

Advocacy Communications

A Handbook for ANEW Members

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CONTENTS

	PAGE NUMBER
INTRODUCTION	4
SECTION ONE: Introduction to Advocacy Communications <i>What is advocacy; What are Communications for Advocacy?; Why Communications are Important for Advocacy; Types of Advocacy Communications; Characteristics of Different Media in Relation to Advocacy; Are You Ready to Use the Media to Achieve Your Advocacy Aims?</i>	5
SECTION TWO: Building a Strategy for Advocacy Communications <i>Why Have A Communications Strategy For Advocacy?; Best Practicefor Developing Advocacy Communications Strategies; Key Elements In an Advocacy Communications Strategy?; Steps in Developing an Advocacy Strategy; Monitoring and Indicators</i>	10
SECTION THREE: Audiences and Messages <i>What is a Target Audience?; Why Audience Targeting is Necessary; Advocacy Audiences; Choosing the Right Communication Vehicle for Each Audience; What is a Message?; Why Messages are Important; Adapting your Basic Message for Different Audiences; Testing Your Messages</i>	19
SECTION FOUR: Stories and Headlines <i>Advocacy and Mass Communications; Why Communicate Advocacy Messages via the Mass Media?; Why Stories are Important; What Makes a Good Media Story?; More Tips for Making Stories Interesting; The Importance of a Good Headline; Some Basic Rules for Writing Headlines; Creating Headlines that Make an Impression</i>	27
SECTION FIVE: Press Releases <i>What is a Press Release?: Is a Press Release the Right Tool for your Story?; Press Release Basics; Circulating your Press Releases;</i>	37
SECTION SIX: Press Conferences <i>Is a Press Conference the Right Tool to Use?; Why Hold a Press Conference; Nine Steps for Planning an Advocacy Press Conference; Tips for the Day of the Press Conference</i>	45
SECTION SEVEN: Building Relationships with the Media <i>Different Types of Media; Getting to Know Your Local Media; Building Relationships with the Media; How To Tell Journalists About Your Story</i>	51
SECTION EIGHT: Spokespersons, Media Interviews and Public Speaking <i>The Importance of Having Good Spokespersons; Why Interviews are Important; Before Agreeing to an Interview; Preparing for an Interview; Giving a Great Interview; Advice for all Broadcast Interviews; Preparation - the Key to Successful Public Speaking; Tips for Delivering Your Speech; Dealing with Questions</i>	55
BIBLIOGRAPHY	64
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	

INTRODUCTION

The African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation (ANEW) is an autonomous Africa-wide platform which aims to ensure that the diverse voices of African civil society organizations (CSOs) are represented and heard in the development and implementation of water and sanitation policies and plans. ANEW promotes dialogues, learning and cooperation on water and sanitation issues in Africa and provides a platform for sharing and coordinating the activities of its members.

This resource book has been developed by ANEW as part of its capacity building initiative for ANEW members. It is intended to support their engagement in water and sanitation decision-making processes at national, regional and international levels. The Handbook complements our other resources and training manual on advocacy for CSOs in the WASH sector and the Policy Advocacy Handbook -both publications are available through ANEW.

This resource book provides some useful tools, methods and case studies to support learning and strengthen CSOs skills in using communications to support their influencing agendas in relation to policies, programmes and practice. We hope you will find it useful.

ANEW is very grateful to its partners European Union Water Facility, WaterAid, Freshwater Action and the Department of Water Affairs of the Government of South Africa for their financial support that has enabled ANEW to publish this resource book and conduct training.

SECTION ONE: COMMUNICATIONS FOR ADVOCACY - AN INTRODUCTION

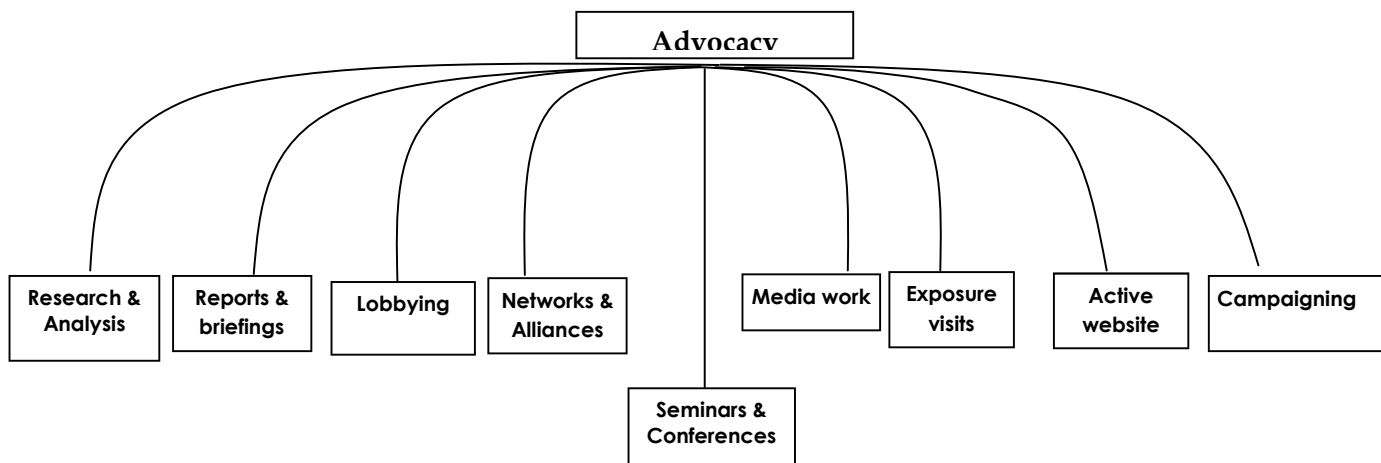
“The ability to communicate is essential to the success of any undertaking and an important factor in the achievement of its objectives. We have entered an age of knowledge, and the key to accessing and harnessing that knowledge lies in the ability to communicate.”
(Research Matters¹)

“While policy research and formulation are given their due as tough, demanding areas of an organization’s work plan, communications is seen as ‘soft’. While program development and practice are seen as requiring expertise and the thoughtful consideration of best practices, communications is an ‘anyone can do it if you have to’ task. It is time to retire this thinking. Doing communications strategically requires the same investment of intellect and study that these other areas of nonprofit practice have been accorded.”
(The Framework Institute²)

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is an umbrella term that describes a method, approach and series of tools used to change policies and practices, reform institutions, alter power relations, change attitudes and behaviours and give project work a broader impact (see below).

Advocacy: an umbrella term



What are Communications for Advocacy?

¹ The RM Knowledge Translation Toolkit: A Resource for Researchers, Research Matters Programme, IDRC, http://www.idrc.ca/uploads/user-S/1226604865112265957811Chapter_6%5B1%5D.pdf see also www.research-matters.net

² The Framework Institute, cited in Hershey C. 2005. Communications Toolkit: A guide to navigating communications for the nonprofit world, www.causecommunications.org/clients-cause.php

Of course, many of the elements required for good advocacy communications are the same as those that should be used in all communications work. But communications for advocacy are not the same as, for example, more general communications like newsletters, or fundraising materials, or general information about your work.

What defines advocacy communications is that they focus tightly on **influencing specific audiences and using specific messages in order to deliver changes in policy or practice.**

In general, successful advocacy communications require clear objectives, knowledge of the intended audience, language appropriate for that audience and content that is short, specific and to the point. Ideally, these communications should be supported by an advocacy communications strategy which should include a section on how different pieces of communications work will be monitored and evaluated.

Essential Elements for Effective Communication

A communications strategy³ that includes:

- a clear vision
- knowing your audience
- realistic objectives
- monitoring and evaluation indicators
- a well thought through programme for developing:
 - key messages
 - policy recommendations and proposals
 - case studies, if possible, with strong photography
 - a calendar of key events, dates and communication opportunities

Communication messages and ideas that will

- persuade and motivate
- create awareness
- create a sense of injustice in order to mobilise support
- gain the endorsement / interest of the media
- have impact and stand out from other “communications clutter”

Why Communications are Important for Advocacy

Advocacy is all about influencing and persuading individuals and institutions to change and this will not happen unless you are able to communicate your ideas and proposals effectively.

Types of Advocacy Communications

The different types of advocacy communications include, for example:

- i. Formal presentations of research and recommendations*
- ii. Policy reports*
- iii. Lobbying decision-makers*

³ See Section Two for the steps in developing a communications strategy for advocacy

- iv. Using the media to get your messages across to policymakers or the public
- v. Lobby briefs
- vi. Managing a dynamic website

Definition: Campaigning⁴

Campaigning uses a series of activities designed to influence the policies and practices of public or private bodies (e.g. governments, institutions, companies) through mobilising public concern.

Campaigns seek to demonstrate to decision-makers that members of the public, voters and consumers are concerned about the issue. Campaigning also educates the public about your issue and motivates them to act in support of change.

- vii. Campaigning** to raise awareness and put pressure on decision-makers including:
 - leaflets and fact sheets
 - posters and banners
 - petitions - written or email
 - letter and postcard writing to decision-makers
 - street theatre
 - SMS/text messages
 - photographs
 - T shirts, badges, wristbands, hats, etc.
 - DVDs or CDs outlining your issues

* A guide to the first two items on the list, formal presentations and policy reports, is provided in a companion handbook from ANEW on policy advocacy.⁵ Information about lobbying can be found in the ANEW advocacy training manual.⁶

** A short ANEW guide to campaigning methods will be produced in September 2010

⁴ Source: Cox, J., (VSO), Participatory Advocacy: a toolkit for VSO staff, volunteers and partners, VSO, November 2009

⁵ Coulby, H., Policy Advocacy: A Handbook for ANEW Members, ANEW Nairobi, June 2010

⁶ Coulby, H., with O'Connell, M., and Bouchane, K, Advocacy and Policy Influencing: an ANEW training manual, ANEW Nairobi, September 2009 http://www.anewafrika.net/Files/advocacy_training_manual_part1.pdf
http://www.anewafrika.net/Files/advocacy_training_manual.pdf

FIGURE 1.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF DIFFERENT MEDIA IN RELATION TO ADVOCACY⁷

	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES	WHAT'S WANTED	WHAT'S NOT WANTED
TV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ quick ▪ combines visuals and sound ▪ large reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ expensive and not accessible by all ▪ work to tight deadlines ▪ work to tight guidelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ availability for interviews ▪ visuals ▪ style ▪ controversy ▪ local interest ▪ international interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ technical issues ▪ events that have already happened ▪ “man gives speech” stories
Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ portable ▪ capable of rapid reaction news broadcast immediately ▪ widely accessible and affordable ▪ local languages ▪ message can be repeated many times by presenters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ sound only ▪ stories usually very short ▪ works to very tight deadlines ▪ FM stations cover small areas so costs can be high 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ availability for interviews ▪ style ▪ controversy ▪ local interest ▪ strong soundbites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ visuals ▪ dry long-winded interviews ▪ complex data and statistics ▪ events that have already happened
Print	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reaches a broader audience ▪ accessible and affordable ▪ in-depth coverage with more details ▪ dedicates more time to a story ▪ willing to follow a story over time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ not as immediate as visuals or TV or radio ▪ no sound or moving pictures ▪ stories decided morning before publication, deadlines afternoon before publication afternoon ▪ readers choose the articles they wish to read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ a strong angle ▪ local interest ▪ human stories ▪ background information ▪ quotations ▪ facts & figures ▪ photographs ▪ colours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ too many technical terms ▪ no local or national angle ▪ stories already reported on TV or radio

Are You Ready to Use the Media to Achieve your Advocacy Aims?

Hovland⁸ has written a useful checklist for assessing whether you are ready for media work to support your advocacy (see Box 1.1. below |). Do not worry if you cannot answer yes to all the questions. This handbook aims to help you get there.

⁷Source: adapted from *Pact Tanzania, Media Guide, Advocacy Expert Series, Pact Tanzania, undated*

⁸ Hovland, I., *Successful Communication A Toolkit for Researchers and Civil Society Organisations, (RAPID), Overseas Development Institute, 2005*

MEDIA READY CHECKLIST⁹

Organisational Assessment:

- Does your organisation have a communications strategy?
- Has this strategy been discussed and developed with key stakeholders as part of your overall influencing plan?
- Is the strategy revised on a regular basis as your advocacy work evolves?

Organisational Infrastructure:

- Does your advocacy budget have a communications component?
- Do you have a staff person who has responsibility for carrying out the communications strategy and coordinating media efforts in your organisation?
- Has your organisation identified its primary, formal spokespersons?
- Do your spokespersons need media training and preparation?
- Is the chain of decision-making for media statements clearly designated and understood by everyone within the organisation?

Media Systems:

- Are your media lists up-to-date, complete with names of editors, reporters or producers for all media outlets you plan to use?
- Do you know deadlines, work hours and preferred communications modes for key people who work on your public policy issues?
- Do your lists distinguish types of coverage: news, feature, editorial, columns, calendars?
- Do you have a calendar of significant events related to your advocacy issue?
- Do you have a clipping file and impact log for all relevant media coverage and for a complete record of coverage of your organisation's work?
- Are you in regular contact with the editor and reporters you have designated as key contacts?

Messages, Stories and Other Materials

- Do you have accurate, concise, interesting information about your organisation - its mission, history, programmes and services?
- Have you shaped a clear message and talking points for the advocacy issue you plan to raise?
- Have you held introductory meetings with members of the press who are likely to cover your organisation and issues?
- Have you got a plan for 'rapid response' to an opportunity or a crisis that presents itself with little warning?

⁹ Adapted from: ⁹ Hovland, I., 2005, *op cit*

SECTION TWO: BUILDING A STRATEGY FOR ADVOCACY COMMUNICATIONS

“The single biggest reason that communications campaigns fail is that they don’t begin with a clearly stated definition of the desired end result. Each successful communications campaign starts by focusing on outcomes.” (Paul Baeyaert)¹⁰

“Communication does not just happen. It must be organized, developed, and built. The first step in the process is to define a communications strategy.” (Research Matters Programme, IDRC)¹¹

Why Have a Communications Strategy for Advocacy?

Having a strategy and developing creative advocacy communications can help you to actively promote your issues and set the agenda rather than simply reacting to the external environment. In addition, a strategy will encourage efficient use of resources and time.

In order to develop your strategy you will need to answer the following questions

- Why do you want to communicate?
- What do you expect to achieve as a result?
- Who do you need to communicate with (audiences)?
- What do you want to say to them?
- Which types of communication vehicles are most appropriate?
- What resources do you have and/or need?
- Who will do what, and when?
- How will your work be monitored and evaluated?

Developing a good advocacy communications strategy will help you plan and manage your work properly and ensure that you target the people who have the power to make the changes you want to see. .

Your strategy will create a shared understanding of what you are trying to achieve within your organisation and provide a foundation for consistent communications across all units. It should also improve internal awareness of your issue and allow non-advocacy and communication staff to be more involved in advocacy.

Tip: KISS - Keep It Short and Simple!

Like good communications themselves, a good strategy should be short and easily understood. Resist the urge to include everything, only include what is essential. In general, the bigger your strategy, the less likely anyone will read it.

Examples of advocacy and communications strategies available online that illustrate different approaches include: UN Cambodia’s Communications & Advocacy Strategy;¹² ActionAid’s Telling

¹⁰ Baeyaert, P., “Developing an External Communications Strategy”. Presentation at Communicating European Research, November 14, 2005

¹¹ Research Matters Programme, *The RM Knowledge Translation Toolkit: A Resource for Researchers*, IDRC

The True African Story, Draft Africa Region Communication Strategy;¹³ and NEPAD Advocacy Strategy Document, Advocacy and Communications Campaign for the New Partnership for Africa's Development.¹⁴

When to Prepare your Advocacy Communications Strategy

Your communications strategy should be developed after the basic elements of the overall advocacy strategy are in place including:

- clear advocacy objectives formed through a thorough analysis of the policy or practice changes needed
- a good understanding of the policy context and policy processes¹⁵
- an analysis of who has power over decisions, and who can influence the decision-makers.¹⁶

Best Practice for Developing Advocacy Communications Strategies

Defining the communications strategy is a task that is best carried out as a group. In addition to pooling expertise, a group approach has the even more important advantage of building on interactions between the participants. (Research Matters Programme, IDRC)¹⁷

There are many advantages in making the development of an advocacy communications strategy a shared activity. Bringing together many different types of staff (or different network members) with different knowledge, skills and perspectives will not only strengthen your strategy but simultaneously build capacity and commitment to the advocacy agenda.

Your strategy can be developed in several stages:

- i. a core team of advocacy and communications staff do some initial work
- ii. workshops are held with a wider range of staff/network members to identify gaps and questions, elaborate the basic outline and contribute ideas regarding audiences, messages and the appropriate communications vehicles
- iii. consultations with partners and network allies take place if appropriate
- iv. the core team prepares a final draft for approval by the head of the organisation and the Trustees

Key Elements in an Advocacy Communications Strategy?¹⁸

¹² Communications Group (UNCG), on behalf of the United Nations Country Team in Cambodia (UNCT), UN COMMUNICATIONS & ADVOCACY STRATEGY 2008 – 2010

¹³ ActionAid International, *Telling the True African Story, Draft Africa Region Communication Strategy 2005-2007*

¹⁴ NEPAD advocacy strategy document, *Advocacy and Communications Campaign for the New Partnership for Africa's Development*

¹⁵ The ANEW handbook on policy advocacy provides a guide to how to do this: Coulby, H., *Policy Advocacy: A Handbook for ANEW Members*, ANEW, 2010, forthcoming

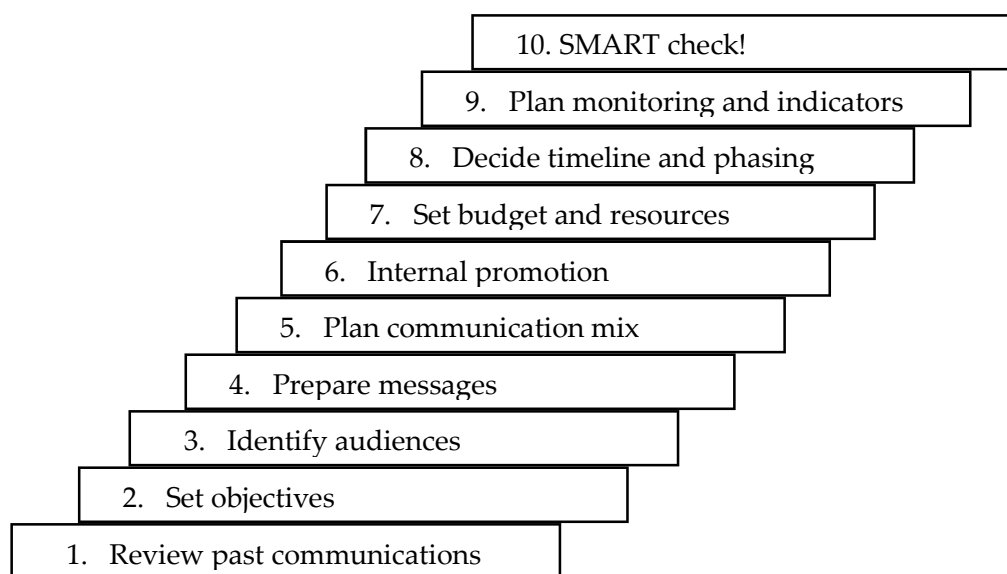
¹⁶ For a simple guide to developing an advocacy strategy, including power mapping, see: Coulby, H., O'Connell, M., Bouchane, K., *Advocacy and Policy Influencing – A Training Manual for ANEW Members*, ANEW, September 2009

¹⁷ Research Matters Programme, *op cit*

¹⁸ Adapted from WWF's International Communications Department, *Programme/Project Communications Strategy Template*; McBean, B., *What matters in a communication strategy in Brief No.11AB, 2005, ECDPM; The Spin Project, Strategic*

The ten key steps involved in developing a communications strategy to support advocacy are outlined in Figure 3.1 below:

Figure 3.1: STEPS IN DEVELOPING AN ADVOCACY COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY



Step One: Review past advocacy communications

Carry out a brief review of past communications work. What types of communications have been produced and for what purpose? What were the worst communications and what went wrong with these? What were the best communications? What were the key features that made them a success? What lessons have been learned? Has anything changed in the external environment that would prompt a change in the type or style of future communications?

Step Two - Set objectives for communications on this advocacy initiative

Setting clear objectives is the key to success. Your advocacy communications consume scarce time and resources and cannot be treated as an end in themselves. Simply producing communications materials is not enough. They must have an impact and play a constructive role in supporting the achievement of the specific objectives for advocacy. *“Be brutally honest: is there a purpose to what you want to say?”*¹⁹

Start by asking if advocacy communications are necessary? What will they contribute to the overall advocacy strategy? Being clear about what you expect communications to achieve is the basis for setting objectives.

Communications Planning, The Spin Project, 2005; Research Matters Programme, op cit; The Media Trust, How to Write a Communications Strategy; and Baeyaert, P., op cit

¹⁹ *WaterAid, Getting the Message Across, WaterAid 2009*

Remember that when setting objectives it is important to be realistic in relation to the budget, staff resources and timeframe for the work as well as making sure that the objectives are measurable.

EXAMPLE: WASH ETHIOPIA MOVEMENT

Advocacy Communication Objectives for Washington High Level Meeting, May 2010

Three objectives were agreed: three tasks to take forward by the member journalists and WASH Ethiopia Movement:

- do an article for the newspapers and/or a report for TV and radio on the high level meeting just before it happens (for TV and Radio, herald and Addis Zemen, the daily monitor) or immediately after(it happens for those newspapers who come out in the weekends)
- hold a press conference together with representatives of the higher government officials who attended the meeting
- attend the monthly WASH Ethiopia learning and sharing meeting to give updates on the high level meeting to attendees

Step Three - Identify audiences

Section Three includes detailed information about identifying and defining your audiences. To be effective in advocacy communications work, it is important to be as specific as possible about the audiences that you need to target.

Step Four - Prepare messages

Section Three explains what messages are and how to develop them. A message should capture the essential elements of what you are trying to achieve, why it needs to change, how you plan to change it, and what you want the audience to do about it. It must be short. And its language must be easily understood by your target audience(s).

Step Five - Plan the communications mix

Consider the best tools and vehicles for getting your messages across to your target audiences.

First, consider the kinds of communications tools or products that would be attractive to each of your separate target audiences. Ideally, there should be different products for different audiences but this may stretch resources too far. So it may be necessary to be realistic about what is possible with limited financial and human resources and either prioritise or find vehicles that will reach multiple audiences.

EXAMPLE: DIFFERENT PRODUCTS FOR DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

- a single page of bullet points for attracting the attention of busy decision-makers
- a light-hearted, colour, A5 leaflet with bullet points and pictures for younger stakeholders
- a three page executive summary or policy brief with more details for interested stakeholders and senior officials
- a printed postcard with key messages addressed to the decision-maker with space for supporters to add their own comments before sending
- a twenty page policy report capturing your key research findings, analysis and policy

- recommendations for officials, administrators, practitioners and sister organisations
- a computer game highlighting your issue for teenagers
- a one page press release on an issue-significant day to attract the attention of news media

Next, think about the best channels or vehicles for disseminating the tools/products. Again, this depends on the message you wish to get across, the audience you are trying to reach and what you want to achieve.

EXAMPLE: SOME EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS/VEHICLES			
PRESS AND PRINT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Newspapers ▪ Weekly and monthly magazines ▪ Newsletters (your own and other actors') ▪ Posters ▪ Advertisements 	ONLINE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Website ▪ Blogs ▪ Viral email ▪ SMS/Texts/Twitter ▪ Facebook, YouTube, etc. 	RADIO AND TELEVISION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ News programmes ▪ Documentaries ▪ Live and recorded chat shows ▪ Features programmes ▪ Your own videos 	DIRECT SPEECH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Lobbies ▪ Presentations ▪ Seminars and workshops ▪ Conferences (your own and other actors')

Make a list of the top 20 channels that would have the most impact in terms of your advocacy objectives and rank them according to their relative importance. If possible, name of the specific journalist or other “gatekeeper” who you need to persuade to give you the space you want.

- TIP: MAKE A DISSEMINATION PLAN FOR PRINTED MATERIALS BEFORE YOU PRINT THEM!**
- Have a dissemination strategy and make an informed estimate of the total numbers of individual printed documents that will be required. Documentation gathering dust in a storeroom serves no useful purpose
 - Different types of dissemination include:
 - post or email to audiences drawn from your organisation’s mailing lists. It is essential to keep these lists up-to-date and add new names of important stakeholders as soon as you become aware of them. While packaging and postage costs can be high, many people prefer to receive a hard copy, sometimes in addition to a soft copy
 - Hand out materials at conferences and meetings
 - Offer materials to visitors to your office
 - Ask other organisations if you can insert materials into their publications, conference packs or similar items

Step Six - Internal promotion

Do not forget to keep everyone in your organisation informed about your advocacy communication plans and activities. If external communications are successful, staff are likely to be asked about the advocacy issue and plans for taking it forward by their families, friends and outside colleagues. If they are properly briefed they will be able to act as informal ambassadors.

It is especially important to keep the head of your organisation, directors and trustees informed. They will not appreciate learning about your advocacy initiative by hearing it on the news!

Internal promotion can be done through:

- involving staff in the development of advocacy and communications strategies
- presentations
- face-to-face meetings with key internal stakeholders
- conference calls with staff in other locations
- email updates (this is the least reliable form of communication as many staff don't read all their emails)

TIP: MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

“The key rules to observe are always to deliver what you promise and never over promise. Use your resources and timescales to set legitimate levels of expectations and outline the case for more dedicated resources.” The Media Trust

Step Seven - Set budget and staff resources

Determine how much money will be available across financial years when the strategy will be implemented. Assess the communications skills of existing staff and the time they will be able to contribute to your activities. Consider the communications hardware you have - computers, telephone, mobile or internet connections, photocopying or printing facilities, etc. - and whether you need to buy, hire or borrow more. If necessary, consider fundraising to enable specific activities to take place, or additional staff to be hired.

Step Eight - Decide timeline and phasing of activities

Plan and schedule different activities. Explore possible “hooks” that would make your issue and messages interesting to journalists. Are there any special events or opportunities to promote your advocacy objectives? These might include international conferences, legislative processes, government announcements or International Days, etc.

TIP: “ DON'T PLAY ALL YOUR CARDS AT ONCE!

- Phase your activities & map out who you will approach first (influencer cascade)

- Plan for a regular flow of information rather than one-shot announcements
- Build in “highlight activities” with high impact
- Be proactive and establish a dialogue”²⁰

Make a list of each key communications product or event. For example a conference, or the launch of a policy report, that will require communications activities, and note the what you would need, when you would need it and the time it would take to prepare it. Then mark these on your calendar. If your calendar becomes too full, prioritise! After priorities have been set, decide how activities should be phased over the period of the strategy.

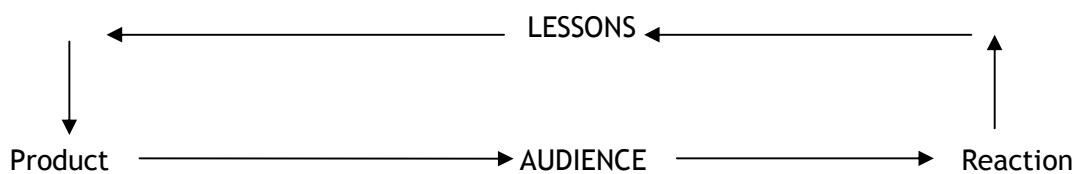
TIP: DON’T FILL UP ALL YOUR TIME

It is unwise to fill all your available time or use all your available funds on planned activities. Communications materials may take longer to prepare than anticipated. But, more importantly, events always arise that could not be anticipated but if you can respond rapidly, provide excellent opportunities to promote your messages.

Step Nine - Plan monitoring and indicators

Monitoring the progress and impact of your advocacy communications is necessary in order to know whether you are meeting your objectives or not. It enables you to know which types of communications are successful and which need adjustment to make them more effective. Furthermore, continuous monitoring is an essential foundation for an overall evaluation of your strategy.

Figure 3.1 The Communications Feedback Loop²¹



One good way is to plan how you will monitor

itor communications is to have an impact log.

IMPACT LOGS

The Research Matters Programme describe an impact log as follows:

“This is an informal record compiled in-house that gauges how our communications have been

²⁰ Baeyaert, P., op cit

²¹ Source: adapted from *Principia Cybernetica Web “Feedback”* cited in *Research Matters Programme, op cit*

received.

The log can comprise stakeholder feedback (e.g. an email extolling the virtues of our policy brief); a list of media references indicating the reach of our communications products (e.g. direct reference or citation in newspaper articles, Internet, TV); speeches citing our work, and so on. This is qualitative and non-systematic, but at the same time it can be an excellent way to gauge where we are, what we're doing well, and what we might do better."²²

Sometimes the “log” can just be a big box, and the feedback can be notes made on scraps of paper. These notes must be dated. The point is to make recording feedback as easy and quick as possible.

This is a simple and cheap way to record which products receive the most positive attention. Ideally, the log should be accompanied by a file containing copies of any press articles and videos or recordings of television or radio coverage.

From time to time it is useful to ask staff, colleagues from sister organisations and relatives or friends with no knowledge of your issue, for their opinions about specific messages, products or other advocacy communications activities. If it helps people to be more open, these comments can be made anonymously. Once read, the comments should be put in the Impact Log.

Alongside the log, it is necessary to create some performance indicators by which you can judge your success. These can relate to outputs, for example, how many products have been created and disseminated, how many articles appeared in newspapers, etc. Or they can focus on outcomes, for example, has the issue been taken up in parliament, are decision-makers or journalists using your language when speaking on the issue, have there been changes to draft policy, etc.

When you come to finally evaluate the overall advocacy communications strategy, some of the questions that you should ask include:

- Did we use the right products or tools to reach the right audiences?
- Did our audiences understand our messages? How do we know this?
- Did we build a strong base of external support for our advocacy objectives?
- Were we able to establish or build good relationships with the media?
- Was the budget and staff time adequate?
- What effect did our advocacy communications work have on our organisation?
- Has the way our organisation is perceived by outsiders changed?
- What external changes happened as a result of our advocacy communications?
- Did we achieve our advocacy objectives?

Step 10 - The SMART Check!

The last step in preparing your advocacy communications strategy is to double check that the objectives, expected outputs and outcomes from your advocacy communications are SMART - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timebound.

²² *Research Matters Programme, op cit*

Finally, don't forget to celebrate all your hard work!

TIP: BRANDING

If all your organisation's communication materials have the same overall design style, use the same colours, fonts, logos, etc., that is have a brand, it will be easier to gain the recognition of your target audiences. The style of your communications should reflect the image of the organisation that you wish to present. For example, young and fashionable; knowledgeable and serious; radical and activist; etc.

SECTION THREE: AUDIENCES AND MESSAGES

Successful advocacy communications result from identifying a specific target audience you want to address and developing short and simple messages that will inform and motivate them.

What is a Target Audience?

A target audience is a group of people you need to influence or persuade in order to achieve your advocacy objectives. Usually, the target audience will be defined through undertaking an analysis of who can make decisions regarding your issue, and who can influence the decision-makers. Analysis exercises should take place when the advocacy strategy is developed but it is never too late to make a powermap or policy context map.²³ Your powermap should be developed by the whole team involved in the advocacy initiative to ensure there is agreement regarding which stakeholders are most important.

An audience is a group whose members share, for example, the same age or gender, level of education or income, or live in a particular location or are employed in a specific type of work, or share the same level of policymaking power. Depending on your issue, other characteristics might be important including, for example, political affiliations, health status, etc.

Why Audience Targeting is Necessary

“When I get ready to talk to people, I spend two thirds of the time thinking what they want to hear and one third thinking about what I want to say.” (Abraham Lincoln)

For sophisticated communication there is no such thing as the general public. Common sense tells us that the language and style of communication that is likely to attract older male academics or civil servants is unlikely to be persuasive for teenage sports fans or fashion fanatics.

Audiences respond better to messages that are tailored to suit them. Being specific about target audiences allows you to create communications products in styles and language that will engage them and to identify and focus on the types of media they use.

EXAMPLE: ADVERTISEMENTS TARGETTING SPECIFIC AUDIENCES

If you look closely at advertisements and other public relations materials you will see that they are targeted at a specific segment of the general public.

A good demonstration of how commercial targeting works in relation to pictures can be found at: <http://www.slideshare.net/meggarven/target-audience-characteristics-329824>

Note that in providing a link to a website site this handbook has made an assumption about its

²³ For examples of powermap and how to develop them see: Coulby, H., O’Connell, M., Bouchane, K., Advocacy and Policy Influencing - A Training Manual for ANEW Members, ANEW, September 2009 http://www.anewafrika.net/Files/advocacy_training_manual_part1.pdf http://www.anewafrika.net/Files/advocacy_training_manual.pdf. For policy context maps see: ; Coulby, H., Policy Advocacy - a handbook for ANEW members, ANEW, May 2010, forthcoming

audience: that whatever its age, gender or location, one common characteristic is that its members have access to the internet!

Advocacy Audiences

The first thing that should be considered is whether your advocacy audience is a single group. Does it share the same characteristics? Can it be reached through the same set of channels? Will it respond to the same set of messages? If this is the case then there is no need to segment it into groups and develop different communication products.

For example, if civil servants and their ministers are the only people to be influenced and they are all male university graduates between 40 - 60 years old whose preference for sources of media information are the same, segmenting them will not be necessary.

DEFINITION: AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION

The process of dividing the general public into smaller groups who share similar characteristics, communication-related needs and preferences, selected in accordance with your advocacy objectives.

In most cases, however, given the number of different stakeholders involved in an issue, communications will be more effective if the audience is segmented. Different audiences read different publications, watch different television programmes and have different motivations so to reach them you will need to use different types of media.

CREATING A PERSONA

"This exercise will help you get inside the mind of the audience by painting a portrait of one person in that audience. Think of the characteristics of the key audience, and begin to paint a mental picture of a person that best represents that audience."²⁴

Sometimes creating a persona requires a little research. This could be as simple as having regular interactions with members of your chosen audience and listening to their views. Or meeting informally with one or two people to get to know them better. Once this is done, or if you already know a lot about the audience, then you can begin to create a persona - a mental picture of an imaginary individual who represents the audience.

Describe the person's age, gender, education, occupation, marital and family status and religious affiliation. Where do they live, what do they do to relax? Whether they watch television or listen to the radio, prefer to read newspapers or magazines. What sort of music and sports they like. Do they go to the cinema? What other hobbies do they have? Describe their typical behaviour and attitudes

²⁴ Johns Hopkins University Center for Communications Programs (JHU-CCP), *A Field Guide to Designing a Health Communication Strategy*, 2009 <http://www.jhucpp.org/pubs/fg/02/04-chapter2.pdf>

It helps to give the imaginary person a name and find a photograph in a paper or magazine that captures how they might look.

Think about how aware they might be about your issue. What might be their motivations to, or barriers against, hearing and accepting the message you want to get across. What might make them change their minds?

The purpose of creating a persona is to get inside the head of your audience, to understand better how they can be reached, what might attract them to your cause, and what messages and materials will generate a positive response from them.

Ideally, you should try to talk to one or two people from your audience and check whether your perceptions are correct. This can be done formally through an interview, or informally, for example by having a chat over a cup of coffee. It is useful to do this as your assumptions about some groups may be inaccurate. The more thoroughly you understand your target audience(s), the higher the probability of communications success. Things to ask them include:²⁵

- What do they read/watch/listen to?
- What works/doesn't work in terms of motivating them?
- What they would like to see more of in terms of communications
- What information do they need about the issue?
- How often would they like to you to communicate with them?²⁶

TIP: Designing written materials for different audiences

- The reading skills and habits of different audiences should influence the design of materials
- Use the language or languages spoken by the audience you intend to reach
- It is important that the page layout is not so dense that it intimidates people who don't read well, or who don't like to read
- Effective photographs or graphic illustrations will reinforce your message
- Be aware that readers over 40 usually have eyesight problems, so a minimum of 12 point type will help them read
- Very young readers also need larger print because it is difficult for them to distinguish letters and comprehend words
- Consider cultural differences when laying out your page. Western cultures read from the upper left across to the right and then down. Asian and Arab cultures read from the upper right down and then across.

Choose the Right Communication Vehicle for Each Audience

²⁵ Johns Hopkins University Center for Communications Programs (JHU-CCP), 2009, *op cit*

²⁶ Adapted from Cox, J., (VSO), *Participatory Advocacy: a toolkit for VSO staff, volunteers and partners*, VSO, November 2009

The communications vehicle or channel you use determines who will receive the message because different audiences like different types of media. Even if your communications materials are excellent, they have no value if they are not seen or heard by the people you are trying to reach.

For example, an internet game would be very suitable for urban teenagers from well-off families, but not much use for senior civil servants or poor rural communities.

Other examples are less obvious and so it is essential to find out, for example:

- Which newspapers do policymakers read? Are there TV or radio news programmes that they follow? Or would it be more effective to send them communications directly?
 - Most big media houses - both print and electronic - regularly conduct audience research. Their findings can be accessed through their marketing departments. For SADC countries, the Media Institute for Southern Africa (MISA) also has this type of information, especially on issues of gender and the media: www.misa.org
- Do key international donors watch the same programmes as policymakers? If not, what local media could attract donor attention? Or should you give them materials at conferences?
- How do people living in rural areas get their information? What is the average level of literacy - for men and for women? Do they have radios and if so, which programmes do they listen to?

Of course, it is not always possible to persuade particular media outlets to cover your advocacy stories. But being clear about the channels that will reach your target audiences means you can focus on developing relationships with the right journalists.

Sadly, even if you receive lots of coverage, unless you have reached your target audiences you cannot regard your communications as an advocacy success.

Example from ANEW Member: Using Radio to Get Your Message Across - WaterAid Nigeria

On 27 April 2010 Nigeria's New President swore-in Dr. Obadiah Ando as the new Minister for Water Resources shortly after the Ministry of Water Resources was separated from the Ministry of Agriculture.

WaterAid Nigeria was on a live radio programme to talk about key sector challenges and how the new Minister should address them. A congratulatory message was also sent to the Minister with a promise to support the new Ministry in ensuring that government increases its focus on water supply and sanitation.

In the interview, WaterAid Nigeria's Country Representative, Joe Lambongang, welcomed the creation of the new Water Ministry. Having a separate ministry for water and sanitation would ensure that the Minister could give the sector the attention it deserved. Joe Lambongang also recommended that the policy to withdraw federal government's funding of rural water supply should be reversed. Instead the Water Investment Mobilisation and Application Guideline (WIMAG) should be promoted and operationalised. This mechanism has the potential to mobilise funds from all three tiers of government to fund water and sanitation projects.

Messages

“Formulating a straightforward, persuasive message is the key to organising an effective advocacy campaign.” (J. Cox, VSO)²⁷

*“If you can’t write your idea on the back of my calling card, you don’t have a clear idea.”
(David Belasco - Theatrical Producer)*

What is a Message?

A message is a concise and persuasive statement about your advocacy objective that captures:

- What you want to achieve - e.g. sanitation for all
- Why you want to achieve it - e.g. positive consequences of action - better health and better environments; or negative consequences of no action - people continue to die unnecessarily
- How you propose to achieve it - e.g. by getting government to give sanitation priority in the budget
- What action you want the audience to take - e.g. writing to their political representatives

Messages should encapsulate everything you need to say - they are not the same as slogans or sound bites. A good basic message can be tailored to fit specific audiences.

EXAMPLE OF A BASIC MESSAGE FOR ADVOCACY COMMUNICATIONS

- FairFarming wants to help poor farmers in developing countries by stopping subsidies to farmers in rich countries. This would help poor farmers work their way out of poverty.
- Subsidised food exports from rich countries drive small farmers in poor countries out of business. The UK Government spends billions of pounds to subsidise agriculture. The top 20% of its biggest and richest farmers receive 80% of this money. .
- FairFarming wants the UK Government and the EU to reform national and international rules governing food and farming. The subsidies that provide an unfair advantage to the richest farmers in developed countries must stop.
- Write to your MP now asking him to support the removal of these subsidies.

Why Messages are Important

“Your key messages help you draft all your products... They’ll help you stay on track and make sure you’re communicating the right things to the right people. The messages will permeate all of your communications, so they’ll also attract a lot of attention from decision makers.” (Dave Fleet)²⁸

Although it may take more time and effort than you expect to prepare your first basic message, this is time well spent.

²⁷ Cox, J., (VSO), *op cit*

²⁸ Fleet, D., *How to Write a Good Communications Plan - Part 9 - Messages*, internet article, undated

Because a message must use very simple language, the process of writing your basic message forces you to be absolutely clear about what it is you want and why, rather than hiding behind technicalities and vague expressions.

Your message will form the basis of all your advocacy communications. It will help you to stay on track and remind you what you set out to achieve and why.

Even when it is modified using different words, the repetition of your message will imprint itself on the minds of decision-makers and other key advocacy targets.

Having a message also enables everyone in your organisation to understand what you are trying to achieve so they can speak to others about it with confidence.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE MESSAGE

“Big men use little words; little men use big words” (Anonymous)

There are four sections to a message: what you want to achieve, why you want to achieve it, how you propose to achieve it, and what you want to be done about it. None of these sections should be more than 40 words long.

Messages should be:

- **Single-minded:** convey just one message at a time
- **Meaningful:** connect with your audience
- **Important:** pertinent and significant
- **Sustainable:** resonate with your target audience well into the future
- **Direct:** be straightforward and memorable
- **Clear:** written in simple non-technical language easily understood by someone who knows nothing about the issue
- **Short:** follow KISS principles - Keep It Short and Simple
- **Inspiring:** clear about what will be different - disease rates will reduce by X%; government’s budget will double; working days lost will be halved
- **Credible:** honest and supported with evidence or analysis

Messages should encapsulate everything you need to say - they are not the same as slogans or soundbites.

TIP: DAVE FLEET’S ADVICE FOR WRITING MESSAGES²⁹

- Focus on the main points - you don’t need to get into detail
- Be brief
- You’re human; write like one
- Highlight the positive side of what you’re doing. But don’t mislead
- Decide what you want the stories to be about. Focus on that

²⁹ Adapted from: *Fleet, D., op cit*

- Use before and after examples if appropriate

Explain why people should care, in terms they care about

Adapting your Basic Message for Different Audiences

“To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others.” (Tony Robbins, author)

People respond best to messages tailored especially for them. This means your basic message should be adapted to suit each audience. The personas you have developed will provide the basis for this work.

If you know an audience cares about a particular aspect of your issue, make sure the message addresses it.

For example, governments often care about finances and economic development. So it could be good to state how your proposals will save money in the long term, or improve productivity. Furthermore, you can assume that government understands its own policy so you can refer directly to its proposals with no explanation.

On the other hand, if you decide that it is important to get sports fans involved, your messages should use the sorts of language that appears on the sports pages or in sports programmes. And your message should refer to the benefits of change for sport - healthier athletes, cleaner playing environments, etc.

Use your imagination. There is always a way to link even the most serious or technical issue to an audience’s interests and emotions. For example, your issue might be that government procurement process for water treatment plants is poor and results in bad quality water supply and increased costs for consumers. Government procurement is something that is not understood by most people and water treatment is simply boring. But no one likes to see money wasted. So your message could begin with something like: “Would you buy an expensive bottle of dirty water?” or “Imagine your children were being charged double for sweets that made them ill”. Then you could move onto the details.

ADDING IMPACT TO MESSAGES³⁰

- Stress the urgency of the issue
- Tie it into current political and social concerns
- Creativity helps- use humour, metaphors, popular expressions, etc
- Make your message emotional not functional, e.g. *washing your hands could save your child’s life not handwashing prevents diseases spreading*

³⁰ Adapted from Cox, J., (VSO), *op cit*, and Baeyaert, P., *op cit*

Testing Your Messages

“Communication is not a one-way process: we send a message to someone and that person reacts to the message received. It is important to test the effect of the message and the communication tool before finalizing it. Then you can make adjustments based on the receiver’s feedback” (Research Matters Programme)³¹

Once your messages are open to public view, you can no longer take them back. So it is good practice to test your message(s) before you start communicating them. For your basic message, you can start this process within your organisation. Don’t ask advocacy or communications experts. Ask the accountant, or an administrator. If they don’t get it, make the necessary adjustments and try again.

Next use the “favourite uncle” test and try them out on a friend or relative or neighbour. Ask for their frank feedback. Do they understand what you are talking about? Would it motivate them to take action? Listen carefully to any pre-set ideas they have about the issue - these may need to be tackled if the message is adapted for an audience to which they would belong.

After testing your message with colleagues, friends and relatives, it is good practice to test it on members of your target audience to see how they respond. This is relatively easy to do if, for example, your audience is children or teenagers, mothers, sports fans, etc. It is much more difficult to do with decision-makers and senior executives or civil servants. In their case, you may have to spend more time on developing a “persona” (see below) to try to understand what will appeal to them.

Please note that if your message will be translated into a different language it is essential to test it on someone for whom the language is their mother tongue but who can discuss any issues with you. Sometimes getting the correct meaning across requires interpretation rather than translation. It is also important to check whether the message works when it appears in another language format. For example, if a page is read from right to left, not left to right; or bottom to top, not top to bottom.

PASSING THE ELEVATOR TEST

- To check if your message is sufficiently short, clear and persuasive, you could try the elevator test. This is an exercise for two people
- You are the advocate. The other person is an important member of an audience you want to influence
- By chance you get in the same lift and the other person presses the button for the 8th floor. You have a maximum of 60 seconds to get your message across
- You must start by telling them who you are and which organisation you work and what it does for before you go on to your message. Be brief
- Ideally, you should finish by asking them for permission to be in contact in the future.
- In between you need to relay your message in a way that captures their interest
- When you have finished, ask them what they understood about what you told them and

³¹ *Research Matters Programme, The RM Knowledge Translation Toolkit: A Resource for Researchers, Research Matters Programme, IDRC*

whether they feel motivated to be involved

SECTION FOUR: STORIES AND HEADLINES

Advocacy and Mass Communications

Once advocacy communications messages have been developed and audiences identified, you are ready to begin working with the media. Section Six explains how to build relationships with the media. But before you do this you should start developing your communications materials.

Note that not all communications work comes under the heading of advocacy communications. Communication only becomes part of an advocacy initiative when:

- communications are clearly and tightly targeted towards decision-makers who have power over the advocacy issue, or towards people who are known to have influence over the decision-makers
- and
- specific media vehicles are used that have been identified as the right ones to reach these target audiences ³²

Why Communicate Advocacy Messages Via the Mass Media?

“For most NGOs using the media is the most feasible way to reach a broad audience base at little expense.” (J.Cox, VSO)³³

Definition: Mass Media

A section of the media designed to reach large numbers of people. Traditionally, especially newspapers, popular magazines, radio, television but now includes internet media.

The use of mass media can be a valuable addition to other advocacy communications because:

- it offers an opportunity to reach large numbers of people without spending large sums of money
- the media is a powerful force and can influence public opinion and the way that people see the world
- policy makers and groups involved in political processes pay close attention to the press, so using the media can help you to advance your policy issue
- coverage in the serious press or news can enhance your image with decision-makers
- your issue and your organisation may gain credibility from appearing in media that the audience trust

However, a word of warning is necessary. Although media coverage can have an considerable benefits, the use of the media also carries certain risks. If the media report unfavourably on

³² *International HIV/AIDS Alliance, ‘Advocacy in Action’ Cards - for developing practical advocacy skills, International HIV/AIDS Alliance*

³³ *Cox, J., (VSO), Participatory Advocacy: a toolkit for VSO staff, volunteers and partners, VSO, November 2009*


your issue (or you, or your organisation), or if their reporting is inaccurate, the impact may be negative rather than positive.

BOX 5.4: INVOLVING THE MEDIA IN YOUR ADVOCACY	
When to involve the media	When not to involve the media
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When you have clarified your positions and developed your messages ▪ When you have begun your advocacy work ▪ When there is a burning issue to deal with ▪ When other methods are not working ▪ When looking for allies ▪ When publicity will help to change the minds of those with power over the issue <p>Note: if you have built a relationship with decision-makers through lobbying, inform them in advance of possible media coverage. This ensures you continue to enjoy their trust and confidence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When you do not know how the media works ▪ When there are disagreements within your organisation or network on the issue ▪ When the timing is not right. For example, due to political circumstances ▪ When bigger issues are dominating the media, preventing your issue from getting the attention you think it deserves ▪ When publicity will alienate decision makers and make change more difficult

For an analysis of the characteristics and the advantages and disadvantages of using them please see Figure 1.1 in Section One.

USING NEW MASS MEDIA FOR ADVOCACY: EXAMPLE FROM ANEW OF AN ELECTRONIC NEWS BULLETIN

March 12, 2010



Dear ANEW members
 Welcome to ANEW electronic bulletin, we shall be keeping you updated on our activities and other developments in the sector through the monthly bulletin. Feel free to share your activities with us.

You can find the full stories on our website
<http://www.anewafrika.net/news/index.php>

Eastern Africa to Track Political Commitments on Sanitation

The eastern Africa region states have committed to tracking progress on political commitments in the water and sanitation sector. This follows the successful conclusion of the 2nd Eastern Africa regional Sanitation conference which was held in Kampala , Uganda on 2nd - 4th March. During the opening, the Uganda 's Minister of Water and Environment, Hon. Maria Mutagamba noted that a large proportion of the African population still faces sanitation challenges only five years to the deadline of meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) targets.

The three day Conference which was jointly organised by ANEW and its partners under the theme, *Tracking Progress on the AfricaSan+5 Action Plan and other International Commitments*, provided a forum for countries within the Eastern Africa region to share progress and experiences on the implementation of the eThekweni declaration, Sharm el Sheikh and commitments made during the first East Africa Conference which took place in November 2008. It drew participants from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea and Sudan representing state, non-state and donor agencies in the water and sanitation sector. Ms Lydia Zigomo, the Head of East Africa region for WaterAid, applauded the countries on progress made even amidst other political and social struggles they are still able to devote time and resources to improving sanitation in their regions. The meeting finally ended with a declaration which among others recognised the continuing urgency of the sanitation and hygiene situation in the East African countries. Read on

[Click to read the Declaration](#)

Sanitation report ruffles feathers

The Traffic Lights Survey, a study assessing the performance of ten African countries in dealing with pressing sanitation needs, ruffled feathers when it was unveiled on day two of the second Eastern African Regional Sanitation Summit. The authors said the report, still in preliminary format, had achieved its first objective of provoking debate. Ms Lilian Otiego of World Bank's - Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) said she was pleased that the preliminary findings of the report had provoked a debate.

"We are seeing a lot of international interest in the sanitation needs. But we are also seeing officials becoming defensive. And that is what we set out to do; to provoke debate," she said.

The report also seeks to encourage officials to learn from each other's experiences in solving the challenges they face with regard to sanitation. Read on

CONIWAS Calls for Release of Water and Sanitation Budget

The Coalition of Non-governmental Organizations in Water and Sanitation (CONIWAS) has called on government to release all national budgetary commitments and appropriations made to water and sanitation agencies for the 2010 fiscal year. In addition, CONIWAS wants the Community Water and Sanitation Agency (CWSA), Ghana Water Company Limited (GWCL) and the Water Directorate to be empowered to access and utilize the funds. CONIWAS further urged the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning to urgently engage with the Ministry of Water Resources, Works and Housing and the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development to fashion out a well-articulated position for Ghana for presentation at the first Annual High Level Meeting (HLM) on sanitation and water scheduled to be held Washington in April.

Mr. Patrick Apoya, the outgoing Executive Secretary of CONIWAS and a board member of ANEW, said ministers are expected to arrive at the HLM with clearly articulated and concrete commitments. In the case of Ghana, Mr Apoya expects the ministers to address challenges in improving access to water and sanitation. He was particularly concerned about the state of improved sanitation coverage in Ghana, which, according to the Joint Monitoring Platform, stands approximately at 11%. Read more <http://allafrica.com/stories/201002151134.html>

Upcoming activities

1. AfWA Congress and Exhibition Kampala **March 15th - 18th** <http://www.aae-event.com/>
2. World Water Day **March 23rd** <http://www.worldwaterday2010.info/>
3. Advocacy Training Tanzania : **March 29th - April 1st**
4. Research and Policy analysis for advocacy training Addis Ababa, Ethiopia **June 20th - 25th**
5. Communications for Advocacy Workshop in Botswana **July 13th - 20th**

For more information please contact us through info@anewafrika.net or

josephine@anewafrika.net

Follow us on


1. STORIES

Why Stories are Important

Story telling is a powerful way to communicate information and share ideas. When a story is told well its readers' or listeners' imaginations create their own pictures of the situation. They make mental leaps forward to visualise implications that go far beyond what is said in the story itself. The connection created between the reader or listener and the story is emotional as well as intellectual. As a result, the story is remembered for longer.

In brief, good stories:

- engage us
- paint a picture

- use everyday language and authentic details
- forge a connection
- make us remember³⁴

What Makes a Good Media Story?

“An effective campaign is based on stories and the extent to which these are accepted by different parties” (Chapman and Fisher)³⁵

The basic elements required for any media story are simple. It must answer the following questions:

who? what? where? when? why? how?

But your story will be competing for media attention with many others and has to stand out amongst all the communications clutter and noise that characterises the modern world. To get coverage your story must be **relevant, timely, engaging and original**. A good story often includes a human interest angle to evoke an emotional response. Also, unless a celebrity or famous person is involved, the media will be more interested in stories that are about events and people close to home than those about distant countries.

Ask yourself:

- is some or all of the story new?
- does it link to other stories already in the news?
- does it have a ‘human face’?
- does it challenge commonly held assumptions? (see Box 5.1)
- does the subject of the story have a potential impact on a large number of people?
- will people identify with the issue?³⁶

If the first paragraph of your story does not meet two or more of the criteria above, then you should try to look for a new angle. For example, instead of talking about the impact of poor sanitation on health and life expectancy, link it to production levels and highlight its economic costs.

Arrange your story so that the most important facts appear at the beginning. The first paragraph should contain enough information to give the reader an overview of the whole story. The rest of the story then expands on this paragraph. It is useful to review your first paragraph to see whether it really is newsworthy.

TIP: “A good approach is to assume that the story might be cut off at any point due to space limitations. Does the story work if the editor only decides to include the first two paragraphs? If not, re-arrange it so that it does.”³⁷

³⁴ *International Society for Technology in Education, Why Stories Matter, undated*

³⁵ *Chapman, J. and Fisher, T., Effective Campaigning, New Economics Foundation, London 1999*

³⁶ Adapted from: *WaterAid, Communications Toolkit, “2009, op cit*

³⁷ *International Society for Technology in Education, op cit*

BOX 5.1 CREATING INTEREST THROUGH CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS

Davis³⁸ suggests categories into which interesting propositions can be sorted, including the following:

- **Causation:** What seems to be an unrelated factor in causing something turns out to be a very important factor. For example: if low school attendance by girls is not a result of negative attitudes to girls' education, nor household chores, but lack of proper toilet facilities.
- **Co-variation:** What is assumed to be a positive relationship or dependence between two factors turns out to be a negative relationship, or vice versa. For example: the assumption that because people are poor they must be paying less for water in fact is wrong, they actually pay more.
- **Generalisation:** If something is assumed to be narrowly restricted and it turns out to be general, or vice versa, this increases interest. For example: Wasteful uses of water are not only confined to rich countries -it takes 5 litres of water to make 1 litre of bottled water; and an average of 9,463 litres of water to produce 1 pound of coffee.
- **Organisation:** If it is assumed that something is organised or structured and then discover that it is actually disorganised or unstructured, or vice versa. For example, it is assumed that sanitation services come under one national policy framework, but in fact there is no central guiding hand only a disorderly group of different actors.
- **Opposition:** What seem to be opposite phenomena are in reality similar, or vice versa. For example, people who join opposing social movements in fact join them for similar reasons.

BOX 5.2 TEMPLATE FOR AN ADVOCACY STORY³⁹

Synopsis/Introduction: A first paragraph that summarises in a few simple words, the key messages you want to get across; why the issue is important; who is involved or affected, and where; why it is significant right now; how the situation has arisen and what needs to happen.

The next 1 - 2 paragraphs need to establish:

The Setting: Give your audience a sense of place. Urban, rural, suburban? Technology-rich or barely equipped? Help others imagine the situation and place you are talking about.

The Key Characters: Who's important to the story—a particular individual, or a local council, or mothers, service providers or the government? Introduce us to your lead characters. Who are the heroes? Who are the villains? Help us imagine them. Better still, help us care about them.

³⁸ Source: Davis, M. S. (1971) 'That's interesting: Towards a phenomenology of sociology and a sociology of phenomenology' *Philosophy of Social Science*, 1971, quoted in Hovland, I., *Successful Communication A Toolkit for Researchers and Civil Society Organisations, Research and Policy in Development Programme (RAPID)*, Overseas Development Institute, October 2005

³⁹ *International Society for Technology in Education, Why Stories Matter, undated*

The following 2 - 3 paragraphs should deal with:

The Plot: What has happened or is happening that people need to know about? What is the source of tension or catalyst for change? A new or forthcoming policy; plans for new services; a difficult situation that has got worse; the arrival of new technology, etc.

Conclusion: The last paragraph should summarise the lasting outcomes if the situation continues as it is, positive or negative; what needs to change in terms of policy or practice; what has changed already - for better or for worse; why it matters; and what the audience could do to improve things. Link the conclusion to your introduction to remind the audience why the issue is so important.

More Tips for Making Stories Interesting⁴⁰

- **Only include significant details**

Be ruthless in your editing. If the story can be told without some of the information you have included, CUT IT OUT. Always try to trim your stories. But do not sacrifice important details simply for the sake of length.

- **Have a clear focus**

Ask yourself, what's the point of this story? What are you trying to get across? Ask a colleague to identify the point of the story. If they cannot do this easily, your story needs work.

- **Use quotes**

Get and use quotes about the things going on in your story. These could come from people affected, government ministers or local politicians, celebrities, the head of your organisation or any other relevant person. Quotes liven up the text and make what you say seem more personal. Try to find new and interesting sources for your quotes rather than relying on the same people all the time

TIP: Quotes

If you are interviewing someone and want to use a quote, make sure you have their full name, age, position and organisation, so that you can use this with the quote.

- **Stay away from flowery language**

Keep your sentences and paragraphs short. Use lively language. Do not use lots of heavy descriptive language. Be positive, not negative.

⁴⁰ Adapted from: Notrain-Nogain, *Writing Headlines, Tips anyone -- even you -- can use*, notes from "The New Age of Copy Editing" workshop, 2002; and Media College.com <http://www.mediacollege.com/journalism/news/write-stories.html>

- **Always give your story a human face**

News stories are all about how people are affected. Focus on one person or group as an example of wider issues.

TIP: BEFORE TELLING THE STORY OF AN INDIVIDUAL

Ask yourself:

- What are the potential privacy and security issues involved?
- Could the story cause them embarrassment?
- Should you ask the person or group's permission?
- What reward will the person or group get from opening up their personal experiences in front of a larger audience?
- What risks might this entail?
- How would you feel if someone was telling a similar story about you?⁴¹

Decide on the Best Way to Present Your Story

Not all stories are news. And not all are suited to news style coverage. So it is important to think about the right media vehicle for your story. Some features of different types of articles and programmes are provided below:

Press, TV and Radio News

For your story to be right for the news, it must reveal new information or link to current events or debates. Typically, news stories are short, forceful and have an element of drama.

Newspaper, TV and Radio Features

A feature article usually addresses a single subject and is longer than a news story. It is analytical, presents new information in a measured way and usually includes some personal examples of the impacts of whatever is being described.

Magazine Articles

Because of the long lead time required for publication, magazine articles cannot cover news. Articles are usually long but may be more concerned with human interest stories and personal experiences than analysis. It is common for articles to be complemented by photographs or other graphic illustrations.

Op-Eds (opinion pieces/editorial)

These are short opinion pieces that relate to something that appeared in your local newspaper/ TV station. They can help to raise the profile of your advocacy issue. An op-ed must be brief, to the point and directly link to an event, comment or a story you have read or heard. Include your full contact details in case the media wants to get more information from you.

⁴¹ Adapted from: *Tactical Technology Collective, Tactic 4, Ten Tactics for Turning Information into Action, undated*

Letters to the editor

Writing a letter to the editor will help you get your story into the public eye. Editors are very receptive to pieces from experts and leaders in the community who have something valuable to add to a debate.

Reaction Statements

Sending a reaction statement - a comment that responds to something in the news is another effective way to draw attention to your issue.

2. HEADLINES⁴²

The Importance of a Good Headline

First impressions count! The few words that form your headline may be the most important you write. The headline is your news hook; the first thing your audience will notice. If it sparks an interest they will want to know more. If not, they will move on to something else.

Some Basic Rules for Writing Headlines

*"There is only one immutable rule. A headline must make you read the story. Every other rule is made to be broken. Some of the best actually do break the rules."
(Andrew Dobbie, headline writer for Reuters newsagency)*

Your headline should be short - 5 - 10 words - but must give a clear idea of what the story is about. If your audience only saw the headline, would they know the focus of your story?

- If facts are not in the story, do not use them in a headline
- Avoid vagueness, hints and double meanings
- Do not repeat the same word in the same headline. Do not repeat the exact wording of the story in the headline
- Alliteration (using words that all begin with the same letter) should only be used deliberately and should fit with the general tone of the story
- Avoid professional jargon
- Assume that the audience - including journalists and editors - knows little or nothing anything about your subject
- Use punctuation sparingly. Do not use quotation marks unless totally unavoidable.
- Avoid information overload. Pick the main point and stick to it. If in doubt, try reading it aloud.

⁴² Adapted from: JProf, *Headline writing for the web*, May 2010; Brown, S., *How To Write Great Headlines*, November 2006, *Modern Life website*; Glover, A., (*St Petersburg Times*), *Tips for Good Headlines* quoted on *notrain-nogain website*

Obama to meet delegation of jobless: not Unemployed delegates to meet president for talks on jobs, industry

- Avoid abbreviations, they will not be understood by everyone. Never use an acronym if there's an ordinary word that will do the job.

Red Cross workers threaten strike; not ICRC threatens strike

BOX 5.3 GRAMMATICAL CONVENTIONS FOR HEADLINES

- Use the present tense for things in the past:
Minister sees red; not Minister saw red
- Use the infinitive form of the future tense:
NGO boss to run marathon; not NGO boss will run marathon
- Do not use any “to be” verbs, such as “is,” “are,” “was” and “were” etc:
Mayor doubtful about sanitation project; not Major is doubtful about sanitation project
- Do not use articles like “a,” “an” and “the.” These take up space that could be used to give more information:
New city pipes cut leakage by half; not the new pipes in the city cut leakage by half
- Use short words and active verbs. Avoid labels and be specific:
Bus hits tree: three kids hurt; not High street accident: three hurt

Creating Headlines that Make an Impression

- Use superlatives
Superlatives are descriptive words that exaggerate. They often end in “est”. For example, biggest, easiest, coldest, best, etc. The category can also include words like unique, unbeatable, invincible, etc. Note that superlatives are eye-catching but may be unsuitable for serious-minded audiences:

*Best tip ever, use superlatives!
ANEW biggest and best says AMCOW
New rope pump unbeatable value*

- Use lists to attract interest:

*Ghana in sanitation top ten
World top fifty includes minister for water*

- Pose a question:

*Policy delay responsible for deaths?
Sanitation more important than education?*

HEADLINES: SOME EXAMPLES FROM ANEW AND ITS MEMBERS

- World's Longest Toilet Queue
- Giving Sanitation the Green Light
- Bottom billions miss out on life-saving aid
- Ghana ready for Washington meeting on water and sanitation
- Rwanda's political will hailed at regional sanitation meet
- EA Countries Urged to Boost Access to Water

SECTION FIVE: PRESS RELEASES⁴³

What is a Press Release?

“Press release” and “news release” refer to the same thing. In most countries in Africa, the term press release can mean either a story/information given to the media that can be used to create an article, or information sent to the media as a paid advertisement. In this handbook, “press release” refers only to information sent without payment to the media in the belief that if the story is strong enough it will be published on its own merit. ANEW encourages its members to opt for free coverage based on the creation of newsworthy stories as this is more credible and cheap than advertising.

A press release (or news release) is the standard way to supply the media with a story. Usually the media select from it the elements they think will interest their audience. They may shorten or lengthen the story to make it fit the space available. Or use the information in the press release to investigate the issue further to develop the story and make it more relevant for their readers.

Reasons for preparing a press release include wanting to:⁴⁴

- draw attention to an emerging or ignored issue
- outline your reaction to a government decision, policy or action
- report decisions taken by key stakeholders for the sector - AU, AMCOW, UN, World Bank, private companies, etc.
- give your perspective on a conference or high level meeting, etc.
- give advance notice of your own activities or events (including who will say or do what)
- announce new advocacy initiatives

FACILITATION SUPPORT TO REPORTERS

Rather than paying for articles, recognise the constraints on local media reporters by:

- paying their expenses to attend press conferences or providing transport to the venue
- organising field visits to help them develop a better understanding of your issue

Big media organisations such as BBC, Reuters etc., do not allow you to cover their costs as they wish to maintain their independence and objectivity and not be influenced by funding.

Is a Press Release the Right Method for your Story?

Only issue press releases when you have something to say, a defined advocacy audience and a reasonable expectation that seeing the story in the media will enhance the possibility of change happening. Be tough with yourself about this. If your story would be best delivered face-to-face to key policymakers or influencers, then plan to do that.

⁴³ In addition to materials referenced in footnotes, thanks are due to Jane Moyo at ActionAid and Marquita Bowen at Platinum PR whose expertise and advice has informed this Section.

⁴⁴ Adapted from: Cox, J., (VSO), *Participatory Advocacy: a toolkit for VSO staff, volunteers and partners*, VSO, November 2009

Before preparing a press release ask yourself whether what you are saying *really is news*? Might it be better to promote it to the media as a feature article?

Remember that all press releases should:

- contain new or newsworthy information
 - correct a misconception about an issue
- or
- give your point of view on an existing news story

USING A PHONE CALL TO REACH REPORTERS

- If you know a reporter (or a reporter knows your organisation) instead of sending a press release you could telephone them with your story. (This tactic works less well if you do not know them and/or your organisation is not famous)
- For this to be successful, you must be very well prepared and the story must be interesting.
- Before you call, write out your key messages and make a list of the key points you want to make.
- Be aware that the journalist may ask you to email them the story immediately after the telephone conversation, so you must have a written copy ready.
- Also, know that telling your story verbally increases the risk of it being distorted.

BOX 6.1 PRESS RELEASES - ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES	
Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Press releases are a very public form of advocacy. At minimum, they alert reporters to the existence of your issue. If published, their contents may put pressure on decision-makers to take action. ▪ You can offer a selection of facts and opinions of your choosing ▪ You can decide when to give the information ▪ A press release is more permanent than an interview - you have a permanent record of what you said ▪ You have time to think before giving your message to a journalist ▪ Releases make the job of the reporter easier and increase the likelihood of coverage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Journalists receive too many press releases. Yours may be rejected if it is not interesting ▪ Even if it is interesting, your press release will be ignored if a big news story 'breaks' ▪ Writing a good press release takes time, requires practice, and needs a good level of literacy as well as an understanding of how reporters work ▪ It is difficult to involve lots of people in writing a press release, for example, all the members of a network ▪ Journalists can still distort your story, even if it is clear in a press release.

Press Release Basics⁴⁵

Newsrooms and reporters receive dozens, sometimes hundreds, of press releases every day. If your press release is going to stand out, it has to have an eye-catching headline and be well presented and well written.

- Imagine you know nothing about the issue and do not care about it much. Write the release from this perspective, thinking about what would create an interest in knowing more.
- The style throughout must be concise, journalistic, as catchy and intriguing as possible.
- Try to present your story in a way that encourages the reporter to reproduce the key points exactly as you have written them.
- From a reporter's point of view, the ideal press release is one that contains all the information they need, and needs minimal editing before it is ready for publication.

Everything in a press release should be as brief as possible:

- Make sure it fits on one side of A4 or two sides at most
- Sentences should be short and contain a maximum of 20 words
- Paragraphs should be short too and contain no more than three sentences

Look at a news story in the paper and copy that style

Use a short example or anecdote as evidence to support your point of view.

- Speak plainly. Use language that you think everyone can understand. Always remember that reporters and editors may not be sector specialists and avoid jargon.
- Where special terminology is unavoidable, add a brief explanation.
- Be consistent. Spelling, abbreviations, and the use of capital letters must be consistent throughout the press release. Always use your computer's spelling and grammar checker.

There are standard formats for presenting information in press releases and if you use these, your release will look more professional. A template is provided in Box 5.5 below.

- Bullet points are useful when listing a range of options or comparing related facts. They can help to reduce the space needed to present a complex picture.
- Avoid paragraph numbering, this will create extra work for newspaper reporters as they will have to remove them from their article.

⁴⁵ Adapted from: *International HIV/AIDS Alliance, Writing and Using a Press Release, 'Advocacy in Action' Cards - for developing practical advocacy skills, International HIV/AIDS; WaterAid, Communications Toolkit; ChristianAid, How to Write a Press Release, undated; Citizen Science Toolbox, see: www.coastal.crc.org.au/toolbox/index.asp quoted in Hovland, I., *Successful Communication A Toolkit for Researchers and Civil Society Organisations*, Overseas Development Institute, October 2005*

- Use an 11 or 12 point print font. This is easy to read on paper, as well as on a computer screen.)
- Use double-spacing or one-and-a-half line spacing.
- Put “PRESS RELEASE” and the date in a large bold font at the top.
- If possible, include the name and job title of the reporter, editor or producer you want to read it.

BOX 6.2 BASIC TEMPLATE FOR A PRESS RELEASE

On your organisation’s headed paper:

- At the top put the heading: **Press Release** and the **date** in bold type, plus **For immediate release**
 NOTE: Embargoes should be imposed only when strictly necessary. They usually are used to ensure all news outlets can cover a story at the same time.
- Underneath put your **headline in big bold type**
- First paragraph - Expand on the headline to answer answer at least three of the basic questions: who, what, where, when, why, how and how much. The first paragraph should summarise the whole story
- The second and all following paragraphs should expand on the first - not bring in a new story angle.
- The following paragraphs should expand the story further.
- At least one paragraph should be a quotation from someone involved. You may also wish to include a quotation from another person from a different stakeholder group - for third party verification. The quotation should add some information to the story and must be in direct speech.
- The final paragraph should be the least important fact.
- NOTE: The custom is to arrange paragraphs in order of importance. That is your most important messages should come in the top paragraphs and the less important later on. You can test if this is the case by imagining that the paragraphs are removed from the bottom up - when the bottom ones are gone, is the core of your message still clear? The reason for this order is to enable a very simple form of editing by a reporter with limited space and facing a tight deadline.
- After the final paragraph of the story come the **Endnotes**. These should include:
 - A contact name and phone number of someone who knows about the story and will be on hand to deal with journalists after the release has been issued.
 - Who you are and what you do. E.g. The African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation (ANEWS) is an autonomous Africa-wide platform which promotes dialogues, learning and cooperation on water and sanitation issues in Africa.
 - Notes to the Editor should be used only sparingly and only when an unusual level of detail is essential.

- Diary information. If you are advertising an event this should be clearly separate from the main text. The diary information should say what, when and where. Do not bury it in the body of the release.

When you have written your press release re-read it and use a checklist to ensure the following statements are true:

- Headline tells the story
- Facts are accurate
- No jargon
- Clearly laid out with the diary details clear and separate
- Direct speech quote included
- Human interest example included, if possible
- Contact name and numbers correct

Circulating your Press Releases

Once written, send your press release to selected reporters by email or fax. They may contact you for further information, or you may like to call them to check whether they need more information. This is a good way to follow up your release.

Nominate one person to coordinate all contacts with reporters. Ideally this person should be available on a 24 hour basis for at least 48 hours after the press release is distributed.

If you hold a press conference, distribute the press release there and then, either on its own or as part of a larger press pack. At the same time, send it to all the reporters on your target list as not everyone will attend the press conference.

If your advocacy takes you to a big event such as a conference or summit, it is likely that reporters will be present. This means you can hand your press release to them directly. Before the event you should check whether there will be a dedicated press room. And, if there is, whether you can display your materials there; and whether special accreditation is necessary to get access? Being able to enter the press room is valuable as it means you can make contact with reporters directly.

EXAMPLE FROM ANEW EXPERIENCE: ANEW SECRETARIAT PRESS ADVISORY

The White House gets a free makeover - African-style...



One of the world's most recognizable buildings has been given a shocking makeover by international charity WaterAid and global campaign group End Water Poverty.

Gone are the immaculate White House lawns, in their place a squalid otherworldly scene where children collect water from a filthy rubbish-strewn water hole and long queues form at the standpoint.

Except that this isn't another world. Having to use a contaminated and potentially fatal water source is a daily reality for 884 million people. Then there are the 2.6 billion who have no access to a toilet.

“This is the White House as you’ve never seen it before,” said Professor Edward Kairu, Chair of the African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation (ANEW). **“We wanted to bring a snapshot of one aspect of life in many African countries to Washington this week to coincide with the historic high level meeting on water and sanitation. The lack of these two basic necessities has a huge impact on the health, education and economic prosperity of millions across the continent and efforts to stamp out poverty are in serious jeopardy unless there is concerted action on the part of ministers attending the meeting to reverse the decades of neglect. “**

The makeover took place to mark the first ever High Level Meeting on Sanitation and Water which takes place in Washington today. At this meeting Ministers and policy makers from 30 developed and developing countries have the opportunity to commit to financial and political action to tackle this forgotten crisis.

According to the Secretary Executive of ANEW Jamillah Mwanjisi, “We have an historic meeting that can deliver real results if the right decisions get made. Decisions that

could stop millions of children dying from diarrhea, free up hospital beds, give girls in particular the chance to get an education and mothers the opportunity to earn a living instead of having to walk hours to fetch water.”

“There is no doubt that if ministers and leaders had to endure these conditions in their own backyard they would take immediate action. Today they have the opportunity to do so and help bring an end to this scandalous crisis.”

Ends

For more information please contact: Jamillah Mwanjisi on 0737043823 or Zainab on 0722513933

EXAMPLE II: WaterAid Press Release

Date: xx xxx 2009 For immediate release

G8 health deal overlooks what may be the biggest child killer

Commitments from the G8 on health stand to be undermined by a failure to tackle the global sanitation and water crisis. Whilst millions of dollars of scarce health resources are being used on treating preventable water borne diseases, sanitation and water are again conspicuous in their absence from the health agenda.

International medical journal The Lancet today highlighted the disappointing neglect of sanitation and water in response to the G8’s health commitments:

“Poor access to water and sanitation accounts for 10% of the global disease burden, it is seriously short-sighted not to give more time, attention, and resources to these basic health needs”

WaterAid’s report, published at the G8, highlights the devastating impact of sanitation on child mortality, showing that sanitation is the single greatest contributing factor to child deaths and yet it remains the most neglected development sector.

In February 2008, in the UN’s International Year of Sanitation, Masahiko Koumura, Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs stated: “Japan, as chair [of] the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit, will play a leading role in the international community’s discussions concerning water and sanitation.”.

The promise of the Japanese government and other G8 leaders to address this crisis has not been met. The G8 Communique’s references to sanitation and water fall short of concrete commitments to address this crisis. It is clear from drafts leaked earlier that commitments on sanitation and water have been progressively weakened.

“The G8’s failure to respond to the sanitation and water crisis in a climate of

heightened concern from the international health community, raises serious questions about the accountability of the G8 leaders to meet the needs and demands of the poor. Before the G8 meet again, millions will have died from a lack of sanitation and water. How long must the world wait?" - Oliver Cumming, WaterAid's Policy Officer.

WaterAid, as part of the End Water Poverty campaign, will continue to call on governments to take action to address this crisis. Without a global action plan and a commitment to finance national plans for sanitation, progress on achieving most of the MDGs will be thwarted.

For a copy of the report visit www.wateraid.org/uk/about_us/newsroom/6787.asp

Ends

For more information please contact: xxx on +44(0)xxx x xx or email xxx@wateraid.org

Notes to Editor:

WaterAid's mission is to overcome poverty by enabling the world's poorest people to gain access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education.

- At least 4,000 children die every day as a result of diseases caused by unclean water and poor sanitation.
- 884 million people in the world do not have access to safe water. This is roughly one in eight of the world's population.
- 2.5 billion people in the world don't have access to adequate sanitation, this is almost two fifths of the world's population.
- It costs just £15 for WaterAid to enable one person to gain access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education.

SECTION SIX: PRESS CONFERENCES

Why Hold a Press Conference?

Press conferences increase media interest in your advocacy initiative and can help you reach your target audiences. They give you the opportunity to tell the media about major new developments related to your issue, or about special advocacy events that will take place.

Is a Press Conference the Right Tool to Use?

It takes a great deal of time, money and energy to organize a press conference, so be sure that you have something important to announce. (Pact Tanzania)⁴⁶

Experience everywhere indicates that to attract media attendance at a press conference you must have something special to offer them. An exciting and genuinely new story is essential. Novelties such as a celebrity, an interesting venue, some truly great photos and/or the promise of food and drink can help a great deal. The timing of the press conference is important. What time will be most convenient for the journalists? Are there any big events happening at the same time that could keep the media away from your event? Otherwise, despite good planning and preparation, you may face the embarrassment of an almost empty room.

MAKE YOUR PRESS CONFERENCE SPECIAL

Including something more exciting than one or two speakers can attract more reporters. Be creative about this. If your extra attractions can link to the subject of the press conference, so much the better. Whatever you do, be sure to let journalists know about the exciting things that you will be providing. The following ideas are just to get you thinking:

- have a well-known person or celebrity speak
- “Use props! Even if they feel a little awkward, they will often work on camera. For example, if you are releasing a report about water quality, have scientists with lab coats and goggles take samples on camera.”⁴⁷
- have a photo exhibition
- provide food and drink - perhaps a typical dish from a community you work with; or a drink made from produce grown as a result of your irrigation work; etc.
- hold the press conference in an unusual venue - in a soap factory, at a water treatment plant, in parliament, by a lake, etc. but be sure that there is not so much background noise that it drowns out what you are saying, or gets in the way of TV or radio recordings
- hand out freebies - T shirts, badges, mugs, pens etc. with appropriate messages
- include some live music - just one or two short pieces not a whole concert, remember that journalists are on a tight schedule! The music should link to your story and could be anything from a small professional group to a choir of children from a local community
- hand out freebies - T shirts, badges, mugs, pens etc. with appropriate messages
- have media pack prepared for each journalist

⁴⁶ Pact Tanzania, *Media Guide, Advocacy Expert Series, Pact Tanzania, undated*

⁴⁷ The SPIN Project, *Strategic Communications Planning, The Spin Project, 2005*

Nine Steps for Planning an Advocacy Press Conference⁴⁸

Step One - Reality check

Check that your advocacy story is sufficiently newsworthy and/or you have strong additional factors that would attract reporters. If this is not the case, do not call a press conference but issue a press release instead and follow up with calls to key reporters.

Step Two - Set objectives and indicators

Develop a clear set of objectives. What do you want to achieve by having a press conference? For advocacy, it is not enough to get general coverage. This may impress your Trustees or your supporters *but it will not achieve your advocacy objectives*. It is essential that the coverage you get reaches your target audiences.

Establish some indicators to measure your achievements: number of journalists at the press conference; amount of overall coverage; number of articles appearing in target media; quality of coverage, etc. Do not be over ambitious. It is better to meet realistic objectives and indicators than to fail against ones that are too grand.

Step Three - Create a team

Pull together a small team to help you prepare for, and organise and run the press conference. This is not a job for one person! Work with the team to outline a plan of action and a timetable. Be clear who will do what, and who can decide what.

Step Four - Set a date and a time

Choose the date and time with care. Try to avoid clashes with other newsworthy events, public holidays, and the press conferences of sister organisations. On the other hand, try to find a date that has a media “hook”, that is, one that coincides with an event or special day relevant to your subject matter.

Note that the notice announcing the press conference should reach the media at least a week before it takes place. These notices must be followed up with calls to key reporters the day before the event. They will need to inform their news editors in advance that they have a possible story for use and this needs to be included in the news diary. If the press conference is not in the news diary, no journalist will be assigned to cover the event.

Step Five - Book a venue

⁴⁸ Adapted from: *BBC Action Network, How do I organise a press conference, BBC, undated; Christian Aid, How to organise an event, undated; International HIV/AIDS Alliance, 'Advocacy in Action' Cards – for developing practical advocacy skills, International HIV/AIDS Alliance; Pact Tanzania, Media Guide, Advocacy Expert Series, Pact Tanzania, undated; and with thanks to Marquita Bowen at Platinum PR and Jane Moyo at ActionAid International*

Always visit your potential venue before you book it. Ask yourself whether its appearance fits with the image of your organisation you want to project? Does it have all the facilities you need? Is there enough parking? Will the venue be easy to reach whatever the weather?

Things to consider regarding the room you will use include:

- can the room accommodate everyone who is coming? Note that it is better to have a room that is slightly too small than one that is far too big. A crowded room gives the impression that something significant is happening and will give your press conferences more of a buzz
- is there good cell phone reception
- are there plenty of electrical sockets
- are there extension cables for powerpoint projectors, laptops, etc.
- does the room have good lighting
- is it quiet and will it be quiet on the day of the event - you do not want to be competing with noisy air conditioning or a party next door!
- is there a good place for the speakers to sit, where they will be both seen and heard?
- is there enough room for TV cameras and microphones, etc.

Step Six - Produce a media kit

A media kit is a folder of materials that provides all the information journalist might need in relation to the subject of your press conference. This should be handed out to all those attending. It should also be available on the media section of your website.

Definition: Media Advisory

A concise announcement to the media about a particular event or news item. It is typically urgent in tone and contains detail in an easy to read format.

A media pack should include the following:

- media advisory
- press release(s)
- fact sheets
- brief biographies of spokespeople
- organisational brochure
- business card of the primary media contact in your organisation

You may wish to include other items such as reports, photographs, diagrams and charts, etc.

TIP: MAKE YOUR MEDIA PACK SPECIAL⁴⁹

The media always appreciate:

- fresh information

⁴⁹ *The SPIN Project, Strategic Communications Planning, The Spin Project, 2005*

- compelling stories with a human interest
- authentic spokespeople
- opinion polls
- scorecards
- top ten lists

Step Seven - Select speakers and brief them well

The more high profile the speakers at your press conference, the more attention it will attract. At minimum, you should have the head of your organisation or someone from your Trustees. A popular figure in the public eye works best.

Brief all speakers in advance. There is nothing worse than your speakers going “off message”. Ideally, in addition to key messages and stories, they should be familiar with relevant policy reports. Rehearse speakers using a mock question and answer session thinking through all the questions they might be asked and working out the answers, that correspond with your messages.

Be sure to collect brief biographies from the speakers for use in the media packs and by whoever will introduce them at the press conference.

Step Eight - Plan what will happen at the press conference

Create a timetable and plan for what will happen, for example:

- what time will you start and finish?
- what will be the order of events?
- who will speak?
- who will introduce the speakers?
- will there be a chairperson - if so who will do this?
- are you allowing time for questions?
- who will answer these?
- who will answer these?
- what will you do if there are questions outside the topic? who will respond to these?
- what briefing will be needed for speakers and the chair regarding potentially difficult or sensitive questions
- who will thank the speakers - and the media?
- when will refreshments be served?

Step Nine - Invite the media

Send out written notices of your press conference well in advance. Spend time on preparing this notice as it is the main element in promoting your event. The notice should provide convincing reasons why your event will be something they do not want to miss. Be sure that all

information included is accurate - including the details of the venue, date, speakers, etc.. Double check this before you send out.

It works best if you can send invitation notices to specific reporters or editors. If this is not possible send them to the newsdesks or programme desks.

Follow up your initial notice with a phone call to check whether they are planning to attend. If they say no, be ready to persuade them to change their minds.

TIP: MAKE YOUR INVITATION NOTICES SPECIAL

Making your invitation notice stand out gets reporters interested in your press conference. Brainstorm ideas with your team to come up with inexpensive but eye-catching ways to do this. For example:

- Deliver the notices by hand - in a bucket
- Print the notice on a sheet of toilet paper
- Wrap the notice round a bottle of mineral water; or round a bar of soap
- Print the notice on the back of a poster

Tips for the Day of the Press Conference

If you want to look professional it is important to make sure that your press conference runs smoothly. This means that your team and any other helpers you have brought in must create a solid plan and checklist for the day. Although everyone will have specific roles and responsibilities, they also need to be ready to step in and cover for a colleague when this is necessary.

A checklist really helps because there are so many things to remember. Some of the common items for a press conference checklist⁵⁰ appear below, but you will want to add more of your own:

- Is all the equipment needed in place - projectors, laptops, microphones, etc. Has the equipment been switched on and checked?
- Is the air conditioning/heating on; is it the right temperature?
- Is the furniture arranged properly?
- Are the media packs in place?

- Who is meeting the speakers?
- Who will introduce them to each other?
- Who will provide them with a reminder of the timetable and their briefs?
- Who will ensure they have everything they need - water, pens, paper, etc.

⁵⁰ *Christian Aid, How to organise an event, undated*

- Who will meet and greet the media?
- Who will introduce them to people you want them to speak to - before and after the main presentations?
- Who will take note of additional materials and further interviews requested by reporters?

- Who will supervise parking - or check this is happening?
- Who will supervise the refreshments - or check this is happening?
- Who will tidy up afterwards - or ensure that this happens?

Example: ANEW Media Advisory

THE SECOND EASTERN AFRICA SANITATION CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN KAMPALA, UGANDA, MARCH 2-4, 2010

Uganda is to host the 2nd Eastern Africa sanitation conference between Tuesday 2nd and Thursday 4th March at the Golf Course Hotel in Kampala.

The Conference

This conference is the second follow up meeting for Eastern Africa for the 2nd African Conference on Sanitation and Hygiene (AfricaSan+5) that took place in Durban South Africa, in February 2008 under the auspices of the Africa Ministerial Council on Water (AMCOW), and its partners.

The meeting in Kampala will review the progress that countries in Eastern Africa have made on commitments made at AfricaSan+5, whose goal was to promote sanitation and hygiene improvement programmes in Africa and to assist key stakeholders in identifying actions to accelerate the achievement of national and the MDG targets for sanitation.

This conference will provide a platform for the governments in the region, civil society and donors to review progress made on national action plans towards achieving the eThekweni Action Plan of 2008, ministerial commitments, and commitments made by the Heads of State at the African Union Summit which took place in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt.

The eThekweni Action Plan, which was agreed upon during the second African Conference on Sanitation and Hygiene in Durban, South Africa, articulates the critical actions to be further developed, funded and monitored by 2010 in order to put Africa 'back on track' to meet the sanitation MDGs.

Press Conference

After the opening ceremony on 2nd March, 2010 at 10:00am, a press conference will be addressed by Uganda's Minister of Water and Environment, Maria Mutagamba, and the Minister of Health, Dr Stephen Mallinga, together with representatives from AMCOW, African Civil Society Network on Water and Sanitation (ANEW), Uganda's National Sanitation Working Group, World Bank, UNICEF, International Resource Centre, Gender and Water Alliance and Water Aid.

Participants

The conference will have participants from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan, and will comprise of state, non-state and donor agencies in the water and sanitation sector. Other experts on sanitation will also be invited from other regions to share experiences and expertise.

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SECTION SEVEN: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE MEDIA

Different Types of Media

Traditional media includes newspapers, magazines and periodicals, radio and television. Over the last two decades, new technologies have resulted in new popular media including the internet with its websites, social networking sites and blogs as well as mobile or cell phones.

You should select the media you want to work with based on the advocacy audiences you want to reach. Generally TV coverage is the most difficult to obtain but can reach the largest numbers of people, including your target audiences. In many countries, getting coverage on the radio is easier because there are lots of local FM radio stations as well as national radio. Often local stations broadcast in local languages which is essential if you want to reach grassroots or disadvantaged communities.

The advantages and disadvantages of working with different types of media are outline in Figure 1.1 in Section One.

Unfortunately, in a number of countries in Africa freedom of expression is limited. In these circumstances, journalists face censorship and have to be sensitive to government control.

Getting to Know Your Local Media

- Study the media by watching, reading or listening to it and find out which newspapers and programmes cover your type of issue.
- Take a note of the names of the specific journalists, editors or producers who write about your issue or seem sympathetic to your ideas. Make a point of reading their articles and keeping track of their interests so you can tap into them.
- Search the internet for the website of your local Foreign Correspondents Association. This should provide contact details for all foreign correspondents working in your country.
- Talk to colleagues in sister organisations and networks to find out which media they think are the best for your issue and which journalists might be helpful.
- Which media attracts the audiences you want to reach? For advocacy communications, it is better to have a short list of media that are seen by your target audiences than a huge list that receives no attention from them at all.
- Build up a database of your selected media and specific reporters, editors and producers. Remember to update this regularly as journalists often change jobs.
- First contact with reporters should include basic information about your organisation. Follow up first contact with a letter that includes your contact information, your activities and why your advocacy work would be interesting to the reporter's audience.
- When first contacting a journalist, tell them about one of their articles or programmes you liked. Everyone likes a compliment!
- Be a news expert. Follow the news agenda closely and find ways to fit what you are doing into it.

TIP: GET TO KNOW THE NEWS EDITOR

The news editor is the person who decides which subjects will be covered. S/he is a very important person in any newsroom including TV, radio or newspapers. Reporters/journalists are the people who actually research and write news and features articles. If you can build a relationship with a well respected and committed journalist, this will increase the chance of your story being covered

Building Relationships with the Media

The success of your media strategy will depend largely on contacts with reporters, editors and other media representatives. Never underestimate the importance of maintaining good media contacts. (Pact Tanzania)⁵¹

“The best way of ensuring the co-operation of journalists is to establish a relationship of trust based on mutual respect.” (European Commission)⁵²

Building relationships with the journalists, editors and producers that are responsible for covering your advocacy issue increases the chances that your messages and stories will receive the coverage you want.

When you begin using the media to achieve your advocacy goals, it is important for your organisation to establish a set of rules about who will initiate contact with reporters on different issues. It is even more important to have rules about who will deal with incoming enquiries. It is best to have limited numbers of people involved because everyone needs to know what each other has said. Also, *“Reporters don't like to be bounced around, never knowing if the person they are talking to has any authority to speak for your organization. Even worse, they hate having to repeat their requests to half a dozen people.”⁵³*

TIPS FROM PACT TANZANIA:⁵⁴ PERSONAL CONTACTS ARE BEST

“There is no substitute for picking up the phone, getting through to a reporter you already know and “selling” a story idea to them. Building rapport with media people does not happen overnight. A steady and reliable relationship can only be developed through regular meetings and phone conversations. Often this process takes months, even years to evolve.

Don't just wait for reporters to call you, because it rarely happens. A big part of your **media strategy** includes placing stories, initiating press coverage, and getting your organization and your spokesperson on the address book of the media person. The press can be contacted in several ways: by telephone, in face-to-face sessions including press briefings and news conferences, through email and by other media stories. It is also very important to ensure that you invite them in any functional meeting that you have.....

Face-to-face meetings can be the most successful format for good press coverage. The smaller the meeting, the better. As often as possible, organize one-on-one lunches or breakfasts for

⁵¹ Pact Tanzania, undated, op cit

⁵² European Commission, op cit

⁵³ Pact Tanzania, undated, op cit

⁵⁴ Pact Tanzania, undated, op cit

your spokesperson and reporters. If a story does not accurately reflect your organization's perspective, call the reporter directly, using the story as an opportunity to set up a meeting. If your organization is called over the phone to respond to a recent event or announcement, end the conversation by saying, "Maybe we should get together to discuss in greater detail when there is more time. How about lunch?"

Once you have begun a relationship with someone in the media, keep in contact via email or SMS and occasionally by phone.

Be proactive

Do not wait for journalists to contact you. Go to them and anticipate their needs by drawing their attention to key events and particularly interesting developments.

Be brief

Do not contact them for a chat! Everyone in the media works to deadlines and most have huge workloads. So before contacting them, ***work out exactly what you want to say***. Then say it. Take a lead from their response. If they sound harassed ask if it would be better to call back later. Do not expect them to hold an in-depth conversation with you. Do not waste a journalist's time or they will find another story or another source.

Make yourself available

When journalists are looking for information, they usually need it quickly, perhaps for a programme that day or an article the next. So when a journalist contacts you respond as soon as possible. Never leave a question unanswered. If you cannot reply in time, make the effort to call or email them as soon as you can to explain why.

TIP: ALWAYS BE PROFESSIONAL

However friendly you get, or even if you have asked for something to be "off the record" do not relax. Always follow this advice:

*"Do not go off duty when you're with a journalist. Casual remarks made whilst relaxing over a post-interview drink can be used against you. Do not say anything you wouldn't want to see in print."*⁵⁵

Be a channel

When you cannot answer a journalist's questions, refer them to a person or organisation that can. It is good to alert the nominated person that you have done this.

Educate key journalists

Consider holding events to help key reporters get a grasp of your subject. The ignorant journalist can actually be your best friend. Do not be shy about spoon-feeding them.

Provide journalists with ideas and angles

⁵⁵ WaterAid, *Communications Toolkit*, 2009, op cit

Make your advocacy messages interesting to the journalist's audience. Link them to something currently in the news. Or with things people care about, or will be shocked by. Journalists want to create a lively story not simply provide information.

Don't lie, exaggerate or make things up

A good relationship with the media is all about credibility. If you don't know the answer to a journalist's question, write it down and tell them you will get back to them within the next 30 minutes with an answer.

Keep in touch with any long-term projects they may be working on

Be imaginative about how part of your story or message could fit into their future articles or programmes. Also help by sharing information or contacts that might be useful to the reporter, even if these are not connected to your own issue.

Say thank you

If they use your story, drop them a short note to say thank you.

Remember your job is to be responsive, co-operative and interesting!

TIP: HOW TO TELL JOURNALISTS ABOUT YOUR STORY

- Make sure your story is good (see Sections Four and Five on how to do this)
- Start by asking if they are on a deadline and if this is a good time to talk
- **Get to the point fast**, and keep to it - adapt your core message for this
- Recount the human interest or visual part first. Tell the bigger story through the eyes of individuals
- Be convincing, provide facts and figures to support your claims
- Use a great sound bite, a brief sentence or phrase that like a headline summarises your case in a few easily remembered words
- Remember that, while you are talking, the reporter is thinking:
 - ? What's in this for us? Will our readers/listeners/viewers be interested
 - ? Will my boss think this is a good idea?
 - ? How much trouble will it be for us to get this story on air/into print?

If you can provide them with the ideas, angles and information that allows them to give positive answers on those three points, you have a good chance of successfully persuading the journalist to cover your story.

SECTION EIGHT: SPOKESPERSONS, MEDIA INTERVIEWS AND PUBLIC SPEAKING

1. SPOKESPERSONS

The Importance of Having Good Spokespersons

Your spokespersons are the public face of your organisation or network. What they say, how they look, and their style and approach will influence strongly how your organisation is seen by the outside world. If you are engaging in advocacy communications, it is vital that you choose and train your spokespeople carefully.

The most powerful person in your organisation is not necessarily the best spokesperson.⁵⁶ What is needed are people who have a good knowledge of the advocacy issues but are also engaging and effective public speakers and who can present themselves in an a way that is attractive to different advocacy audiences.

Discipline is another necessary characteristic of good spokespersons. They will be representing and speaking on behalf of your organisation or network. So they must stick to agreed positions and not offer personal opinions. If they do offer personal views, they must make it crystal clear that what they say does not represent the collective view of the network.

Your spokespersons must be well-prepared and know the subject. Ideally you should have no more than one or two spokespeople. Each of them should know which issues they will be leading on but be prepared to step in for their co-spokespersons if necessary. The spokespersons will act as a resource for the media and should be easy to contact and accessible for reporters with tight deadlines.

2. MEDIA INTERVIEWS

“All interviews are a meeting of two agendas - the issues you wish to raise and the journalist’s story they wish to tell. Although the journalist is asking the questions, you are in control as the answers are down to you.” (WaterAid)⁵⁷

Why Interviews are Important

“A media interview is a conversation between a reporter and a person who has an interesting story that can be used as the basis for publication or broadcast. Although interviews are usually used by NGOs/CBOs for education and awareness-raising work, media interviews can be used for advocacy work too.” (International HIV/AIDS Alliance)⁵⁸

An interview gives you the opportunity to explain to a large number of people why your advocacy issue deserves attention and what you wish to see done about it. A successful interview should motivate people to find out more, or to take action.

⁵⁶Cox, J., (VSO), *Participatory Advocacy: a toolkit for VSO staff, volunteers and partners*, VSO, November 2009

⁵⁷ WaterAid, *Communications Toolkit, Chapter Five, Working with the Media*, WaterAid, 2009

⁵⁸ International HIV/AIDS Alliance, *‘Advocacy in Action’ Cards – for developing practical advocacy skills*, International HIV/AIDS Alliance

The idea of being interviewed often makes people feel uncomfortable or nervous. This is natural as being an interviewee means giving up some control over what happens. What follows is intended to provide information that will help you to feel more confident and better equipped to get your advocacy messages across.

Note that for a media interview to help achieve your advocacy objectives it must appear in media outlets that reach the audience you need to influence.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Interviews⁵⁹

Advantages

- They can provide profile for yourself and/or your organisation that increases your credibility with key decision-makers and other stakeholders
- They are an opportunity to get your messages across in your own words
- Your messages can reach a wide audience with relatively little effort

Disadvantages

- Inexperienced or badly prepared interviewees can be caught out by difficult questions, say something foolish, and lose support for the organisations or its advocacy work
- The reputation of your organisation or network could be damaged if the person interviewed does not stick to the organisation's views

Before Agreeing to an Interview

If a reporter requests an interview, before you say yes it is important to gather the following information:

- which newspaper or programme will it be used for
- when will it be published or broadcast
- what the audience is like
- what information does the reporter already have
- why they specifically want to interview you/your organisation
- if they have seen your previous press releases or reports on the issue
- what sort of questions will you be asked
- how long will the interview last
- who will be the interviewer
- who else will be interviewed
- if it is a broadcast interview, whether it will be live or recorded

Once you have this information you need to decide whether you are the right person to be interviewed. Being a truly good interviewee depends on having a **good knowledge of the subject**.

⁵⁹ Adapted from: *International HIV/AIDS Alliance, 'Advocacy in Action' Cards – for developing practical advocacy s*

Is there someone else in your organisation or network that would be more appropriate for the topic? If there is, as soon as you have finished speaking to the reporter, call the person and ask them if they would be willing to do the interview. If they say yes, ring the reporter and put them in touch directly.

Even if you are the best person for the interview, it is best not to allow the reporter to start asking questions straight away. Suggest instead that s/he should call back (or that you will call them) in 15 minutes. This will give you time to gather your thoughts and prepare for the interview.

Tip: Be Safe, Not Sorry

Most interviews are neither “investigative” nor hostile. Usually, reporters are simply trying to gather accurate information on a topic they intend to cover. However, it is important to establish at the outset the style and approach of the reporter before you agree to take part.

When asking your preliminary questions regarding the interview, try to get a sense of what the reporter already knows and thinks. Sometimes they have already made up their mind on an issue and may simply be seeking quotes that will support their point of view. Knowing this allows you to take care not to be quoted in such a way that you appear to agree with something that you do not.

As highlighted in the previous Section, assume that nothing you say will be “off the record”, even if this is agreed. Instead, at all times speak and act as though the journalist will use everything.

Steps in Preparing for an Interview

1. Review your messages and think about the best way to put them across. Generally, you will not have much time in the interview, so focus on two or three key points.
2. Think about a few facts and figures that could support what you are saying. Make sure these are very easy to understand.
3. Think about human interest stories or anecdotes that could illustrate your messages - these must be brief and to the point.
4. Consider possible hostile questions that you could be asked and how you will respond to the interview about a subject that is difficult or sensitive, decide in advance what you should and should not say. And develop phrases that explain why you cannot say more: “as an NGO it is not appropriate for me to comment on party politics”, “I have not seen the documents”, “we wish to investigate the facts before commenting”, etc.
5. If it is not a telephone interview, think about what you will wear and what will your clothes will say about you.
6. Prepare answers for typical questions such as:
 - How many people are affected?

- How bad is the problem?
- Why will your solution work when others have not?
- How much will it cost?

7. If time allows look at the newspaper or watch or listen to the programme that will carry the interview to get a sense of its approach.

8. Rehearse with your press officer or a colleague. Get them to ask you difficult questions so that you can practice giving your answers.

TIP: Dress and behave to appeal to your target audience

First impressions are important, so it is important to consider how you want to come across. If your audience is made up of serious suit-wearers, then dress the same way and do not tell jokes. If your audience is sports fans, wear something casual and try to use sporting references. If in doubt about your audience, wear smart national dress.

Note that for television black or white clothing is not good as it may either blend into the background or, in the case of white, cause glare. Very bright colours should also be avoided, as well as fancy patterns on materials and ties as they can “vibrate” on the screen and will draw the audiences attention away from you and what you are saying. **Big jewelry can also be distracting.**

How to Give a Great Interview

- Take a few deep breaths immediately before you start the interview to help you relax
- Pretend you are discussing the subject with an ordinary person and try to be yourself as much as possible. Remember you are the expert.
- Always start with your most important message
- Stay fully engaged, alert and focused at all times
- Speak at a normal speed, not too fast and not too slow
- Talk in simple language. Use as little professional or technical jargon as possible
- Tell stories and anecdotes that illustrate your point
- Keep responses brief, but long enough to help the reporter get quotes
- Unless the interview is about a tragedy, smile. A smile can be “heard” in your voice on radio as well as seen on television. A smile transforms you into a warm and likeable human being
- Do not worry if the reporter asks you a question you are not expecting. Reply by saying the question is important or interesting but before you answer it, you’d just like to say...(x, y and z)...and then deliver your most important message. This strategy is known as ‘bridging’ and is a common interview technique
- Stick to your main points and do not get drawn too far off onto other subjects. Say, for example, “I think what you are asking about is important but the main issue is...” and repeat your most important message.

- Remember you probably know more than your interviewer. If s/he uses information you think is inaccurate, say so and offer the facts as you know them
- If you do not understand a question, ask for clarification
- If you do not have the answer, say so. Unless you are being broadcast live, tell the reporter where they can find the information they need.
- It is fine to repeat your points. This helps people to remember them.
- Whatever happens, do not lose your temper. The calmer you are, the more unreasonable a hostile interviewer will appear
- Maintain eye contact with your interviewer. If you are becoming boring you will see it in their eyes!

Advice for all Broadcast Interviews

- Stay still. Moving about in a chair or rocking on your feet makes you look nervous and can even take you out of reach of a microphone or camera
- Speak in complete thoughts. The reporter's question may be edited out and your response should stand on its own. This is especially important for television interviews. For example, do not answer the question "do you think spending cuts will harm the sector?" with "yes they will". Instead say "yes, the spending cuts will be a disaster for the health and welfare of millions of people".
- Try to use full names all the way through the interview. This may seem a little strange at first but ensures that anyone who was not concentrating at the beginning can understand what you are talking about. It also makes editing what you say much easier for the reporter. For example, the second time you speak government policy repeat "the government's water policy" rather than saying "it"; or repeat service providers rather than "they"
- If you make a mistake during a recorded interview, you can ask to answer the question again. If it is live you can say, "Perhaps I might explain that answer", and then say what you really wanted to say

Advice for radio interviews

- Don't breathe loudly into the microphone or turn your head to the side
- For radio, your voice will come sound higher than it is. Counteract this by lowering the tone of your voice
- Don't speak too fast
- Give full answers. For example, if the question is "how many people are you expecting at your event?" don't say "one hundred" say "we are expecting one hundred young people to attend"
- If it makes you feel more comfortable, take some notes along to remind you of key points - but don't read from them and definitely don't rustle them!

Advice for television interviews

- Think about your posture. Do not slouch. Try not to look down. Instead look straight at the person interviewing you.
- Check the scenery behind you to make sure you are not positioned in front of anything strange. If you are not in a television studio, you may be able to have a say in the backdrop.

Shelves of books will make you look academic and serious. A messy office will make you look disorganised.

- Try not to:
 - look terrified
 - sound uncertain
 - use too many er umms or aaahs
 - wave your arms about too much
 - be patronising, lecturing or pompous
 - stiff, tight-lipped, stern
 - speak too fast, too loudly or be too abrupt
 - smile!

3. PUBLIC SPEAKING

Preparation - the Key to Successful Public Speaking

“Before you start working on your talk or presentation, it’s vital that you really understand what you want to say, who you want to tell and why they might want to hear it.”
(Mind Tools)⁶⁰

“Tell them what you’re going to tell them, tell them, then tell them what you’ve told them.” (Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister)

As for all other aspects of advocacy communications work, spending time on preparation is the key to success. There are ten steps involved in planning a public speaking presentation:⁶¹

1. **Define why you are giving the speech or presentation.** Do you want to persuade the audience that an issue is important? Or convince them that something needs to change? Do you simply want to educate them about the issue? Or do you want to convince to take a specific action?
2. **Know your audience.** Who will you be speaking to? How much do they know about your issue? Will audience members have anything in common? Are they allies, opponents or undecided about your position on the issue?
3. **What do you want the audience to take away from the presentation?** What do you want to communicate? How will you know whether you have done this successfully? Set yourself written objectives for the presentation.
4. **Find out who else will be speaking at the event.** It is useful to know who the other speakers are and where your presentation sits in the overall timetable. Have speakers been given written briefs for their talks? If so, ask the organisers to let you have these. This will ensure you know who is talking about what and enable you to avoid duplicating information.
5. **Become familiar with the subject you will speak on.** If you do not yet have a thorough knowledge of your subject, the next step is to improve your understanding. Read papers

⁶⁰ Mind Tools, *Better Public Speaking and Presentation*, undated

⁶¹ Adapted from: Pact Tanzania, *Media Guide, Advocacy Expert Series*, Pact Tanzania, undated; and Mind Tools, *Speaking to an Audience – communicate complex ideas successfully*, undated

and reports on the issue. You must be comfortable with the subject before you speak. If this is not the case, consider asking someone else to give the presentation.

6. **Determine the length of your presentation.** Audiences cannot listen attentively for long periods so plan accordingly. However enthusiastic you are about your subject you should not speak for more than 15 - 25 minutes. A short but interesting presentation followed by a question and answer session has more impact on an audience. The longer the presentation the bigger the chance of boredom setting in.
7. **List the main points you want to make.** Do not try to cram everything you ever wanted to say into your speech. Select 3 - 4 key points you want to make. Divide the time you have set into segments. The first segment is your introduction. The next three or four will be allotted to your main points and the final one is your conclusion. Can you fit all your main points into the time you have set? If not, prioritise!

EXAMPLE: SEGMENTING YOUR TIME

If you have 20 minutes to make your speech and have 3 main points to make, your segments will look like this:

Segment One: Introduction - overview of the presentation, why you are speaking about it and what you hope to accomplish = 3 minutes

Segment Two: Main point A - basics, plus facts or figures, plus illustration = 5 minutes

Segment Three: Main point B - basics, importance, example = 4 minutes

Segment Four: Main point C - basics, figures, illustration = 4 minutes

Segment Five: Summary, conclusions and recommendations = 4 minutes

As this illustrates, there are limits on what you can say in 20 minutes! But remember that if you have inspired your audience they will want to know more.

8. **Outline the substance of the speech.** Use facts and figures, quotes, human interest stories, real life examples and anecdotes to liven up the presentation and make it more memorable. Avoid too many statistics and confusing information in your presentation. Instead, put this information in a handout for participants to refer to later. Make sure your introductory and concluding segments are strong as these will play an important part in determining what the audience remembers. Do not forget to mention your organisation and/or network.
9. **Think about how you can best convey your message?** Language is important. Choose the words you will use to suit your audience. Create some visual aids - powerpoint slides or flipcharts or posters. Do not try to write the whole of your speech on the visual aids - 5 or 6 brief bullet points on each slide or sheet is quite enough.
10. **Rehearse your presentation.** Do this using your visual aids and time how long it takes to deliver. Trim, edit and amend as necessary. Try it out on a colleague or friend and ask them for constructive criticism. Get them to ask you difficult questions about your subject

and practice your responses. Practice is the key to giving a relaxed and successful presentation.

Tips for Delivering Your Speech

How you deliver your speech is the final stage in a successful presentation. And for some people this is the most difficult part. But public speaking is something that everyone can be good at if they follow some simple rules.

- It is natural to be a bit nervous. Try to convert your nerves into excitement, energy and enthusiasm
- You will feel less nervous if you (a) arrive in plenty of time and check that all the technology is working; (b) wear clothes appropriate to the audience, and that make you feel confident and comfortable.
- Before you speak, take time to relax your neck and shoulder muscles. You may find it useful to take a few deep breaths and as you breathe out let your whole body relax.
- The hardest part is getting started. So to open your presentation have two or three sentences that you know off by heart. This will get you going and the rest will come more easily.
- Speak loudly, clearly and slowly, and pause to allow people to consider key points. Many problems with presentations are a result of speaking too fast. This reduces clarity and comprehension. So remember, less is more. Focus on slowing down and emphasising the most important points. Use a variety of tones of voice.
- Do not read your speech. You should talk to the audience, not at them. If you need any prompts apart from your visual aids, write some key phrases on index cards.
- Maintain eye contact with the audience throughout your presentation. A quick glance at your visual aids is acceptable but never turn your back on the audience for longer than a few seconds.
- Be enthusiastic about your subject matter. Keep your body language up-beat. Smile, be focused and completely present in the moment. Gesture as you would in normal conversation to emphasise your points. All these things make you look confident and help to keep your audience fully engaged.
- If you can avoid doing so, do not speak from behind a rostrum or desk. Stand up and move around a little.
- If you have to speak sitting down, for example as part of a discussion panel, make a good impression by leaning forward, smiling, and making eye contact across the whole audience.
- If you forget what you were about to say, pause for a moment and remember your overall objectives for the presentation. While the original words may not come back to you, you should be able to continue on the right track even if you use different examples and ideas.
- If you have handouts for the audience, you should let them know that these exist but only hand them out at the end of your speech.

Dealing with Questions

- When your presentation is over it is usual to invite questions from the audience. Be sure to take questions from the entire audience, not just the people at the front or in the VIP seats.
- If there are a lot of people wanting to ask questions and there is no chair to do this for you, say you would like to gather a few questions at a time and respond to them together.
- Listen to each question carefully. Try not to show any emotion or reaction as you listen. If you do not understand the question, ask for the questioner to re-phrase it for you. Then tell them what you have heard to check you are right. If their question has been negative, try to re-phrase it in a more positive way when you check that what you have heard is correct.
- Try to take a relaxed and light hearted approach to the question and answer session. Try to enjoy yourself
- Think before you respond then speak to the whole audience, not just the questioner.
- Your replies should be as simple and direct as possible
- Do not bluff! If you do not know the answer to a question say so, and throw it open to the audience to answer.
- Try not to become upset if some questions appear hostile. Be confident about saying what you think and what you know. Throw anything you don't know back to the audience to see if anyone else does.
- Do not let one questioner dominate the session. If a person has asked a question and you have answered it and they want to follow up on your answer, suggest you get together in the break, or after the session is over.
- Remember to leave yourself some space at the end of the session to summarise some of your answers and repeat the key points from your presentation.
- Always end on a positive note and thank the audience for their attention.

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