

Communication is central to effective advocacy. First, good interpersonal communication is vital *inside* the advocacy effort itself — among colleagues, leaders, constituents, allies, etc. Second, we need communication strategies to reach, educate, and persuade *external* audiences, from policymakers to communities.

In this chapter, we cover the following areas in media advocacy and education strategies:

- **Message Development & Delivery:** This section focuses on identifying and knowing the audience you want to reach and tailoring your message according to their profile. We also discuss the pros and cons of different ways to deliver your message. In later chapters, we give more examples of message delivery as it relates to outreach and mobilization, and lobbying and negotiation.
- **Mass Media Advocacy:** We offer tips and strategies to engage and utilize mass media that reach large numbers of people (newspaper, radio, TV, etc.). We also discuss some of the challenges of working with both private and publicly-owned media where the owners' interests may conflict with your advocacy goals.
- **Alternative Media for Outreach and Education:** We discuss and give examples of strategies for engaging your audiences in dialogue and education. Such community-based and popular media use theater, song, workshops and other direct forms of communication.

## Why Media Advocacy?

Media advocacy is important to:

- get on the political agenda;
- make your issue visible and credible in policy debate;
- inform the public about your issue and proposed solution;
- recruit allies;
- change public attitudes and behavior;
- influence decisionmakers and opinion leaders;
- shape policies, programs and the conduct of public and private agencies;
- raise money for your cause.

A *media advocacy plan* spells out:

- What message you want to convey.
- Who you want to reach with the message.
- How you will reach this audience.
- How you will utilize each type of media.
- How this will boost your overall advocacy effort.
- How you will time your media effort to complement your other strategies.
- How you will measure success.

Like all aspects of advocacy, media advocacy requires clear goals and carefully planned strategies.

## Message Development

Your advocacy message is what you choose to say about your issue, its solution and who you are. To develop a message, you will need information to back up the arguments you use.

The following are some basic principles of message development. Not all of these principles are universal. For example, if the media is government-owned, some principles may not apply. Some principles depend on whether you are using the mass media or alternative media. In general, to develop an effective message, it is important to:

1. Know your audience.
2. Know your political environment and moment (controversies, big issues, fears, and what is considered left, right and center).
3. Keep your message simple and brief.
4. Use real life stories and quotes.
5. Use precise, powerful language and active verbs.
6. Use clear facts and numbers creatively.
7. Adapt the message to the medium.
8. Allow your audience to reach their own conclusions.
9. Encourage audiences to take action.
10. Present a possible solution.

### **1. Know your audience.**

*Find out who cares – or could be persuaded to care – about your issue.* In chapter 12, the Power Map, the SWOT and the Forcefield Analysis help you identify key stakeholders in

relation to your issue. Your “audiences” are these same stakeholders, as well as potential sympathizers. When you develop your messages, you can refer back to this analysis, but you may also need to sharpen your profile of each audience.

The box below shows different categories of potential audiences with a range of interests and perspectives. The particulars of your issue will direct you to the specific type of person or organization you want to engage. For example, if your issue has to do with land rights for poor women and men, your audiences will be those who have influence and interest in land issues. In this case, your audiences might be grouped according to locale of operations and include:

- *Local Level:* your main constituents -- peasant and farmer’s associations as well as large and small-scale farmers, extension and other agricultural service workers.
- *National Level:* associations concerned with agro-business, agricultural development, and the environment; journalists covering development and agriculture; politicians representing rural constituencies; decisionmakers with influence over land and agriculture, such as the Ministers and top officials in Agriculture, Justice, Trade and Finance; agricultural profession-

## Potential Audiences

### Local and National

- Decisionmakers - politicians and policymakers
- Opinion leaders
- Donors
- Journalists
- NGOs
- Issue-specific researchers and professionals
- Trade unions
- Constituents
- Private sector
- The general public

### International

- Bilaterals and Multilaterals (the World Bank, etc.)
- Donors
- NGOs
- Corporations
- UN Agencies

Information/Analysis → Position → Argument → Message

Using solid information and analysis, groups develop their position on an issue, create compelling arguments, and design a message that conveys all of this in a nutshell.

als; related academics; and concerned citizens.

- *International Level:* institutions shaping trade and agricultural policy, like the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund; NGOs concerned about globalization and food; influential donors.

*Find out what they know, their concerns, their values and priorities, and what kind of language they use.* To capture the attention of an audience, you need to know their interests, their situation and their vocabulary. This involves listening to their ideas and concerns. For some audiences – like citizens – you may need a focus group (see chapter 8). For opinion leaders and decisionmakers, their background and positions on issues are usually publicly available. Study media stories and existing research on social and political issues to find out more about your audience. (See *Getting the Message Right: Using Formative Research, Polling and Focus Group Insights on the Cheap*, The Advocacy Institute, Washington, DC, 1998.)

## **2. Know your political environment and moment.**

Many contextual factors will shape your message. These include the level of political openness and public attitudes about controversy. In countries emerging from conflict or economic crises, messages that express hope may work well. When a government is broadly under fire, it may be more acceptable to criticize explicitly. In a time of war, critical messages become less acceptable. Often it helps to link your

message to another issue that has public attention. Comparisons with other well-known problems help audiences understand the seriousness of your issue.

For example, after the US government found two Chilean grapes with cyanide on them, it stopped all imports of Chilean fruit. Tobacco control advocates used this incident to compare the much larger amount of cyanide in one cigarette with that in several bushels of tainted grapes.<sup>1</sup>

## **3. Keep the message simple and brief.**

Make sure the information can be easily understood by someone who does not know the subject. Jargon is confusing and should be avoided. Even common terms like “sustainable development” and “civil society” are obscure to most people.



## **4. Use real life stories and quotes.**

Political debates are often reduced to facts and sweeping social analysis that may not reach most audiences, even policymakers. The human element makes a problem real. Quotes and personal stories bring to life the challenges of a problem in a way that general explanations cannot.

### **5. Use precise, powerful language and active verbs.**

Advocacy groups often use language that may not work with all audiences. For example, the general public message of an African women's advocacy campaign to reform inheritance laws was "Put an end to property-grabbing. Support women's equal rights to inherit." The message was then tailored for rural women, suggesting a concrete action and using an image showing the need to be vigilant: "End property-grabbing: Write a will and cry with one eye open."

### **6. Use clear facts and numbers creatively.**

Good information boosts the clout of any advocacy. But the facts you choose and how you present them is important. The last chapter discussed some of the information needed for advocacy planning. That same information can be used for your media strategy. Concretely: What is the problem/issue? What are the causes? Who is directly affected and how? What are the financial and social costs? Who's to blame? What is the solution, and what can a citizen or policymaker do to help?

#### Messages that reach citizens are....

In a workshop with African advocates in 1998, participants gave the following reasons from their experiences why certain messages worked:

- Humorous
- Use popular expressions
- Adaptations of popular songs, metaphors, stories and poetry
- Brief, rhythmic and witty
- Reference to a respected person or institution
- Appeal to children who help to inform parents and other adults

The answers to these questions require credible research from reliable sources. However, this does not mean that you can't move forward with other parts of your advocacy strategy until you have done extensive research. Research can be done by constituents or others as a parallel process. Although some issues require new research, usually there is a lot of information already available. What you will add is a new way of understanding the facts and figures in line with your advocacy objectives.

### **7. Adapt the message to the medium.**

Each medium has its own possibilities and limitations. For example, radio relies on sounds. So you should use different voices, backgrounds sounds and music to add to make your message compelling. For television, make full use of the visual element and reduce written and spoken information. For street theater, engage the audience by asking questions, inviting responses, speaking to individuals and making people laugh.

### **8. Allow the audience to reach their own understanding.**

Provide the basic details and allow the audience to develop their own understanding of the issue. Too much explanation appears dogmatic. Longer explanations are useful once you have your audience's attention.

### **9. Encourage the audience to take action.**

Your audience – whether it's policymakers or the general public – needs to know what they can do to support your cause. Offer simple suggestions, like "visit your local councilor" or "discuss this matter in your Parent Teacher Association" or "vote 'yes'" or "call the Campaign for a Living Wage to register support."

### **10. Present a possible solution.**

Tell your audience what you propose to solve

the problem. Keep the solution simple, such as “the government needs to show its commitment by providing adequate funding” or “new laws are needed to keep people safe.”

### Framing Your Message

How you frame your issue and solution is one of the most critical factors in advocacy. To help you present the information with the message development principles in mind, we recommend the following:

- Start with your advocacy campaign’s **core message**;
- **Tailor the message** to reach distinct audiences;
- Put your **frame** around the issue<sup>2</sup>.

A “**core**” message is one or two brief, direct statements that reflect:

- your analysis of the issue;
- the causes of the issue;
- who is responsible for solving the issue;
- your proposed solution;
- the actions you ask others to take in support of the solution.

A **tailored message** is created for a specific audience based on an analysis of:

- What will be most persuasive;
- What information the audience needs;
- What action you want the audience to take.

This analysis will determine the message’s:

- Content;
- Form (words, images, etc);
- Length;
- Medium;
- Messenger.

Tailor your message to different audiences by:

- tapping into the audience’s priorities, values and concerns;
- giving relevant human examples;
- choosing the appropriate medium and moment for delivery;
- including a “what you can do” appeal that enables the audience to respond.

### A Framed Message

*“Frames are the boundaries that highlight specific parts of an issue, place others in the background, and leave out some entirely. The frame influences how an audience thinks about an issue, including who is responsible for the cause and its possible solution... You need to frame the issue in a way that is as compelling as the opposition’s frame, and shifts the audience’s attention to your perspective.”<sup>3</sup>*



To **frame** the issue:

- translate individual stories into larger social and political problems;
- assign primary responsibility for the problem;
- present a clear solution;
- spell out your proposals;
- develop images that highlight your values.

The matrix on the following page can help you frame your message by guiding you through an analysis of the available media and the concerns of the audiences you wish to reach.

### Pretesting Your Message

Pretesting your message helps to ensure that your intended audience understands and is engaged by it. Yet for many reasons, advo-

cates rarely pretest their message to make sure it appeals beyond the “converted”. Often, they assume that if the message sounds good to activists, it will sound good to everyone. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case. Advocates often have their own language that may not be easily understood by others, even those who may care about the issue.

Being on the political defensive can make advocacy groups forget that they need to reach and persuade others. For example, during the World Bank protests in Washington, DC in 2000, a small group of activists was asked what they wanted to communicate to the average American citizen. They answered: “Guilt. Americans should feel bad for what’s happening in the rest of the world.” Trying to make people feel bad is not a good way of

### Different Frames, Different Solutions

In her book, *Prime Time Activism: Media Strategies for Grassroots Organizations*, Charlotte Ryan offers an example of how one event can be framed in many ways. The different frames affect the event’s meaning. Consider these three frames for the same event:

- “An infant left sleeping in his crib was bitten repeatedly by rats while his 16 year old mother went to cash her welfare check.”
- “An eight-month old South End boy was treated yesterday after being bitten by rats while sleeping in his crib. Tenants said that repeated requests for extermination had been ignored by the landlord. He claimed that the tenants did not properly dispose of their garbage.”
- “Rats bit eight-month old Michael Burns five times yesterday as he napped in his crib. Burns is the latest victim of a rat epidemic plaguing inner-city neighborhoods. A Public Health Department spokesperson explained that federal and state cutbacks forced short-staffing at rat control and housing inspection programs.”

The first version, by emphasizing the age and actions of the mother, suggests that the problem is irresponsible teenagers having babies. The solution would be discouraging such irresponsible behavior.

In version two, the issue is a landlord-tenant dispute about responsibility for garbage. The solution depends on the reader’s perspective. Some readers will say there must be stronger enforcement of landlords’ responsibilities. Others will say that the laws must make it easier for a landlord to evict tenants.

Only the third version looks at larger issues such as how cuts in funding for basic services affect low-income communities.

From *Advocacy for Social Justice: A Global Action and Reflection Guide*, *ibid.* p 105.

Framing Messages for Different Audiences			
AUDIENCE	CONCERNS	POSSIBLE MESSAGES	MEDIUM
<p><b>Decision-Makers</b> (political and economic)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ministers</li> <li>- Chief of Police</li> <li>- Legislators</li> <li>- President &amp; executive staff</li> <li>- Chief Executive Officers</li> <li>- Board of Directors/shareholders</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Major newspapers</li> <li>- Television channels</li> <li>- Radio</li> <li>- Business journals</li> <li>- Issue briefs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Donors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Foundations</li> <li>- Bilateral agencies (e.g., SIDA, DFID, USAID)</li> <li>- Multilateral agencies (e.g., World Bank, regional development banks)</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Major newspapers</li> <li>- Television channels</li> <li>- Radio</li> <li>- Business journals</li> <li>- Issue briefs</li> <li>- Intl. development journals</li> <li>- Internal updates, etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Journalists</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reporters</li> <li>- Foreign correspondents</li> <li>- Editors</li> <li>- Feature writers</li> <li>- Columnists</li> <li>- Economics &amp; labor reporters</li> <li>- Women's issues reporters</li> </ul>			Local & international print & electronic media
<p><b>Civil Society Groups</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NGOs</li> <li>- Trade Unions</li> <li>- Development agencies</li> <li>- Grassroots groups</li> <li>- Church groups</li> <li>- Research groups &amp; think tanks</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Major newspapers</li> <li>- Television channels</li> <li>- Radio</li> <li>- Posters and Pamphlets</li> <li>- Bumper stickers</li> <li>- Listserves</li> <li>- Newsletters</li> <li>- Conferences &amp; workshops</li> <li>- Issue briefs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Issue Relevant Practitioners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual professionals</li> <li>- Trade associations</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Major newspapers</li> <li>- Television channels</li> <li>- Radio</li> <li>- Posters and Pamphlets</li> <li>- Bumper stickers</li> <li>- Listserves</li> <li>- Newsletters</li> <li>- Conferences &amp; workshops</li> <li>- Issue briefs</li> <li>- Professional journals</li> </ul>
<p><b>General Public</b></p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Major newspapers</li> <li>- Television channels</li> <li>- Radio</li> <li>- Posters and Pamphlets</li> <li>- Bumper stickers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Opinion Leaders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Religious &amp; church leaders</li> <li>- Chiefs &amp; traditional local leaders</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Major newspapers</li> <li>- Television</li> <li>- Radio</li> <li>- Conferences &amp; workshops</li> </ul>

Adapted from *TB Advocacy: A Practical Guide*. Global Tuberculosis Programme, World Health Organization, 1998.

gaining support. Poorly designed messages can confuse or alienate potential supporters.

The most common way to pre-test a message is through focus groups, which were discussed in detail in Chapter 8. To conduct a focus group for this particular purpose, you will want to bring together individuals representing the audience you want to reach and ask what they like and dislike about the message, and how they understand it.

### Message Delivery

Message delivery involves careful attention to:

- how the information will be transmitted -- the *medium*;
- who or what will convey the message -- the *messenger*.

Choices about delivery differ depending on the audience, the country and the community. For example, a 1991 study in Zimbabwe found that for most rural people the primary source of trusted information was a respected visitor - often a government extension worker who was in the area on a regular basis. In places where access to electronic or printed information is limited, people trust information they receive face-to-face from a person they regard as knowledgeable. Other information sources simply do not reach them. In contrast, the primary source of information for many people in Indonesia is television.<sup>4</sup>

Many countries have two faces – one of poverty and isolation where information is scarce and personalized, and another resource-rich side where the electronic and print media bombard people with information. In places where public interest organizations are strong, some concerned citizens might depend on a newsletter or internet communication. Increasingly, a key source of information for people around the world is electronic. Often the

source is international, like CNN. But the electronic sources rarely reach poor or excluded groups.

Multiple information strategies are needed if you have diverse audiences. Some of the many different options for delivering a message include<sup>5</sup>:

#### **Person-to-Person**

- One-on-one
- Lobbying visits (discussed in Chapter 15)
- Group or community meetings (discussed in Chapter 14)
- Seminars, workshops and conferences
- Public hearings (discussed in Chapter 14)
- Protests and public demonstrations (discussed in Chapter 14)

#### **Print**

- Newspapers and magazines
- Journals, bulletins, newsletters, updates
- Posters, leaflets, fliers, action alerts, pamphlets, bumper stickers
- Reports, studies
- Letters to decisionmakers

#### **Electronic**

- Radio
- Television
- Videos and films
- Internet

#### **Drama and folk art forms**

- Street theater
- Songs, music and poems
- Dance

### Choosing the Right Medium

Your choice of a medium to deliver the message depends on who you are speaking to,



## Purpose

To apply the principles of message development to a slogan in order to better understand how different audiences require different messages.

## Process

(Time: 30 minutes)

1. Divide participants into small groups according to the advocacy issue they are addressing. Give them the following instructions:
  - If your group does not have a slogan, write one that communicates a message about your issue. Clarify who your audience is, and how you will test the slogan.
  - If your group has already developed and used a slogan, identify the intended audience, describe how the slogan was developed, and say how you knew if it was effective or not.
2. After they have finished, the groups can share their slogans in plenary.

## Discussion

- What purpose(s) can slogans serve in advocacy?
- What are the characteristics of the most effective slogans? Why are some slogans ineffective?

### Examples of Slogans in Different Contexts

Slogans can reach large numbers of people but their impact varies widely from context to context. A consumer's group in India developed the slogan "*Sterlite sterilizes life,*" to create public awareness about the deaths and illness caused by gas leaks from a company named Sterlite. When the organization analyzed its slogan, they found several problems. First, the word sterilize has more than one meaning. On the one hand, it can mean to make something clean. On the other hand, it can mean to make a person impotent. Second, only people who read newspapers knew about the accidents caused by Sterlite since they had not been covered on the radio or television. So the impact of the slogan was limited.

In Nepal the slogan "*When the mountains fade, daughters be alert*" was used to warn young girls about the danger of being lured across the border into forced prostitution. The slogan seems abstract, but it was turned into a more explicit song that was broadcast throughout the country and became popular.<sup>1</sup>

The Uganda Debt Network (UDN) developed the slogan "*Debt is death for children*". The slogan was intended to convey the consequences of negative macroeconomic policies on the most vulnerable of the population. A small working group designed this slogan to reach policymakers from the World Bank, IMF, and from government and the general public. Information accompanying the slogan explained that a nine million dollar debt (generated primarily by a dictator in the 70s and 80s) was paid each year by the Ugandan government to international financial agencies while only three million dollars were spent on health each year. Organizers of the campaign argued that debt caused the death of children because it reduced spending on public health. The posters were placed in front of the local World Bank offices one week before elections, and banners were placed in the streets. In addition, a petition was sent to the World Bank and its President sent a response thanking UDN for their work.<sup>2</sup>

From GWIP Asia TOT and GWIP Africa TOT

what you want to say, your purpose and your ability to work with that medium. Here are some questions to guide the selection:

***For each audience, ask:***

- What are the audience's primary sources of information? Who or what do they listen to? What do they read? What do they watch? What appeals to them?
- What are the audience's characteristics (age, gender, class, employment, race, etc)? Where do they live? Work? What languages do they speak? Do they read? Do they buy newspapers? Do they have access to television and the internet? Do they listen to radio?
- What are their political views? Their jokes? Expressions? Religious and cultural sensitivities? Are there differences based on race, age, gender and other factors?

***For each medium, ask:***

- How do we access this medium as advocates? Will it cost money? Will we need assistance from specialized people? Will we need influence that we currently do not have? Who owns it? Who controls the information it transmits?
- Will they be willing to convey our message, and if they do, will they distort it?

***To assess your group's capacity to work with the medium, ask:***

- What skills are needed?
- What resources are needed?
- If we do not have the skills and resources internally, can we get them easily?

## Mass Media Advocacy

Mass media can be both a tool and a target of advocacy. On the one hand, because it reaches so many people, it is a powerful tool to

inform and build support around your issue. On the other hand, its influence over public opinion and values makes it a prime target. The case on the next page of an advocacy campaign against sexism in the media is one example.

Working with media that reach large numbers of people, such as newspapers, television, radio, and magazines, requires good relationships with the journalists and editors who will choose whether and how to cover your issues.

### Assessing the Mass Media in Your Context<sup>6</sup>

Assessing the media is part of your overall contextual analysis (See Chapter 7). This combines a general analysis of the media in your context with more specific research about different media organizations, and should answer these questions:

- What are the main sources of information in the geographic area you are operating in? And what are the main sources of information for your key audiences?
- What is the mix of privately-owned, government-owned, national and international media?
- What are the politics of each of the key media outlets (organizations)?

Then, looking more specifically at each media source, the basic information you need is:

- Who are their main audiences?
- What is their likely position regarding your issue and proposed solution?
- Who owns and runs the organization? Is there a department or specific journalist who covers your issue?
- Which individuals inside the media may be possible allies?
- What are the coverage options? (Articles, editorials, columns, political cartoons,

letters to the editor, op-eds, radio talk shows, etc?)

- How much advance time (hours, days) is needed to get each option into the media?

Through observation you can also assess:

- how often and how your issue is covered;
- the likelihood that your message will be covered or distorted;
- who is held responsible for your issue;
- whether solutions are presented;
- what kinds of people write and are quoted.

### Key Steps in Mass Media Advocacy

1. Develop a list of names, addresses and phone numbers for the different news organizations, their editors and key journalists.
2. Based on your contextual assessment of the media, develop a hierarchy of those who are most important to contact.
3. For the top news agencies, establish

relationships with journalists and editors. For the more sympathetic ones, the relationship should enable you to regularly inform the media staff about the progress of the campaign.

4. For each agency and audience, know what is considered “newsworthy.” (See page ###)
5. Track news coverage and public opinion on relevant matters. Keep press clippings so you can see how the issue is portrayed over time and in different sources.
6. Look out for upcoming events where your issue might be highlighted.

### Networking with Journalists

This task varies depending on where you are operating. In Zimbabwe where leading press is government-owned, NGOs usually have to cover reporters’ expenses to persuade them to cover their issues. In countries where there is freedom of press and the media is privately owned, mainstream journalists are lured by a

### Challenges Journalists Face

“Members of the media face many challenges, including:

- **Partisan control of the press** is a problem around the world. Governments usually have some way of exerting pressure on the media. Sometimes the control is very direct. For example, in Indonesia, . . . [g]overnment often asks newspapers to censor what they write. In other countries, government controls what happens through strict licensing laws. In Malaysia the newspapers, magazines, and printing presses must renew their operating licenses yearly. Malaysian media organizations that are critical of the government have trouble renewing their licenses.
- **Private media ownership** can also jeopardize the freedom of the press, especially when the media is owned by large corporations. A daily newspaper in China experienced this kind of corporate control when a group of Malaysian businesspeople with interests in the sugar industry bought the Hong-Kong based *South China Morning Post*. The businesspeople wanted to sell their sugar to lucrative Chinese markets and put their business interests first. They changed the editorial board of the newspaper, and hired new reporters. Activists reported that the paper subsequently became more hesitant in covering human rights issues.
- **Threats of libel suits** can limit what the media and individual journalists say. In most countries, an individual who feels defamed has the right to sue for libel. Even if the newspaper or station is in the right, defending it can be costly.”

From *Making the Most of the Media: Tools for Human Rights Groups Worldwide*. Center for Sustainable Human Rights Action, 2001, pp 12-13.

### How a Journalist Writes a Story, in Nine Steps

A Kenyan journalist who works for a weekly newspaper outlined nine steps in writing a story. Once he

1. gets a tip for a story, he
2. researches the history and past coverage of the issue. He then
3. makes a list of questions and
4. calls sources who might be able to give more information. Once he has heard different points of view, he
5. verifies the facts and
6. asks other sources to confirm or deny the details he has received. To write a strong story, he
7. looks for good quotes. When he has sufficient details, quotes and different sides of the story, he
8. begins to write, and
9. rechecks the facts as his deadline approaches.

*Making the Most of the Media: Tools for Human Rights Groups Worldwide*, Center for Sustainable Human Rights Action. 2001, p. 11.

well-substantiated claim, the relevance of the issue, the human interest aspect and the likelihood it will advance their career. The work of journalists is also shaped by the business interests of the media outlets that employ them.

The following tips come from US reporters with international press experience.<sup>7</sup>

- *Sobriety, balance and data, data, data - in other words, the more 'facts' the better.*
- *Be able to substantiate what you say and respond to counter-arguments.*
- *Offer well-researched information that points out specific problems or offers practical solutions. Use examples as much as possible.*
- *Be honest about your agenda and whether or how the issue affects you personally.*
- *If you don't know, say you don't know. If you can't talk about it, say you can't.*
- *Get the people affected by the problem to talk about it themselves.*
- *Be aware of media deadlines and work within them.*
- *Build a relationship of trust with journalists by being honest.*

A US journalist covering Asia for the *New York Times* has these tips for dealing with media:

- *Journalists are usually not interested in promoting specific organizations. Focus on the issue, not your organization.*
- *If a story is not immediately relevant, make linkages between your issue and the reality of the readers.*
- *Locate your issue in the broader social, economic and political trends of the time.*

Often a journalist may share your interest in informing people about a social issue. However, journalists have to prove the issue is worth covering. Where the media is private, they must prove that readers want to hear about this type of issue.

There are other factors to consider when building media relationships. How a journalist's story gets published depends on the politics of the editors and owners of the media. If the issue is controversial, the journalist's words may be changed to reflect corporate or government interests. When working with journalists on controversial stories, do not automatically blame them if the coverage seems distorted.

## The Politics of Mass Media: Being “Newsworthy”

An independent media is an important pillar for democratic governance. It facilitates open political debate and keeps the public aware of injustices, corruption, and issues of national importance. There are many examples of how the media has helped social justice and accountability advocacy, ranging from the impeachment of former Filipino President Estrada to the tobacco control campaign in the US.

But there are many forces that undermine the independence of the media. The media often reflect the same power dynamics that shape policy issues. For example, even in the most independent media agencies, the voices of women, poor people, and minorities are extremely rare or coverage is slanted by social stereotypes. Women’s issues are considered “soft” while stories of war and business are “hard” and so more worthy of coverage. Politics and economics also shape what is considered newsworthy. In many countries, people or institutions with political power may prevent a controversial issue from being covered so that their part in it remains invisible and less open to scrutiny.

The exclusion of certain social issues is also related to “the bottom line”, especially where media organizations are profit-driven corporations. Media outlets may try to avoid alienating investors or sponsors, or spend more time marketing products rather than ideas. The need to sell news can sometimes compete with the desire to offer balanced coverage.

What makes news “newsworthy” depends on the political context, the nature of the mass media, and the politics of the particular issue. There are some things that may boost your chances for coverage, such as:

- controversy, conflict and scandal

- deception or injustice on a massive scale
- broad interest to many people
- things that are mysterious or unusual
- celebrities and opinion leaders as spokespersons
- individuals affected by a problem telling their story
- compelling images

Making an issue “newsworthy” depends on how you package your message, who delivers it and whether you can persuade the media that it is newsworthy. This is all political.

## Mass Media Tools

The most common tools for getting publicity from the mass media are:

- Press releases
- Media events: News conferences and press releases
- Letters to the editor
- Television or radio interviews
- Radio dialogues and educational soap operas

## Press Release

Press releases aim to attract journalists to cover an upcoming event or one that has just occurred. Some journalists receive hundreds of releases a day, which makes the competition to be interesting steep. This means that the wording of the headline and first sentence must be compelling.

## Content of the Release

- Make sure the headline, first sentence and first paragraph are newsworthy.
- The first paragraph should have the 5 Ws:
  - What is happening?
  - When is it happening?
  - Where is it happening?
  - Who is involved and who is speaking?
  - Why is it important?

## Examples of Mass Media Advocacy

### Truth Speaks to Power in the Philippines

How does a corrupt, incompetent President get impeached? An experience from the Philippines demonstrates that organized citizens' groups can move the media even when powerful interests are against change. The Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism was at the heart of the advocacy that led to former President Estrada's impeachment. The Center did careful research and produced a series about the President's corrupt business practices. Initially, their information was not carried by most major newspapers due to political pressure. But as discontent and advocacy expanded, the information added momentum to the impeachment campaign. It convinced many sectors of the Philippine society that the impeachment allegations were credible and demanded action.

### Helping Journalists See All Angles in Croatia \*

A story from Croatia illustrates how groups can work to change images of women in the media.

"My name is Kristina Mihalec. I am the International Communications Liaison at Be active, Be Emancipated (Budi aktivna, Budi emanipirana or B.a.B.e.) in Zagreb Croatia. We are a strategic lobby NGO working for women's human rights in Croatia. One of our main projects is *Women in Media*. We at B.a.B.e. monitor the media daily. We don't have to search for sexist examples in advertising because it is pushed into our faces. Sexism in visual and printed media is the norm. Female opera singers are reported on only if they take a 'sexy' pose in their underwear. The covers of newspapers never show women unless they are half naked, a model or a victim. Jumbo public posters show fully naked women advertising a car. Bare breasts are used to sell everything, be it beer, jeans, kitchen faucets, cars, medicine, juice, etc. Yet when we try to take out sexism, the women at B.a.B.e. are called extremists.

There is no government monitoring or regulation of sexism in the media. So, we have designed several projects. We give workshops to female journalists on what sexism is. We teach them to develop journalist skills from a gender perspective. We use all forms of media in training journalists: gathering information on the internet about women or the Croatian government, analysis of pictures and art. At the last workshop participants expressed the need to invite men to our workshops, since they need to be educated too. So, in the future we will hold workshops for women and men journalists. This will be very difficult, but necessary.

Here are more examples of our media work:

- We did very successful street actions. On public sexist signs we placed large stickers which read 'this offends women,' 'sexism,' and 'STOP!' This form of graffiti was an inexpensive and fun way to convey a message to the public.
- The women at B.a.B.e. monitor all the Croatian newspapers. Every day, newspapers are read, all sexist articles and pictures concerning women are cut out and filed for our research library.
- We campaigned against a food store for its sexist advertisements through writing to the manager and educating store owners. Since then, their advertisements have drastically improved.
- We have done research on gender stereotypes in schools. The results are distributed to schoolteachers, media, and government bodies.
- We have analyzed the portrayal of homosexuals in the media.
- We have published two booklets on the portrayal of women in Croatian media.
- For the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence last year, we commissioned a female rap group to do a rap and video. This was very successful. Finally, young female musicians were given coverage. They received much publicity on the national radio, TV, and newspaper. Their CDs were distributed throughout Croatia and Europe, and can be found on MP3 format on the internet."

\* This story from Croatia was part of a list-serve dialogue on Women and Media coordinated by UNDP during the Beijing plus 5 preparations; for more information contact babe@zamir.net.

- Use a direct quote in the first two paragraphs.
- Use one fact or numbers to show it is important.
- Be specific.
- Attach a fact sheet so that the release is not too long.

### *Style of the Release*

- Use short sentences of no more than 25 words.
- Use paragraphs containing no more than two to three sentences.
- Keep the length to one or two pages.
- Use a simple, jargon-free style.
- Avoid lots of adjectives and adverbs.
- Use active verbs, e.g. “Twelve women who witnessed and survived the horrors of trafficking testified...” rather than: “The horrors of trafficking were described by twelve women.”
- Proofread.

### *Layout*

- Put the date and release details at the top of the page. Say whether the information is “*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*” or “*EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE*.” An embargo means that the information must not be released until a specified date and time.
- At the end of the release, put - *END* - and list contact names and numbers where the journalist can get more information.

On the following page is a sample press release from the Supermarket campaign organized by Christian Aid (UK).

### **Media Events: News Conferences and Press Briefings**

A news conference lets you announce a news story to a number of journalists at once. Usu-

### Practicing a Press Release in Ghana

**Draft** - “The population of Ghana doubled in nine years. This has put a strain on all economic resources. There are inadequate health services, water supplies, and food to meet the growing numbers. A big factor is escalating teen pregnancy. A thousand women from around the country are meeting to discuss how better family planning services can halt this dangerous trend.”

**Rewrite** - “A thousand women from across the country gathered in Accra today to devise solutions to Ghana’s escalating population growth....”

ally, it involves articulate speakers making presentations, followed by questions from journalists. The checklist on page ### can simplify conference organizing. But first be sure that your story warrants holding a news conference, as they can be costly to organize, and will be disheartening if few people attend.

In some cases, you can achieve the same results and be more cost effective by handling the story from your office. For this, you need to send journalists your press release and briefing materials with an embargo until the date of the launch. The briefing materials should also inform them who is available for interview.

Journalists cover hundreds of stories and may not know anything about your issue. If you want them to produce accurate stories, they need to be properly briefed. Consider organizing an informal press briefing. This can also help build good relations with journalists. For example, invite selected journalists to attend a briefing at your offices in advance of your planned event, or offer to meet them in their own offices. Brief them on key developments relating to your issue and what your organization is doing about it. You can do the briefing as a breakfast meeting and provide refreshments. Take along briefing materials, such as fact sheets, to distribute.

# Press release

## THE GREAT SUPERMARKET RECEIPT COLLECTION

# Local churches challenge supermarkets

### Photo opportunity:

Receipts will be handed in to

\_\_\_\_\_

manager of

\_\_\_\_\_

supermarket

at \_\_\_\_\_

on \_\_\_\_\_

at \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm.



Local churches have issued a challenge to supermarkets to ensure that the Third World workers who produce many of the products they sell are fairly paid and properly treated.

The challenge is part of Christian Aid's ongoing campaign *Change the Rules*. As part of this campaign, Christian Aid is calling on supermarkets to adopt a code of conduct to protect vulnerable workers in the Third World. Christian Aid believes implementation of this code should be independently monitored.

Churchgoers at \_\_\_\_\_ are collecting till receipts from local branches of supermarket chains. They are now handing in receipts with a total value of \_\_\_\_\_. These will be presented to supermarket managers at \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ as proof of the level of concern about the lot of workers in developing countries, some of whom work under appalling conditions for long hours and very little money.

"This isn't a threat to the supermarkets. But as their customers we want to say to them: 'We're spending a lot of money in your shop, and we want to know we can be absolutely confident that the people who produce the things you sell us are guaranteed basic, minimum conditions and fair pay,'" explained \_\_\_\_\_, *one of the local organisers*.

Martin Drewry, Head of Campaigns at Christian Aid, said: "Christian Aid is already involved in negotiations with the supermarkets nationally. We believe they might be prepared to adopt codes of conduct to ensure workers are fairly treated – providing we can show them that their customers do really care.

"The magnificent response of all those who collected together their till receipts shows beyond any shadow of a doubt that shoppers do care, and want to know that the goods they buy are not produced by workers who are exploited or unfairly treated."

**For more details phone** \_\_\_\_\_ (local contact)

**or Martin Drewry, Head of Campaigns at Christian Aid, on 0171-523 2264.**

London: PO Box 100, SE1 7RT **Belfast:** PO Box 150, BT9 6AE  
Cardiff: PO Box 21, CF4 2DL **Edinburgh:** PO Box 11, EH1 1EL  
Dublin: Christ Church, Rathgar Road, Dublin 6  
Registered charity no 258003 CAP1





## Rationale

- A big, newsworthy story
- New information relating to a big story being followed by the news media
- A statement by an important figure on a controversial issue
- Participation of high profile speakers
- Release of important new findings
- Launch of a major new initiative
- Announcement of something important locally

## Location and Set Up

- A central, well known location, convenient for journalists, and appropriate to the event
- Avoid large rooms that give the appearance that few people attended
- Make sure the noise level of the room is low
- Reserve space at the back of the room for television cameras, possibly on a raised platform
- Reserve a quiet room for radio interviews following the news conference
- Ensure light and sound systems are in working order
- If possible, have fax, phone and email available
- Make sure there is a podium and a table long enough for all spokespeople to sit behind
- Consider displaying large visuals, such as images, logos or charts
- Have a “sign in” sheet for journalists
- Consider serving coffee, tea and light snacks following the event

## Timing

- Hold the event in the morning or early afternoon of a workday, or with enough time for reporters to meet deadlines
- Check that you are not competing with other important events on the same day
- Start on time - don't keep journalists waiting
- If you distribute materials beforehand, use an embargo to prevent journalists from publishing before the event
- Wait until the event to release some information. This creates an element of surprise and rewards those who attend

## Possible Materials

- Press release
- List of news conference participants
- Executive summary of report

- \_\_\_ Case studies and stories
- \_\_\_ Fact sheets
- \_\_\_ Biography and photos of speakers, and copies of speeches
- \_\_\_ Pictures
- \_\_\_ B-roll (broadcast quality video background footage)
- \_\_\_ Consider putting all of the materials together into one “press kit”

## Inviting Journalists

- \_\_\_ Keep an up-to-date mailing list of journalists
- \_\_\_ Make sure you know who the relevant journalists for your issue are
- \_\_\_ Focus on getting the most influential media to attend
- \_\_\_ Remember to invite foreign media
- \_\_\_ Inform journalists of the event at least a week before the day
- \_\_\_ Make a follow up call to check that the right journalist received the invitation
- \_\_\_ Build interest for the event without giving out the story
- \_\_\_ Consider offering “exclusive” angles to key media

## Preparing Speakers

- \_\_\_ Select speakers who are articulate and authoritative
- \_\_\_ Brief speakers carefully on the message of the event
- \_\_\_ Prepare speakers in advance on how to answer difficult questions
- \_\_\_ Ideally, each speaker should present for only three or four minutes
- \_\_\_ Make sure that each speaker makes one or two important points. Try to get speakers to make different points
- \_\_\_ Keep speeches simple and non-technical, aimed at a general audience
- \_\_\_ Select a moderator who will manage questions from the floor after the presentation
- \_\_\_ Encourage questions and keep answers short

## Follow-Up

- \_\_\_ Within a few hours of the end of the conference, get the information to important journalists who were unable to attend.
- \_\_\_ Advise the person who handles the phone in your organization where to direct follow-up calls.
- \_\_\_ Gather news clippings of the coverage that results from the news conference. Distribute these to coalition partners and policy makers.

From *TB Advocacy: A Practical Guide*. Global Tuberculosis Programme, World Health Organization. Copyright 1998 by the WHO.

**Letters to the Editor<sup>9</sup>**

Most newspapers and magazines have a “letters page” which gives readers the opportunity to express their views or correct previously published information. Letters are widely read and provide a good opportunity to promote a cause or debate issues.

Letters should be short and to the point. Those over 500 words are unlikely to be published. Short letters of 100 words can be very effective. A letter should make one main point and end on a challenging note, with a call to action.

Make sure you refer to your organization. The impact can be increased if letters are signed

by more than one signatory, representing different organizations or interests. If your letter is responding to an article in a daily newspaper, you should submit it to the paper within a couple of days.

**Television or Radio Interviews**

Activists in many countries say that getting on television is nearly impossible and costly, especially when it is government-run. But where possible, appearing on radio and television can be one of the best ways to get your message across to a broad audience.

Before you agree to an interview, make sure you know<sup>10</sup>:

**Sample Letter to the Editor**

The following letter to the editor was published in the *Wall Street Journal* on July 17, 2000.

**Rain Forest Devastation Is Real**

Philip Stott's July 10 editorial-page commentary “The Rain Forest Doesn't Need Saving” creates the illusion of scientific controversy where none exists. Mr. Stott claims that because “rain forest” is an imprecise term that includes diverse ecosystems, its destruction is “hype.” This is like saying that since cancer is not one but various diseases, we need not concern ourselves with it.

Wishing to portray the issue of rain forest conservation as a fad, Mr. Stott fails to mention, much less address, the very considerable mainstream scientific consensus that exists on tropical deforestation. He does not explain, for example, that 2,000-plus climate scientists of the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concur that tropical deforestation is responsible for 20%-30% of the emissions of greenhouse gases globally; nor that in 1997 more of the earth's surface was on fire than in any time in recorded history, largely because of burning rain forests; nor that biologists overwhelmingly concur that half, and possibly as much as 90%, of the species of plants and animals on the planet are in the 6%-7% of the earth's surface that is tropical forest.

It is a self-serving distortion to allege that concern with forest destruction arises only in “the rich, self-indulgent countries of the North.” Much of the forest devastation benefits corrupt governments, corporations and oligarchs at the expense of forest peoples. This is why grass-roots leaders from the Amazon to Indonesia have risked and at times lost their lives to stop the destruction. A national public opinion poll in Brazil recently found that 88% of the public thinks that forest protection in Brazil should increase, not decrease.

Thomas E. Lovejoy  
Stephan Schwartzman

(Mr. Lovejoy is chief biodiversity adviser to the president of the World Bank and counselor to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution for Biodiversity and Environmental Issues; Mr. Schwartzman is a senior scientist of Environmental Defense.)

### Preparing for Television Interviews

Selecting speakers for live programs on television and radio is tricky. Sometimes you may choose citizens who are affected by the issue. Although they may not be as confident speaking in public as an “expert”, the human aspects of their story are often more compelling. The emotion in their story makes a powerful and lasting impression on the public and policymakers. Radio and television interviews also give constituents an opportunity to learn new skills and gain confidence.

#### Preparing for Television Interviews<sup>11</sup>

- Focus on one main message and come back to that message again and again.
  - Don't allow the interviewer to sidetrack you from your main message.
  - Don't use jargon, don't make too many technical points and keep your answers simple.
  - Be yourself. Rely on the strong points of your own personality.
  - Be enthusiastic about the subject. People will usually remember your passion for an issue more than what you say.
  - Look at the interviewer when talking with him or her. If there is an audience, look at them when appropriate.
  - Don't pretend to know the answers to all the questions.
  - Don't become defensive or angry.
  - Ask the producer what you should wear -- dress is part of the message.
  - Sit up straight and lean forward slightly.
  - Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse.
  - Be prepared for confrontational questions.
- What the program is.
  - Who the interviewer is and if possible, their views on your issue and what their interview style is (confrontational, conversational, etc.).
  - What information they have, the reasons they want the interview, and whether or not they have your press release and other relevant materials.
  - What you are likely to be asked, and how long you will be given to talk.
  - Whether it is live or pre-recorded.

Select spokespeople who will come across well -- people who are knowledgeable, articulate and appear confident. Less experienced people will need to think carefully through what they want to communicate. Facing a camera can make anyone jumpy and go off the topic. Practicing the message over and over again can help the speaker avoid getting diverted.

#### ***Radio Dialogues and Educational Soap Operas***

Public education programs that aim to change attitudes and behavior often depict a familiar human story and illustrate alternative ways of seeing and resolving common problems. Women's groups in Latin America and Africa have developed and used radio and television soap operas in this way. In some cases a human drama unfolds over several episodes of a series. Surveys indicate that audiences find them enjoyable and thought provoking. Rather than preaching, these stories show real life dilemmas and the consequences of stereotypes, prejudice, and hidden injustices.

Radio can also be used to generate citizen dialogue and debate. Call-in shows allow listeners to comment and debate indirectly with one another about issues. Many citizen education initiatives combine radio with structured face-to-face discussion to deepen the learning.

## Purpose

To practice and examine key elements of media strategies involving press releases and television talk shows.

## Process

(Time: 1½ hours)

1. Divide the participants in two groups and ask each to do a role play illustrating the use of a different media strategy (either real or invented).
  - One group focuses on the print media and writes a press release on their issue. The role play must show the process used to write the release, who and what information sources they consult, how they try to get the story or information placed with a media outlet, and the problems they encounter.
  - The second group focuses on appearing on a television show. The role play must show the steps they take to prepare, the appearance itself, the problems the show presents, and how they respond.

## Discussion

Analyze the approach each group uses. Emphasize the elements of the strategy that worked and those that did not. Identify ways that the group could have changed their strategies to be more successful. If necessary, prepare handouts of the tips on press releases, media advocacy and talk shows.

## Example for Facilitators

### Print media

In an Asian training-of-trainers workshop, the *print media* group's role play was about developing a press release on the problem of bride burning\*. The release was written by three human rights organizations in consultation with a woman journalist. The human rights groups tried to get the story placed in the media by sending it to newspapers and talking with an editor. They wanted the story on the first pages of the papers, the name of the victim omitted, and an emphasis on the demands the three human rights groups were making of the government. Ending on a realistic note, the story appeared in only one paper, on the last page and it mentioned the victim's name.

The participants suggested ways to engage the media more strategically. They said that the groups could have asked the woman journalist to investigate the case herself, or taken her to the location where the woman was burned. The group also discussed some of the challenges of writing effective press releases. Press releases appear simple to do but are not. Editors and journalists may not read beyond the first sentence, so that sentence has to be intriguing. An opening sentence stating that three human rights organizations are concerned about burnings may not be as compelling as one that gives the startling figures and reasons for bride burning.

\* In South Asia, a significant number of alleged accidents have surfaced where it is later uncovered that in-laws and husbands burn new brides with cooking fuel in order to pressure them to increase the dowry or have cause for divorce to seek another wife for more dowry.

### Television Show

The *television show* group acted out a TV talk show in which a women's rights activist discussed domestic violence and the court system. The activist wanted to illustrate the problems underlying the case of a woman beaten to death by her politically influential husband who was tried and found innocent. A legal expert on the show supported the activist's arguments. However, the moderator gave more credence to a conservative newspaper editor who dismissed the points. As a result of the show, the activist received many calls of support.

The participants raised a variety of issues. Getting on television can be difficult, especially when it is controlled by the government. Even in more open political contexts, effective communication through television requires a great deal of preparation. Effective spokespersons maneuver the discussion so that their message gets across. They present the message in a way that has impact. Facts and figures can be powerful, as can human interest stories. Visual aids are also useful.

### Radio Promoting Common Ground: Studio Ijambo in Burundi

In May 1995, Search for Common Ground and Common Ground Productions established Burundi's first independent radio studio, Studio Ijambo ('wise words' in Kirundi). This happened at a time when hate radio was promoting fear and mistrust, and had encouraged the massacre of hundreds of thousands in neighboring Rwanda.

Studio Ijambo employs Hutu and Tutsi staff to produce about 15 hours a week of news, public affairs, and cultural programming. The studio also produces a radio drama featuring a Hutu family and a Tutsi family who live next door to each other. Entitled *Umubanyi Niwe Muryango (Our Neighbors, Ourselves)*, the production describes the conflict between these neighbors and how, in the end, they reconcile their differences. A survey found that an estimated 87% of Burundians listen to the radio drama. It found that 82% of those surveyed believe that Studio Ijambo's programs help reconciliation.

Studio Ijambo reaches beyond Burundi, to an estimated 12 million people throughout the Great Lakes region in Africa. It has earned a reputation for unbiased reporting and its broadcasts are used regularly by other news organizations such as Reuters, the BBC, and Voice of America. Studio Ijambo has also helped to decentralize the media in Burundi and build local capacity for news coverage. Studio Ijambo was seen as so innovative that it became the subject of a story by the United States ABC-TV news program *Nightline*.

Source: [www.sfcg.org](http://www.sfcg.org)

## Alternative Media for Citizen Outreach and Education

With the mass media, communication is usually in one direction, thus less controllable and measurable. Without two-way dialogue, you do not know how the message is received and whether recipients will take action for or against your advocacy. In addition to helping you reach people without easy access to mass media, alternative media can also be more effective for probing complex issues and for engaging people in advocacy. Alternative media can also be simpler and less costly.

We will briefly discuss each of these alternative forms of media:

- Internet
- Newsletters
- Talking points and issue briefs
- Conferences, seminars and workshops
- Posters and bumper stickers
- Pamphlets, comic books and photonovels
- Street theater and songs

### **Internet**

Global policy advocacy has benefited from the use of international communication technology

(ICT) to engage citizens' groups in dialogue and planning for coordinated action. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines has relied on communication and education through the internet, as do the global protests on economic and trade policy. These demonstrate that virtual forms of organizing can work. Emergency action alerts to mobilize protests against violations of human rights often depend on the speed and reach of the internet. Issue-focused listserves bring together activists, practitioners, donors, and policy makers in dialogue around UN conferences and other global policy events.

Innovative internet-radio connections offer new ways for activists to communicate with each other and reach larger audiences. For example, FIRE, the Feminist International Radio Endeavor, covers a range of concerns important to women advocates. It broadcasts dialogues with activists from major international events such as the UN Conferences in Beijing and Durban. Radio journalists at these meetings record FIRE's programs and send them through the internet for rebroadcast locally in their countries. (See [www.fire.or.cr](http://www.fire.or.cr))

### **Newsletters**

Brief updates in print or via the internet are

### The Internet as a Tool for Democratization?

Many people are enthusiastic about the potential of the Internet to democratize the policymaking process, and provide citizens with information and an avenue to make their voices heard. However, potential is one thing and reality another. In *Internet . . . Why and What For?* Ricardo Gomez of the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada and Juliana Martinez of Costa Rica's Fundacion Acceso, looked at the experiences of about 50 IDRC-funded information and communication technology (ICT) projects in Costa Rica since 1997. Between them these projects were worth more than CA\$4 million. Gomez and Martinez conclude that "... Connecting the masses is not by itself enough to foster democracy... a social vision of the Internet in Latin America has to involve three things: *equitable access*, which involves basic training and reasonably priced connections; an *ability to make meaningful use of ICTs*; and *social appropriation* - ICTs should help people solve concrete problems and transform current realities. Otherwise, ICTs will just reproduce and increase the social divide..." [emphasis added]

[www.idrc.ca/reports](http://www.idrc.ca/reports)

used by NGOs and citizens' groups to inform allies and other stakeholders about issues. Some newsletters ask for reader feedback to encourage an exchange of ideas and to facilitate consultative planning.

### ***Talking Points and Issue Briefs***

These are useful for educating and lobbying decisionmakers. Issue Briefs are 3-10 pages long and highlight crucial facts and analysis. They assist the media and policymakers to understand the issue and your proposed solution with minimal energy on their part. Talking points are generally shorter than briefs and are used to guide advocates in making their case in 3-5 minutes to a decisionmaker. We discuss this in more detail in Chapter 15.

### ***Conferences, Seminars & Workshops***

The audiences for conferences, seminars and workshops can vary in size, but these fora can be an effective way to educate specific groups of people. Many NGOs use community-based workshops for citizen training and education as part of their legal rights and policy advocacy efforts. Conferences with high level speakers or compelling topics can also draw mass media attention. In many countries, a gathering of international visitors will attract media coverage. When the workshop involves people who are not used to speaking to the press, the workshop program can include time for preparing and rehearsing media statements.

### ***Posters and Bumper Stickers***

One of the cheaper ways to get a simple message out to the general public is with posters and bumper stickers. With a clever slogan, a captivating illustration, and basic information, posters can reach more people than most other media. This is particularly true where there is a low level of literacy and poor access to the mass media. The choice of image and words can be more difficult than in other media tools because a poster must reach

many different people and be self-explanatory. A good poster will captivate, energize, provoke and educate. Bumper stickers are useful in countries where there are many individually owned cars. In some countries, caps and T-shirts can also spread the word. The use of these different channels depends on your budget and your audience.

### ***Pamphlets, Comic Books and Photonovels***

Pamphlets and other simple materials can help with follow-up to a one-off event. They can be cheap and, where information is scarce, will likely attract an audience, depending on literacy levels. The challenge is making the content and design educate and entertain. Many NGOs put out pamphlets to educate communities about different topics. In some cases these pamphlets are not read, either due to low literacy levels or the complexity of the language. Comic books can be more effective reaching certain audiences as can photonovels, which are short stories depicted through photos with simple text, similar to comic books. In Chapter 4, we discuss how to design educational materials in more detail.

### ***Street Theater and Songs***

Street theater and songs can reach a wide range of people. Again, they are particularly useful in situations where the mass media reaches only a fraction of the population. The combination of entertainment, real life dramas, thought-provoking information and interaction engages people in a way that no other media can. Street theater and songs work for both literate and non-literate populations. By depicting real life situations and using humor, drama and songs, they can encourage public discussion of controversial cultural and religious issues without appearing to directly criticize values and beliefs. In addition, street theater and song can be tailored to local needs and available resources. (See case from Cambodia on the next page)



### Example: Public Education through Street Theater in Cambodia

The Project Against Domestic Violence (PADV), the Women's Media Center (WMC), and the traditional *ayai Prom Mahn* street theater troupe – headed by one of Cambodia's most popular stage personalities – developed a play that was performed nightly in 36 remote communities in five provinces to raise awareness about family violence. The play attracted as many as 30,000 people in some districts.



The drama compares the experiences of two neighboring families. One family enjoys a high quality of life, which is attributable to the loving relationship between the husband and wife. The other family suffers from repeated incidents of domestic violence. Prior to each performance, a public awareness team from PADV and Women's Affairs contacted local NGOs and officials for support. Before the show, a team member spoke about domestic violence and explained where families could find local help. Each play informed the public of the law and the local services available to victims, including interventions from the police and community officials, legal aid, and domestic violence shelters. In the play the heroine takes action to end the abuse by turning to the services available in the area where the play is performed.

Through the story, the performance:

- showed that domestic violence is a public problem, not a family matter, by highlighting its harmful effect on women, children, families, and society;
- raised awareness that domestic violence is a human rights violation and against the law;
- encouraged community intervention in cases of domestic violence; and
- informed the public of the available local services and legal remedies.

After the performances, local organizations reported an increase in the number of women seeking assistance. The project also stimulated the formation of broad coalitions of human rights and women's organizations to advance women's rights. PADV and WMC also gained the support of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which ensured the security of the performing troupe and the cooperation of local authorities. Through press releases, PADV gained media coverage for performances, expanding the reach of the performance.



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**NOTES**

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Advocacy Learning Initiative, Vol II, page 90, draft 11/99.

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Advocacy Learning Initiative, Vol II, page 91, draft 11/99.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Advocacy Learning Initiative, Vol II, page 93, draft 11/99.

<sup>3</sup> International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), Indonesia poll, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> The list is adapted from the Advocacy Learning Initiative, VolIII, Oxfam and the Advocacy Institute, Draft copy, 11/99. (To be published by Kumarian Press.) p. 99.

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Advocacy Learning Initiative, *ibid.*, p 105.

<sup>7</sup> In "Media-Advocacy Relationships: The View from the Other Side, by Amanda Rawls in *CHANGE EX-CHANGE*, Part 1, Issue #6, "Common Threads", October 1999, the Advocacy Institute, Washington, DC.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.* p. 18.

<sup>9</sup> *TB Advocacy: A Practical Guide*. Global Tuberculosis Programme, World Health Organization. Copyright 1998 by the WHO.

<sup>10</sup> *TB Advocacy: A Practical Guide*. *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Advocacy Guide*. International Planned Parenthood Federation, Western Hemisphere Region. IPPF/WHR Regional Council. September 30 - October 1, 1994. Aruba.