Social and Behavior Change Communication (SBCC) interventions are more effective when messages reach audiences from multiple sources. Audiences are more likely to change their behaviors when they receive information that is consistent and accurate. Conflicting messages confuse audiences and make behavior change less likely. Harmonized health messages help health providers, program implementers, media professionals and other stakeholders to effectively communicate with their audiences for a better public health outcome.

Communication for Health supports the Federal Ministry of Health (FMoH) and Regional Health Bureaus (RHBs) to harmonize health messages through active engagement of stakeholders. The harmonized messages are packaged into reference booklets and disseminated to the different stakeholders, who will use them in crafting their communication interventions.

The message harmonization process starts with setting a shared vision that all stakeholders aspire to see in the community, and understanding the current situation in terms of the knowledge, attitude, and practices across a particular health topic. Stakeholders then continue to identify and prioritize health problems that need to be addressed, and analyze root causes of the prioritized problems. Based on the root causes, priority audiences are identified and core messages developed. Core messages are generic messages that help advance recommended behaviors for health problems.

Core messages relate to actions by a specific group/audience that would help address root causes of a health problem.

The core messages serve as the basis for designing SBCC interventions. Public health practitioners and media professionals are expected to refine the core messages to fit into context and channels of choice, to persuade their audiences into practicing recommended behaviors. The booklet containing the core messages provides guidance on how the messages can be refined further based on context.