



# Producing your own media

## Overview

Welcome to this toolkit on producing your own media, where we focus mainly on print media. We offer this toolkit because media is a powerful tool we can use to communicate our messages and advance our work as civil society organisations. Our media landscape is, however, largely dominated by the mass media, produced for, and in pursuit of profit. It reflects certain interests. Often it handles issues in a sensational way.

Inasmuch as it is important that we try to get our voices heard in the mass media (see the CIVICUS toolkits called *Handling the media* and *Promoting your organisation*), it is also vital that we produce our own media. This offers us the opportunity to offer alternative perspectives and information, promoting a better, more just world.

Producing your own media can be exciting and creative. It can bring people in your organisation together. Skills and media awareness can be built, and your organisation strengthened.

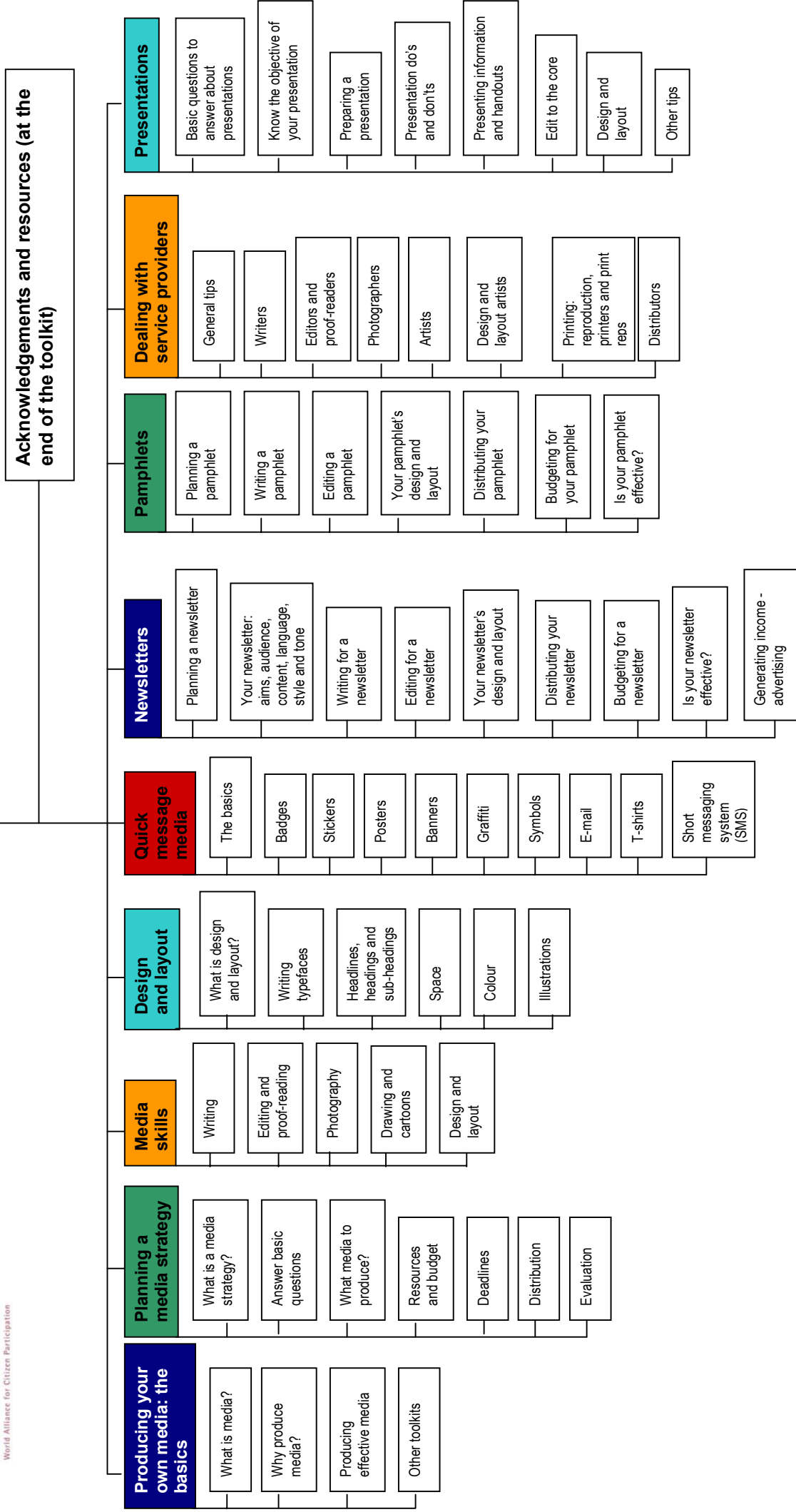
We hope you will find this toolkit useful.



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## Basic principles for producing your own media



## Who will find this site useful?

This site offers suggestions for both experienced and inexperienced people on media production processes and practicalities. The site makes the connection between producing your media and organisational planning and budgeting, skills development, and using service providers. Because of this broad approach, people in organisations who already produce media may find new things to think about. And those who are starting out should find it invaluable. We think the site will be particularly useful for organisations that do not have media departments.

## A brief description of the toolkit

On this site you will find information about:

- **Producing your own media: the basics**

We answer the question “what is media?” and why it is important for civil society organisations to think about how they can use media to advance their work. We also look at what it takes to produce effective media.

- **Planning a media strategy**

Many organisations produce media in an *ad hoc* way. Whilst you can produce effective one-off media this way, we recommend a carefully thought-out plan. This will help you become more effective. In this section we look at what a media strategy is, and we also look at resources and budget issues, as well as deadlines, distribution and evaluation of media.

- **Media skills**

When you produce your own media you open up an ideal opportunity to develop skills in your organisation. We offer some ideas on how to go about this, and look at writing, editing and proof-reading, photography, drawing and cartoons, and design and layout.

- **Design and layout basics**

You can have the most powerful message in the world but if it is hard to read then it will be ineffective. In this section we explain what design and layout are, and go on to offer guidance around some of the different elements of design.

- **Quick message media**

This kind of media is great fun to produce, but to be effective requires careful thought. We offer tips around producing badges, stickers, posters, banners, graffiti, symbols, e-mail and T-shirts.

- **Newsletters**

Newsletters can be powerful communication tools for any organisation. Newsletters should be alive, interesting and informative. We offer substantial guidelines on newsletters from planning through to writing, editing, distributing and evaluating your newsletter.



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- **Pamphlets**

Organisations use pamphlets as organising tools, as well as for other reasons, like offering information. We look at the process of producing an effective pamphlet from planning through to writing, research, editing, distributing and evaluating your pamphlet.

- **Presentations**

Powerful presentations have clear key objectives and careful preparation. We look at guidelines on this, including ideas for introductions and conclusions, do's and don'ts, handouts, editing, design and layout and other tips.

- **Dealing with service providers**

Sometimes organisations have to deal with outside service providers. In this section we offer tips on how to deal with such service providers. We include writers, editors and proof-readers, photographers, artists, design and layout artists, printing reproduction, printers and print reps, as well as distributors.

## Producing your own media: the basics

Media does not replace our organising work. It is a tool that we use in our organising work. In the age of Internet communication and e-mail petitions, we have to remember that it is the people on the ground organising that will in the end make a difference.

Media is powerful. Think about how you use media in your life. About the impact it has on what you know, how you think about issues, and what you do. That is why civil society organisations should use and produce media in a creative, planned way. Producing our own effective media will help us further our causes.

Whatever you produce should ideally be part of a bigger strategy and plan. It should emerge from your organisation's strategic planning. It should be easily identifiable as coming from your organisation.

For this reason, we recommend you use this toolkit together with the CIVICUS toolkit *Promoting your organisation*. It covers the basics about creating and sustaining organisational identity when producing media. It also looks at developing promotions and communication plans.

### What is media?

We produce media as a way of getting our key messages across.

There are many ways to do this, including through:

- The mass media – which is what people mainly think of when they hear the word *media*. The mass media includes electronic media like radio and television. It includes print media, like newspapers and magazines. See the section *Ownership and control of the media* in our CIVICUS toolkit *Handling the media*.
- Community media. This includes non-profit electronic media, like community radio stations, and print media like newsletters, magazines and newspapers.
- Quick message media, like badges, stickers, banners, billboards, graffiti, posters, T-shirts and caps, symbols and e-mail.
- More substantial organisational media, like newsletters and pamphlets.

### Why produce media?

Your organisation exists for a particular purpose. Media can play an important and powerful role in communicating and advancing your cause.

Your organisation will decide on its own particular reasons for producing media. Here are some. You may want to:

- Inform. You may want to inform people about:
  - an event (like an annual general meeting, a benefit concert)
  - a situation (like a disaster caused by floods)
  - an issue (the impact a factory's pollution is having on the community living near it, and on the earth's resources).

- Educate. You may want to educate people about something. For example, what globalisation is and how it is affecting people in poor countries. Or about how you get tuberculosis (TB) and how you treat it.
- Mobilise and organise. You may want to mobilise and organise people around a cause, like a boycott of payment for a service that a community is not happy with.
- Recruit. You may, for example, want to recruit more members into your organisation and use media to encourage workers to become members of your trade union.
- Promote. You may want to promote your organisation so that people know why you exist and what you do.
- Fundraise. You may want to produce information about your organisation to get funding and sponsorship.

## Producing effective media

Producing media requires careful planning, creativity, media skills and resources. It is best to have a media strategy for your organisation.

- Your media strategy must be an integral part of your organisation's overall planning, taking into account campaigns, special events or focus days and themes coming up both nationally and internationally, education work you may need to do, or as part of building membership. See the section in this toolkit called *Planning a media strategy*.
- Planning involves budgeting.
- Producing media can be costly in both human resources and money.
- The media you produce must clearly help your organisation to achieve its aims and objectives.
- The media you produce must have clear key messages and achieve its objectives.
- You need to know which media will best achieve specific objectives. You need to decide on how you will measure your media's success.
- You need to know what skills you require to produce effective media. If your organisation does not have these skills and wants to build them, then you need to include training into your planning and budget.

## Effective media

This whole toolkit focuses on what it takes to produce effective media, starting with planning a media strategy and going through different aspects of media production. Here are some points about what goes into making media effective. Effective organisational media:

- has been carefully thought through and planned
- is often the result of collective creativity
- is the product of careful audience analysis
- has been tested before being mass produced
- has clear objectives
- has clear messages
- reaches people's hearts
- makes people want to respond
- is well-designed
- is honest
- has no mistakes
- is clearly designed and easy to read

- need not cost a fortune – draw on existing resources that people have, volunteers and your non-profit status.

## Other toolkits

There are other CIVICUS toolkits that complement this one. We recommend especially:

- ◆ *Effective and powerful writing*
- ◆ *Overview of planning*
- ◆ *Action planning*
- ◆ *Budgeting*
- ◆ *Promoting your organisation*

## Planning a media strategy

Plan your media before you get into producing it. This will help to make your organisation and its media more effective. It will be more cost-effective in both people and money. Your media strategy must emerge from your organisation's strategic planning and support achieving your organisation's overall goals. Your media strategy needs a budget to go with it.

## What is a media strategy?

What is a media strategy? It is a clear plan of how your organisation decides to use media to help it achieve its overall aims. Your media plan emerges from your strategy, and sets out concrete implementation plans with responsibilities and deadlines.

When you develop a media strategy, these are your first basic questions:

- Who do we want to communicate with?
- Why do we want to communicate with them?
- What are our key messages?
- What is the best way to communicate with them?
- How will we measure if we are/were effective?

Having a media strategy will help you to think long-term. This will make your organisation more effective. So, we recommend that your organisation, as part of its planning, has a particular focus on its media strategy.

In this toolkit we focus on producing your own media, mainly print media. If you want to think about other aspects of media and media strategies for your organisation, then go to the CIVICUS toolkits on *Handling the media* and *Promoting your organisation*. Producing media for radio and television falls outside of the scope of this toolkit, but should not be ignored when you are brainstorming and planning.

## Answer basic questions

Here are questions to answer when your organisation has a meeting to plan its media strategy. We suggest you use the *Mind map* tool in the CIVICUS toolkit for *Writing effectively and powerfully* to get going on this. Strategising is a highly creative process and it is when you use tools like mind maps that you can reap original and exciting ideas. Here are some of the most important questions to answer when planning media.

## Objectives

- **How** can a media strategy help us achieve our objectives?
- **Who** will our media strategy be aimed at? (You may have different audiences for different objectives)
- **What** are our key messages?
- **What** will our media strategy achieve?

## What media to produce

- **What** media is best suited to achieving our objectives? (different media may suit different objectives)

## Deadlines/timing

- **When** will we distribute our media? (Think ahead about focus days, events, campaigns national and international.)

## Resources

- **What** resources will we need? (We are talking about people, equipment and money here. Think about which organisations you can network with, if appropriate.)

## Distribution

- **Where** will we distribute our media?
- **How** will we distribute our media?

## Evaluation

- **How** will we know if our media strategy is successful?

## What media to produce

Media is anything you produce that has a message – it could be a small aeroplane flying in the sky trailing a message, or a cap that you wear with your organisation's slogan on it. Knowing your media objectives will help you to make choices about which media will best advance them.

For example, if you are going on a march, and all members of your organisation wear T-shirts with a clear message on them and your logo, you will attract attention. Television news, if present, could well focus on you. You could end up promoting your organisation and its cause more widely this way. You might want to contact print, radio and TV journalists and brief them, if appropriate. This helps them in their work, and costs little.

If, as part of your media strategy for the march, you also hand out your organisation's newsletter to passers-by on the march, you may find this ineffective. You may find your newsletters lying on the street after the march. People may discard them because they are more interested in participating in the march than reading a newsletter at that point.

There are many different kinds of media, and you will think of and notice more and more once you are looking out for them.



## Resources and budget

To produce media, you will need people, equipment and probably money. What you choose to produce will determine how much of each you need. In this section we offer you lists of resources to think about. Not all of them apply to all forms of media.

### Resources: people

- What work is involved? And what skills are needed? Think of:
  - planning and progress meetings
  - co-ordination
  - getting quotes
  - writing – news, features, adverts, briefs
  - commissioning
  - reviewing and giving feedback
  - editing
  - illustrations
  - design and layout
  - proof-reading
  - production: reproduction and printing
  - distribution
  - assessing effectiveness and analysing new needs
  
- How much work is involved for each?
- What skills do we need to do this work?
- Do we have the capacity to get the job done?
- If we don't have the skills within our organisation now, do we want to train in them? If yes, who will be trained, in what skills, by whom and how much will this cost?
- Do we have enough people to produce the media?
- If we do not have enough people, how can we draw more volunteers in?
- Will we need to outsource some of the work? See the section in this toolkit called *Handling service providers*. If yes, what work will be outsourced? How much will this cost?
- Who will be the media coordinator/s in our organisation? Who will help them? Look at staff and volunteers.

### Resources: production, running costs, budget

The equipment you are likely to need depends on what media you produce. You make up a budget for expenditure based on this. Your budget could also include income, depending on whether you are charging for any of the media you produce.

A media budget could be small and simple. Or it could be large and complex. In this section we include a large range of items that could appear in a media budget. We cannot include all media and everything you may need for different methods of producing media. Just use this to develop your own list of resources and costs further. Also make use of the CIVICUS toolkit on *Budgeting*.



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Media costs	Items	Estimated Cost in money
<b>Equipment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Camera</li> <li>▪ Computer</li> <li>▪ Modem – for internet connection</li> <li>▪ Scanner</li> <li>▪ Printer (black/Colour)</li> <li>▪ Fax machine</li> <li>▪ Photostat machine</li> </ul>	
<b>Running costs</b>	<p>Camera</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Film (if not digital)</li> <li>▪ Processing and developing</li> <li>▪ Maintenance and repairs</li> <li>▪ Insurance</li> </ul> <p>Computer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Computer software (word processing, design and layout, distribution, internet connection)</li> <li>▪ Computer discs / CDs</li> <li>▪ Subscription to internet</li> <li>▪ Lighting protection</li> <li>▪ Maintenance and repairs</li> <li>▪ Insurance</li> </ul> <p>Printer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Paper, cartridge, and maintenance</li> </ul>	
<b>Training Costs</b>	<b>For various aspects of media work, including operating equipment, and producing media</b>	
<b>Printing pamphlets, posters, newsletters, stickers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Paper (size, quality, type)</b></li> <li>▪ Colours</li> <li>▪ Reproduction actual printing – number of copies</li> </ul>	
<b>Making banners</b> Depends of your banner-making method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cloth</li> <li>▪ Scissors</li> <li>▪ Thread and needles</li> <li>▪ Paint</li> <li>▪ Brushes</li> <li>▪ Water and soap</li> <li>▪ Tape</li> <li>▪ containers for paint and water</li> <li>▪ newspaper</li> <li>▪ overhead projector, transparency, and pens (optional)</li> <li>▪ glue</li> </ul>	
<b>Graffiti</b>	<b>Paint</b>	
<b>Making badges</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Badge-making machine</li> <li>▪ Paper- or whatever material you are making badges from</li> <li>▪ Safety pins, or whatever you are using to attach them</li> </ul>	
<b>Distribution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ You may need:</li> <li>▪ Subscription list – which could be printed out by a computer on sticky labels</li> <li>▪ Envelopes</li> <li>▪ Stamps</li> <li>▪ Transport costs</li> </ul>	

## Tips when media shopping

- As a non-profit organisation, ask for a price reduction.
- Shop around and get quotes from a range of suppliers. If you do this, and the best price is not from the service provider you can negotiate.
- Do not buy equipment unless you have a running, maintenance and repair plan for it.

## Deadlines

If your organisation has a media strategy for the year then you will have done broad production planning. But you will also need mini-production schedules for every piece of media you intend to produce. To do this, plan your production schedule with deadlines for different parts of the production process. Have a look at the section *Resources: people* later in this toolkit to help you to do this, especially for media like newsletters and pamphlets.

When you design a production schedule, think of each and every step in the production process. Then map these out on a calendar, giving realistic time to everything. When you are planning, remember to take into account everything else that is going on in your organisation, and its network, if it has one. You can have the best schedule in the world, but if you have forgotten that your organisation is attending a five-day conference in the middle of it, you are in deadline trouble.

Planning backwards can be a very helpful tool. Basically, you start at your distribution date, and work backwards, including all the parts of the production process and how long you estimate it will take. This will also alert you to when you need to begin your production process.

Have a look at the section called *A writing process schedule* in the CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully*.

If you are dealing with outside service providers, find out how long they estimate a job will take, and they need to know and agree to deadlines with you. Be sure you know that printers, for example, are available when you need them. Some printers close down over religious holidays, or maybe for a break during a particular part of the year.

## Example of a production schedule

<i>To do</i>	<i>By whom</i>	<i>How much time</i>	<i>By when</i>
Content brainstorm	Newsletter committee	2 hours	9 October
Content outline	Co-ordinator – consolidate from brainstorm	2 hours	10 October
Briefs and deadlines for writers	Co-ordinator – from brainstorm	6 hours	11 October
Collection of illustrations	Co-ordinator – delegate	6 hours	11-18 October
Writing	Article writers	10 days	11-21 October
Reviewing and amendments	Newsletter's sub-editor (and editor)/newsletter committee	5 days	22-26 October
Editing	Newsletter's editor	1 day	26 October
Design and layout	Newsletter's design and layout artist	2 days	27-28 October
Final approval, proof-read and sign-off	Newsletter's editor and proof-reader	3 hours	29 October
Printing	Printer	3 days	1-3 November
Distribution	Committee members	7 days	4-10 November
Evaluation of the newsletter	Committee members and selected readers and/or people with media expertise	2 hours	30 November

## Planning a newsletter

In this example, we have taken note of weekends, and not planned production work on them. But in your organisation, that is when you may plan to get lots of work done, if volunteers are involved. This is a very simple production schedule – it is good to plan every part of the process you can think of and include each part, however small. Everyone involved in the production process should be aware of deadlines and responsibilities so they stick to them.

## Distribution

Never produce media without producing a distribution plan! Many, many organisations get caught up in the excitement of planning what to produce and the creative part of how to produce it. Distribution gets left to last and sadly often piles of valuable media lie wasted in offices, undistributed.

Here are some questions to help guide you when developing a media distribution plan. You will have thought through some of these questions when you were doing your media planning.

1. Who do we want to reach with our media?
2. Where can we reach our target group?

3. How best can we reach them? What different methods could we use? Be creative!
4. By when do we want them to receive our media?
5. Who will do the distribution?

### An example of a distribution plan for a newsletter

Where	Who	How many?	By when?
Office	Rajan	65	31 October
Post	Ramesh	20	31 October
Annual general meeting	Newsletter committee	200	1 November
School meeting	Rajan	20	2 November
Temple	Shanti	45	4 November
Library	Perusha	30	4 November
Clinic	Perusha	60	4 November
Civic meeting	Jasmin	55	8 November
<b>Total</b>		<b>495</b>	<b>10 November</b>

### Evaluation

A vital part of producing media is to evaluate it. It is also good to review your production process to see how you can become more efficient.

As far as evaluating your media, ask yourselves critical questions about:

- the newsletter production process – how did it go?
  - what went well?
  - where were the glitches?
  - what can we do better next time?
- content
- language, style and tone
- design and layout
- distribution

Also get feedback from your readers. Have a look at the section called *Evaluating your newsletter's content* in this toolkit for ideas on how to go about this.

### Media skills

You will know what your organisation's capacity is to get the various media production tasks done. We do have a section in this toolkit on *Dealing with service providers* for those organisations that commission out media tasks to freelancers and companies.

Identifying and developing a media skills development plan is important in all organisations. The more you can build these skills within your organisation the more control you have over the production process – even if you commission some of it

out. It is part of building skills within your organisation. Make sure that your organisation discusses this in its general planning, even if it decides to develop certain skills slowly, over the years.

Of course, if your organisation decides it wants to build particular skills to do media production in-house, then it may need to budget for equipment, like a computer, printer, scanner, camera, for example, and for capacity. See the section in this toolkit called *Resources: production, running costs, budget* for more thought on this. Also see our CIVICUS toolkit *Budgeting*.

If you want to develop and grow any skill you have to look for information on it and learn that way. Like any skill, the more you do it, the better you get.

Visit some of our other toolkits to learn more about media skills, including

- *Writing powerfully and effectively*
- *Writings within your organisation*
- *Handling the media*
- *Promoting your organisation.*

When producing media you will also need organisational skills, like strategising, planning, visioning, budgeting, liaising, commissioning, co-ordinating, and monitoring and evaluation.

## **Writing skills**

People who teach writing skills will tell you that everyone is a writer. You just have to have the confidence to try, learn and practise. See also our CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully*.

There are lots of skills and techniques to learn along the way, and the more you write, the better you get. Here are some ideas on developing your writing skills:

- Look out for writing courses. If there is a cost involved, ask for a reduced rate as a not-for-profit organisation.
- Budget for a writing course to be run in your organisation, so more people can benefit. Be clear about your objectives – you may want some general writing skills, or journalistic, report-writing, or writing briefs skills.
- Offer to take on writing tasks – the more you try your hand at writing different writings, the better you get.
- Get concrete feedback on your writing so that you can learn and grow from it. See the section called *Getting feedback* in the CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully*.
- Keep a journal that you write in regularly, just for practice.
- Read, read, read – especially in the kind of writing you mostly want to do. This may be letters to the editor, feature writing, or pamphlets.
- Borrow books from the library on writing, browse bookshops in the writing section, and see if you can pick up a bargain at second-hand bookshops.
- Follow the writings of established writers.
- Join or create a writing group.
- Surf the internet for writing-related sites.

- If you work on a computer, turn off the spelling and grammar checks while you are getting your ideas down. Switch it on only when you are ready to edit. The checks can really distract you from getting your ideas down.

## Editing and proof-reading

There are different kinds of editing. There is overall editing for content and angle. Sometimes this is a highly political task. Then there is editing for content accuracy, logical flow, repetition, word-usage, headings and sub-headings, grammar and spelling. We call this sub-editing. Then there is proof-reading, which concentrates on checking that the grammar and spelling are correct.

- ◆ Learning to edit well is something that, like all skills, takes time, learning the techniques, and lots of practice. Look out for editing courses.
- ◆ For some editing tips, go to the section *Edit for effectiveness* in our CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully*.
- ◆ Sometimes it can work very well to have an editor-mentor who helps you learn on the job. This could be someone inside or outside your organisation. You could try to arrange this on a voluntary or paid basis.
- ◆ Your organisation should keep a couple of good grammar books on its shelves, as well as a good dictionary and a Thesaurus which tells you what alternative words you could use if you are searching for similes (words that are different but mean almost the same thing).
- ◆ If you use a computer, use the grammar and spelling checks on it. Do stay in control of this, though. Sometimes the computer programme offers inappropriate suggestions!

## Photography

Photography is a very creative skill. Like most other skills, you never stop learning. Unfortunately, photography is expensive because of the cost of cameras, film, and film processing and development.

Technology has moved particularly quickly in the world of cameras. Many people still love the good old trusted manual cameras more than the hi-tech modern ones. Others love the new technology, like digital cameras. It is a matter of taste and budget – each has its advantages and disadvantages. It is good to know what each different type of camera can offer.

If you want to develop photography as a skill:

- Visit camera shops, if you can. See what is on offer, and ask lots of questions about the different kinds of cameras.
- Find out if there are any photography clubs around. As well as learning about photography, you will probably also get access to cheaper bulk film and other things, like cameras for sale, that will help you.
- Connect up with photographers, and learn from them informally.



- Find out if there are any courses on offer.
- Get books on photography out of the library, and browse that section of bookshops. Sometimes you can pick up good books on photography in second-hand bookshops. They tend to be very expensive new.
- Look through magazines and other media that use photographs. You can learn about composition, and develop your own style this way.
- If you need to buy a camera, look at both new and second-hand – sometimes you can pick up a good second-hand camera. If you do, make sure it has a guarantee.

## Drawing and illustration

- If you want to build the skill of doing illustrations and cartoons, then look out for courses and classes that are offered.
- Be on the lookout for the work of other artists – at exhibitions, libraries and bookshops.
- Look out for self-help books.
- Connect up with artists – both formal and informal – in your neighbourhood. Learn from them informally.
- Practice, practice, practice.

## Design and layout

Design is exciting, creative media work. It is when you work out how you want the media to look. Layout is implementing your design.

It is challenging to design media that looks good, is accessible, and gets the messages across. One of the best ways to learn about design is to look at how different forms of media are designed. Think about what works and doesn't work for you – and why.

- Find out about design courses on offer. Quite often these are offered by organisations in the non-governmental organisation sector.
- Become design aware. Look critically at design of all media around you. Ask yourself if it works well (if yes, why?) or not (if not, why?). Initiate discussions with people around you about design.
- Copy some ideas that you like, amend them, and try them out. Sometimes you need to get copyright to use other people's work. But generally with design we create from what we see, reshape and reinvent. Ultimately we come up with an original design.
- Experiment and play around with design whenever you can.
- With layout, work out what methods your organisation can afford and then train in what is practical. You may have to do layout manually – which offers lots of creative opportunity.
- A computer is very helpful for design and layout – especially in correcting mistakes and producing media quickly. But don't get carried away with all the many options it can offer. You may end up with a messy looking publication. See our section called *Design and layout basics*, which comes next.



## Design and layout basics

### What is design and layout?

The way you set out your writing, headings and illustrations on what you are producing is your design. It includes what style of lettering you want, what colours you decide to use, and whether you choose to use a drawing or a photograph.

Design is the creative part where you work out what is going to make your media look interesting, attractive and easy to read. And what is going to make it powerful.

You can play around a lot at the design stage, trying out different things. It is through this process that you learn about design. There is one fundamental rule: design should not compromise the clarity of your message. For example, if you have a beautifully designed poster advertising a rally but people cannot read the writing on it, your media has failed to achieve its objective.

Depending what you are producing, with design you could be working with:

- words
- symbols
- slogans, headlines, headings and sub-headings
- illustrations (photographs, drawings, patterns, cartoons, graphs, tables)
- colour
- empty space

**Layout** is when you implement your design. You may do layout through using paper, glue and scissors if you are producing a poster or pamphlet. Or you could use a computer.

After design and layout, you will probably send your product to the printers, for copies to be made.

### Lettering

Use lettering (a font) that is easy to read. This applies to whatever you are producing. We suggest you work at making your media powerful through the words, more than the shape of the lettering you choose.

1. Think about the lettering (also called font). Lettering is the design and style of lettering. Here are some different lettering styles that you can get when you use a computer, with their names. Decide which you think are more reader-friendly. Remember there is a difference between attractiveness and being easy to read.

This is a lettering called *Comic Sans MS*

This is a lettering called *Jazz LET*

This is a lettering called *Times New Roman*

This is a lettering called *Telegram LET*

This is a lettering called *Arial Narrow*

This is a lettering called *Tahoma*

This is a lettering called *Courier New*

This is a lettering called Bookman Old Style

2. There are two main kinds of lettering: the serif lettering and the sans serif lettering. *Sans* is a French word meaning “without”.

This is a serif lettering called Bookman Old Style. The serif lettering has little feet running at the bottom of letters. This helps the reader’s eye run from letter to letter, word to word.

This is a sans serif lettering. It is called Arial. It does not have the little feet at the bottom of each letter. Although it looks like a neat, clear lettering, it is more difficult to read than a serif lettering if in a block. It is good for headings and sub-headings.

Have a look at the different letterings in (1) above and see if you can work out which is serif and which is sans serif.

Have a look at newspapers, magazines and books. You will notice that most of them use a serif lettering for the main text, and then use sans serif lettering for headlines, headings, sub-headings and captions. They do this because serif is easier to read in big chunks. We recommend that you do the same.

3. Think about how you use upper and lower case.

THIS TYPING IS IN UPPER CASE (CAPITAL LETTERS)

This typing is in lower case (small letters), except for the “T”

Upper case is more difficult to read. It is startling. Compare this upper case text below with the use of mainly lower case in (1) above.

THIS IS A LETTERING CALLED VERDANA

THIS IS A LETTERING CALLED CG TIMES

THIS IS A LETTERING CALLED ARIAL NARROW

THIS IS A LETTERING CALLED TAHOMA

THIS IS A LETTERING CALLED COURIER NEW

THIS IS A LETTERING CALLED TIMES NEW ROMAN

THIS IS A LETTERING CALLED BOOKMAN OLD STYLE

4. Bold writing works well on banners and posters which people have to read from far away. But mainly use it for headings on newsletters and pamphlets because it can be startling. Compare these below. Which is easier to read?

**We need to work out a media campaign so that we advance the struggle for landless people’s rights as quickly as possible.**

We need to work out a media campaign so that we advance the struggle for landless people’s rights as quickly as possible.

5. Italics is more difficult to read. We suggest you use it sparingly. Compare the text below in italics and non-italics and see what you think about which is easier to read.

*We need to work out a media campaign so that we advance the struggle for landless people's rights as quickly as possible.*

We need to work out a media campaign so that we advance the struggle for landless people's rights as quickly as possible.

6. Underlining can be very dazzling for the reader. We suggest you hardly ever use it. It distracts the reader from the words. The key message should hold the power, more than the design. Have a look at this. Which do you think is more effective?

We need to work out a media campaign so that we advance the struggle for landless people's rights as quickly as possible.

We need to work out a media campaign so that we advance the struggle for landless people's rights as quickly as possible.

7. The size of your print will depend on what you are producing. The size of lettering is called its point size. The bigger the point size, the bigger the letter.

With a poster, banner, or graffiti, your lettering will be big so that people far away can get your message. With newsletters and pamphlets, don't reduce the size of your writing or typing just so you can fit more on a page. Keep the size of the writing easy and comfortable to read, otherwise people might be put off. Experiment with lettering size. Design your poster and stand far away from it – as far away as your poster's intended audience would be – to see if it is easy to read. Try it out.

8. Keep it simple. Even though computers offer us lots of different options with lettering, if you use more than about three styles in one piece of media, you can end up distracting the reader. Simple is powerful.

## **Headlines, headings and sub-headings**

These are part of design. We use them to attract attention and interest, and to break up the text part of our media. There is empty space around a headline, heading and sub-heading. This lets the page "breathe" and makes it easier to read.

Headlines, headings and sub-headings are like signposts. They help the reader to understand the journey you are taking them on, especially in a newsletter or pamphlet. They must always reflect what the reader can expect to find in the text, otherwise they can irritate. Do not let your headings float in between paragraphs. Rather have the paragraph and the heading closer together than the space above the sub-heading. The closer your sub-heading to the text, the stronger the connection, and the better signposting you are offering the reader. Compare the first and second examples; the first one has floating subheadings:

## **First example**

### **Fun day**

Our organisation's fun day will be held on 1<sup>st</sup> September at Nature's Park. We invite you to bring lots of friends and family to share in the fun with us.

### **Lots of things to do**

You will find lots of interesting and fun things to do. Amongst them will be:

- pony rides
- face painting
- races – for adults and kids
- competitions – art, balloon popping, jumping
- yoga

### **The cost**

There will be an entrance fee of 50 pula for children and 100 for adults. Once you are in everything is free except for food and drinks.

## **Second example of sub-headings**

### **Fun day**

Our organisation's fun day will be held on 1<sup>st</sup> September at Nature's Park. We invite you to bring lots of friends and family to share in the fun with us.

### **Lots of things to do**

You will find lots of interesting and fun things to do. Amongst them will be:

- pony rides
- face painting
- races – for adults and kids
- competitions – art, balloon popping, jumping
- yoga

### **The cost**

There will be an entrance fee of 50 pula for children and 100 for adults. Once you are in everything is free except for food and drinks.

## **Space**

We know that space is precious – and often with a newsletter or pamphlet especially, we want to use it for written information. But put yourself in your reader's shoes. Think about how they will feel when faced with pages of dense writing. It will put them off. They may not have the energy to read it.

Rather be very selective about what written information you put into your media and let that stand out on a page by offering generous space around it. Rather say less in a more powerful way. Design it attractively with your reader in mind, to make sure it gets read rather than have a reader put it down because it requires too much effort to read.

## Columns

Columns are especially important to think about when producing pamphlets and newsletters. Put yourself in your reader's shoes. How can you make what you have written easier to read? If your text stretches all the way over a wide page, it is more difficult to read. Try using columns that have a good breathing distance between them. We call the space in between the columns the *gutter*. The space around the outside of the text is the *margins*. Be generous with both.

## Colour

Think carefully about the colours you choose. Colours can be cultural and symbolic. Use colour to strengthen your message. The more colours you use, the higher the cost of printing. Ask your printer to explain how this works.

For billboards, banners, posters, and badges especially, experiment with colours before you print. Dark writing on a dark background is not easy to read. Contrasting colours work well, like white on red, for example, or black on yellow. Be creative, try out new ideas, and test them before you spend a lot of money on printing.

## Illustrations

Sometimes a photograph can replace a million words. When the public sees a photograph of a tiny two-month old baby killed by soldiers in a war, you hardly need words to evoke outrage at the injustice and brutality. The thing about photographs is that they are of real people. Drawings can also be very powerful, and cartoons, if clever, are very effective.

But do be careful not to make them too clever so that they obscure your key messages.

## Some tips with photographs

- Use clear photographs that have good contrast. A very grey photograph can end up looking terrible once it has been printed on a pamphlet or poster.
- Don't be shy to make a good photograph very big so that it tells its own story.
- Find out if there is a photo agency where you can get good quality photographs. Some newspapers have photograph libraries that allow you to borrow photographs and reproduce them (sometimes for a fee).
- As an organisation, take photographs of your work regularly, keep them accurately labelled and well filed. These will be very useful over time.
- Decide whether your organisation wants to train someone in photography to add to the skills that you have.
- If you have a member who does photography as a hobby or as a job, perhaps you could even ask her to come and give you some tips on taking effective photographs.

## Drawings and cartoons

Drawings and cartoons can be very powerful in your media. Political cartoons especially can make a point very clearly. People put good cartoons up on their notice boards. It is a way of spreading a message.

## **Some tips with drawings and cartoons**

- Keep a file of drawings and cartoons that you come across that are relevant to your work. Remember if you use the work of other people, get permission to do so and acknowledge their work. This is part of copyright law.
- Find out if anyone in your organisation is good at drawings and cartoons, and can do some for you. People often love to be able to contribute in this way.

## **Text boxes**

One way of creating interest on your page, and drawing attention to especially important information in a newsletter or pamphlet is to use text boxes. The boxes should not be too big on the page, otherwise the reader may not bother with the rest of the text on the page. And don't make the lines of the box too thick. This can make your page look heavy.

## **Quick message media**

### **The basics: quick message media**

Getting your message out through quick message media requires careful and sometimes clever thought. The lettering has to be easy to read – not cluttered. The message has to be clear and catchy. It needs to stick in people's minds.

Think of slogans that you have remembered over the years because they were effective. Or an advertisement where the words are catchy, a tune that you keep humming. Civil society organisations need to have the skills to get a message out without lecturing.

With badges, stickers and posters we work with small spaces. With banners and graffiti we work with bigger spaces. But the principle remains the same: we have to use few words or symbols to maximise the clarity and boldness of the message. And our message must be crystal clear.

Don't you find it very frustrating when the lettering on a poster is so small that you have to go up very close to read it? Or if, when you are driving past a poster in a bus, you eventually give up trying to read what it says. The poster producers have messed up – they have put time, effort and money into producing a poster that not many people can read.

Other times a poster tries to tell you too much – it makes it hard for passers-by to retain the information. Another wasted media exercise.

## **Planning and implementation**

Whatever media you want to produce, you must have a plan. Your plan involves answering these basic questions. Do not produce media without asking them. Each question gives rise to more detailed questions that your organisation should develop and answer along the way:

- What media do we want to produce?
- Why do we want to produce it?
- What will our key message be?
- How will this fit in with our organisation's aims?



- What do we hope to achieve with it?
- What do we want people to think, feel, know or do after seeing our media?
- Does it fit into our organisation's capacity?
- How does this fit into our organisation's overall role and strategic planning?
- What are the possible implications or repercussions of our media? Think this through carefully. Media is powerful and can evoke tremendous positive or negative reaction. For those organisations operating in a hostile environment, for example, are security police likely to raid your offices or members' homes and detain people? Or for those where there is overwhelming support – maybe there will be hundreds of people suddenly wanting to join your organisation.
- What is our plan for handling repercussions? For example, do we have the capacity to handle it?
- Do we think it will be worth it? How can we tell?
- What skills do we need to produce this media?
- Do we have the skills?
- Who will help to produce the media?
- Which help, if any, will we need to outsource? e.g. printing
- Who do we want to reach with this media?
- Why are they an important grouping?
- Where will we distribute it?
- Will we give it out free or are we going to charge for it?
- If we charge for it, how much? And how do we calculate that figure?
- How will we distribute it?
- Who will distribute it?
- Who will monitor how effective our media is or was?
- How will it be monitored?
- How will the outcome be incorporated into the memory, experience and future planning of our organisation?
- How many items do we need to produce?
- How did we get to that figure?
- How much will it cost?
- Did we budget for it? If yes, how much?
- If no, how will we pay for it?
- What is our production schedule for this media production? Will we be able to produce it in time (if it is for an event, for example)?
- Who will be the overall co-ordinator of this media production activity/project?

## Badges

See the sections in this toolkit on *Quick message media*, and *The basics: quick message media*. These covers planning, some general production issues, distribution and budgeting questions. Also see the section *Basics of design and layout*.

Badges are important. People wear them to show where they stand on an issue. Under hostile or repressive conditions it can be very brave to do this. Effective badges promote curiosity and discussion, and so meet the important objective of creating interest as well as identity.

## **An example of the importance of badges**

The red AIDS ribbon is an example of how important badges can be. Because it is a symbol, it is a non-verbal badge.

People wear these badges to show they reject the stigma attached to HIV and AIDS. They wear them to show that they care about people with HIV and AIDS. In some parts of the world, people have worn them at risk of being stigmatised, hurt or even killed.

At one stage all the presenters on South Africa's public service television stations wore AIDS symbol badges to show viewers that they think of and care about people who are suffering with AIDS. There has been a lot of innovation with this symbol. There are fairly cheap red ribbons made into the AIDS symbol shape and attached with a small safety pin. Traditional South African beadmakers have turned their hand to creating the AIDS symbol in beads, using a large safety pin. There are metal badges, pottery badges, all kinds of badges have emerged in the struggle for raising awareness around HIV and AIDS. Organisations can do the same with any issue they are involved in. It just takes some creativity. Badges can be made and sold as income-generating activities for unemployed people.

## **Some things to think about with badges**

- Because badges are small, you have to be economical with words, or use a symbol as large as you can.
- Your message must be clear, unless you want to provoke curiosity. It can be funny and thought provoking, like *better be gay than grumpy!*
- Try to work with contrasting colours so that your symbol or message stands out.
- If you are using a symbol, it has to be clear and recognisable.
- Think about whether your organisation could organise a badge-making workshop as an organisational building activity as well as to get your message out.
- As mentioned earlier, there are many different ways of making badges. Find out if you can hire or buy a badge-making machine and buy the badge components too.
- Whatever method you choose, experiment first to see whether your badge design is effective and whether it is strong. Do this before producing hundreds of badges that end up breaking easily.

## **If you are outsourcing badge-making**

- Know what kind of badge you want made. For example, metal, beaded, plastic – whatever you have seen and want.
- Make decisions about what quality badge you want. The better the quality, the more expensive it will be. But you might weigh this up with how long you want people's badges to last and be worn.
- Work out your numbers carefully by planning who you are going to give (or sell) them to, how distribution will work, and whether there will be long-term demand for them.



- If you sell badges at a mass meeting, conference or march you are likely to have quite a lot of demand, as people like to wear badges on these occasions.

## **Stickers**

See the sections on *Quick message media*, and *The basics: quick message media*. This covers planning, some general production issues, distribution and budgeting questions to answer. Also see the section on *Basics of design and layout*.

As always, shop around for the best prices. Be able to explain clearly the purpose of your stickers when you talk with printers, so that you get good advice. Ask the same questions of printers so that you can compare answers effectively.

## **Sticker size**

Experiment with your sticker size. Make up a mock-up sticker and try it out. The size is linked to how far away you want people to be able to see or read it.

## **Paper quality for stickers**

Decide how long you want stickers to last for. This is linked to your objective in producing them. If it is for a rally where you are going to hand out stickers to lots of people to wear on their clothes for the one day, then you can choose quite a cheap sticker paper.

But if you want people to put stickers on cars or other vehicles that will be exposed to all kinds of weather, then you need to go for a weatherproof sticker because you want them to last for a long time. In this form, they will cost more.

## **Design for stickers**

See also the section on *Design and layout basics* in this toolkit.

Effective stickers require creativity. Play around with shapes and colours, with words and slogans. It has to be effective and catchy. Your message must be clear. Bear your audience in mind. Ask, "What will work for them?" rather than what works for you. Often activists have a more radical perspective than the people that they are trying to win over. So think strategically about how you can do this. An example here would be people who are pro-choice with abortion. How can you develop a sticker that makes an impact and makes people who are against abortion rethink their position?

With stickers, if you are using words, you can't go for more than around four or five words. We suggest you have a creative meeting and use the *mind map* method in the toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully* to generate ideas. This way, you will reap the power of collective thought, and you will also be able to sound off ideas amongst more people. Try to come up with a sticker that people want to have, and will be proud to wear or display.

## **Uses for stickers**

If you want your stickers to last for a long time and for them to be seen everywhere, try to think of uses that people have for stickers. One idea is to produce stickers of the right size for people to use for motor vehicle licences. Your organisation could

perhaps negotiate with the relevant government department to hand them out when people buy their licences. If you are a non-profit organisation doing valuable work you may be able to persuade them. If you work in a hostile environment, try to think of other ways that people could use stickers in their lives.

Remember that children love stickers, so you could try to develop your message from a child's perspective. Most of the issues our organisations deal with affect children in their own specific way. Most media focuses on adults, but children are exposed to it and can read it too from a young age. Perhaps for the beginning of the school year when children need name tags for schoolbooks, you could design some with a message from your organisation?

Most of all, be creative with stickers – do lots of brainstorming and you will be delighted with the powerful and innovative ideas you come up with. Think unconventionally!

## **Banners**

See the sections in this toolkit *Quick message media* and *The basics: quick message media*. This covers planning, some general production issues, distribution and budgeting questions. Also see *Design and layout basics*.

## **General points**

- A banner-making activity can be an organisation-building event.
- You have to be clear about what key message you want to send. And who you are sending it to.
- Once you have decided on your message, try it out with different people to see whether it works.

## **Making banners**

You can outsource your banner to a printer but you will lose out on how a banner-making event can help build your organisation. If you do outsource your banner, be clear about what you want it to look like, what fabric you want to use, and how it will be hung.

## **How will it hang?**

Before you start your banner, work out where and how you will hang it. You may want to sew loops onto your banner. Then you can thread rope or string through and hang it. That way you will give it a longer life, and it can be nicer than just tying rope around a corner and scrunching it up. Sew on your loops before you paint.

Consider the weather – is it likely to rain, be windy, etc. If your banner flaps around wildly no one will see it properly. Will you tie it to a tree, to poles? Do you need string on all its corners? Do you need to reinforce the corners in some way, like with reinforced fabric or metal? How much rope or string do you need?

Will people carry it? Do you need wooden poles on each side for this? Do you need to sew any seams, or pockets at the top on the banner for this? Remember even if people will be carrying a banner on a march, you may want to hang it somewhere at

the end of the march, or display it permanently. Make sure you have a plan for how it will hang in the long-term.

We do not advise you to use sticky stuff to put a banner on a wall. Usually it is not strong enough and the banner falls down. This can cause great disappointment. It can also spoil both banner and wall.

## **Resources for banner making**

Here is a list of the range of resources needed for different kinds of banner making. Once you have decided which method to use, you will need to make your own list from this, as well as other things you have thought about:

- people with time and energy to make a banner
- cloth for the banner
- scissors
- banner hanging resources e.g. fabric, needles (or sewing machine) and thread to sew loops, rope or string to hang the banner with
- newspaper or newsprint to put under the banner
- paint
- brushes
- small, flattish containers to decant paint into
- container to wash brushes in
- soap and water to wash brushes
- a banner design on paper that is the same proportional size that you have chosen for your fabric
- overhead projector and design on an overhead transparency (if you choose that method)
- tape to stick the banner on the wall for the overhead projector method
- refreshments and music (optional!)

## **The fabric for banner making**

- Choose the size of your banner carefully. Will it be hung in a small or large setting? How visible do you want it to be? What is your long-term plan for the banner? Do you know the size of the space it will have to fit?
- Choose colour carefully. For effectiveness, use contrasting colours for your fabric and for your paint. Black writing on yellow background, for example, stands out very effectively.
- You can use unbleached calico. It is cheap and it works well for banners. Use a high cotton content fabric. Nylons do not work well with painting because they often stretch.
- Work out the size carefully. You may have to sew pieces together if you want a very big banner.

## **The paint for banner making**

- Use water-based paint only. Oil-based paint will not work.
- Some water-based paints are called PVA or PVA acrylic.
- You can choose white paint and mix in colours. Or you can choose the colour paint that you want.

- You will have to discuss the quantity of paint that you need with a salesperson in a paint shop, or with someone who knows about these things. Remember to ask for a not-for-profit organisation discount.
- You can also check with members in your organisation whether anyone has some spare paint (but it must be water-based paint) that they can donate. Or if there is someone with some banner-making expertise.

## **The brushes for banner making**

- You need to have narrow, flat and stiff brushes for painting the design, and for detailed work. Big brushes are good for painting very big areas.
- After using your brushes wash them with soap and water. Rinse them. Some people put a little dryish soap on brushes while they are being stored. This can help them keep their shape. You just rinse it off next time you use it. Store your brushes with the tips pointing up.

## **Plan ahead and avoid mess**

Try and keep everything highly organised when you are working on your banner. An accidental kicking over of a pot of paint could spoil everything.

- If your banner work is going to take a couple of days, then try to organise a venue where you can just leave the banner out for that whole time, and where you can close the entrance. Things get spoilt when you have to move a banner that is still wet.
- Pour paint into small flattish containers for each person to work with.
- If your paint is too thick, dilute it with a little water. This will make it easier for you to control into your shapes.
- Paint light colours first, then when you paint the dark colours, you can tidy up rough untidy bits.
- Keep your water container for cleaning brushes well away from the banner.
- Put some protection under your cloth before you start painting. It is quite likely that paint will go through the cloth and you don't want to mess the surface you are working on. If you use newspaper, be careful as it can stick. Plastic works well – like plastic sheeting or garbage bags.
- Remember to wash brushes thoroughly after using them. They can last a long time if you do.

## **Methods for banner making**

Your organisation will probably have used its own methods for making its banners for events and campaigns. It is amazing how you discover the hidden artistic talent amongst your members and staff when you have to produce something like a banner! We focus here on painted banners but you can make beautiful banners by using cloth designs sewn or glued onto cloth. You can also silkscreen banners, but we do not go into this in this toolkit.

## **Cloth on cloth banners**

AIDS activists, and family and friends affected by HIV/AIDS have made very powerful AIDS quilts as a way of remembering those who have died of AIDS and as a way of raising awareness. Organisations have arranged for these kinds of quilts to be exhibited in different countries. In Chile, when thousands of people “disappeared”

during political uprisings, women sewed small quilts that told stories about what was going on.

You can make beautiful banners by using cloth shapes on your backing cloth. You can either stick or sew them on. Sewing on usually lasts longer and can look wonderful. You can do a lot of different things with them. Stuck-on ones can start peeling off, and as the glue gets older, may start to stain the cloth.

If you are going to cut out shapes and letters for your banner, then choose your cloth colours carefully so you achieve the look you are after.

### *Some tips with cloth banners*

- Use cloth that will not fray easily
- Use glue that is good for cloth
- Plan your colours carefully
- Set aside enough time to do this – it can be very time-consuming – especially the sewing method.

### **Design and do: the grid method**

#### *Step One*

With this method, you would create your banner design first on a large piece of paper that is a smaller proportional shape to your fabric. First divide your paper up into a grid, for example in blocks of 2cm squares. Then draw your design over the light pencil marks. Use a pencil so that you can rub out. Once you are happy with the design you can use coloured crayons or felt-tipped pens to play with the colours you want to use. This will give you a model version of your banner.

#### *Step Two*

Then, also using pencil, and working lightly, mark out the same grid – using a colour chalk a similar colour to the cloth, or very lightly in pencil. This will help with your accuracy and drawing to scale in copying your banner design from paper to cloth. You could also use a coloured thread and sew it in to show your grid, if you want. You would need to pull the thread out later.

#### *Step Three*

Copy your design onto your cloth.

#### *Step Four*

Let the painting begin! But to avoid problems, the banner making team should discuss how they are going to work. For example, which colour are you painting first, (start with lighter colours) will you start painting from the top to the bottom, or from side to side. Agree on things like that to help make the process smooth. Obviously you may change your plan along the way if you need to.

#### *Step Five*

Let the banner have plenty of time to dry. If you fold it wet, it will get spoilt.

## *Step Six*

Hang the banner in a clearly visible, most strategic spot. Take a photo of it (if you can), and enjoy seeing your collective handiwork!

## **The overhead projector method**

This is one of the most effective banner making methods, and it is quicker than the “design and do” method. You will need an overhead projector for it, and an overhead transparency. If your organisation does not have one, perhaps you can borrow from an education institution, local government, or another organisation.

## *Step One*

Sew the hems and/or loops you need to before you start the banner.

Draw your banner design on a piece of paper to the same proportion as your piece of banner fabric. The best is to draw it in black pen on white paper. Your paper should not be bigger than the size of an overhead transparency (which is around A4 size). This is because you are going to copy it onto an overhead transparency.

Once you have drawn your design in black, put your piece of overhead transparency over your design and copy it, or photostat it directly on to a burn-on transparency.

## *Important note - photostatting*

If you decide you want to photostat your design straight onto the transparency, then you must first find out whether the photostat machine can take burn-on transparencies. If you do not use a burn-on transparency, an ordinary transparency will melt as you put it through the photostat machine, and this will cause a costly breakdown.

## *Step Two*

Tape your banner cloth firmly to the wall. Set up your overhead projector and transparency on it so that it shines accurately onto your cloth. Tape the transparency to the overhead projector glass so that it does not move while you work.

Your design will be projected onto the cloth. Your team can go up to the cloth and start tracing the outlines of your design on the cloth, using pencils. If you are using a drawing of something, then be extra careful about being accurate. Trace around the drawing as if you are tracing a map. After you have done the tracing, stand back and see if it all looks right. Do a final check that all words are spelt correctly! If it is quite a complicated design, then draw small pencil crosses to indicate where it must be painted in. This is important especially if there are quite a few people working on the banner.

Also, do not move the cloth until your tracing work is complete. It can be very hard to match up positions after it has been moved.



## *Step Three*

Before you start painting, put some plastic sheeting or newspaper behind the banner on the floor so it does not get spoilt. Plastic is better than newspaper, which can stick. Remember after painting to give it enough time to dry properly before you move it.

If you use paint that is too thin it can run and spoil the banner. Paint that is too thick can crack.

With this method you can make very effective banners – especially using graphics and drawings. It is simple and quick – and very exciting to watch your banner design grow before your eyes.

## **Tips with drawing on a banner**

### **Sew first, then paint**

Sewing a thick, painted banner is a big job. Do all the sewing first, and then do the drawing and painting. It also helps you to be sure what size of fabric you have to paint on.

### **Straight lines**

If you want to draw a straight line over a large area without using a ruler then follow these steps:

Two people hold a piece of thin string that you have covered in chalk along the place that you want the long straight line. They must hold the string very tight. Another person then slaps the string against the cloth. This should leave you with a chalk line where you want your line to be. You can dust it off later.

### **For accuracy**

You can use thick black felt tipped pens to do the finer, detailed outlines, and for narrow lines and neatening. They are much easier to handle than paint brushes.

### **Circles**

If you want a good clear circle, then hammer a nail in the centre of the circle. Naturally, do this onto a surface that will not get spoilt by the nail.

Tie a piece of string to the nail, and tie a pencil to the other end of the string at a distance to where you want the outside of the circle to be.

You can now draw the circle, keeping the string tight as you move the pencil round in a circle. The knot at the nail should be able to move freely round the nail. The knot on the pencil should be taped on to stop it from moving.

### **Graffiti**

See the section *Quick message media*, and *The basics: quick message media*. This covers planning, some general production issues, distribution and budgeting questions. Also see *Design and layout basics*.

By its very nature, graffiti is usually agitational. In many places it is illegal. It is always wise to know what your rights are when you produce graffiti.

Sometimes you have to do graffiti under pressured conditions – you have to do it quickly and sometimes at night when fewer people are around to complain. So before you go out to do it:

- Plan your message. Test it out before you do it by asking other people what they think.
- Know your objective.
- Think about children. They can read from an early age – is your graffiti written in a way they will understand? Could it be offensive or harmful to them in any way?
- Plan your location carefully – whom do you most want to have read your message and where, therefore, is the best spot for it?
- Have you got all you need, for example:
  - the right paint – many people use spray paints because they are quick to use
  - a ladder, if necessary
  - your words or symbols clearly remembered
  - an escape route planned in case someone comes after you
  - a number to call in case you get arrested

## Posters

See the section *Quick message media*, and *The basics: quick message media* in this toolkit. This covers planning, some general production issues, distribution and budgeting questions to answer. Also see *Design and layout basics*.

Posters can be lots of fun to plan – especially the creative part. They are challenging because of their very nature – many are for quick pass-by reading. So they have to grab attention through their message and their design.

## Planning your poster

The more you plan a poster, the more effective it is likely to be.

## Uses of posters

You can use posters to:

- advertise an event (date, time, venue)
- raise awareness about an issue
- provide information

## A budget for your poster

Plans need budgets. Remember to consider all the things that go into poster-making, and work out how much it will cost. Your ideas for your poster should be influenced by your budget.

Here is a list of possible resources you will need, depending on what poster-making method and what kind of distribution you choose:

- people's time and their poster-making creativity
- money – for stationery, reproduction and printing (if you have your posters made at a printers)
- paper



- kokis, paints, rulers, pencils, scissors (for handmade posters)
- graphic, photograph, cartoon, drawing
- whatever you need to put your posters up. For example, cardboard and glue to stick posters on, and string to tie them up if you are going to tie them around trees, lampposts, fence poles, fences
- silk-screening equipment (we cannot go into this method in this toolkit – find out from people you know who have done it, from craft shops, printers, and books)
- poster reproduction and printing costs

## **The aim of your poster**

- Be clear about your aim.
- To help you sharpen your media message awareness, look around at other posters and decide what each one's aim is. If you can't work out the aim, then the poster is weak. Aims could include to:
  - make a statement
  - inform
  - educate
  - mobilise and organise
  - agitate
  - politicise
  - raise awareness

See also the section in this toolkit *Producing your own media: the basics*, especially the subsection *Why produce media?*

- What do you want people to think, feel, know or do after they have read your poster?
- Is it for quick passer-by reading, or is it for places where people stay for a while, like community centres, clinics, libraries, and schools?
- Do you intend using other media alongside the poster? Like pamphlets, for example, or a radio programme?

## **The audience for your poster**

- Be clear about your audience. Remember that posters are public, and many different people will see them. Whose attention do you mostly want? See the section *Know your audience* in the CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully*.

## **Where they will go up?**

Also see also the section later *Distribution of posters*.

- Picture where your posters will be displayed. Be clear about the different locations where you will display your posters, and what resources you will need – both people and equipment – to make sure the posters are displayed.
- Decide how many posters you are going to make based on where you plan to display them. Consult your media budget to see what you can afford.

## What is your main message?

- Get the people who are going to work on the poster together and discuss what the possible messages are that you want to get across. Then choose one message that is the most important. If you have more than one main message, you will have to consider making another poster for it.
- You need to end up with one powerful main message. For example, *come to our fundraising fun day!* Or *join the march against police brutality!* You can offer pamphlets that give more information at the fun day, or on the march.
- Your message must be clear, easy to understand, and easy to remember. People often pass by posters quickly, so you have to be good at this. Test it out before you print thousands.
- Your message could be a slogan, like *“child labour is child abuse”*.
- Your poster should evoke a response. Someone should read it, and ask someone else *“have you seen that there is a fun day at....”* Or *“let’s join the march against police brutality...”*
- Your message could be a question, followed by a suggestion. For example, *Want to feel needed? Got a bit of spare time? Volunteer at Kidz Home,* followed by the contact details.
- Your main message should be in the biggest letters on the poster, so it stands out above all the other information.
- Would it help if your main message were supported by a visual message? For example, a photograph of a couple of children having fun at Kidz Home? A drawing of some kind?
- Although children may not be your target audience, they go to most places that adults do and can read from an early age. Is your poster child-friendly? Would your poster offend the dignity of women, or a particular group of people?
- Whatever the purpose, posters should generally contain very simple, clear information about an event, or an organisation, or an issue.
- Make sure you write your organisation’s name and contact details on your poster (unless you are operating in very hostile conditions and want to remain anonymous). In some countries, by law you are supposed to publish this information on the poster.
- Sometimes posters can advertise pamphlets. Like at a clinic for example, you may have a poster that tells you where you can get a pamphlet on a health issue.

## Design and layout of posters

See also *Design and layout basics*.

- People usually see posters from a distance. It could be at a bus stop, on a wall, on street poles, on a shop window. So they must always be clear, bold and easy to read.
- Before designing your poster, have a look at examples of other posters. Look at ones you think are weak as well as the powerful ones. We learn from both. Use libraries, magazines, and any place you can to get hold of books that have examples of posters. This process can help stimulate ideas.
- Decide what size paper to use for your poster. The bigger your paper, the bolder your design can be. But you will have to balance this with your budget.

- Have a brainstorming session in your organisation about the design.
- Make your message stand out.
- If well-designed, a poster can be a very effective way of providing information or raising an issue.
- If your poster is cluttered, it will be difficult to read and uninteresting. It will cause irritation rather than interest.
- A poster is not a big pamphlet. It should not have many words on it.
- There are different ways of illustrating your poster, including:
  - photographs
  - drawings
  - cartoons
  - silhouettes
  - borders
  - patterns
  - coloured shapes
- If you can use different colours, then use colours that contrast, so your message, whether it is verbal or non-verbal, stands out. The more colours you use the more expensive it will be.
- Come up with a few rough designs on paper. Play around with them. Cut out headings and pictures and move them around. Use coloured wax crayons, felt tipped pens or coloured crayons to help you to work out how it will look. Try to work out how your poster will look from a distance, and then choose the design you think is the most effective.
- Decide whether you want to put a logo onto the poster. If it is a joint poster, you may need to include all the organisations' logos. But keep them fairly small and preferably at the bottom of the poster.
- Many posters are made for quick pass-by reading to provide information about an event, like a civic organisation's annual general meeting. The information or message must be written big and bold so it can be seen from far away.
- Some posters are produced to provide a social or political message that will go up in offices, community centres, and homes, and stay there for some time. It is worth using a better quality paper for these so they will last for a long time. And making them attractive so that people want to display them, and find them interesting to look at. This is a way of promoting your organisation and what it stands for.
- Think about the kind of paper you need to use. This will be informed by where you are going to put your posters up, and by your budget. Higher quality paper costs more but will usually last longer. What you choose is also linked to your aim with your poster.

## **Printing posters**

- If you are getting your posters printed by printers then you need to give very clear instructions about what you want. You should write these down so that you have a copy and so does the printer.
- Make sure the printer knows when you need your posters and agrees to meet your deadline. Try to have planned ahead enough so there is no last minute rush. Things can go wrong (like a printing press breaking down) so production can be delayed at the printers. Try to get your posters done a few

days before you actually need them. This will reduce stress and enhance creativity.

## **Distribution of posters**

Each organisation has its own ways of getting their media out. To be effective you need to plan the most strategic points for your poster to be displayed. You need to think about:

- Where will they be most visible?
- How are you going to put them up? Do you need glue, cardboard backing, string, sticky stuff, drawing pins, and tape?
- Who is going to put them up? If you are going to go on a blitz in your area putting up posters, you may need teams of volunteers. You will need to organise this in advance, and have a co-ordinator.
- To distribute your posters, you may decide to:
  - use existing networks
  - use events
  - get volunteers to stick up posters
  - send out some posters by post

## **Deadlines for your posters**

Try not to leave your poster production to the last minute. Carefully thought-out posters are more likely to achieve their objective. If you rush a job without careful attention, you could end up making mistakes – like forgetting to put the venue onto a poster advertising a meeting. Or forgetting to state that childcare will be provided. This could mean many parents (especially mothers) do not attend.

Plan backwards from the date your poster is due out. And then work out how long each step will take. This will help you know when to start your poster production.

Include in your schedule:

- distribution
- printing
- checking
- design and layout
- finalising content and design
- piloting
- creative brainstorming
- planning

## **Methods**

There are a range of different methods to produce posters. Unfortunately we cannot go into them in this toolkit. They include:

- hand-made
- silk screening
- conventional printing

You will choose a method depending on:

- your resources – people, skills, money
- whether you want to use poster-making as an organisation-building opportunity – for example with silk-screening and hand-made posters

## **Symbols**

Symbols are non-verbal communication – communication without written or spoken words. Using symbols to get a message across can be incredibly powerful.

Perhaps the most famous international symbol right now is the red AIDS ribbon that people have used in all kinds of ways to raise awareness about HIV and AIDS, and following the invasion of Iraq, the peace symbol.

In South Africa, the non-governmental organisation called the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) has used symbols in its campaign to urge the government to provide pregnant HIV-positive women with anti-retroviral drugs to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Symbols have included activists holding wooden crosses and small coffins on marches, symbolising all the babies needlessly born HIV-positive because their pregnant mothers did not get anti retroviral drugs.

## **Tips with symbols**

- Symbols must be clear. Ambiguous symbols can lead to confusion, and your key message can be lost.
- When you use a new symbol, find a way of educating people about what the symbol represents. Example of symbols used over the years include the peace symbol, anti-nuclear weapons, the sign for women in feminist struggles, and the white ribbon for breast cancer awareness.

## **E-mail as media**

E-mail, or electronic mail, is a very quick way of getting messages out both near and far. It is a very exciting medium to work with because you can spread messages almost instantaneously, and get responses quickly from people all over the world. It is a mobilising tool, and has been used as such to get people to participate in protest marches, for example, and also to sign petitions.

But e-mail only works for people who have access to computers that are linked to the Internet. It can cause a divide in an organisation if some members do and others do not have access. Remember to accommodate all members' communication method needs so that you do not make people feel inadequate or excluded.

We do not go into how to send e-mails here, nor do we go into how you set up group addresses. This you need to work out according to which Internet programme you use. We just offer some thoughts and tips on using e-mail as one of your media.

## **Some tips on e-mail**

- Keep messages short, simple and clear.
- Unfortunately, people these days have little time for reading, and reading on a computer screen can make people even more impatient than reading in print – so you have to get your message across clearly and quickly.
- Unless absolutely necessary, try not to send people bulky e-mail files, especially with photographs and other graphics, as these take a long time to download.

- Be clear about what you hope people will do (if anything) after reading your e-mail.
- Give people clear instructions and guidance, and a contact e-mail and telephone/fax address if they need to get hold of you.
- Use e-mail very consciously, as it is a very public and flexible form of media.
  - E-mails are unlike printed media. The content can get changed, and forwarded to other people.
  - E-mails can get forwarded to people you had not intended them to go to, so make sure you bear this in mind.
- Use an appropriate language, style and tone – sometimes people adopt a very casual way of writing that does not always suit the wide, public, easy-to-change nature of e-mail.

## T-shirts

See the earlier section *The basics: quick message media*. This covers planning, some general production issues, distribution and budgeting questions to answer. Also see *Design and layout basics*.

Printed T-shirts are a great way to get messages out, and to promote your organisation and what it stands for. Often they go well together with posters and banners – giving an identity to your event, issue, or your organisation.

In this section we do not go into how to print T-shirts. There are different methods, and you can decide whether to print T-shirts in-house or to outsource the printing see the section *Dealing with service providers*, especially the section *Printing: reproduction, printers and print reps*.

## Why print T-shirts?

- To promote your organisation.
- To raise awareness about an issue. For example, “Every 26 seconds a woman is raped”.
- To commemorate key days, people, or events. For example, International Children’s Day.
- To express support for a struggle. For example, “We support unions’ demand for an end to retrenchments”.
- To make a statement. For example, “my friend with AIDS is still my friend”.

## Some tips

### Costs and printing

- Obviously you will need to have a budget for your T-shirt production. It is important to locate it within your organisation’s media strategy. See the section in this toolkit called *Planning a media strategy* and within that section *Resources and budget*.
- Linked to your budget will be a decision as to whether you are selling your T-shirts. To get to your price, work out the cost of producing each one.
- T-shirt printing can be expensive, so ask around your networks and shop around for the best prices for the best value T-shirts.
- Check the quality of the T-shirt carefully and make sure you know that printing on it will work well.



- Work out what sizes you need, and see samples to check how they look.
- Find out about the different methods of printing on T-shirts and which lasts longer, and costs.
- As an organisation not-for-profit you can ask for a special price.

## Design of T-shirts

- See *Layout and design basics*, and also look at our section on *Posters* in this toolkit.
- The message should be simple and bold.
- It can be illustrated but do not allow it to be cluttered.
- You should be able to read the writing or identify the illustration or symbol from a distance.
- Play with colours to make your message stand out. You can play with different T-shirt colours, and different ink colours.
- Whatever your T-shirt says will be strengthened if the person who is wearing it can explain more about your message.
- For adults, do not make the design wider than about 26cm across the chest or 28cm across the back. Obviously this would be less for children's sizes. Do not make the design so long that half the slogan disappears if the T-shirt is tucked in.
- It usually works well to have an illustration on the front, and a slogan on the back. Otherwise it can look as if a person has put the T-shirt on back-to-front.
- Try not to use all capital letters – they are harder to read.
- Make a design or slogan that people will want to wear because it is so effective and attractive.

## Short messaging system (SMS)

Increasingly in countries where cellular phones (also known as mobile phones) are used, activists are taking advantage of what this technology offers through text messages.

Text messages sent through cellular phones can be used to:

- mobilise
- organise
- inform
- get people to act on an issue
- unite people around a cause, event, issue.

This has been particularly effectively used in mobilising people around struggles in the Philippines, as an example.

## Newsletters

See the section *Quick message media*, and especially *The basics: of quick message media*. This covers planning, some general production issues, distribution and budgeting questions to answer. Also see *Design and layout basics* in this toolkit.



# Producing your own media

A newsletter is your organisation's voice. It is an important way of keeping people interested in and informed about your work— and this helps to keep it alive in people's minds. It is an important communication tool with your members and other stakeholders.

A newsletter need not be too expensive to produce. Depending who you want to reach and what their computer resources are, you can produce an electronic version and send it out via e-mail or your Web site, if you have one. Or you could print it, or do both!

If your organisation does not have much money, then you can find creative ways of getting news out about your organisation. You might, for example, produce as many copies as you can afford and then stick them up in public places where you have members. As a not-for-profit organisation, remember to explore what volunteer help you can get in different parts of the process. Try to ask for reduced rates for things like paper and printing.

## **Planning a newsletter**

If you want to produce a newsletter it is important to answer these questions:

- Do our members need a newsletter? If yes, what kinds of news would interest them?
- What do we want to achieve with this newsletter?
- Have we budgeted for both people and financial resources to produce a newsletter? If yes, how much?
- Do we have the people resources to produce the newsletter?
- What skills do we have, and what skills might we need to develop to produce an effective newsletter?
- Who is our target readership? And other less mainstream reader groups?
- What image of our organisation do we want to promote?
- How often do we want it to come out? It must come out on a regular basis (even if only two or three times a year), so readers can look forward to it and know when to expect it.
- How will we assess whether we are achieving our objectives with our newsletter?
- How should we go about annual planning?

## **Media committees**

In a small organisation, it is best if a newsletter (or media) committee takes on the responsibility for the planning, producing and distribution of a newsletter. This does





# Producing your own media

not need to mean the committee does all the work – they can delegate. Media committees can be very exciting and creative places for volunteers. By its very nature creating effective media is exciting, creative and challenging.

If you have a media committee, it must be made up of people who:

- enjoy working with media, and understand its powerful role in society
- are interested in and committed to producing a newsletter
- either have, or want to develop media skills
- are reliable
- understand all that goes into producing media, from ideas, to budgets, writing, design and layout, printing, distribution and evaluation.

The media committee would make sure that newsletter planning takes place, and that plans are put into action.

## **Your newsletter's aims**

Your main aim with producing a newsletter should be that it makes your organisation stronger. How can it achieve this?

- By being vibrant and interesting in its coverage of your organisation's issues, your newsletter will help to keep people involved.
- By keeping your members informed about what is going on in their organisation.
- By informing members (and other readers) what events are coming up.
- By writing about issues that affect your members in one way or another – and doing this in an educational way.
- By being transparent about what is going on in your organisation. Readers will feel there is good, honest and open communication between your organisation and them. You are likely to build loyalty and stronger democratic participation in your organisation.

## **Your newsletter's readership**

Many organisations face the problem of a having very diverse audience when they produce media. Different audience groups have different needs. Sometimes it is almost impossible to meet the needs of all of them.

For more about audience analysis, please go to the CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully*, the section called *Know your audience*.

Of all the different groups of people you want to read your newsletter, which would you prioritise? Which grouping do you most want to appeal to and inform? You can work this out by having a brainstorm.

Come up with a list of all the different groups who you see as your readers. If your organisation sees to the needs of poor elderly people, your list may look something like this:

- poor elderly people living in informal settlements and low cost housing in our local government area
- health workers who work with the elderly in our local government area
- families (comprising all ages) who have elderly people in their care
- volunteers in your organisation

- board members
- funders

## Work out your target readership

As you can see, the list above reflects a very broad readership. You may have to work out who the most important readers are for your newsletter and therefore whose needs you mainly want to meet, who you will mainly write for. This will be your target readership and this will influence your newsletter's content, design and layout, and how you will decide to distribute so that you can be sure your target readership receives the newsletters. Then you work out, in descending order, whose needs you next want to meet, and so on.

## Your newsletter's content

Once again, *Mind maps* (which you will find in our CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully*) is a brilliant tool to use both in planning each issue of your newsletter, and also to use in thinking through launching a newsletter. You should have a ready ear to listen to your readers' comments – after all, it is for them, not yourselves, that you are producing it.

Your newsletter's main purpose should be to keep people up-to-date with what is going on in the organisation. This is especially important if your organisation is very big and has different branches, and operates regionally, nationally or internationally. Your newsletter can also play an important role in offering ideas, information and opinions about issues of concern to your organisation's mission. This will help keep your members stimulated and interested in their organisation.

## Ideas for content

The more you want to include in your newsletter, the more pages it will take up. And the more work it will involve. So it is important to make decisions based on your resources – both people and financial. You will need a proper budget for this, which we cover later in this section.

These are important to include:

- An **editorial** – decide who in your organisation will write this. You could write a collective editorial, you could rotate editorial writing, or you could ask one person to write the editorial regularly. This could, but need not necessarily, be your organisation's chairperson.
- Articles about your organisation's **activities** both those that have happened and those that are planned.
- Notices about **forthcoming events**.
- **Information** about issues that affect your organisation.

Other sections to think about:

- Do you want a regular **readers' letters** section?
- Do you want a regular **advice column**?
- Do you want regular **opinion pieces** where you invite members or other organisations and individuals to write about issues that are important to your organisation?
- Do you want your newsletter to play an **educational** role?

- Do you have any regular **themes** that you want to focus on? For example you may want to focus on different aspects of human rights, such as, children's, women's, gays', workers', people with disabilities, etc.
- Do you want to write profiles about different **people** in your organisation? This need not focus on high profile people. It could, for example, also focus on ordinary members.
- Do you need to include **news from different branches**, if you are a big organisation?
- Do you want to have some **light-hearted** parts to your newsletter? People can get a bit put off if everything is dry and serious.
- You may want a regular **cartoon** that focuses on your organisation's issues?

## Tips for news and newsgathering

Have a discussion in your organisation about news. What kind of news could you cover that would attract and interest readers?

### *News?:*

- Is what gets people talking.
- Is an event that will impact on readers' lives in some way.
- Is something your readers do not already know and that is important to them.
- Is about what famous people have done or said. Obviously every community has its own famous people they are interested in.
- Is extraordinary things that ordinary people have achieved.
- Is something that has been discovered and is important that readers know about.
- Just happened.
- Is events, things people have said, scandals, surprises that will interest your readers.

Bear this in mind when you brainstorm the content for your news stories. Keep asking, how can we make sure we produce a newsletter that readers will find interesting and valuable?

### *Ideas for newsgathering*

Be creative when you brainstorm where and from whom to gather news. Make use of books and teaching materials for journalists so that you can learn more about writing newsletter articles and journalism. Talk with journalists – even get a sympathetic journalist to help with ideas for your newsletter.

Here are just a few ideas around story writing and newsgathering:

- Do you need to offer a balanced view? For example, if you are writing about conflict between civil society organisations on the one hand and government and corporates on the other – should you offer all sides of the story? You may say yes or no. It depends on your objective. Just so long as you are aware that balanced reporting is an important value in journalism, and it can give credibility to your story.
- Go to less obvious sources to get a fresh angle on a story. Telling a story about how a factory is polluting a community? We usually focus on adults. How about interviewing children? Who else could you get information and

quotes from? Environmentalists, trade unions, medical people, and so on. Of course you should be careful not to lose your story angle or focus.

- Develop a story that links the issue to your community. If you remain abstract you may fail in your objective.

### *For background:*

- Use resource centres, libraries, use search machines on the Internet to get to relevant web sites (but don't drown in all the information), people, institutions, organisations.
- Use newspaper libraries.
- Use newspapers and magazines.

### *Important!*

- Make sure that every bit of information is accurate that you put into your newsletter and its stories. Your newsletter is devalued by incorrect or inaccurate reporting of information and people. If someone offers you a statistic about how many gay people have been killed or injured in gay-bashing incidents – cross check the statistic with a gay organisation that monitors this, and the police (they may or may not have the statistic).
- Think through the implications of every story. And strategise carefully on how to handle it.

### **Tips for content**

- Try to find interesting and different ways of presenting information.
- Plan ahead, so that your newsletters do not all sound the same.
- Be creative and innovative.
- Look out for other organisation's newsletters and see what you think works well that you could apply to yours.
- Try to find out from readers what they really enjoy or would like more of. See *Evaluating your newsletter* later in this section.

### **Your newsletter's language, style and tone**

Except for the very committed members, people are unlikely to read your newsletter if it is boring, if it uses difficult language with lots of jargon, or talks down to them. The CIVICUS toolkit called *Writing effectively and powerfully* has a useful section called *Edit for effectiveness*.

Think about your readers and what language, style and tone is appropriate for them.

### **Writing for a newsletter**

If people in your organisation are keen to develop their writing skills further, then you can also read the CIVICUS toolkit called *Writing effectively and powerfully*. The section on *The writing process* is important to read, as you set out on this exciting writing for a newsletter journey.

Writing effectively is a skill that everyone can develop. A lot has to do with techniques that you can learn about and use. Look out for writing courses that will help develop writing and journalistic skills. Or think of having an in-house workshop specifically for writing for your newsletter. There are many books about

strengthening writing skills. Keep an eye out for good ones, and try to get your organisation to budget for writing resources.

## Tips for writing for a newsletter

- AAA = audience, angle, aim. This is fundamental in writing effectively. It means:
  - Keep your target readership or **audience** in mind at all times. You are writing for them, not for you. See *Your newsletter's audience* earlier in this section on newsletters.
  - Have a clear **angle** for every story in your newsletter. Unfocused stories are generally boring and readers switch off.
  - Have a clear **aim** for each piece in your newsletter. What do you want people to know, think, feel or do once they have read your piece?
    - KISSSS = **keep it simple, straightforward and short**.
    - Brainstorm your articles before you start writing. The mind map tool featured in our CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully* explains an excellent thinking tool for this.
    - You can brainstorm in a collective – this way you reap the power of collective thinking.
    - You will probably write these main kinds of stories: news, features, editorials, opinion pieces and profiles.
    - Most stories, especially news stories, need to include the 5Ws and 1H. They are:
      - Who** was involved
      - What** happened?
      - Where** did it happen?
      - When** did it happen?
      - Why** did it happen?
      - How** did it happen?
- Start your articles with the main angle, so readers don't have to wade through the article to find out why it was written.
- Write an interesting introduction that will hook your reader into reading the whole piece.
- Write a powerful conclusion – not one that retells the whole story. Maybe it can ask a question, pose a challenge, or look to the future, for example.
- Remember that people are interested in people – the human interest side of a story is usually what grabs a reader.
- The shorter the article the better. Cut out parts of the article which do not help to achieve its aim.
- You may need to do a bit of research, even if it is to do with something simple, like how many people attended an event.
- You can liven up a story by using quotes. Quotes should carry strong messages and be short. Remember to use the correct spelling of the names of people that you quote.
- Get feedback on early drafts of your story. See our CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully* specifically the section on *Getting feedback*.
- Once you have strengthened your story, then you need to edit it. See later in this section *Editing for a newsletter* and *Edit for effectiveness* from our CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully*.



# Producing your own media

## Kinds of stories

There are many different kinds of stories, but in a newsletter you will mainly find news, features, editorial, opinion and profiles.

A **news story** tells you the basics of what happened, when it happened, where it happened, how it happened, why it happened and to whom it happened. (The 5Ws and 1H). You can use quotes in a news story to liven it up and to give balance. For example, you may write a news story about activists picketing outside a World Trade Organisation meeting to protest about the impact of globalisation on poor countries.

A **feature** goes into more depth behind the news. It can be more educational and analytical. A feature can put a news story into a broader context. For example, you might get quotes from people to explain the impact of globalisation in poor countries through giving examples and evidence. You could include quotes from people backing up the story. Your feature would play an educational and informative role so that your members understand why the picket took place and exactly what cause the activists are fighting for. A feature is generally longer than a news story because it is more in-depth.

An **editorial** is an opinion piece from your organisation. It can be written by anyone your organisation chooses. Often the chairperson writes it. In our example, the editorial would comment on the picket, giving opinion.

**Opinion pieces** are exactly that – a person or group giving an opinion on something that happened, or a trend that is happening. Opinion pieces do not necessarily reflect the organisation's policy on an issue. You need to state this in your publication so as not to confuse readers. You can use opinion pieces to promote debate. So someone could write a controversial opinion about the picket – either supporting it or opposing it.

**Profiles** are articles about people. You may, for example, want to write a profile on the co-ordinator of the picket. You might ask the co-ordinator, for example, "What makes you tick?", "What led you to being involved in anti-globalisation activism?", "What other struggles have you been involved in?" and so on. You can use profiles as straight human interest stories about a person; you can also use them to offer your reader more depth about an issue through that person. If your organisation has a new chairperson or staff member, then you can introduce them to members through writing a profile in your newsletter. You can also profile an organisation.

## Editing for a newsletter

See our CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully* – the section called *Edit for effectiveness*. Here are some basic tips:

- When you have finished writing your story, stop being a writer and become an editor. Look at your story through your readers' eyes. How can you reshape the story to make it more interesting and powerful?
- Keep your stories short.
- Make sure your main message (aim) is clear.
- Make sure your main message is right at the start of your story.



- Make sure it is written in a language, style and tone that is appropriate for your readers.
- Make sure it has a logical flow.
- Make sure you have checked it for content accuracy. If you give inaccurate information, your readers won't trust you easily again.
- Make sure the grammar and spelling is correct.
- If you are going to translate your newsletters into other languages, make sure the translations are thoroughly checked for accuracy, appropriate language and style. You need to keep consistency.

## **Your newsletter's design and layout**

See also *Design and layout basics* in this toolkit. With a newsletter it is important that:

- It has a look that clearly identifies it with your organisation.
- It should have your logo.
- It should have a name.
- It should be easy to read, and attractive.
- It should have a carefully thought out design with:
  - page numbers
  - page size
  - columns
  - use of space
  - paper type
  - colour
- It should include illustrations like drawings, cartoons or photographs.
- Photographs should have interesting captions.
- If you have regular sections, it can work well to have an icon or special name for those sections. For example: *readers' voices* for your letters page.
- Each story or section should have a heading. Longer stories may need subheadings.
- Your most important and interesting story should be on the front page.
- Number your pages.
- You can also put the newsletter's name and date at the bottom of each page, very small.
- Your organisation's contact details should be easy to find on your newsletter. This promotes membership.
- You should have a consistent format for your newsletter, but each one should look different. If, for example, one issue has a full page drawing with a caption on the front cover, you could have more text and a photograph in the next issue.
- Date and number your newsletters.
- When the layout is complete, do a final proof-read to check that everything is in the right place, and that everything is correct and in order.

## **Distributing your newsletter**

Most people with experience in civil society organisations can tell a story or two about newsletters produced that eventually got used to prop up a wobbly table, or piles of them used as stools. This happens because those producing the media either did not implement their distribution plan, or they did not have one in the first



place. In times of talking about sustainable development, we all want to preserve earth's resources.

There are many different ways to distribute your newsletters. Have regular discussions in your organisation about whether you are using the most effective ways. Volunteers, for example, can be very valuable in distribution.

## **Have a distribution plan**

Inasmuch as you plan the content of your newsletter, you must have a plan for distribution. You would have printed a certain number of copies to fit with your distribution plan.

- Who needs to receive the newsletter? Have a list.
- How best can we reach them? What is the quickest way? What is the cheapest way? What way will keep us most in touch with our members and with other people who might want to join our organisation?
- Who will do the distribution?

## **Ways to distribute**

Each organisation will know the best way for them to distribute. Here are some ideas:

- When you don't have many resources, produce enough copies as "wall newsletters" to stick up in public places, like school notice boards, outside shops, clinics, places where people queue, like local government offices, and so on. You may have to ask permission first. If this is how you decide to distribute, you will need to think through your design and layout side carefully so you produce a newsletter that is quick and easy to read
- Drop off door-to-door
- Post
- Distribute at events
- Distribute through committee members
- Distribute through other organisations in your network
- E-mail

However you decide to distribute – most organisations use a variety of methods – make sure that you have included distribution costs in your budget.

## **Volunteers for distribution**

If your distribution method includes volunteers, make sure this is properly planned, co-ordinated and followed up. Using volunteers for something practical like distributing newsletters can help to build your organisation. It also brings visibility to your community. People can stop and ask volunteers about the newsletter and you can promote your organisation's work this way, so it is important to prepare your volunteers.

## **Budgeting for your newsletter**

See also *Budgeting for media* in this toolkit.

This is a broad list of items that your organisation will probably need to budget for (either time or money) in producing a newsletter:

- Meetings
- Co-ordination
- Telephone calls, faxes
- Writing
- Editing
- Proof-reading
- Illustrations
- Design and layout
- Reproduction
- Printing
- Distribution

## **Is your newsletter effective?**

The most effective newsletter producers are those that listen to their readers, and respond positively to reader's needs. Effective newsletter producers evaluate each issue afterwards through constructive criticism.

Once your newsletter has come out quite a few times, you need to find out from your readers whether it is effective. You set out certain objectives with your newsletter. Ask readers some questions, based on these objectives, to find out whether you are meeting them. And also find out other things that readers are thinking. You can do evaluations by:

- one-on-one interviews of a sample of your readers
- focus group discussions
- a readership survey

The kind of newsletter evaluation you do will depend on who your target audience is, and what your people and financial resources are. The important thing is to make sure that you do evaluate your newsletter fairly regularly.

We suggest you ask readers questions that cover:

## **Evaluating your newsletter's content**

- what articles readers find most interesting and useful?
- what sections readers find most interesting and useful?
- what readers would like more of?
- what readers would like less of?
- what new inclusions readers would like to see?
- do your readers need your newsletter to be written in other languages?
- do your readers feel the newsletter is written in an accessible, interesting way?
- do readers like the newsletter's tone – does it talk to them as equals?

## **Evaluating your newsletter's design and layout**

- do readers find the design and layout attractive?
- do readers find the newsletter easy to find their way around and to read?

## Evaluating your newsletter's distribution

- do your readers manage to receive your newsletter easily?
- do your readers have any suggestions as to other ways you could distribute it?

## Generating income: advertising

Would you be able to interest some advertisers in your newsletter so that you can recover some costs? You can create an advertising rates card. This would require some research.

Your rates card should be attractively designed and would include information like:

- An encouraging blurb about what potential advertisers could gain from advertising in your newsletter. This could include your mission, target readers, number of readers. It shouldn't be too long.
- How much you charge per column for black and white, for colour (if you use it).
- Design and layout rates if you produce the advert for the advertiser.
- Deadlines for the year that indicate (a) when each issue of your newsletter will be distributed; (b) by when you need the advert in; (c) who the advertiser should contact and how.
- Each advertiser will have their own needs, so you may have to supply extra details.

Good luck!

## Pamphlets

See *Quick message media*, and *the basics: quick message media* in this toolkit. They cover planning, some general production issues, distribution and budgeting questions to answer. Also see *Design and layout basics*.

Pamphlets have played an important role through the years in civil society organisations by raising issues, providing information and promoting action. Pamphlets can be produced fairly cheaply, are generally easy to distribute and, if written and designed effectively, can be very powerful media to produce. Ideally, a pamphlet is a fairly small publication – one piece of paper folded – and contains more information than a poster would. It is easy to carry around and to pass on.

## Planning a pamphlet

Your organisation has decided to produce a pamphlet. It may be part of your organisation's planned media strategy. Or maybe an issue has just come up that you want to respond to. Your pamphlet may be one amongst a range of media that your organisation has decided to produce, including for example, posters and T-shirts. If this is the case, then you will obviously need to conceptualise and plan the set of media together, and then work on producing each item individually.

## Questions to ask before producing a pamphlet

When you plan a pamphlet your organisation needs to be able to answer these questions:

- Why do we need a pamphlet? See *Why produce media* in this toolkit and also *Know why you are writing* in our CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully*.
- Is a pamphlet the best type of media for this?
- Are we complementing it with any other media?
- Who is our target group for this pamphlet?
- What is our main aim with this pamphlet?
- What do we want our target group to think, feel, know or do after they have read our pamphlet?
- What is our main message?
- When does our pamphlet need to be ready by?
- How much work is involved in producing this pamphlet?
- Can we meet the deadline?
- What skills do we need to produce this pamphlet?
- Do we have the necessary skills?
- If we need help, what kind of help do we need?
- How much will this pamphlet cost? Do a costing on everything, including number of copies to be printed, colour, reproduction.
- Did we budget for the pamphlet? If no, how can we raise the money? Or how can we reduce the costs?
- How will we distribute our pamphlets?

## Writing a pamphlet

Writing is always a process. We deal with this writing process in our CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully*, in the section *The writing process*.

### Step one

Answer all the questions in the section *Questions to ask before producing a pamphlet* earlier in this section before you start on a pamphlet.

### Step two

Before you try writing a first draft of your pamphlet use the thinking tools that you will find in our CIVICUS toolkit called *Writing effectively and powerfully*. Go to the section called *How to get started* to find the freewriting and mind map tools. These tools help you to reap ideas in an unhindered and uncensored way. Mind maps work very well for thinking on your own and also for working collectively. After you have done a mind map on your pamphlet topic, prioritise your content so that your pamphlet will be focused. Don't try to do too many things in one pamphlet.

### Step three

Now that you have an idea of your pamphlet's content, analyse your readers. See *Know your audience* from our CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully*. It is vital that you follow the *Steps in doing an audience analysis*. Work out what research you need to do for your pamphlet. There may be a little or a lot, depending

on what your pamphlet is all about and your own knowledge level. If your pamphlet is for textile workers and your aim is to explain how World Trade Organisation agreements are likely to affect them, then you will need facts and figures, examples and maybe even a real case study.

## **Step four**

Do research if you need to. You may think you do not need to do any research, but after doing your audience analysis you may find that you do. Research can be quick and easy – like finding out how many members your organisation has. Or it could be more time-consuming, like reading a research report that has figures on the impact of globalisation.

## **Step five**

Start writing your first draft. Just write as it comes to you. You could think of this as a wild draft. Do not worry about spelling or grammar at this stage. It is just important to get down ideas. Once you have finished your wild draft, take a break from it so that your ideas can brew a bit.

## **Step six**

Then work on an outline of your pamphlet's structure. See the section *Writing an outline* from our CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully*. Come up with your main heading and subheadings. These should be short and interesting – making sure that they tell the reader what to expect. Write another, fuller draft.

## **Step seven**

Get a draft to a point where you can get some feedback on it. This is not a perfect piece of work. It is still work in progress. You want feedback now before you go much further so that you can strengthen and improve your pamphlet. See *Getting feedback* from our CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully*. Once you get feedback you can start rewriting, strengthening and shaping your pamphlet into a final draft. Once you feel satisfied that your pamphlet will interest your readers, has the right focus and content, and is written in an appropriate, engaging style, then you are ready to edit.

## **Editing a pamphlet**

The best advice we can give around editing your pamphlet is that you put yourself in your readers' shoes. This will help you to edit for appropriate language, style and tone. If you are writing for teenagers about sex and sexuality, for example, you would probably use teenager slang a bit, have a trendy conversational style and maybe a "buddy-to-buddy" kind of tone.

Also see our CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully* – the section called *Edit for effectiveness*. When you edit you change hats from being a writer to being an editor. This means you stand back and read the pamphlet through your readers' eyes.

Most of all, remember to edit so that you have a pamphlet that:

- Has a clear message and objective that is set out right at the beginning. Readers do not want to search for this.
- Is written in everyday language – lots of jargon puts people off. Everyday language is full of life. Just think of how people talk about things that are important to them.
- Is engaging and interesting.
- Tells a story.
- Talks to readers as equals, not as people who are “less than” you.
- Is short and to the point.
- Has a logical flow.
- Has the main point of each paragraph at the top of the paragraph.
- Is absolutely accurate.
- Has had the spelling and grammar checked.
- Has the right number of words to fit into your design.

## **Your pamphlet’s design and layout**

Make sure you design a pamphlet that:

- Is attractive and easy to read. See *Design and layout basics*.
- Uses headings and subheadings to break up the text.
- Uses illustrations, like photographs, drawings, and cartoons to complement your content focus.
- Is clear. If you need to provide statistics in a graph or table make sure they are easy to understand and refer to them in the text if necessary.
- Flows logically. There are different ways to fold your paper when you produce a pamphlet – make sure your reader will easily be able to navigate the different sections.
- Has your organisation’s logo on it, and its full name and contact details written on it.

## **Distributing your pamphlet**

You would have thought about distribution when you first planned your pamphlet.

Think about:

- Who is the pamphlet aimed at?
- How many people?
- When is the most appropriate time period for distribution?
- Where is the most appropriate place to distribute pamphlets to them?
- What is the most appropriate method to hand out pamphlets to them?
- Who will do the distribution?
- Are there any financial costs? If yes, what are they?

## **Budgeting for your pamphlet**

When you budget for your pamphlet, think about costs for every part of the production process. You will need to work out if you are going to produce the pamphlet in-house or whether there is anything you are going to outsource. Printing, including reproduction, is what most organisations outsource. Work out at what point it becomes cheaper to print than to photostat. Think about what goes into producing a pamphlet and see if you have to pay for any of the steps, including:



- writing
- research
- editing
- proof-reading
- illustrations, like photographs or drawings
- design and layout (how many pages, colours, complexity of the job)
- print reproduction (how many colours, photographs)
- printing (numbers, quality of paper, size of paper, colours)
- distribution

## **Is your pamphlet effective?**

We recommend that you always evaluate the media you produce as part of your organisation's effective media production learning.

Evaluate your pamphlet against your original objectives, and with the intended audience. You can do this fairly informally, or you could set up a focus group or two. You will think of your own questions to ask. Here are some suggestions for questions you might ask readers:

### **Evaluating objectives**

- What did you think, feel, know or want to do after reading the pamphlet?
- Did you do anything that was related to the pamphlet after reading it?

### **Evaluating content**

- What was the main message you got out of the pamphlet?
- What part of the content did you find most useful? Why?
- What part of the content did you find least useful? Why?
- Was the pamphlet written in a way that kept you interested in reading it from beginning to end?
- If you stopped reading it, at what point was that?

### **Evaluating design and layout**

- Did you find the pamphlet attractive and easy to read from the design side?
- Was there anything that put you off the pamphlet from the design side? If yes, what?

### **Evaluating distribution**

You will need to work out your own way of evaluating whether your distribution was effective. You could ask questions like:

- How did you get hold of the pamphlet?
- Was it easy to get a copy?
- Have you seen copies being distributed anywhere else? If yes, where?



## Dealing with service providers

If your media production plan involves using service providers, then you should find these tips useful.

### General tips

The advice that applies to dealing with all service providers is:

- Get detailed quotes in writing from a range of service providers. When you are not sure what the quote covers, ask for a detailed breakdown. You need this for comparison
- If there is a general kind of sales tax in your country, remember to ask if the quote includes the tax.
- Once you have an agreement, make sure you have the final quote in writing.
- Ask for samples of other work the service provider has done.
- If appropriate, ask for references so you can check for yourself about things like quality and reliability.
- Service providers are experts in their field. Pick their brains for innovation, the latest technology, and good ideas. They may have ideas on how to do something differently, more effectively.
- We advise you to have a formal first meeting with service providers so that you can establish a relationship. It also helps them to get a sense of who you are and what your organisation does. This should help them to produce the kind of work that you want.
- Write all your instructions down as a brief, keep a copy for yourself, give one to the service provider and go through it with him or her. If you change an instruction, do so in writing.
- Where appropriate, write up a clear contract and provide each party with a signed copy.
- Stay in control of the situation – you are the client paying for a service. You should expect professional service at all times. If you do not get it, complain.
- Keep the lines of communication going with your service provider. Make sure that the service provider knows what you expect. If, for example, they know they are running behind schedule with your job, you should make it clear that you want to be informed of this along the way and not at the end when there is a crisis.
- Make sure you tell your service provider who the contact and liaison person is in your organisation, and if that person is away, who the second contact person is.
- Not everybody sticks to deadlines. When you plan your media, build in some “cushion time” in case there is a delay along the way. Sometimes problems, like a machine breaking down, do occur.
- You are a civil society organisation, working not for profit but for a better world. It is fine to ask corporate service providers if they have a reduced rate for not-for-profit organisations.

### Writers

If you have decided to get outside writers to help you write for your media, then read through the *General tips* at the beginning of this section on dealing with service providers. Here are tips for dealing with writers.

- When you choose a writer, find someone who understands what your organisation stands for and who supports the work you do. It is important that your writer has passion for what you do and for what she or he does.
- Choose someone who you know can write in the style you want.
- You must be able to give the writer a written brief on what you want. In your brief you need to include:
  - deadlines
  - the process you want to follow with the writer, including perhaps getting 1<sup>st</sup> drafts of work to comment on, giving feedback, making amendments, and so on (see also *The writing process* in our CIVICUS toolkit *Writing powerfully and effectively*. This has a section on *A writing process schedule*)
  - the primary target group for your publication
  - the aim of your publication
  - the language, style and tone you want your publication to have
  - a broad idea of how the publication will be designed – text and design are inseparable when you conceptualise a publication
  - what research you may want them to do, if any
  - the writing work you expect them to do – including how many words or pages
  - an agreed budget.
- Keep the communication channel open with the writer. Make sure that if the writer is uncertain about something, she or he knows who to discuss it with.
- Record in writing any changes to the brief that you may decide. Keep a file of all correspondence, including print outs of e-mails, and notes from telephone conversations.

## **Editors and proof-readers**

If you have decided to get an outside editor to help you edit your media, then read through *General tips* at the beginning of this section. Also think about:

- Do you want someone to review content, restructure, reorganise and check that your content will help to achieve your objectives? This is an editor's job.
- Or do you want a sub-editor who checks mainly for logical flow, repetition, accuracy, consistency in style, headings and sub-headings, grammar and spelling?
- If you only want the basics checked, like spelling, then you need a proof-reader.
- Maybe you want a plain language editor who will turn your document into everyday language and get rid of complicated ways of expressing things?
- Know what you want the editor to do and then write him or her a brief that outlines what you expect. Your brief should also:
  - give deadlines
  - explain who the target audience is for the publication
  - explain the process you will follow, for example, in giving feedback and amendments
  - state the kind of editing work you expect done. For example, if you want a document reduced from 6 000 words to 4 000 words

- Make sure you have a contact person in your organisation with whom the editor can discuss problems with.

## Photographers

If you have decided to commission an outside photographer to help you illustrate your media, then read through *General tips* at the beginning of this section.

- Ask the photographer you have chosen to come for a briefing meeting at which you will explain the purpose of the media project, and outline what photographs you need for it. It is important to describe the different elements of the publication – for example, if writers are involved, and how you envisage the media being used. This is a creative process, so include several members of your organisation. Ask the photographer what camera he or she uses. You may want to know if they are using a digital or standard camera, for example, and what the implications of each are.
- Ask the photographer for a quote.
- Look at the quote carefully, and ask for clarification if necessary. This could include asking who will own the negatives after the photos are taken, how much individual photographs will cost to print up if you want extras, and other questions that will inevitably come.
- After the meeting, write up a brief that explains exactly what you want photographically. You need to give the photographer details of:
  - deadlines
  - where to go to take the photographs. This may involve a contact person, address and map (if it is a remote area)
  - whether you want photographs in black and white, or colour, or both
  - a detailed description of the photographs you want. It is too late when the photographer returns without the photographs you specifically wanted if you have disagreement over your verbal instructions. If it is written in the brief, then you have a strong case for getting the job redone, or negotiating a new arrangement.
  - how many photographs you want printed up, and what size
  - payment for accommodation, food and transport, if necessary
- People can be very sensitive about having photographs taken. If you are commissioning the photographer to go to a project to take photographs, then you need to get permission (if appropriate) and tell the people ahead of time when to expect the photographer and what you have asked him or her to do.

## Artists

If you have decided to commission an outside artist to help you with your media, then read through *General tips* at the beginning of this section.

You also need to:

- Know that the artist can do the job you want done. It is advisable (and common practice) to ask for samples of work.
- Brief the artist about your media project. Have a creative brainstorm meeting with him or her. Involve several members of your organisation. The power of collective creativity can be strong.

- After the meeting, write up a detailed brief for the artist to follow. This should include deadlines. There should be no room for misunderstanding about what you have decided you want. Tell the artist if she or he is unsure about anything, to communicate with you.
- Ask for a quote. Go through the quote carefully, asking the artist if you are unsure about anything to do with it.
- Ask for drafts of work at a very early stage so you can work out preferences, and give the artist a full go-ahead.
- You may need to review several drafts before you are happy. That is okay. You must be sure that your artwork will help your media to achieve its objective.
- Once you are happy, give the go-ahead.

## **Design and layout artists**

Working with design involves creativity and following a strict process. It requires:

- An initial meeting to brief a design and layout artist. It helps to have a small group of people from your organisation present so that it is a creative process between your organisation and the design and layout artist. You also want an opportunity for the artist to make suggestions and be creative.
- Following the meeting, you should present him or her with a detailed briefing in writing. This should include deadlines.
- The design and layout artist should present you with a quote for the work.
- Understand and discuss in your organisation what the quote is made up of.
- Ask questions about the quote – perhaps you've decided to have more colours, or you want to print more copies. You need to ask whether the quote includes the price of making positives (this is done at a reproduction house).
- The design and layout artist should present you with a design concept, maybe two or three (if you have requested this).
- Your organisation will review the design (at an early stage), and make design decisions. Taste is involved here. Not everybody may agree or like the same design. But you will have to make decisions so the design and layout artist can move ahead. This should be written down so there is no misunderstanding.
- Once you are given the final design and layout, you should go through the text, checking that everything is correct.
- The design and layout artist may have to make final amendments. You are responsible for then doing a final proof-read and signing the job off ready for printing.

## **Communicate effectively**

Make sure that your organisation and your design and layout artist communicate very effectively. Miscommunication can be costly financially, emotionally and deadline-wise. In working with a design and layout artist, you need to be able to write clear briefs. But do remember that you are the client.

## **About printing**

Some design and layout artists have established networks with printers. They know which printer is good for which kind of printing job. You can ask your design and layout artist about this. If they can perform this function, and you decide you want them to handle the reproduction and printing side of things with the repro house and printers, find out if this will involve a handling fee. And if so, how much. Then you can work out whether you would rather handle the repro and printing yourself.

## **Print reproduction, printers and print reps**

Printing can be very expensive so you need to be alert and informed when dealing with printers. Technology advances fairly quickly, so it is useful keep up with a basic understanding of how the production process works. Know what the different terminology means, and use it.

Some of the larger printers have their own in-house print reproduction houses. This means they can do the whole job, from making the positives from your originals to printing, packing, and even distribution. Positives become plates from which the printing is done. A one-colour print job would have one positive. A full-colour print job would have five positives. The more colours you use, the more it costs.

Some printing companies also offer post and delivery services. Find out what different printers offer, and always compare prices. A printer may be cheaper on the printing side but more expensive on the distribution side, for example. In that case, you can get the distribution done elsewhere, or negotiate a better price.

Here are some more tips:

- It is worth shopping around for printers. Even if you have a printer you always use and you assume is giving you a good price, always get another quote or two just to check that you are getting a good deal.
- In most countries, printing is highly competitive, so you should be able to negotiate a competitive price.
- Find out what kinds of printing the printers can do. Ask to see samples of their work, especially if you are producing more complicated media, like using full colour, using an unusual shape, or working with unconventional paper.
- Get equivalent quotes from at least three different printers, so that you can compare them effectively. This means asking for quotes for the same:
  - number of copies
  - number of run-ons per 100 or 1000
  - types and qualities of paper (you may specifically want recycled)
  - size of paper
  - colours
  - stitching/binding process
- Get quotes in writing.
- Some countries have a general sales tax added on to the price of most things. Make sure you know whether the tax is included in the price.
- Write all your specifications about the job down, and make sure both you and the printer have a copy. Go through the specifications with the printer so there are no misunderstandings. This would include deadlines for both you

and the printer to meet, as well as quantities, paper, size, folding, stitching or binding, if appropriate.

- Mistakes can be very costly. If your printing job includes negatives being made, always check the final negatives and then sign them off once you are satisfied. The printer can then start printing. This should be done formally so that you both know where you stand if there are mistakes in the printing.
- If you are working with colour, you can ask for a sample (in some production processes called a chromalin) to be made so you can see whether it is what you wanted. This does cost extra money, but can be worth it if colour precision is important for your printing job.
- Some printers charge a percentage of the cost if you have booked in to have a job done with them but do not stick to your deadline. This is because, especially with more complicated work, they have kept their printing machine inactive waiting to proceed with your work.
- If you are not happy with the job once it is done, say so and negotiate for it to be re-done or for a price reduction. You are the client. You do not have to settle for a badly done job just because you chose a less expensive printing company.
- Some printers also provide a post service. They put your product into the packaging of your choice and arrange the bulk postage. This can be very convenient if your printer is reliable. But always do a quick comparative check with costs elsewhere.
- Depending on your circumstances, you may decide to use a print rep. She or he is the middle person between you and the printer. The print rep adds on a handling fee to the printing costs. There are advantages and disadvantages to having a print rep. If you decide to use a print rep, make sure it is someone who has been recommended to you.

Advantages to having a print rep:

- A print rep saves you time.
- If you do not have the time, or lack the confidence in dealing with reproduction houses and printers, the print rep takes on the job of running around doing the work of sourcing the best and most appropriate printer at the best price, and liaising with reproduction houses and printers.
- She or he deals with the reproduction house and with the printer.
- Once the printer has received the job – the print rep is the one who liaises with the printer
- She or he makes sure the work is delivered to you on time. If there are delays, the print rep deals with the printer.
- A good print rep is up to date with technology and knows most of the printers around – and will therefore know who the best printer for your job is.
  - If you are a small client and do not have money up front to pay the printing costs, the print rep may be able to help because she or he probably has a 30-day account with the printer.
  - If there is a problem with the printed job the print rep finds out where the problem lies – whether it was with your organisation or the printer. She or he then helps to sort it out. If the problem was with the printer



then the print rep liaises with the printer and makes sure that the printer reprints at their own cost.

- A print rep can usually find a printer at short notice because of all his or her contacts.
- A print rep can also assist with handling distribution through postal and transport companies. Again the print rep would get the best deals. She or he will probably get proof of deliveries and show you.

Disadvantages to having a print rep

- It will cost you more financially. The print rep makes a living out of charging a handling fee. The fee varies, depending on the kind of job it is, but can be between 5% and 10% above the printing price.
- You do not get involved in the printing process, and do not learn as much as you would if you were handling the job.

## **Distributors**

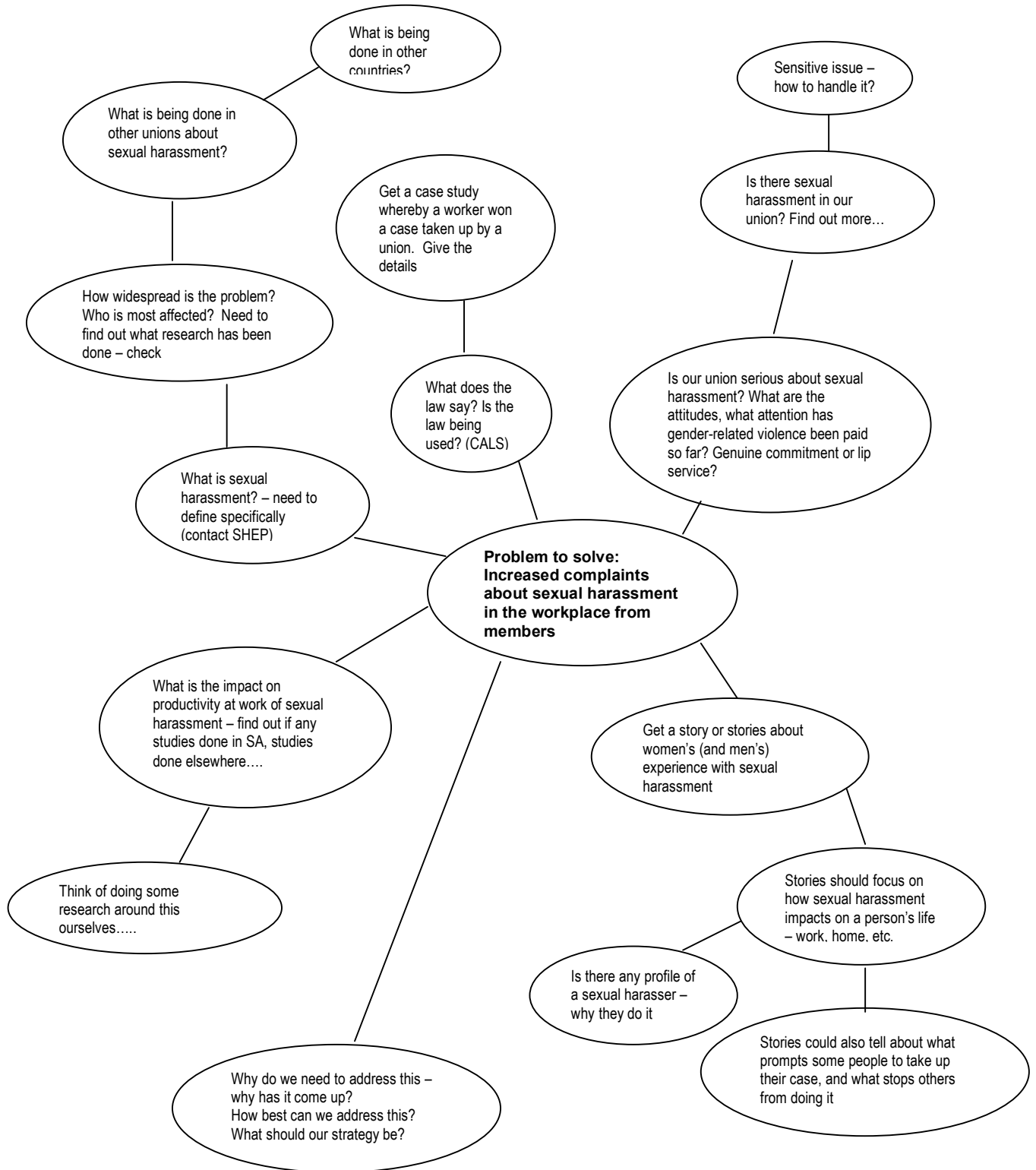
Your organisation may decide to use an outside service provider to handle distribution. This would be particularly for a national campaign, for example, where you are working with other organisations.

It is worth:

- Getting quotes from at least three distribution companies.
- Remembering that the cheapest quote is not everything. Despite the best planning in the world, sometimes we are in a terrible rush to get our media out on time. So you need to choose a reliable company.
- Having an agreed process for proof of drop-off. You need to have proof that all the deliveries were successfully done.



A mind map example for a presentation around dealing with sexual harassment at the workplace



*Rough outline/draft written up from mind mapping example on the previous page.*

## **Dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace**

Proposal to national executive committee – from the gender committee

The union is receiving an increasing number of complaints from our members about being sexually harassed in the workplace. The gender committee sees this in a serious light, and can only assume that the national union leadership will too.

We recommend that the union:

- Embark on a national workplace education campaign for both women and men members around sexual harassment. The campaign should be conducted through workshops and media (posters and pamphlets). We should draw on the expertise and materials of organisations like the Sexual Harassment Alleviation Organisation, and on documenting our own members' experiences.
- Embark on an internal education campaign around sexual harassment – unions need to practice what they preach.
- Initiate research to find out:
  - If other unions have dealt with this, and if so, how?
  - What impact sexual harassment has on those living with the threat of it.
  - What impact sexual harassment has on productivity at the workplace.
  - What steps, if any, unions in our country have taken around sexual harassment.
  - What have unions achieved in other countries?.....ends

The writing process is to freewrite, talk and discuss your ideas, use a mind map, and follow on with a quick first draft.

Freewriting – and mind mapping — allow the spontaneous, free thinking, non-censoring, and non-judging part of you to be dominant. This will free you to come up with unusual and original ideas that could take you to very fertile presentation ideas, and help you speed up. It could give you the edge and make a very powerful presentation that meets your objectives.

## **2. Know your topic**

If you are confident about your topic, and can talk off the cuff about it, your presentation is bound to go well. Know your topic inside out through:

- having discussions
- doing reading
- doing research
- asking questions
- talking with experts
- anticipating questions people may ask



# Producing your own media

## 3. State your objective

Be clear on your presentation's main objective. For example, is it to provide information, or to get a decision? Is it to convince funders that you do essential work and that they should fund your project? Being clear about your objective helps you to choose what to include. Keep reminding yourself of your objective throughout your preparation process.

It is vital that you are able to clearly state your main objective. Try completing this phrase: *the objective of my presentation is to...*

You may find that you come up with several objectives. Read them over and try to prioritise. Your presentation is likely to be more successful if you can say:

My main objective today is to...  
*I also hope to... (keep secondary objectives to a minimum)*

You may also say:  
 Today I will argue that.... (a strategy, a proposal, whatever)  
*I will back up my argument by...*

Your objective will determine how you structure much of your presentation.

## 4. Know your audience

The key to a successful presentation is to know and understand your audience. Do an audience analysis.

Audience	<u>Your agenda</u> <i>As a presenter, what do you hope to accomplish with this group of people? What are you trying to convince them to accept or do?</i>	<u>Their knowledge</u> <i>What do they know and what do they not know? What do you know that they don't know?</i>	<u>Their sensitivities</u> <i>Do they have strong attitudes about your subject? What do they believe or value? Do they share any common ground with you?</i>	<u>Their needs, expectations</u> <i>What do they need to see in order to be convinced? What will make this presentation accessible to them?</i>
<b>Your main audience (target audience)</b>				
<b>Your secondary audience</b>				
<b>Other important audiences</b>				

Adapted from Louise Dunlap's adaptation of Linda Flower's work in *Problem Solving Strategies for Writing*

## 5. Know your presentation environment

Start to visualise yourself doing the presentation. Find out:

- what, if anything, will happen at the meeting before and after your presentation
- what venue you will present in, and how it will be set up (or how you would like to set it up)
- the equipment you need, including things like overhead projector, electric plug access, extension cords, chart paper stand, computer, projector
- stationery needs, e.g. kokis, overhead projector pens

## 6. Draft an outline and work on drafts until you are satisfied

Work with your mind map again to draw some threads together. Add to it, reprioritise and change whatever you might have re-thought. It is work in progress. Ideas do change, grow and strengthen.

Then from your mind map, write up what you want to present in a logical order. Try your draft out on someone, revise it and strengthen it into a presentation. Ask yourself over and over again: will I meet my objective with this presentation?

*From draft outline through to final content and picture of your presentation in your mind*

Your outline will be determined by your objective. Ultimately each presentation is unique and you will develop a logical outline for your particular needs. You can work from your mind map to get a logical sequence going. You will find that you produce draft after draft until you are satisfied with what you have done. Keep cutting your presentation until you have no unnecessary elements to it. Be ruthless! Get to the core message/s. If you are using slides, try not to have more than ten.

## 7. Test it!

Have a practise round, testing your presentation. Check that:

- Your objective is clear.
- You do not have too many slides to present.
- Your key message comes across crystal clear.
- You keep to time – try to keep it under ten minutes.
- You can anticipate questions and be able to respond to them.
- Your equipment is working.
- You have a method of working with your documents.

## Introductions and conclusions

Your introduction is critical to grabbing your audience's attention. And your conclusion is the last thought you leave your audience with. Both are clearly vitally important and will require special creative thought. Here are some thoughts on this:

### Introductions

- During your presentation you are competing with all the other thoughts that people have running in their minds. How can you tune in to your audience and draw their interest and attention to your topic? How can you retain their interest from beginning to end? Often a human interest story can do this. You may be able to link back to it at different points in your presentation.

- Would it work to start with a question? You could ask a question that gets people reflecting in some way. If you are giving a presentation on the extent and effect of sexual abuse of girls in our schools, you could ask a rhetorical question, like *does government really care whether girl children are sexually abused at school?* Or you could ask a challenging question. For example, if your presentation is about high unemployment levels, you might ask if anyone in the audience has experienced unemployment, either directly or indirectly. And you could follow up with asking how it made them feel. Or, if your organisation does workplace research, and you are giving a health and safety in the mines presentation, you could ask: *how many people do you think get severely disabled through mining accidents a year? Ten, twenty, fifty?...*
- You might like to refer to the occasion at which your presentation is happening. For example, maybe it is a historic occasion in some way. It is good to do a bit of research on this – it can endear you to the audience by making people feel special in some way.
- Relevant quotations can be a powerful way to start. Especially if it is from someone your audience relates to emotionally or politically.
- You may want to start with a compliment or acknowledgement. For example, maybe some people have travelled far, or sacrificed in some way to come to this presentation.
- If you are part of a line up of speakers or entertainers, it can work very well to acknowledge and affirm (or disagree with, if you want to be controversial!) something they have said or done that links to your presentation topic.
- Make sure your opening is related in some way to your topic. There is no point in telling a joke that has no connection to your topic. It can be confusing and irritating. Avoid jokes or anecdotes that may offend.
- Do not use tired, over-used openings, e.g. *unaccustomed as I am to public speaking....*

## Conclusions

There are many ways to conclude your presentation. However you choose to conclude, make it powerful. It is the last message you leave the audience with before question and answer time.

Here are some techniques that can work well, if appropriate:

- (a) If you began your presentation with a story, you could link back to that story in some way.
- (b) Leave people with a thought, a question, a quotation, a challenge – something to reflect on or do.
- (c) You could summarise – but keep it really brief. People get bored if they think you're going to repeat your presentation.

(d) Recap on key points.

## **Presentation do's and don'ts**

There are some things you should avoid doing. Avoid:

- Starting off by saying *I was only told yesterday that I had to do this presentation so...* (blaming and excusing).
- Starting off by saying *so-and-so would have been better placed to do this presentation than me....* (your audience may feel they're getting second best and wonder why).
- Walking in with a huge pile of papers that makes the presentation look like it will take all day. It is a turn off.
- Not being prepared.
- Being late.
- Presenting in a monotone voice.
- Standing in one place clinging to your overhead projector for protection.
- Overstepping your time. Prepare and practise before so you know how long it will take. Respect your audience and stick to their expectations.
- Failing to check that your presentation equipment, if you are using electronic equipment, is working.
- Setting up your equipment during your presentation time, and delaying the programme.

## *What helps a presentation to be successful?*

Here are some thoughts about what helps your presentation to be successful.

- Being there early, well prepared, looking enthusiastic, chatting a bit before the presentation. Prepare handouts if it is obvious your audience will want or need them.
- When it is obvious that you know your subject extremely well.
- When your audience can see that you are enjoying this opportunity to present to them, that you are confident and relaxed.
- When you can acknowledge your own mistakes (if you make one), and apologise.
- Assuming the people in the audience have prior experience and knowledge, and acknowledging this.
- Engaging with people.
- Moving around a bit while you present.

## **Presenting information and handouts**

If you are going to use chart paper information, overhead projector or computer projector slides:

- Decide what you want to put onto your slides and what you will elaborate on orally.
- Decide what handouts you want to give to people at the presentation, and prepare them.



## **What onto slide/chart paper and what into handout?**

Giving handouts to supplement your presentation usually helps to make your audience feel more relaxed. It helps people feel that they can sit back and concentrate on your presentation rather than take notes. It sets a good tone from the outset.

### **Handouts:**

- Help keep your audience's attention.
- Offer more information than you can cover in your presentation.
- Should be KISS – keep it simple, short and straightforward.
- Should offer an explanation of any jargon you use (you should explain this during the presentation as well), spell out any acronyms you use, and maybe other resources/contacts people could use in case they want to find out more about your topic.
- Help you to prepare carefully.
- Show your audience that you have prepared for the presentation and have tried to anticipate their needs.
- Can offer useful extras that are relevant to your presentation e.g. newspaper clippings, an article (short) that offers in-depth comment, poem, story, case study, relevant organisations' contact details, resources, etc.
- Help you if you want to divert from the presentation into an example that is in the handout – even to offer a quick activity.
- Help to support you if you are new to the presentation.
- Gives a polished, professional feel to the presentation.

Make sure your handouts look easy to read, are easy to read, and are well-printed. Avoid dated handouts – they can have the opposite effect and make people feel you haven't really bothered to prepare for this presentation.

### **When to hand them out?**

It is usually best to distribute your handouts out right near the beginning of your presentation, or very soon after you have started. The handout helps your audience to relax and focus on you and your presentation. There is no point in telling people that you have a handout for them and that they should not to worry to take notes. If they do not have the handout in front of them they will probably take notes anyway because they do not know what is in the handout.

### **Edit to the core**

Edit your presentation so that it is short and snappy. This means revising it several times. If you are using slides or other audiovisuals, try to keep it to ten slides or sheets of chart paper. An effective presentation cuts straight to the core. Use plain language that makes it easy for the listener to keep track with you all the way. Edit drafts of your presentation over and over again until you have got rid of all unnecessary words, and you have explained difficult concepts in everyday language. Giving examples often helps.

## Design and layout

An effective presentation is uncluttered and clear. This applies to whether you are working with a computer presentation programme or overhead projector slides.

- ❑ Avoid too many distractions from your key message. Use colour, graphics, cartoons and symbols, etc. purposefully and selectively, so that they reinforce your message.
- ❑ Avoid over-used graphics.
- ❑ The standard clip art range that is readily available on computer programmes can be very limited and very western, corporate-oriented.
- ❑ Keep good spacing – don't go too dense with words or images.
- ❑ Use a reader-friendly lettering. Try out different lettering until you find one that really works well.
- ❑ Make sure you have used a big enough lettering size (font) for projection.
- ❑ Do a dummy run of your design and layout before you do the presentation.

## Other tips

### **Practise! Eat, sleep and breathe your presentation**

Go through the presentation until you feel it is part of you. So that you and it breathe with one breath. Also anticipate questions. This will help you to feel confident and relaxed.

### **Be there early**

Arrive early to check the room is set up as you want it. Check that equipment is there and working. Deep breathing. Smile. Be warm and welcoming as people arrive or circulate.

### **Go for it! And enjoy...**

Take a deep breath, welcome everyone and go for it!

## Introducing your presentation

- State your objective briefly and clearly.
- Say how you want to handle questions – usually asking people to note them and ask at the end of the presentation works best.
- Help your audience look forward to your presentation – be enthusiastic.
- If you have a handout, give it to people at the beginning, and explain how it complements your presentation.
- Start with something attention grabbing. An anecdote, a statistic, a quote, for example.

## Tips for during your presentation

- If you can, have direct eye contact with each person in your audience at some point during your presentation. (Have you ever been the person a presenter has fixed their eyes on? Remember how uncomfortable it made you feel?)
- Try to establish a connection, some common ground, between yourself and your audience.
- Try not to use the equipment to hide behind.

- From time to time, and to reduce the distance between you and your audience, move away from the object you are using to present with (e.g. chart paper stand, overhead projector). This will help you to appear confident (even though your knees may be wobbling!).
- Refer to handouts during your presentation, if appropriate. This can break monotony.
- Vary your voice tone, emphasise some key words. Practise this before your presentation so that it comes naturally when you're presenting.
- Refer positively to someone in the audience. For example acknowledge them e.g. *Ms Ntuli has done research in a similar field and our notes have compared favourably...*

## Questions and answers

This is an important opportunity to involve your audience. You could kick off with asking a question yourself. Or invite questions.

Depending on the nature of your meeting and presentation, you could ask people to go into groups to discuss some questions.

## Questions – two main kinds

One kind of question is to get information and the other is to get opinion. Questions should be:

- short and clear
- relevant
- appropriate
- open ended, unless you want a yes or no answer
- part of the presentation time – not latched on as an afterthought just before a break or time is up.

## Answering questions

- When someone asks a question, acknowledge the value they have added to the presentation session by asking it.
- Try paraphrasing the question, for example, *I understand you to be asking me whether any recent measures to prevent underground mining accidents have been successful...?*
- Try to notice whether there are feelings underneath a question someone asks. For example, he or she may be asking a plain question but his or her body language and voice tone shows they are building up to an attack of your presentation.
- Don't be offensive.
- If you don't understand the question, ask for clarification until you do.
- Make sure you have answered the question to the best of your ability. Ask the person who asked the question if they feel satisfied with your response.
- If you can't answer the question but you are sure someone else in the audience can, ask him or her to do so.
- Try to make time for everyone who wants to ask a question to get a chance.
- Make sure you are sensitive to diversity in your audience. For example, make sure you take questions from women and men evenly, and from young and old.
- Be patient, even if someone is trying your patience.

- Don't ridicule or undermine anyone – you will come off worst and your image will be affected.
- Try to answer questions on the spot and directly.
- If you don't know the answer defer to a greater authority – whether in the room or in a book! Humility is a good trait!
- If you ask for questions and no one has one, try throwing in one yourself. For example, *when I was preparing for this presentation I asked myself whether anyone would learn something new from it. Could someone respond to this if they have learnt something new, and if so, what is it? Or a question that you have struggled with on your topic.*
- Don't go off the subject unless someone has made an incredible link that will solve the world's problems. Try to keep you and your audience tightly on track. If you don't, you risk other members of your audience being bored and frustrated.
- Don't let one person dominate.

## **Presentations**

Presentations, if well done, are an effective way to promote your organisation and its issues. When you are doing your organisation's strategic planning, and specifically when you discuss promoting your organisation, think about opportunities you have to do presentations. Be creative and take initiatives. Be bold!

You do not need hi-tech equipment to do an effective presentation. You can use chart paper, overhead transparencies or more modern computer/projector presentations. As you go more hi-tech, there are more that can go wrong. You introduce more distractions from your main message. The simpler and shorter your presentation, the better – for the listeners' sake.

There is a substantial overlap between presentations and speechmaking, so we highly recommend that you go to the CIVICUS toolkit *Promoting your organisation*, and specifically to the section *Speechmaking*. In speechmaking you will find important guidelines that also apply to presentations. These include the need to have a brief to prepare effectively, as well as tips on writing and presenting. We do not repeat that information in this section. Also very valuable is the CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully* where we look at the entire writing process and tools from thinking through to editing.

## **Basic questions to answer about presentations**

You need to develop a brief for your presentation. Please also see the CIVICUS toolkit *Promoting your organisation* and specifically the section *Getting started: you need a brief*.

In getting your thoughts about your presentation going, we suggest you start off by answering these basic questions.

- Why am I doing this presentation? (use freewriting and mind maps to help you see the CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully*, the section called *How to get started*?)
- What do I want people to know, think, do or feel after it?
- Who is going to be there?
- What do they want to get out of it?
- How should I structure it?
- When will it be?
- Where will it be?
- What do I need to organise?

## **Know the objective of your presentation**

It is essential to have a clear objective for your presentation. It helps you to focus with clarity on your task. Be disciplined and have one main objective, with not more than one or two secondary objectives, if possible. There is nothing worse than having to listen to a presentation that aimlessly wanders and wafts with only subtle clues as to its purpose.

Complete this phrase for yourself: *this presentation aims to...*

Is your main objective to:

- provide information?
- report progress?
- convince people about something?
- get a decision?
- solve a problem?
- something else?

See the CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully*, especially the section *Reasons for writing*.

## **Preparing a presentation**

### **Preparing psychologically**

When you prepare for a presentation remind yourself that it is normal to go through highs and lows.

- Sometimes you may even feel you have nothing new to say. But you must have. Your presentation is important to you and to your audience, otherwise it would not be taking place.
- Tell yourself “I can do it”.
- An icy freeze-up panic once in a while whilst preparing is normal. Talk yourself out of it. Remind yourself of all the good reasons for doing the presentation. You can do it
- Many famous actors and singers get nervous before a show, even after performing successfully for many years. Feeling a bit nervous before your

presentation is a better sign than feeling super-confident. Think of it as respect for your audience.

- Enjoy what you can get out of preparing for a presentation.
- Make the presentation your friend.

## Preparing practically

These are basic guidelines to preparing practically for a presentation. They are not all necessarily “steps” you tick off and never revisit. As you prepare your presentation you may well return to double-check or re-think some issue. It is a fluid process. Your ideas will change and grow as you experiment with them.

### 1. Getting started

Use thinking tools like freewriting and mind maps as a way of getting your thinking started in an enjoyable relaxed way. See our CIVICUS toolkit *Writing effectively and powerfully* and in particular the section *How to get started?* with the freewriting and mind maps tools.

#### *How can freewriting help with getting started?*

Freewriting helps you think quickly, originally and in an uncensored way about your presentation. It helps you get rid of a freeze-up. You are more likely to reap creative ideas through freewriting than through making a list. Freewriting and mind maps speed up your preparation time dramatically.

In doing your freewriting, you can start with these kinds of phrases:

My main objective with this presentation is to....

I can make my presentation interesting by....

#### *How can mind maps help with getting started?*

When you develop a mind map, make sure that you aim for depth of thought and generate original ideas, that radiate out from your topic. To get depth, after each idea ask questions, like:

- What are the implications of this?
- What does this lead to?
- What follows?
- What does this mean?
- How can we develop this further?
- What else?

Write up other ideas, like contacts, organisations, readings, as they come up. The idea is to capture powerful thoughts, ideas and suggestions. This tool helps you to brainstorm, organise, plan and get a structure. And to prioritise.





# Producing your own media

## **Acknowledgements and resources**

In writing this toolkit we made use of these valuable resources, and recommend them to you.

*Basic journalism*, by Gwen Ansell. Published by M&G Books. South Africa, 2002.

*Building organisations: using media*, by the Human Awareness Programme Publications. Published by HAP Organisational Development Services. South Africa

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