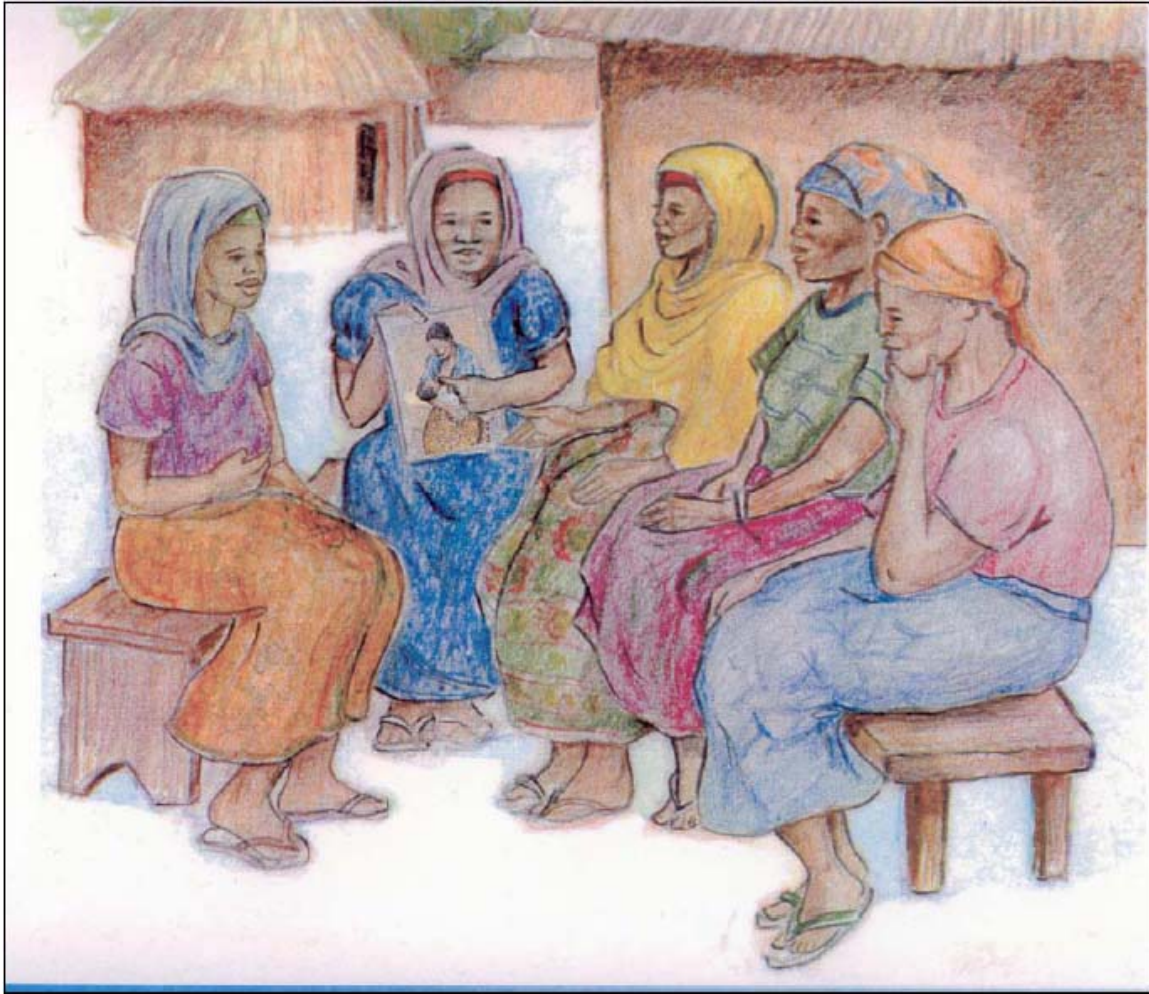


Development of Messages and Materials
to Promote Improved Infant and Young Child
Feeding: A Case Study in Northern Ghana



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Purpose: To build local capacity to develop and implement a communications strategy featuring radio, print, and traditional media to address infant feeding problems found in northern Ghana.

Generic IEC materials—both radio and print—are often developed in the national capital and disseminated nationwide for general use. LINKAGES, in collaboration with the Ghana Health Service (GHS) and partners in northern Ghana, instead chose a participatory process for developing materials for the promotion of improved infant and young child feeding practices in the three northern regions. By weaving their own ideas and experiences into all media outputs—illustrations, stories, songs, plays, and festivals—the GHS and partners made them especially appealing to northern audiences.

Steps Used in Developing Messages and Materials


1. Conducting Formative Research and Identifying Messages

- **Conducted a literature review** to find out what had already been written on the topic and to spark ideas for additional information needs on child feeding practices. Ten researchers, nutritionists, and public health specialists met for two days to review the literature and identify information gaps. Missing from the literature was information on why people feed infants the way they do and the role of family members in determining infant feeding practices.
- **Held a two-week messages and materials production workshop** to review findings from the literature review, identify key messages, develop the communication strategy, and draft culturally appropriate materials to promote exclusive breastfeeding. During the workshop, representatives from partner organizations working in northern Ghana as well as national representatives initiated the following process:
 - a. *Reviewed findings from the formative research and identified key messages.* The findings of the formative research suggested obstacles and opportunities for behavior change messages and strategies. The research indicated that family members have an important influence on how a mother feeds her child. For example, grandmothers—particularly mothers-in-law—have authority in the family. They command respect and like to be recognized as guardians of family health. Although they have good intentions, they lack new information. Consequently, the partners decided to involve older women in program interventions. Participants helped review focus group guides and made suggestions for gathering additional information needed for crafting the strategic direction for the program.
 - b. *Segmented the audience* into three groups—mother of children <12 months, grandmothers, and men—and *targeted messages* for these groups.
 - c. *Developed “creative briefs”* to define the overall communications strategy. Participants wanted the “tone” of all materials to be emotional, encouraging, and positive. They turned the messages into informative and creative materials—drama, songs, stories, radio spots, story cards, and counseling cards—and learned how to pretest the messages and materials in focus group discussions. Local artists who attended the workshop prepared draft illustrations for the counseling cards and flipcharts. Community members and workshop participants served as “models” for photographs taken with disposable

cameras. The communication strategy identified the following channels for delivering the messages: print, song, theater, radio, home visits, group meetings, and village festivals. At the end of the workshop, participants left with their creative briefs and copies of materials tailored to appeal to audiences in northern Ghana and to address specific child feeding problems in the region. They volunteered to pretest them in their communities.

The table below outlines a creative brief developed to reach grandmothers.

Example of Creative Brief: Grandmothers Support Exclusive Breastfeeding

<p>Audience: Grandmothers</p>	
<p>Tone: <i>Praise:</i> You are wise. <i>Encouraging:</i> You can learn and be a custodian of good breastfeeding practices.</p> <p>Appeal: Caring grandmothers support good breastfeeding because they desire strong, healthy grandchildren.</p>	<p>“Grannies should know about exclusive breastfeeding and how to feed their grandchildren so that they grow up to be plumpy, strong, and intelligent.”</p> <p>“Help everyone you know to learn and practice good breastfeeding and infant feeding for a healthier and happier family and community.”</p>
<p>Challenges to exclusive breastfeeding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief that breastmilk makes a child thirsty • Belief that one must give newborns water or concoctions to “welcome them into the world” • Belief that if a baby or child is not given water it will dehydrate and die 	<p>Message:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breastmilk has everything that the baby needs—both food and water—to satisfy and quench the baby’s hunger and thirst for the first six months. • The first yellow milk, colostrum, protects against infection and helps to clean the baby’s stomach and eliminate the first black stools. The yellow milk is God’s way of welcoming the child into the world. • Putting the baby to the breast immediately after birth helps to expel the placenta and reduce bleeding.
<p>Action: Encourage mothers to put the baby to the breast immediately and to give only breastmilk for six months. Help them position their babies correctly so that they can suckle well and get all the nourishment they need to grow strong and healthy.</p>	 <p>Card Five: Do Not Give Water</p>
<p>Media: Counseling cards, radio messages, and radio call-in shows</p>	<p>A series of nine counseling cards were developed for use with grandmothers. They are larger in size and print than cards used with pregnant and lactating mothers. Messages on the cards are also broadcast on the radio.</p>

2. Pretesting and Adapting Messages

- **Conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews.** Focus groups discussions with mothers, fathers, older women, traditional healers, and health workers provided additional information on local beliefs and customs. The draft materials and messages were tested in these groups. This step took place off and on over a four-week period.
- **Refined the messages and materials.** Individuals who participated in the first workshop returned for a six-day workshop to review the pretest and focus group findings and to refine the creative briefs, messages, and materials. The draft counseling cards were sent to LINKAGES Headquarters for technical review. Additional research was carried out in one district in the north using Trials in Improved Practices (TIPS). Findings from the research were used to further refine the messages. The first mother-to-mother support group training for trainers provided another opportunity to test the messages during the community visits and training of mothers.
- **Continued to develop materials for various media.** Over the next months project partners and participants in the workshops—including journalists and radio programmers—organized and participated in community festivals and created new songs, stories, radio spots, and radio programs to communicate the key messages.

Pre-testing Counseling Card with Target Audience



Training Health Workers and Grandmothers to Use Counseling Cards

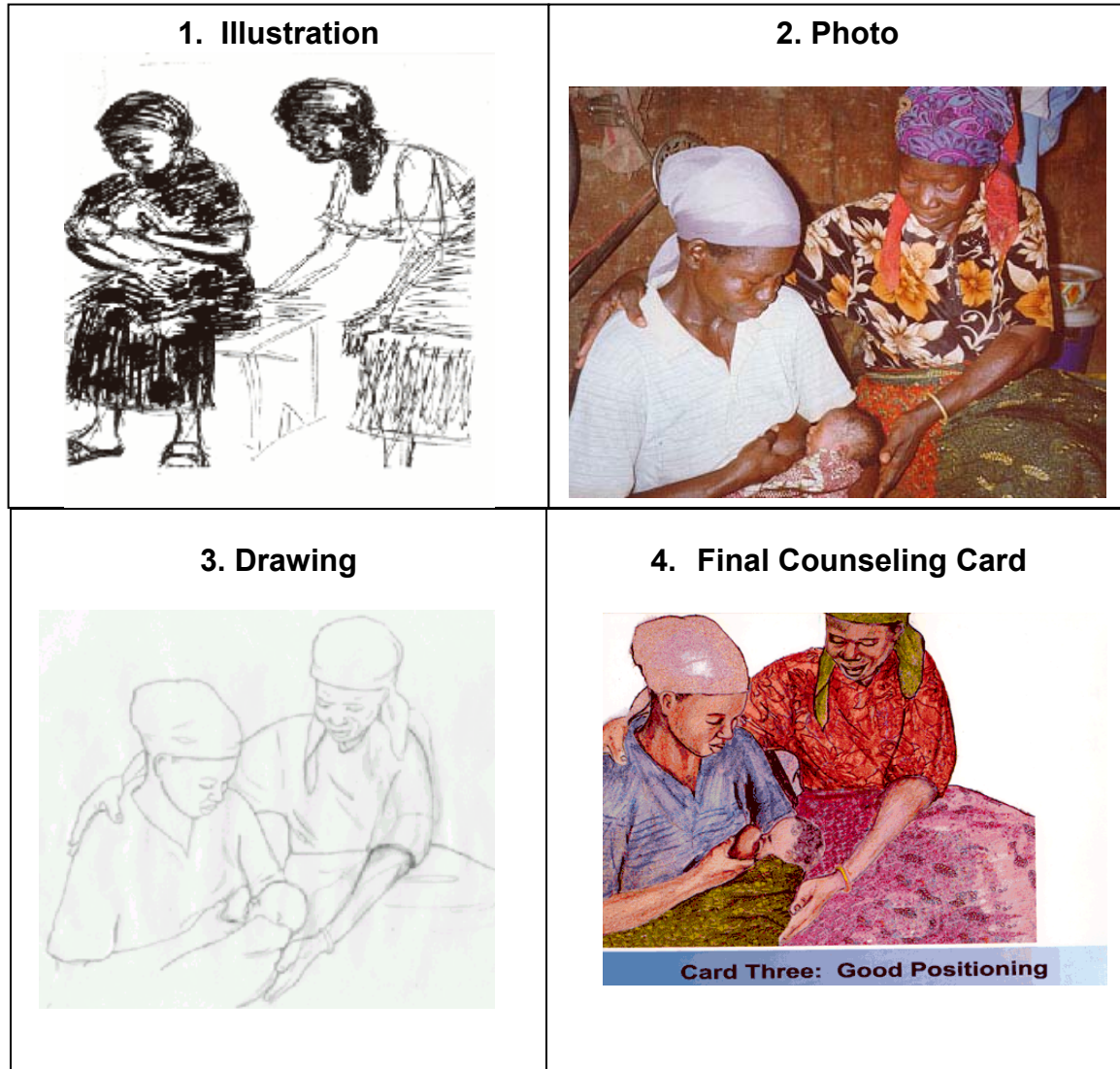


3. Producing Print Media

Mockups of counseling cards were prepared and submitted to a graphic artist for fine-tuning. The images selected were from photographs taken in the field during the workshops and pretests. The project produced nine counseling cards for grandmothers, eight cards for lactating and pregnant women, and a poster for men. Photographs were scanned into the computer and transformed into colorful illustrations, as shown below.

From Concept to a Counseling Card

Illustrate Concept → Take Photograph → Scan into Computer → Transform into a Drawing → Pretest → Refine drawing → Keep refining until get it “right” → Finalize



4. Training and Building Negotiation Skills

Partners who had been involved in the development of the materials were invited to participate in a two-week behavior change communication (BCC) workshop. During the training, they learned how to effectively use the new materials they had helped to produce. They practiced using draft counseling cards during field visits to negotiate behavior change and promote better breastfeeding practices in the community. Partners—equipped with simple training manuals for working with community volunteers and other educational tools—then trained others at the community level to disseminate key messages.

5. Disseminating Print Media

The final print materials were distributed about five months after the BCC workshop during a three-day refresher training focused on community mobilization. From the time participants drafted messages and materials at the first messages and materials production workshop to the actual production and dissemination of the counseling cards took nearly one year.

6. Monitoring and Evaluating Program Interventions

Each year the Ghana Health Service (GHS), LINKAGES, and its partners carry out a rapid appraisal survey to monitor the impact of program interventions. Information is collected on key indicators such as timely initiation of breastfeeding, exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and timely, appropriate complementary feeding. The target groups (mothers, grandmothers, and fathers) are asked questions on their knowledge of key infant feeding practices, the source of their information, and actions taken after hearing the messages. During the 2001 rapid appraisal, 53 percent of mothers, 39 percent of grandmothers, and 37 percent of fathers reported having been exposed to GHS/LINKAGES print materials on breastfeeding or child feeding. Radio listening is very high in the partner coverage districts with 75 percent of mothers, 72 percent of grandmothers, and 88 percent of fathers stating that they listen to the radio. Of radio listeners, 96 percent of mothers, 97 percent of grandmothers, and 99 percent of fathers reported that they had heard messages on breastfeeding or child feeding.