

Road Safety Best Practice: Communication Guide

The aim of this guide is to support governments in designing, implementing and evaluating behavior change campaigns to promote safer road use and compliance with traffic regulations, drawing on Vital Strategies' work under the Bloomberg Philanthropies Initiative for Global Road Safety.

Well-designed mass media campaigns, especially when paired with best-practice enforcement, can reduce risky road behaviors and shift social norms.^{1,2,3,4} Campaigns should target specific audiences with clear, evidence-based messages delivered through a mix of digital and traditional channels. These messages should run intensively for at least four weeks at times of the year when risky behavior increases. They should form part of a broader, multisector road safety strategy aligned with the World Health Organization's Safe System approach.

The WHO recognizes five key behavioral risk factors—speeding, drink driving, and improper use of helmets, seat-belts and child restraints. Of these, speeding is the top priority because it increases both the likelihood and severity of crashes.

WHO manuals on road safety risk factors for decision-makers and practitioners:



[Speed Management](#)



[Occupant Restraints](#)



[Drink Driving](#)



[Helmets](#)

ASPIRE to Change: Mass Media Campaign Development Framework

Analyze
the nature and scope of the problem



Strategize
the communication plan and steps to create change



Prepare
the resources needed to execute the strategy



Implement
the communication strategy



Review
and revise campaign using monitoring tools



Evaluate
the campaign



The ASPIRE six-step cyclical framework, developed by Vital Strategies, guides the creation, implementation and evaluation of strategic communication campaigns that drive meaningful change. Best-practice campaigns use research and data to inform every step of the cycle, from message development and testing to implementation and evaluation. This process typically takes about six months to complete. Road safety campaigns are most effective when grounded in behavioral theories, which can help explain how people perceive risks, form attitudes, perceive norms, form intentions and change their behavior. By drawing from frameworks such as the Theory of Planned Behavior, Social Cognitive Theory, and the Extended Parallel Process Model, campaign planners can design messages, select channels, and engage credible messengers in ways that meaningfully influence behavior and sustain safer road practices.

1. Road safety mass media campaigns: a toolkit. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2016. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

2. Phillips RO, Ulleberg P, Vaa T. Meta-analysis of the effect of road safety campaigns on accidents. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*. 2011 May;43(3):1204–18.

3. Elder RW, Shults RA, Sleet DA, Nichols JL, Thompson RS, Rajab W. Effectiveness of mass media campaigns for reducing drinking and driving and alcohol-involved crashes. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 2004 Jul;27(1):57–65.

4. Akbari M, Lankarani KB, Tabrizi R, Heydari ST, Vali M, Motevalian SA, et al. The effectiveness of mass media campaigns in increasing the use of seat belts: A systematic review. *Traffic Injury Prevention*. 2021 Aug 6;22(7):495–500.

Step 1: Analyze the Problem

Start by clearly identifying the road safety problem and the risky behaviors perpetuating it. Road safety behavior change campaigns are impactful only where best-practice laws and enforcement are in place, allowing communication to bring attention to the issue, reinforce compliance and generate behavior change.

Bring together a multisectoral group of partners to explore the issue, its scope and context, while clarifying roles, resources, and capacity. Be clear which agency leads the campaign and how responsibilities are shared.

Set up a campaign task force—including representatives of transport, health and enforcement agencies, community groups, drivers' associations and researchers—to guide development and meet at key milestones, from planning and concept review to launch, evaluation and assessment of lessons learned.

Use this analysis to define clear, measurable objectives and identify key target audiences. Given the range of road safety issues, set priorities and focus each mass media campaign on one risk factor at a time for clarity and impact, while aligning with a longer-term, multi-year strategy.

Key questions to answer:

- What problem are we addressing, and how can the communication campaign help solve it?
- What specific risky behaviors contribute to the road safety problem, and which road users are most responsible for and affected by these behaviors?
- What other social, cultural, political and technological factors may be contributing to the problem and need to be considered when developing the campaign strategy to address the problem?



[Strategic Planning Meeting Template](#)

Step 2: Strategize the Communication Plan

With data and audience insights in hand, the next step is to define the overall strategy, outline key components (formative research, campaign production, media and evaluation strategies, and available resources), plan their implementation and establish progress tracking. Research should guide the campaign strategy and help develop evidence-based messages that resonate with the audience.

At the end of this step, we should have a Campaign Concept Note—a comprehensive plan showing how strategic communication supports the campaign's behavioral objectives and overall goal.

Key strategy planning questions:

- What measurable outcome do we want to achieve as the overall goal?
- What is the campaign logic for how this outcome will be achieved—guided by behavioral theory?
- What are the communication and behavioral objectives that need to be met to achieve this outcome in line with the logic model?
- What do we want the target audience to know and feel? How should this influence their behavior and help reduce the problem?

Key campaign planning outputs:

- **Media Strategy:** Explain target audiences, message framing, key messages, the optimal mix of communication channels and platforms for each audience segment, credible spokespersons, PR and community outreach, and ways to amplify enforcement and support policy measures.
- **Research and Evaluation Strategy:** Define formative research strategy to inform campaign development, and evaluation research methods and indicators to measure campaign success including baseline and post-campaign surveys and ongoing monitoring and evaluation.
- **Resources and Capacities:** Identify human, financial, technical and pro-bono resources; indicate capacity-building needs, external vendors and budget allocation.
- **Timeline and Roles:** Develop a timeline with milestones, clear agency roles, coordination with enforcement, and realistic division of in-house vs. external tasks.



[Campaign Concept Note](#)



[Strategic Communication Research and Evaluation: A Practical Guide for Decision-Making](#)

Step 3: Prepare to Execute

With this step, you move from planning to action. Consolidate budgets and approve disbursement, strengthen team capacity, build key media contacts, and prepare requests for proposals and letters for pro-bono contributions. Outline vendor selection and financial procedures and coordinate closely with timing and scope of enforcement plans for alignment and synergy.

Frame Message

Develop evidence-based messages that resonate with your audience. Review existing social and behavioral data, lessons from past campaigns, and relevant desk research. Conduct additional formative research—focus groups, interviews, or surveys with drivers and key influencers—to better understand the audience, context and drivers of behavior. Message-testing focus groups can help refine messages and creative concepts, ensuring they are relevant, relatable and emotionally engaging, while also identifying trusted channels and messengers.

Use these insights to prioritize audience segments to target and determine how to reach and engage with them—what messages and materials will resonate, which channels to use, and which influential messengers will be most effective.



[Protocol for Pre-testing Road Safety Advertisements](#)



[Messaging Recommendations](#)

Finalize Media Placement & Dissemination

- **When:** Air campaigns during periods of increased risky behavior and targeted enforcement, with each phase lasting at least four weeks.
- **Where:** Use a mix of channels: traditional mass media (TV, radio) to achieve broad reach; digital and social media for precise, adjustable targeting; and roadside out-of-home placements near high-risk areas. Amplify messages through trusted messengers on platforms like TikTok and Instagram to increase engagement and make road safety relevant and relatable.
- **What:** Core video (30–60 seconds) with short, adapted clips for social media, radio PSAs, print materials, out-of-home designs and posters, and keywords for paid search, all with consistent messaging. Aim for 75% of the target audience to see each message at least three times per phase.
- **How:** Integrate messages creatively into trusted messengers' content. Use storytelling to engage audiences in ways that fit their everyday lives. Combine expert voices (trauma doctors, emergency responders, public health professionals) for authority with lived-experience voices (crash survivors, families) to build emotional connection. Include everyday road users (drivers, riders) to reinforce peer norms and trusted digital creators to make road safety relevant and engaging for younger audiences, rather than purely instructional.

[Creative/Production Brief](#)



[Recommendations for Effective Media Planning](#)

[Digital Media Recommendations](#)

Media Engagement

Plan a press event to mark the campaign's launch. Identify spokespersons (officials, police, experts, victims or peers) and provide talking points and supporting materials (press release, fact sheet, pitches). Prepare responses to potential tough questions and consider media coaching and briefing to prepare in advance.



[Personal Stories That Have Power to Save Lives](#)

Step 4: Implement

Follow the strategic communication plan to implement the campaign.

Hold a visible launch event with stakeholders and high-level representatives to reinforce collaboration and evidence-based messaging. Include a crash survivor, victim's family member, or peer to make messages relatable and emotive. Issue a press release and engage media to highlight key messages and government commitment to road safety.

Execute the media dissemination plan throughout media channels and community communication channels, continuously monitoring performance. Adjust as needed.

Highlight enforcement operations through media coverage to increase perceived risk of being detected and penalized for breaching traffic rules.

Keep media engaged by pitching diverse story ideas—statistics, personal stories, economic or health impacts, enforcement updates—to maintain media interest throughout the campaign.



[Media Reporting on Traffic Crashes: Best Practices](#)

Steps 5 and 6: Review and Evaluate

Continuously monitor any social, cultural, political and technological factors that may be influencing campaign implementation. Review adherence to the media plan, earned media coverage, digital media reach and engagement, and coordination with enforcement and community activities. Make any necessary adjustments to campaign strategy, media channel selections, or campaign materials to improve campaign performance.

Evaluate campaign performance against communication objectives and behavioral objectives in line with the campaign logic model. Measure campaign recall and associated impact on knowledge, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors by comparing the pre-campaign baseline with post-campaign data, which should be collected immediately after the campaign phase concludes. If pre-campaign data is unavailable, compare knowledge, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors between those who recalled the campaign and those who did not recall seeing it. Analyze whether and how the campaign, paired with enforcement, influenced crash data.

These findings will inform future campaigns, protect your media investment, and can be used for media engagement moments, to highlight your agency's role, and to support technical publications addressing evidence gaps on the effectiveness of road safety mass media campaigns in low- and middle-income countries.

Your work doesn't stop with the completion of evaluation. Insights from your and partner organizations' lived experience are valuable opportunities to regroup, review which approaches worked, identify bottlenecks and challenges, consider needed institutional changes, and plan the next campaign. Make sure to document these insights for future sharing and analysis, ensuring that each campaign builds on the last by incorporating learnings into the next cycle of campaign development.



[Evaluation Methods and Questionnaire](#)

Notes: