

# BE HE@LTHY, BE MOBILE

## Personas Toolkit



World Health  
Organization





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# Background

Preventing disease is the most sustainable way of improving population health. However, it can be challenging to reach people with the right information to stop avoidable conditions from developing.

By using a technology that most people already have in their pockets, we could solve this problem just by using what already exists – a truly sustainable enterprise.

The Be He@lthy, Be Mobile initiative seeks to achieve this. It is an award-winning initiative run jointly by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations agencies that deal, respectively, with health and information and communications technologies (ICTs). Since 2013, it has worked with governments to address the global challenge of improving disease prevention by using mobile technology.

Despite its multisectoral approach and immense support from a network of technical experts, much of the initiative's innovative nature stems from keeping users themselves at the core of the design process. Our beneficiaries are the true experts, and our role as innovators is to facilitate the creation, adoption and scaling-up of mobile health services.

In designing content and delivery mechanisms for mHealth programmes, the Be He@lthy, Be Mobile initiative hosts global workshops with technical experts, governments and implementers. Over the course of each workshop, the initiative facilitates activities aimed at challenging the experts to think beyond their theories and frameworks, bringing them into the minds of the users and creating empathy with them. We do this through the use of personas.





# What is a persona?

A **persona** is a fictional archetype of the actual user of a product. For the Be He@lthy, Be Mobile initiative, personas represent the various users who may directly or indirectly benefit from a specific mHealth programme. Personas represent the lived experiences and specific characteristics of potential user types and are intended to promote empathy among programme designers – experts, government officials and implementers – and bring them into the mind of the user. Through the use of descriptive visuals, personal anecdotes and key user information, programme designers gain insight into the realities and complexities of the users' lives that are likely to influence their engagement with the programme.

When the design features of a programme are not aligned with the users' needs, users are less likely to engage – even if the product has proven and well understood benefits. The price of “not getting it right” is a poorly designed programme that fails to serve the user and fails to achieve its intended impact. The value of the persona lies in the perspective gained by programme designers and their strengthened ability to design high-quality programmes that effectively meet the needs of the user.

# When to use personas?

Personas are essential to the Be He@lthy, Be Mobile design thinking process, and can be applied to most problem-solving activities. A key activity of the initiative is the development of mHealth toolkits – comprehensive, evidence-based documents that provide guidance for governments and policy-makers for developing, implementing and evaluating mHealth programmes. The digital health content developed for these toolkits is then adapted by governments to meet country-specific needs.

The initiative convenes global workshops for the development of the Be He@lthy, Be Mobile mHealth programmes, which serve to address the growing burden of noncommunicable diseases. The message content for these mobile-phone-based mHealth programmes is developed by a group of technical experts and designed to be easily adapted to different contexts. Personas are applied to the design thinking process during the initiative's global workshops, which are attended by these technical experts and serve as the basis for the toolkit design. The persona activity allows experts to consider the variety of potential users and design from the perspective of the beneficiary. The personas can also be utilized by governments in the adaptation of content to the context of their country. The exercise serves to strengthen our understanding of the user and deliver high-quality programmes designed to meet the needs of the beneficiaries.

# DESIGNING PERSONAS

1



**Get to know your audience and design personas**

2



**Use personas to promote empathy and bring technical experts on the users' journey**

3



**Produce an mHealth programme strategically designed to meet the needs of its users**

## Audience segmentation

The design of personas begins through segmentation of the target audience, based on a few key factors that may shape their engagement with the product.

The audience will likely consist of several different types of beneficiaries. Depending on their respective roles and

the way they may interact with the product, they will make up different segments of the audience, which must all be represented and considered in your design. Consider the issues that the product aims to resolve, and the people who are directly or indirectly affected by those issues. This will help to identify who will benefit from the product.



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