

Concept Testing for Nutrition and Agriculture Social & Behavior Change Communication: The ENGINE Project Experience

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USAID | **ENGINE**
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Acknowledgements

Empowering New Generations to Improve Nutrition and Economic opportunities (ENGINE) is a five-year USAID-funded multi-sector nutrition project whose goal is to reduce Maternal, Newborn, and Child Mortality by improving the nutritional status of women and children under five in Ethiopia.

The creative concept development was done jointly by ENGINE's SBCC Teams at Save The Children and The Manoff Group.

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What is Concept Testing and Why is it Important?

- Part of the Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) process
- Blends product marketing research and development with social science research
- Identifies the best creative ideas (“creative concepts”) for materials design that will be effective with our intended audiences
- Clarifies other ideas or concepts to support clear communication and messaging

ENGINE's Research & Testing Activities supporting SBCC programming

- Baseline Survey
- Literature Reviews
- Formative Research
- Materials Audit
- Cultural Resources Inventories

CONCEPT TESTING:

- ❖ Multi-method Qualitative Research
- ❖ Groups of participants representative of priority audiences

SBCC Message and Materials Design

Pretesting

Finalize, Reproduce, Disseminate and Implement

Concept Testing Approach

- 5 regions in Ethiopia (Amhara, East Oromia, West Oromia, SNNP, Tigray)
- 30 total audience groups:
 - 10 groups: Husbands/Fathers of <2s
 - 10 groups: Pregnant/Lactating Women
 - 10 groups: Grandmothers of <2s
- 12-15+ participants per group
- Average duration: 2 ½ hours
- Audio recorded (17 GB of data)
- Refreshments provided
 - bananas, bread, roasted barley with peanuts, soft drinks/ water

Some of the Concepts ENGINE's Formative Research identified for Testing

A. *Creative concepts to help communicate about:*

1. The First 1000 Days
2. Diet Diversity
3. Family support for pregnant and lactating women

B. *General concepts to refine messaging on:*

1. Maternal Nutrition
 - a) “Eat an extra meal”
 - b) Snacking
 - c) Eating for two
2. Improved couple communication and joint decision-making

Q: What Concept makes the First 1000 Days easy to understand?

Answer: ENGINE's rural smallholder farming audiences found the "Four Sunflower Stages" creative concept appealing and relevant to their daily lives.



(1) Seed:
Pregnancy



(2) Sprout:
0-6 months



(3) Bud:
6-11 months



(4) Flower:
12-24 months



Formative Research Finding: Diet Diversity Messaging is Unclear

“She (the Health Extension Worker) told us to put different ingredients like maize, teff and sorghum into the food that we cook. Besides these she tells us to eat various types of food as much as possible ...No one teaches us about diet in detail...”

“I am eating seven types of food in a week. I need to eat 21 types [which are] beetroot, cabbage and the like- I can't mention all... I eat three categories of food: boiled beans in the morning. I need to eat tomato and other fried foods in the afternoon to be healthy”.

~ Pregnant women, Oromia region

Diet Diversity Concepts	Supporting Visuals
Comparison	
Rainbow meals	
Flag meals	
Star Foods/Reach for the stars	
Gulicha pillars for "balanced" meals	

Types of Questions asked to Test Diet Diversity Creative Concepts

1. *What do you see?*
2. *Which of these concepts do you find most appealing and why?*
3. *Which one do you think is the easiest to understand?*
4. *Which one do you think shows a situation closest to your life?*

Increasing Children's Consumption of Nutrient-Dense Foods

Formative research finding:

Parents are motivated to improve children's diets if doing so will help their children grow up to be *healthy, intelligent, and successful in school and in life.*

Creative concepts test result:

The "Star Foods" and "Reach for the Stars" concepts appeal to audience motivations while sharpening the focus on nutrient-rich foods



The “*gulicha*” concept also tested well in facilitating communication about “diet diversity” & “balanced” meals



The “gulicha” = “balancing” regular meals with nutrient-dense foods



Formative Research Finding:

Outside of the post-partum recuperation period, maternal nutrition and care is “nothing special”

“No, how can she do this [eat an extra meal]? It is not possible....so she doesn't prepare special food for herself and also there is no additional food for her. She eats what her family eats and what they have. It is difficult and not possible [for a pregnant woman or lactating woman to eat an extra meal]”.

~Grandmother- Oromia region

“There is nothing different provided for her, we just eat together. We don't provide her with something special because she is breast feeding”.

~Father- Amhara region

Broader Concept Test Results

Maternal Nutrition Concepts	Supporting Visuals
Eat an extra meal vs. Snacking	
Eating for two	
Queen Bee	

- Confirmed formative research findings that audiences perceive the recommendation to “eat an extra meal” to be inappropriate and not a “doable” behavior for pregnant or lactating women
- Confirmed that audiences perceive “snacking”, “eating for two” and tasting more of the food they are cooking as appropriate and “doable” behaviors for women
- Helped to shape effective messaging about supportive family actions for improved maternal nutrition

The “Queen Bee” concept tested well for promoting Maternal Nutrition and Supportive Family Actions

Types of questions asked to test this concept:

- Why is the Queen Bee important for the hive?*
- If the worker bees didn't provide special food and care for the Queen Bee, what would happen?*
- Compared to the other concepts, how relevant and appealing is this Queen Bee concept in explaining the importance of family support and good nutrition for pregnant and lactating women?*



Formative Research Finding:

Poor Couple Communication, Marital Discord are **Barriers to Maternal and Child Nutrition**

“Love does not exist among our family members. There is disagreement. We do not discuss ... I seek advice from other people, but not my husband since he does not understand... Given the fact that we are always clashing, I do not understand what he means even if he advises me. He also does not understand my advice. We’re always fighting... What can I say? If love existed, we could have managed to eat good food today considering the bad food we ate yesterday. But since there is always a fight between us, we do not advise each other”.

~Mother, SNNPR region

“...[A good maternal diet is] difficult due to shortage of income and disagreements a woman has with her husband. There is no agreement between them, so how can she get what she wants? Others may have agreement and peace within their family and they eat what they want... If there is agreement anyone can feed their children”.

~Grandmother, Oromia region

Concept Testing Methods for Couple Communication and Gender Roles

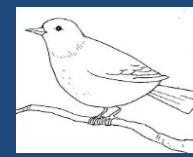
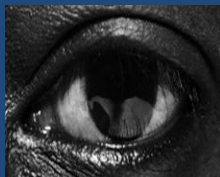
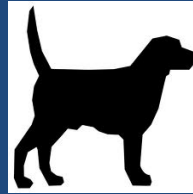
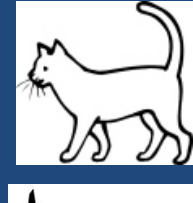
1. Pile sorts

Sort these images into one of these three piles and explain why you put them there:

(1) MAN

(2) WOMAN

(3) UNDECIDED



Concept Testing Methods for Couple Communication and Gender Roles

2. Picture Codes

Types of Questions asked to explore concepts for enhanced gender roles and communication:

Let's say that this couple is talking about an issue related to nutrition, and the foods the woman and their young child should be eating. How is their dialogue going?

Let's say that this woman has just told this man that she needs money to buy eggs for herself and their young son. What is the man saying?

Are these pictures realistic? Why or why not?



Concept Testing Methods for Couple Communication and Gender Roles

3. Diagnostic Role Plays (DRP)

Examples of instructions used to start the role plays with groups of fathers, mothers, and grandmothers:

- *Show me how, when and where a woman would tell her husband she's pregnant.*
- *Show me how a man would react if his wife asked him to give her money so that she can buy nutritious foods for herself and their young children.*



The “Honey & Water” * concept tested well for promoting Couple Dialogue and Joint Decision-making



**The “Honey and Water” concept was the idea of audience group members in Amhara region, who recommended this during the testing of other concepts.*

Women’s communication:

- speaks up and shares her opinion more often, but in a way that is still respectful and not impatient
- talks kindly with her husband, asks for his opinion
- asks her husband what he’s thinking about and says that she would like to help him make decisions.

Men’s communication:

- talks kindly with his wife, listens patiently
- asks for her opinion , affirms what she is saying
- asks his wife to join him in decision-making about resources for the family’s nutrition

Qualities of a Good Concept for Nutrition and Agriculture SBCC

- Appealing
- Memorable
 - Hits home, grabs emotions, holds interest
- Easy to understand
- Defines/Redefines key nutrition or agriculture issues and behaviors
- Tested with project audiences:
 - *After* formative research
 - *Before* message and materials design

