

WHEN A STORY ISN'T JUST A STORY

Catalyzing Communities to Change Behavior Through Immersive Storytelling

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OUR GOAL

Ghana WASH for Health’s project goal is to accelerate sustainable improvement in WASH behaviors, with a primary communication objective of expanding key

hygiene behaviors. The objective of this activity was to identify and promote a key set of WASH behaviors for mothers, caregivers, and other community members.

GETTING STARTED: UNDERSTANDING OUR AUDIENCE

- Conducted TIPs, community member observation, and focus groups with local leaders and officers determined what communities wanted and needed
- Research conducted in 64 households in 4 regions of Ghana
- Households provided information on their WASH behavioral challenges and discussed needed support for change
- Households chose from a series of behaviors to try over a two-week period
- Baseline and ongoing observations conducted, as well as follow-up visits, to discuss challenges faced and modifications made to make behavior changes manageable
- Findings used to detail the set of behaviors to promote with mothers, caregivers, and other community members



WHAT IS TIPs?

Trials of Improved Practices (TIPs) is a research technique developed by The Manoff Group to allow program planners to pre-test the actual practices that a program will promote, or to assess interventions already in practice for opportunities for tailoring

and improvement. In a TIPs study, participants representative of their community try out proposed changes to their behavioral practices, and their experiences and opinions are collected and used to inform design of a program or activity.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Developed and tested a communication package with instructions, fact sheets and checklists for facilitators, radio spots and interactive stories (discussion scenarios, role play, drama) for mothers, caregivers, and other community members
- Conducted more than 23 training workshops with 600+ participants pulling all levels of the community and diverse units across the districts including environmental, health, development and education officers
- 600+ trainees now working in 23 districts and 700 communities using these stories to help people adopt healthy WASH behaviors

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WHAT WE LEARNED

WASH/health practitioners using the stories said:

- the stories were tools to enhance what they were already doing;
- they were wide-ranging, actual stories that speak to the issues they must address in the communities;
- they provided choices of issues and modalities that they could select from depending on time, audience, and situation;
- they were well-researched and thorough, eliminating their own subjective interpretation; and
- they were consistent throughout, reinforcing the behaviors to be adopted

Community members hearing the stories said:

- the stories were interactive and immersive, allowing them to actively participate in and own the behavior change process;
- the behaviors and steps to follow in the stories were clear and manageable;
- the stories allowed them to discuss the situation with others, learn from their neighbors, participate in actions to take and not just be told what to do; and
- repeating the stories through the local radio spots reinforcing what they knew they needed to do



SO, WHAT WORKS?

A behavior-centered approach that focuses on:

- Critical factors to change
- Prototyping and pretesting
- Fostering and providing time for community iterations, refinements, and adaptations
- Encouraging flexibility to meet the needs of a wide variety of community preferences
- Providing training in use of methods for effective determination of local solutions