



Save the Children



**The Open
University**

Advocacy and Campaigning

7 Developing and communicating your message

Keywords: Communications, social media, presentation, headline branding, case studies

Duration: 2 hours



Introduction

Through this module, you will develop an understanding of Save the Children's policies around communications, how to tailor messages to different markets and on social media, and learn about the different social media platforms and tools.

Learning Outcomes for this session

Knowledge and understanding

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

1. Understand Save the Children's approach to communications.
2. Understand the importance of a clear message and communications plan

Practical and professional skills

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

1. Develop and deliver your message.
2. Identify your target audience and the best tools to reach it.

1 Communications and Save the Children

We know that communications is the key to achieving our mission: 'to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.'

We can become much better at communicating about the work we do by producing high-quality communications material for a variety of outlets (web, print, TV, digital, social media) so that we can raise more awareness, influence more key decision makers, and ultimately save more children's lives.

This guidance has been designed to provide practical suggestions for staff across Save the Children on how to communicate our mission, vision and values. It aims to simplify the concept of communications, and present practical tools that can help managers become more effective and deliver greater impact for children.

After reading through this session we would also recommend a simple communications planning tool called the Spitfire Smart Chart (<http://www.spitfirestrategies.com/spitfire-tools/smart-chart-30.html>). You can use this tool to help you plan your communications strategy and messages in a useful step-by-step process in line with Save the Children's approaches shared in this session. The tool can help you start a communications planning process, evaluate a communications effort already in progress or review a communications effort you've already completed.

We have used the tool as part of a campaign planning process in the past. The benefit is that it forces you and your colleagues to focus your campaign 'asks' and simplify your message so that it has an impact. One downside of the tool is that your communications in support of advocacy and campaigns will not always be a straightforward linear communications process as set out in the chart (i.e. just communicating one message over time to change opinions). When working on advocacy you will often need to change your messages at short notice in order to influence regularly changing external contexts. You are also likely to be working on a number of advocacy issues at the same time in support of your overall goal. Take these factors in to account when planning your strategies and be flexible.

Branding guidelines

Save the Children is a global movement for children, working in more than 120 countries. You need to reflect this in the way you represent yourself externally, communicating in clear, consistent identity to the world. This section provides guidance on key aspects of the brand which you must keep consistent globally, in your messaging (what we stand for) and visual identity (what your communication looks and feels like).

The guidelines are to help you:

- Grow recognition and awareness of Save the Children and our work with all the audiences across the world – from supporters to governments – in order to increase our impact and influence.
- Protect the reputation and the trust we've built in Save the Children over the past 90 years.
- Present ourselves as a strong, unified, global partner, e.g. to corporations, the media and other NGOs.
- Share resources internally to encourage innovation and best practice and cut costs.
- Feel part of one global team.
- And ultimately have more impact for children.

OneNet Branding Guideline link: <http://ow.ly/qgZcX>

Planning communications

Communications through coordinated planning of activities provides the framework for answering four questions:

1. Who are our target audiences and what do we want them to do?
2. What messages will move the audience to take the desired actions?
3. Who should deliver the messages, and what materials are needed to support getting these messages out?
4. How will we know if we have succeeded with this strategy?

Communication tips

Child focused:

When describing your work, try to focus on the **impact we have for children**, rather than people generally. **‘We’ve treated 25,000 children for malnutrition’**, not ‘We’ve treated 40,000 people for malnutrition’.

Use quotes from children and photos of children as much as possible. Help your audience see the world through their eyes. Use stories to show how we help children.

Outspoken:

Show the need. Use strong words like ‘appalling’ or ‘unacceptable’ – just don’t overuse them. **‘In the 21st century, it’s appalling that nearly 70 million children still don’t go to primary school.’**

Inspire action. Make sure you have a strong call to action. Use words like ‘**now**’ and ‘**today**’ to express urgency. **‘More than a million children could die because of food shortages. We must act now. Please help us save lives.’**

Proactive:

Show ambition. ‘We could be the first generation to stop children dying of preventable causes, once and for all.’

Get excited about success and show results. **‘You did it! Your campaigning helped inspire an historic deal on vaccines – a huge step towards saving the lives of 4 million children.’**

Principles of a good elevator pitch

The art of getting your message across effectively is a vital part of being a successful advocate. You need to develop clear, consistent and effective messages that will provoke the audience to act. Whether you make a pitch, deliver a presentation or write a position paper for a specific audience, your communication should seek to inform, persuade or result in action. The difference between a pitch and a presentation is the time element. A presentation generally takes more time to deliver. A pitch or elevator speech is a short summary used to quickly and simply define a product, service, organisation or change programme and its value proposition. The name 'elevator pitch' reflects the idea that it should be possible to deliver the summary in the time span of an elevator ride, or approximately 60 seconds.

In October 2011, Save the Children International went through a transition and developed an elevator pitch. The pitch is intended for an internal audience, that is, staff within Save the Children, but also for contacts within the sector, such as pro bono partners, corporate partners, other NGOs or people otherwise involved in the sector wanting to know more about the changes the organisation was going through.

It was not very relevant to the general public, friends and family. In those contexts the staff were to focus on what we do for children.

Elevator pitch: Communicating our change (<http://ow.ly/qhBo4>)

Good pitch

All the members of Save the Children, with combined revenues of over a billion dollars, have agreed to a shared strategy, including vision, mission, values and theory of change. While each member will continue to direct and support its own programmes, internationally these will be delivered through a merged operation with 14,000 staff, managed through seven regional hubs and reporting to a relatively small central office.

Each member will also play a strong role advocating for change and building relationships with its own supporters. All members will join Save the Children's global campaign to stop children dying from preventable causes before their fifth birthday, and will contribute to Save the Children becoming the emergency response agency for children. In addition, members will lead global initiatives on education, protection, child rights governance, health and nutrition.

We aim to complete the transition by the end of 2012, becoming more efficient, more aligned, a better partner, a stronger advocate, a magnet for world-class people and relevant for the 21st century. At the end of the day, it's about achieving our mission – to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

Bad pitch

Thank you for your time, I promise this won't take long. Save the Children is an international organisation working in over 120 countries across humanitarian, education, child protection, health and nutrition, child rights governance. I am honoured to talk to you today about Save the Children. I work for an organisation whose main focus is to ensure that children are at the heart of everything we do. Children are the hope for tomorrow, the hope for our country and they need to be protected from violence, abuse, exploitation and child labour.

Activity 1 (SAQ)

Can you identify the difference between the two pitches?

2 Messaging

Messages should be clear, compelling and engaging.

- Avoid jargon.
- Put your ‘frame’ around the issue – highlight your perspective.
- Use clear facts and numbers creatively.
- If possible include local information relevant to your audience.
- Allow your audience to reach their own conclusions.
- Present a solution if possible.
- Remember: concise and consistent messages are critical for advocacy.

Ten tips for developing a good written message

1. **Know your audience**
Consider what they know or don’t know about your organisation. This will determine your choice of language, tone and examples to be used.
2. **Decide on the key message**
Before you start, challenge yourself to say in one or two sentences what you want the reader to take away after reading your piece. This may be the most difficult thing you do, but refer to this message in the subsequent drafts to evaluate whether the message is retained.
3. **Be clear on your objective**
What do you want the reader to do? Are you writing to educate, entertain, persuade? Keep this objective in mind throughout and consider how to motivate the reader to do what you want them to do.
4. **Organise your thoughts**
To support your key messages, ensure that you have your points written out separately to check for consistency and coherence.
5. **Eliminate jargon, acronyms, technical terms**
No one wants to read NGO-speak such as CCCD, TBA, ECCD. If your reader speaks English, write in English.
6. **Eschew obfuscation**
Write simply, use short words and sentences; the reader will thank you.
7. **Be concise**
How much time did you spend today reading things that you didn’t have to? The reader won’t read things that go on for pages and pages, so reduce the content and word count. Decide on the key message again and check for the gaps in the write-up.

8. **Benefits, not features**

If one of your objectives is to raise funds, ensure you are talking about benefits to the donor rather than the feature of the offer. Talk to the potential donor who wants to get something out of the write-up.

9. **Use quotes**

Include quotes when you are writing, preferably from children or youth. Children are the best testimonials of the work Save the Children projects. Quoting a child adds credibility and makes a difference to the write-up.

10. **Use reliable sources**

If you are not writing for academia, it's not necessary to footnote everything. However, it's critical to ensure that your reliable source of information is acknowledged and documented.

Source: adapted from Plan International, 'Ten steps to good writing'

Activity 2 (SAQ)

How do you frame/tailor the message for different audiences?

The one-minute message

The spokesperson should be able to communicate the message and tailor it to fit within 30 to 60 seconds, especially for television and radio interviews.

Content: Statement + evidence + example + action desired

- The statement is the central idea in the message.
- The evidence supports the statement with (easily understood) facts and figures.
- An example will add a human face to the message. An anecdote based on a personal experience can personalise the facts and figures.

The action desired is what you want your target to do.

Activity 3 (SAQ)

If you were to meet a minister in an elevator, what would be your one-minute message based on your role at Save the Children?

Save the Children's messages

A breakthrough is a remarkable shift from the current trend and a sustainable change in the way the world treats children, as experienced by the majority of affected children in the world. This kind of change is only achieved over several years, utilising our full Theory of Change in partnership with others.

Our breakthroughs:

- No child under five dies from preventable causes and public attitudes will not tolerate high levels of child deaths.
- All children can read by the time they leave primary school; and children caught up in humanitarian crises have access to quality education.
- All children thrive in a safe family environment and no child is placed in harmful institutions.
- All children, especially the poorest, benefit from greater public investment and better use of society's resources in realising their rights.

The table below highlights examples of a clear message and an unclear message. Note how brief a clearly thought-through message can be.

Unclear message	
Maximising educational attainment for girls is a critical issue and we are working on it as part of our Education TPP. There are not only cognitive benefits, but economic and developmental benefits to be gained from this. We see many long-term impacts to enhancing girls' educational opportunities, particularly those younger than the age of 12. If you're interested, we can provide more information to you about our programming which we implement in 4 rural areas and 3 peri-urban areas throughout the country.	<p>Benefits of proposal vague</p> <p>Contains jargon</p> <p>No clear request for action from the audience</p>
We hope you and your colleagues will keep girls' education in mind as a top priority as you debate national strategies for educational policy this year.	Too long!

Clear message	
<p>Please consider supporting a national policy that will encourage more girls to attend school.</p> <p>International research shows that educating girls leads to economic growth, thereby benefiting all children. Please read this report, which will show you the positive results girls' education has already achieved in seven locations nationwide.</p>	<p>Makes a specific request</p> <p>Makes one strong supporting argument</p> <p>Documents benefits</p> <p>Concise</p>

Source: Save the Children, 2007, p. 98

Activity 4 (SAQ)

Can you identify the three crucial steps to getting your message across to the audience using the chart below?



The audience receives the message and thus is the initial listener. Your primary/target audience includes those key individuals who are in position to bring about the change you want. The influentials (secondary audience) are those people who have influence over your targets. As advocacy is essentially being weaved through all roles in the organisation, you must be clear about the needs of your audience and how to communicate successfully with them.

There are a wide range of people and organisations we need to communicate with, including:

1. **Decision makers:** those who can change policy at a global level.
2. **Influencers:** those who can advocate for change, including partners and grassroots organisations (and in some cases media allies). We need to identify opportunities where we can link with those partners along thematically aligned events and leverage their media moments to highlight the work of the campaign.
3. **Public:** campaigners, activists and the general public who can engage with the campaign and can help create an enabling environment for change.
4. **Advocacy targets** including: governments, civil society partners, and other key stakeholders committed to taking steps that ensure every child has access to quality, essential health care services.
5. **Donors** to support national efforts by mobilising sufficient and efficient funding for health care, and ensure that no country plan fails for lack of resources.
6. **Save the Children staff:** who are key to achieving and delivering our campaign goals.

Activity 5

Read the box below and in a few sentences describe how you would frame/tailor the message for different audiences.

Children's messages to the Minister of Education in Sudan

More than 250 people – Save the Children staff, children, parents, teachers, NGO partners, donors and media gathered in Khartoum's Friendship Hall on 12 September 2006 to take part in Save the Children's global challenge to Rewrite the future and provide quality education for children affected by conflict.

Addressing their comments to the Minister of Education, children from refugee camps spoke about the importance of education in their lives.

"If you receive an object with the word (bomb) written on it, if you know how to read you will avoid it, if not, it will blow off." Abuk Jacob Mabiln (13), Osqofiya B School

"An educated person who would know how to speak the Arabic language and get used of it." Moses Lal Mau (16), Osqofiya B School

"I advise all fathers, mothers and sisters to get boys and girls an education because it is very important." Fiasal Adam Hamed (17), Itehad Mayo

"Education is the most beautiful thing and most important to build Sudan." Mayson Mustafa Ahmed (12), Itehad Mayo

Source: Save the Children, 2007, p. 97

Tools to reach your audience

Both traditional and social media are critical channels to reach your targets, including:

- global media: led by the GMU – when speaking as one, the organisation has something new and significant to say about issues which affect the lives of children and women
- national media: led by members and countries
- local media: led by country programmes
- social media audiences and partners with a large social media reach.

Case studies

A case study is a brief piece of information that tells a person's (ideally a child's) story in their own words – it gives them a voice. When you're talking to a child or an adult for a case study, try to get some photos of them in their environment. Quality is better than quantity – it's better to collect a few good case studies than a lot of mediocre ones.

Where can you use them?

- They're often used to add interest and authenticity to a press release, or in fundraising materials and policy papers, or on the website.
- Telling the story of one child and their family helps the public to understand the human cost of an emergency and develop empathy for those affected, making them more likely to donate or get involved in campaigning.
- Case studies can also be used to talk about the wider issues facing children (e.g., child labour or child trafficking) or specific projects or activities (e.g., HIV and AIDS awareness, and disaster risk reduction).

Multimedia

The type of material published online also offers opportunities for innovative approaches to communications and new types of communications packages. Examples include using audio interviews with photography slide shows, or publishing 360-degree photography that links to information in other media. Used on its own, but more often alongside photos or other visual material, audio can be a hugely valuable medium as it is an effective channel to draw attention to children's issues.

Blogs

A blog enables us to present our work through the voice of 'an everyday person'. It showcases our programmes and interventions and complex political and socio-economic events through the language, thoughts and feelings of an individual who has been there and done that – seen our work or cause in action.

Blogging provides us with a real opportunity for a more conversational, direct and frequent way of communicating with the public. A blog is like someone's diary or journal update – a space where they can write down what they're seeing and feeling. Ideally, blogs are written in a series – short entries that are regularly updated, helping to keep people informed about a rapidly changing situation. Blogs should also talk about what we're doing on the ground to help people affected by an emergency.

Some members of Save the Children post blogs directly to their website or use them internally on intranet sites to inform staff. More and more, we're working with major media outlets through the GMU to get blogs from our staff published on news websites – broadening the audience reach enormously. Ultimately, good blogs help us to develop our relationship with members of the public, inspiring them to donate or get involved in campaigning.

“What Bill Gates and Save the Children have in common”



By Hadiza Aminu, Save the Children, Nigeria

At 5pm on Monday, 11th Nov 2013, Mr. Bill Gates, the former richest man in the world, was sitting in a hall at Hilton Hotel Nigeria, with Mr. Aliyu Dangote, the richest man in Africa, there was also the Sultan of Sokoto, leader of nearly one hundred million Muslims in the most populous country in Africa, and the Nigerian Minister of Health, the chairman Senate committee on health, the Director of Primary Health care and Representatives from Centre for Disease Control (CDC), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nation Children’s fund (UNICEF), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Department for International Development (DFID) they were all sitting together and doing one thing- watching with keen interest, the story of Fatima in a video documentary that Save the Children put together on the progress of Routine immunization in Nigeria.

The event was the launch of a new Routine Immunization Strategic Plan which Save the Children together with other partners had been providing support to the National Primary Health Care Agency to finalize. The new strategic plan was expected to chart the next course for the operation of immunization activities in the country.

What was unique about this strategy was the emphasis on accountability. Nigeria is a country where corruption assessments are largely negative so by adopting this document, the National Primary Health Care was leading the efforts in terms of accountability within the health sector. Another important component of the new Strategic Plan was the promise to redouble effort around bridging the gap of equity in routine immunization so that no child is left unreached.

Childhood diseases can be deadly, especially in a developing country like Nigeria. But the good news is that they can be prevented and a good way to do this is through routine immunization. Safe and potent vaccines against killer diseases are free and available but these vaccines do not have legs to walk up to children. They have to be delivered through joint effort between the government and the communities. Fatima's story portrays that although Nigeria has made some progress in improving routine immunization coverage, the gains are still fragile and a lot still needs to be done such as integration of routine immunization services with polio eradication efforts, revamping of cold chains to block out bottle necks and mass sensitization campaigns at grass root levels so that children like Fatima can lead healthy lives and live beyond the age of 5.

I waited a few minutes for Amina (Fatima's mother) to wipe off her tears before we continued with the interview for the video documentary we were producing. It had to be ready within the next 5 days in time for the launch of our new Framework on Routine Immunization.

Fatima was cuddled up in Amina's arms, oblivious to our discussions about her. She will raise her head every now and then to cough profoundly into her mother's chest before dozing back to sleep. Fatima didn't look a day older than one or two months but her mother told me she was 1 year and 4 months. She was weaned at 6 months when her mother realized that she had conceived again. I learnt it was culturally unacceptable to breastfeed a baby when another one is on the way. Those first 6 months of Fatima's life I was told, were the only healthy period of her entire life, after that, it was a constant relay of one illness to the other. Malaria, diarrhea, typhoid, measles, tuberculosis and now pertussis. On top of all these Fatima was severely malnourished.

As I listened to Amina, one thing became very clear as the root of all her problems and that was ignorance or lack of education. Amina had no idea how to take care of herself let alone her baby. She was not aware of the modern contraceptive options available to her, she had no clear understanding of exclusive breastfeeding, she was ignorant of proper infant and young child feeding habits and she was not clear on the benefits of immunizing her child. Unfortunately Fatima was unfairly bearing the burden of Amina's ignorance by suffering from life threatening conditions that were totally preventable.

As I listened to Mr. Gates speech during the launch of the new Framework on Routine Immunization in Nigeria, it realised that one thing he had in common with Save the Children was a deep desire to catalyze new heights in vaccine coverage and inspire new commitments towards health system strengthening, so that children like Fatima will no longer be left behind.

Source: everyone.savethechildren.net

Photos

Photos, film and case studies are often the most powerful ways of telling people what we do, and the problems faced by children. They show the reality of life for millions of children, and they can help our supporters feel closer to children's lives. Powerful and emotive images can really help our fundraising and campaigning. However, always bear in mind that children's protection and wellbeing take priority over our communications agenda.



*(**Photo credit:** Prasanth Vishwanathan, Save the Children India)*

Ethical guidelines for communications

Do no harm

This should be our governing principle. Press releases and other communications regarding our work should be accurate and reflect the views of all Save the Children.

Focus on children and their long-term needs

Our communications should: focus on children's needs, give children a voice and address the issues children face in their lives. Our communications should reinforce key messages from the Save the Children advocacy group, which is charged with developing key messages around the Every One campaign, and our global initiatives.

Support child protection and children's rights

Our communications should emphasise the effective programmes we are putting in place to protect children – and the ongoing threats faced by children.

Good practice – imagery of children

We have a responsibility to the people we represent to use our images in a responsible and ethical manner.

Digital and social media



The pictures above are taken from the same location at Vatican City.

In 2005, hardly anyone had a smartphone and even fewer people were using social media. Just eight years later, everyone has a phone with the ability to instantly upload media and information and stream content as it happens.

Anyone with a phone today is a potential journalist, campaigner, donor or advocacy target. And they are all using social media – you just have to provide them with your content and the call to action and they'll do the work for you.

Web-based communications initiatives are a relatively inexpensive way of sharing a message. They are the preferred medium of engagement for the younger generation, and offer a vehicle for campaign actions.

- **Content:** compelling content is paramount for engagement and spreading by digital means, such as copywriting and audio-visual materials, short stories, films, case studies, testimonials, etc. Choose social media platforms which the target audience use and think carefully about how they interact with those platforms.
- **Conversation:** engage followers and solicit their feedback, responding and commenting quickly on announcements and events – working to create a unified brand voice.
- **Collaboration:** engage users through petitions or calls to action. Keep an eye on ‘trending topics’ and key policy and media debates to maintain a proactive approach to communications.

Twitter and Facebook

Social networking sites present huge opportunities to draw people in, to form a more personal connection with supporters, and to target audiences who share an interest in a specific cause, country or organisation. People create their ‘identity’ through their profile, and for many, an important part of this is to list the charities or causes they support. Sites such as Facebook allow charitable organisations to set up ‘causes’, allowing people to join and show their support. Twitter presents a communication style that is more conversational – updates are limited to 140 characters, so must be brief and engaging. People can choose to ‘follow’ our organisational updates on Twitter as a trusted source of useful and interesting information. Typically, people follow a wide number of individuals and organisations, so their attention is unfocused and frequently switches. So it’s important to post links to the websites of Save the Children members to encourage people to visit them and get involved through fundraising or campaigning. Use of these channels may include, for example, agreement on unified tweets and hashtags, targeted tweets to influential leaders and civil society actors and streamlined Facebook launches around events as well as innovative actions such as campaign supporter sign-ups, global web chats and webinars.

Twitter basics:

- **Tweet:** a Twitter single update of 140 characters or less, which can include @Mentions to other users, hashtags, external links, or simply regular text.
- **Retweet (‘RT’):** taking a tweet from one user and posting it yourself, automatically crediting the source, so that all of your followers can see the tweet. The original retweeting style would take a tweet and re-post it via your own account in the following format: ‘RT @(username of person who originally tweeted the tweet you’re retweeting): (contents of tweet)’. The current system does away with this format, and instead directly re-posts the tweet, crediting the origin underneath. For example, ‘retweeted from @username’.

- Use hashtags. Prefacing a word with a '#' will create a hashtag. A hashtag makes a certain word easily searchable.

Example of a Twitter campaign



Grassroots organisation 1 Billion Rising organised a day of action to raise awareness around violence against women. The organisation's objective was to get 1 billion people on Twitter discussing the issue and standing up against violence.

Ethical guidelines when using social media

Remember your postings on social media could be interpreted as the opinion of the organisation. Any political/social statements, opinions or views should be cleared by your country office or department head before posting.

Inappropriate comments online could:

- get yourself, SCI or any related partner into legal trouble
- hurt the brand's reputation as a credible international, independent organisation
- divert internal resources to fight brand/reputational damage
- impact our ability to work effectively in the field.

Summary

Through this module, you have developed an understanding of Save the Children's policies around communications, how to tailor messaging to different markets and on social media, and learnt about the different social media platforms and tools.

You should now be able to:

1. understand Save the Children's approach to communications
2. develop and deliver your message
3. identify your target audience and the best tools to reach it.

Answers to SAQs

Activity 1: Can you identify the difference between the two pitches?

One is shorter; it has no sense of focus, lacks quality content and encourages poor delivery. The bad sample is a good example of a bad pitch.

Activity 2: How do you frame/tailor the message for different audiences?

What do they need to know?

- Why should they listen?
- Why should they take action?
- What action do you want them to take?

Tailor your message:

- WHAT you say – ideas and arguments
- HOW you say it – language, style, format
- WHO says it – messengers
- WHEN, WHERE and HOW you deliver it.

Activity 3: If you were to meet a minister in an elevator, what would be your one-minute message based on your role at Save the Children?

One-minute message by Getachaw Dibaba, Media and Brand Manager, Ethiopia:

Statement: Registering vital events provides countries with accurate data and statistics for formulating policies and monitoring progress as well as planning, prioritising and allocating resources. It is hardly possible to deliver age-specific services to citizens, including children, without a registration system.

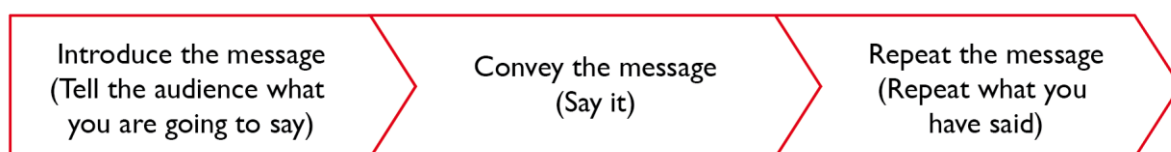
Evidence: In Ethiopia, only 7% of children are registered at birth and most of these live in urban areas.

Example: For example, immunisation is often age specific, but absence of the registration system prevents children from receiving the right vaccine at the right age.

Call to action: We are, therefore, calling on the Ethiopian government to enact the Proclamation on Registration of Vital Events.

Our special role: Save the Children is committed to assisting the implementation of the system and improving access to services targeting children.

Activity 4: Can you identify the three crucial steps to getting your message across the audience using the chart below?



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