

Goals of the IMC/COMBI Method:

A continuing global dilemma for health and other social development professionals is finding effective ways to achieve behavioral impact

The challenges can be found in many development sectors: health, agriculture, girls education, labor and the environment. In health alone they include, among others, preventing and controlling a range of communicable and non-communicable diseases; getting children immunized; increasing the practice of family planning; preventing the spread of AIDS; reducing drug abuse; improving diet and nutrition; and encouraging more physical exercise. In addition, there are policy-related behavioral outcomes which are critical such as passage of new legislation or declaring new health policies.

In all of these, achieving behavioral impact is the central goal.

Many different approaches have been useful in the past, ranging from health education and development support communication to social mobilization. While there have been some successes, there has also been enormous frustration at not being able to achieve more at a faster rate. Social development programs, as a consequence, struggle along - but with modest behavioral impact. In the health field, for example, there is the continuing massive phenomenon of people apparently knowing what they should do for better health but who fail to act accordingly.

Conventional "Information-Education-Communication" (IEC) programs in health have been able to increase awareness and knowledge but have not been as successful at achieving behavioral results. It is clear that informing and educating people are not sufficient bases for behavioral responses. Behavioral impact will emerge only with strategically planned communication programs, purposefully directed at behavioral goals, and not directed just at awareness creation, or advocacy or public education.

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) offers a dynamic, proven approach to achieving behavioral results in health and other development programs.

The private sector experience over 150 years in successfully using IMC with consumer behavior (for products both awful and superb) points to an approach applicable to health and social development. IMC is not about posters and T-shirts and pamphlets. It begins with the client/consumer and a sharp focus on the behavioral result anticipated, clearly mapped out by practical market research or situation analysis related to the desired behaviors. It requires the integrated application of the disciplines of health education, adult education, mass communication, social and community mobilization, social media, marketing (including village-level marketing traditions), advertising, public relations and public advocacy, personal selling and counseling, client/customer relations, and market research, all dedicated to the ultimate goal of achieving behavioral results.

WHO has been applying this approach to various health issues (including emergencies and outbreaks) over the past 14 years and refers to it as "**COMBI**", Communication-for-Behavioural-Impact. UNICEF has applied the approach (within its framework of C4D - Communication for Development), to juvenile justice, maternal health, HIV/AIDS, promotion of iodized salt, immunization, child protection, child nutrition, and children and violence. UNAIDS and UNFPA has applied it to HIV/AIDS prevention and reproductive health. UNDP has used it with gender issues.

The course is intended for health and social development professionals who have the responsibility for designing, supervising or managing health education, health promotion, communication for development (C4D) and other information-education-communication (IEC) programs to achieve specific behavioral results in health and social development. Prior communication experience is not required for this Institute.

Participants will learn how to apply the techniques of IMC/COMBI in the strategic planning of communication programs for behavioral results. Participants will cover the following topics: Behavioral Goals and Role of Communication; Basic Communication Techniques (Mass Media, Small Group and Personal Selling/Interpersonal Communication/Counseling); Marketing Principles and Practices for IMC and Ethical Marketing; Marketing Research and Program Evaluation; Communication for Development (C4D); Sexual Health Communication; Community Mobilisation; Advertising, Social Media, and Public Relations; and an IMC/COMBI Practicum.

Your personal learning outcome: *As a participant in a working group you will apply the IMC/COMBI planning method to develop an IMC/COMBI plan for a health or social development field of your choice.*