

Foreword

This new book *Strategic Urban Health Communication* has come at a most auspicious time for the involvement of communication professionals in promoting good health practices at local, regional, national, and global levels. As the world becomes increasingly more urban and our health challenges continue to require more than the usual bureaucratic approaches to manage, there is an urgent need to adopt integrated and strategic communication methods that take advantage of proven techniques of advocacy, behavior change, persuasion, promotion, public enlightenment, publicity, and customer relationship management. This is the message of this new book.

The global health situation has improved dramatically in all world regions, both developed and developing—the world has recorded an impressive decline in child mortality and maternal mortality rates. Some diseases have been eradicated completely and the incidence of epidemics and pandemics has reduced in the last two decades. Prevalence of HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria, and Measles has dropped drastically. Fewer people are contracting HIV.

Average life expectancy has increased worldwide, even in developing countries from 45.4 to 68.2 years in the last 60 years. Higher standards of living, improvements in hygiene, and medical progress are some of the factors that have made key contributions to this trend. (Source: World Health Statistics 2012). Such dramatic achievements or developments mask many areas of underperformance, especially in developing countries where health challenges have persistently been pervasive. HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria, Measles, Pneumonia, Diarrhea, etc. continue to challenge improvements in life expectancy in developing countries. Rapid urbanization which is a worldwide phenomenon but more serious in developing regions complicates the global health situation and calls for more urgent use of strategic communication methods which are known to have been successful in other spheres of human communication.

There are three elements required in sustained improvements in global well-being. These are sustained leadership, effective communication, and participatory engagement. The least common factor among these is strategic planning, which is illustrated in many of the 17 chapters of this book. From the world of professional advertising we know the value of strategic planning because all our communication activities begin with a sound knowledge of consumers and how they can best

be engaged. Effective gathering and qualifying of consumer data enable accurate identification of the audience that then informs what messages are articulated, how they are packaged, and the most effective and efficient vehicles for their delivery.

The Saatchi model of strategic communication adopts the use of the OIIC tool (Objectives, Issues, Insights, Challenge) which enables the communicator to focus on the key objectives of the communications, identify issues that could be obstacles to the solution, and using the Xploring tool, mine insights that would provide windows of opportunity to unlock the challenge. Contemporary health communication already employs such analytical tools but needs more of these in more disciplined and focused approaches, with clearly identified audiences, benchmarks, and milestones for measuring success.

It has been proven that behavioral changes are key assets in proactively managing health care, especially in developing countries. Inculcating healthy habits and influencing the adoption of positive attitudes toward health and environmental issues will lead to more sustainable improvements in public health. Global health promotion today requires multidisciplinary and multimedia approaches that embrace the proven technologies of human communication in all its ramifications from advertising to personal selling. Our health is much too important for us to manage while leaving out some professional communicators who are well versed in strategic uses of communication for education and behavior change. The book illustrates the value of planning and integrated marketing communication approaches that ensure effective engagement of key stakeholders in a holistic manner that delivers the necessary enlightenment, behavioral change, and improved well-being. Indeed, there is no better option in health communication to adopting strategic methods that begin with planning and end with assessment and evaluation.

Udeme Ufot
MD/CEO
SO&U/Saatchi, Lagos, Nigeria



<http://www.springer.com/978-1-4614-9334-1>

Strategic Urban Health Communication

Okigbo, C. (Ed.)

2014, XVII, 225 p. 11 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-1-4614-9334-1