.org/distance-learning-in-crisis/>
12. Foundation Hirondelle, ICRC. Using Radio as a Means of Operational Communication and Community Outreach. 2019.
13. Hannides T. Bridging Theory and Practice Humanitarian Broadcasting in emergencies: A synthesis of evaluation findings. BBC Media Action. 2015.
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21. Smout E. Communicating in a crisis like Ebola: Facts and figures [Internet]. SciDevNet. 2015 [cited 2020 Oct 28]. Available from: <https://www.scidev.net/global/ebola/feature/communicating-crisis-ebola-facts-figures.html>
22. The World Bank. Improving Educational Quality through Interactive Radio Instruction A Toolkit for Policy Makers and Planners Paper Series: 2005.
23. Todd A, Weber A, Mulcahy-Dunn A, Venetis E, Nott J, Harris J, et al. Delivering distance learning in emergencies: A review of evidence and best practice. 2020.
24. UNICEF. Risk Communication and Community Engagement Preparedness and Readiness Framework Ebola Virus Disease. 2020
25. WHO. Communicating Risk in Public Health Emergencies. A WHO guideline for emergency risk communication (ERC) policy and practice. 2017.
26. Wilkinson S. Using media and communication to respond to public health emergencies: lessons learned from Ebola. BBC Media Action. 2016.