POSTERS

Well designed posters usually use striking visual images, and often communicate a message in a provocative, inspiring or humorous way. In their simplest form, posters can be hand drawn in small numbers and displayed within a community to publicise a local issue or event. More sophisticated posters may be designed to convey a message to a larger number of people, over a longer time period. The production of durable posters will require access to printing services and may require the skills of a graphic artist.

Advantages of Posters

Simple posters can be designed and produced by adults and children in any community. They can be designed to communicate local issues using images which are familiar and appropriate for that location.

Posters:

- Communicate visually which can be good for non-literate audiences.
- Can be publicly displayed to reach a wide audience.
- Are often used to decorate homes and offices, thereby serving as a constant reminder of the message.

How to use Posters

- Be clear about the message to be conveyed, and the intended audience. Ensure the design effectively conveys the central message.
- Think about the visual impact of the design, use eye-catching or interesting images and colours.
- Work out what resources will be needed to make posters (large sheets of paper, paints etc.) or the costs of design and printing for producing larger numbers.
- Consider designing posters on a computer, but remember the size will be confined to the paper size in the printer.
- Posters may be displayed indoors or outdoors on walls, trees, etc. remember that wind and rain will damage posters placed outdoors.
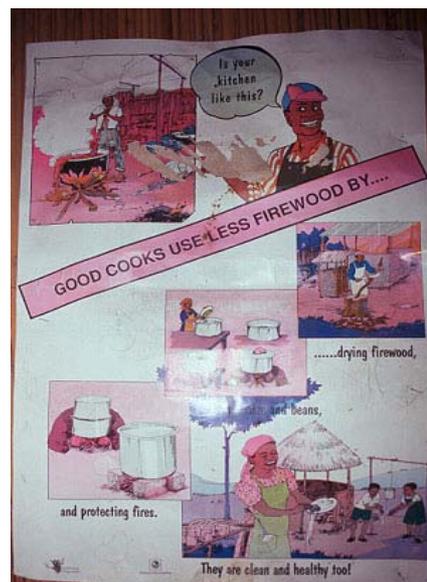
A poster encouraging the use of techniques which reduce the use of firewood

Constraints of Posters

- Posters are limited to conveying simple messages. They cannot communicate complex issues or processes.
- Posters communicate 'one way', the audience cannot ask questions or receive direct feedback.
- Production costs may be prohibitive.

Real Life Story

Posters Help Promote Women's Participation in Kenya's Governance
Kenyan women's groups from Kakamega in Western Province have used posters to address a wide variety of issues affecting their lives. Under the guidance of Professor Khasiani the groups started out by encouraging women's involvement in the democratic process, and to enable up to 30,000 women learn how to access information via computers.

On a brightly coloured poster, a woman wearing the traditional Kenyan village attire of a kerchief, a wrap-around skirt and cotton blouse is doing something untraditional: using a computer. The poster reads in Kiswahili, 'Be educated through computers'. This poster is a humble but significant step in encouraging rural Kenyan women to increase their participation in the democratic process.

A poster promoting family

In December 1998, the project team asked a sample of women's group leaders to identify the civic education needs of their communities. These women were later invited to Nairobi, along with local chiefs, for a meeting. After the meeting, the group leaders began developing education materials. They chose posters as the best medium because of the semi-literate nature of their communities. The women identified 10 issues of concern, and those issues dictated the design of the posters.

One poster reads in Kiswahili: 'Vita nyumbani bado ni vita' ('Violence at home is still violence'). It shows a man with one hand on a woman's throat and the other brandishing a lash. The women leaders also felt that transportation issues should also be addressed, so another poster states; 'Roads are good, they bring development'. A third poster shows rural women in a bank manager's office, with the caption; 'Give credit to women to promote development'.

Real life story by kind permission of IDRC adapted from writing by Mike Crawley that appeared in IDRC Reports, *the online magazine of the International Development Research Centre, Canada.*

Further reading

Wall Newspapers Practical Action Technical Brief
Drawings and Photographs Practical Action Technical Brief
Computers Practical Action Technical Brief

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Practical Action is a development charity with a difference. We know the simplest ideas can have the
most profound, life-changing effect on poor people across the world. For over 40 years, we have been
working closely with some of the world's poorest people - using simple technology to fight poverty and
transform their lives for the better. We currently work in 15 countries in Africa, South Asia and Latin
America.

technical brief