

## G3

## Advocacy Cycle Stage 4

## Taking action – Using media

Section G3 focuses on using media in advocacy. It explains what it is, why it is important and how to use it.



### Facilitator's notes

This section explores a series of questions and answers. A training workshop facilitator must be familiar with this material.

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### Training exercises

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## SECTION G3 Facilitator's notes



What is the media and why does it matter in advocacy?

The media includes traditional media platforms such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines, and electronic and online media such as email, the internet, social networking sites and blogs.

It is a powerful force that can build awareness, shape public opinion and influence decision-makers and their decisions, leading to changes in laws, policies and practices.

Using the media well, and integrating our media activities into our wider advocacy strategy, can greatly enhance our advocacy work and increase the chances of bringing about the changes we desire.



What opportunities exist for working with the media in advocacy?

There are an increasing number of options open for working with the media, including:

### Written

- **PRESS RELEASES**
- **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR** of a local or national newspaper or magazine – the letters page is often one of the most-read sections of a newspaper and a carefully worded letter of a few paragraphs can be particularly effective in getting across the main advocacy messages and a call for action.
- **FEATURE-LENGTH ARTICLES** for newspapers or magazines – these always have a strong appeal on a personal level. They are often linked to an individual's personal story, a single topic and particular advocacy moments, but they do not necessarily need to relate to a current news topic.
- **BLOGS** written from a personal viewpoint, or in the name of the leader of our organisation, for our organisation's website or a media website.
- **BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR JOURNALISTS** on the issue (on the basis that they may not have time to do in-depth research themselves).



**Spoken and visual**

- Radio interview
- Television interview
- Phoning in to a radio talk show
- Radio or television programmes, including producing regular programmes in local languages, as well as storylines about the issue placed within soap operas or other popular programmes.
- Film footage on social networking sites, illustrating how communities have been affected by an advocacy issue.

**Relational**

- Putting on a breakfast or lunch for journalists and inviting them to come and find out about an advocacy initiative
- Inviting a journalist to an event or to see what is happening in one of the communities affected by an advocacy issue
- Organising joint events with the media
- Working through social media, alongside traditional media channels, to share stories and build relationships with key journalists.

This list is not definitive. New ways of working with the media continue to be identified and developed, so it is important to keep an open mind and use different methods of engagement.

## CASE STUDY

**AFGHANISTAN**

In Afghanistan, people suffering with mental health illnesses are largely left untreated as there are very few relevantly trained professionals within the stretched and limited health care system. Sufferers are mostly disregarded due to a lack of knowledge and resources. Families sometimes turn to traditional faith healers, who do not always provide appropriate help. The many Afghans with mental health problems are consequently one of the most vulnerable groups in society. One Tearfund partner, seeing the great need, decided to advocate for greater attention to the problem following years of treating patients and training local health professionals and workers in the western region of the country.

Working with the provincial health director, the public health directorates, education directorates, health care professionals and other NGOs concerned about the issue, the partner raised awareness about mental health through basic training courses and special events. This included engaging with the media. As a result of the partner's requests, the media broadcast television programmes at a national level to raise awareness about mental health.

The partner also worked collaboratively with the Ministry of Health in developing a national mental health training manual for medical professionals working in primary health care. They also worked with some key higher education institutions to develop a mental health curriculum for nurses.

It is important to develop relationships with national and international journalists in our context and country, even when we do not want anything from them. If we tell them about our organisation and the communities with which we work, we are opening the door so that we can ask them to tell our stories and share our messages when appropriate opportunities arise. We can also find out what they are interested in.

## CASE STUDY

## EGYPT

Following the Arab Spring in Egypt, when many citizens rose up against the government and overthrew the president, advocacy became more difficult. Despite this, one of Tearfund's Egyptian partners, who had already convened a network with other NGOs, decided to continue advocating on child rights, particularly concerning the use of corporal punishment in schools. The partner knew, through the network, that this was in breach of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the Egyptian government had signed and whose provisions still stood, despite the uprising. As a network, the members used television and radio to broadcast messages speaking out against corporal punishment, something that was possible because of the network's pre-existing relationship with the journalists involved. They also met with the National Council of Motherhood and Childhood, a semi-autonomous government body, to ask them to change national practice in schools.



### What are media messages and how are they created?

A media message is the most important point that we want the interviewer and the public to pick up from our media work. It is the key thing that gets emphasised, whatever media channel we choose to use. For example, our media message may be that we want the government to take a particular action (eg pass a law, provide water to a certain region), or it may be that we want to bring attention to a situation (eg an increase in child trafficking from poorer regions of the country), or it may be that we want to highlight a good news story about success (eg a women's cooperative work together to build a local school).

It is important to know what we want to share in a media message, and it must be consistent and in line with advocacy messages used in lobbying and mobilising people.

Most people cannot cope with more than three things to remember. So, to develop a good media message, think in 3s:

# 3

**Points** – We should have no more than three key points

**Characteristics** – Our message should be *clear, concise* and *colourful*, using vivid examples and painting a picture of the situation

**Letters** – Remember the ABC rule:

- Acknowledge the question ('Yes, that's an important point')
- Bridging phrase ('But really the fundamental problem is ...')
- Communicate ('The real point is ...')

Remember:

- Avoid jargon and abbreviations.
- Use images truthfully and respect the dignity of the subject.

It is good to be able to summarise our main message(s) in one or two sentences so that we are sure what we are trying to get across. We should always try to use accessible language. We can do this by asking, 'Will someone who knows nothing about this issue understand this message?'

The clearer the core message, the easier it will be to include it in media work and the more likely the media will be to cover the story in the way we want. For example: 'Indigenous people are excluded from decisions about the use of their territories for mining and often miss out on

any potential benefits. The government needs to pass a law that requires any proposed mining activity to be discussed with communities, in order to gain their consent before it goes ahead and to reach agreement on benefit-sharing.'

A message is different from a 'sound bite'. A sound bite is a concise response in an oral interview, or a written quote, which incorporates our key messages in a short phrase that is easy to understand and catches people's attention.

Once we have developed our media message, it needs to be simplified into sound bites. The contents of a message and a sound bite are the same, but they are aimed at different audiences.

## CASE STUDY

**EAST AFRICA**

A Tearfund partner in East Africa wanted to highlight the issue of HIV because it was concerned about prevention, care and access to services for people living with HIV.

They organised a street march and invited television, radio and newspapers to attend. En route, they visited the Association of HIV/AIDS Patients as an act of solidarity. They carried banners with their messages clearly visible. They ended the march at the prime minister's office, where they delivered a letter and prayed for the nation and people living with HIV. The letter said that they wanted more coordination between NGOs and government in HIV prevention and care, increased education about lifestyle choices in schools, more medicines to be imported for people living with HIV, free of tax, and new laws to stop job discrimination against people living with HIV.

The march was covered on television, radio and in various publications, which raised awareness in many parts of the country.

As a result, the government agreed to import medicines free of tax, and the Ministry of Education introduced a forum, of which the partner was a member, that led to changes in the educational curriculum.



**What is good practice for working with the media in advocacy?**

Whether we are writing or speaking, and whether we are working live or recorded, the following principles have been tried and tested:

■ **Understand the aim**

Why do we want media coverage? Is it to reach decision-makers or a wider audience? Is it to raise awareness or to put pressure on decision-makers for changes in laws, policies and practices?

■ **Use clear media messages**

What particular messages do we want to share? Are we able to condense them into three key points? Are they clear, concise and colourful?

■ **Target key media**

If our advocacy message is aimed at government, then we will want to target media that has a wide reach and/or media that reaches government officials. Sometimes, these media channels are harder to gain access to, but it is worth pursuing contacts as this will increase the impact of our media work. Alternatively, if our advocacy message has a purely church focus, then gaining coverage in Christian media may be our main aim.

- **Target key people**

To use the media well, we need to have good relationships with relevant people who are covering the issues of interest to us and, if possible, are in sympathy with what we are trying to do. As an organisation, it is a good idea to try to become known for expertise in relation to the issue and to build up relevant contacts in the media.

## CASE STUDY

**BANGLADESH**

Lobbying local government to commit resources to disaster risk reduction initiatives can be challenging in Bangladesh. One village in North Bengal was keen that the embankments near their village were reinforced to protect them against annual river flooding. These embankments stretch many miles down the river but are rarely sufficiently strong to protect the villages they surround.

Staff from Tearfund partner Health, Education and Economic Development (HEED) accompanied the village Disaster Management Committee (DMC) in visiting the government water development board to support them in presenting their case. Each time they visited, they were told the board did not have the resources. As a result, HEED and the DMC, knowing that resources generally could be made available for embankment work, mobilised more village members and contacted a journalist from a national newspaper to accompany them to another meeting with the water development board.

The journalist wrote an article for the paper after this visit but the board, not wanting further bad publicity, decided to commit more time and resources to preparing plans for rebuilding the embankment. HEED then linked DMCs across many affected villages down the river and shared information about available funding. This led to more DMCs accessing funding and the government lending greater support to the strengthening of the embankments.

- **Try to view the issue from the perspective of the media**

We need to ask ourselves: why is this newsworthy? What will catch people's attention? What is the likely reaction?

- **Remember that no news is unbiased**

Most media have values behind them, whether they are political, religious, poverty-focused, etc. We must find out what this bias is before we approach them, so that we have a good understanding of how they may view our issue.

- **Use 'hooks'**

It is worthwhile trying to hang applicable stories or relevant events in our advocacy work on to media stories. For example, you could use the International Day on the Rights of the Child as a hook for media about advocacy relating to child rights.

## CASE STUDY

**DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)**

In Kivu in DRC, where a Tearfund partner was working on provision of water and sanitation, it decided to mark Global Handwashing Day, an annual event designed to raise awareness of the importance of improving hygiene practices. The campaign was based on the fact that, although people wash their hands with water, very few wash their hands during critical moments, including after using the toilet, while cleaning a child and before handling food.

Throughout Global Handwashing Day, the partner conducted radio talks to sensitise local communities and mobilise them to wash their hands with soap. They also joined with community members, local authority leaders and others to march through the town, before a keynote address was delivered by the public health inspector for the areas, which was broadcast live on radio.

As a result, many eating places started providing hand washing facilities with soap and the local government administration announced that it would take steps to enforce this strategy, as it believed it was key to curbing diseases such as cholera. The radio stations also continued to make public announcements about the importance of washing hands at critical times.

**■ Use social and digital media<sup>8</sup>**

Social media and websites that share film footage can both be useful for collecting and sharing stories, quotes, film clips and other materials. They can also be useful for building relationships with journalists and opinion-formers. Digital media can be used to record the data for sharing.

<sup>8</sup> Please check [www.tearfund.org/tilz](http://www.tearfund.org/tilz) for additional suggestions for using social and digital media in advocacy.



## TOOL 41

## Written media messages

One way to get a written media message out is to prepare a press release. These are sent to media contacts to try to get your issue on the radio and in print media, electronic media and television. It is one of the most common ways of sharing information with the media.

The media receive far more information and stories than they can cover, so press releases need to be interesting and relevant in order to catch the attention of the media, otherwise they will be ignored. They should also be shared through social media, websites, emails, texts and any other appropriate means.

Releases for different media will have different styles and emphasis, but they all have certain things in common.

Make sure you answer the following questions:

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| ■ <b>What</b> is happening / has happened?                     | <b>THE MEDIA STORY</b>    |
| ■ <b>Who, where, and when?</b>                                 | <b>THE FACTS</b>          |
| ■ <b>Why</b> is it happening / has it happened?                | <b>THE ANALYSIS</b>       |
| ■ <b>How</b> is it affecting people and why is this important? | <b>THE RELEVANCE</b>      |
| ■ <b>What</b> needs to happen now?                             | <b>THE ADVOCACY 'ASK'</b> |

Include the basic information in the first paragraphs (what, who, where and when).

Include a direct quote from a spokesperson and an example or story. The quote will often be from the director of the organisation or someone who has been affected by the situation. It needs to be concise and get across the main advocacy message.

Apply the 'So what?' question to the press release. Why is this interesting or relevant to the general public? Why would people want to read what it says?

Include good photographs, if possible, as this can significantly improve the chance of coverage in a newspaper and on the internet.

Ensure that facts are correct and put contact details and any further information at the bottom of the press release, as well as any additional information and statistics.

Once the press release has been sent, contact the person who has received it, in order to find out whether they will cover the story or want more information.







## TOOL 42

**Verbal media messages**

Sometimes, opportunities arise for media messages to be shared verbally, through radio, television, the internet or other media. It can be an effective way of delivering an advocacy message clearly and quickly. However, if badly done, it can undermine your advocacy work.

If you have been asked to do an interview, you should find out as much as you can about the programme or publication beforehand. Ask the journalist how they intend to present the issue (ie what angle they intend to take) and why they have chosen this particular topic. Ask what the target audience for the publication or programme is if you don't know already. This will give you a sense of what is required of you. Media outlets are not obligated to let you know what questions they are going to ask but, if you ask these questions, you will be better prepared.

Do not be worried about stating the limitations on what you are prepared and/or able to talk about. If you can only talk about a particular locality, incident or technical area of work, be clear about this with the journalist, so that you do not get drawn into wider discussion beyond the field of your expertise.

Interview styles can range from simple enquiry to hostile questioning. Remember that when communicating verbal media messages, we are the ones with the information. We are the experts and we are there to inform, educate and entertain. Good interviews require good preparation and experience. Good preparation can be learned, but experience only comes with practice.

**Ten tips for a media interview**

1. Be clear about your core message or messages. Write down the three main points you want make and stick to them.
2. Develop some stories or examples to illustrate your points.
3. Check the latest information and have the necessary facts written down in front of you to back up your arguments and answer any counter arguments.
4. Think of difficult questions you might be asked or arguments against your position and develop answers.
5. Find out about the media channel/station and interviewer. Are they likely to be sympathetic or antagonistic towards you? What is their interview style? Who are the listeners or viewers? What particularly interests them about the story?
6. Check whether it will be live or recorded and whether you will be the only person interviewed or whether it will be a debate.
7. If you are inexperienced or lacking confidence, practise what you want to say with a friend or colleague. Look straight at the camera and talk clearly. Keep the message short.
8. Develop a conversational style. Do not be too complicated or technical.
9. Never ignore questions, but steer your answers towards what you want to say. Use the subject of the questions to make the points you want to make. Remember the ABC rule:
  - Acknowledge the question ('Yes, that's an important point')
  - Bridging phrase ('But really the fundamental problem is ...')
  - Communicate ('The real point is ...').
10. Be confident in your knowledge and experience. Remember that you are likely to know more about the issue than the interviewer.

## SECTION G3 Training exercises



### EXERCISE 46 Press release

**Aim** To gain experience and confidence in writing a press release

**TYPE** Small group or individual exercise

**METHODS** Small group discussion, individual reflection, writing, plenary discussion

**HANDOUT** TOOL 41: Written media messages

- STEPS**
1. Provide participants with a story for which they want to gain media coverage or ask them to think of one themselves.
  2. Give out TOOL 41: Written media messages.
  3. Ask them to write a short press release (five to six paragraphs) based on their story and using the guidance in TOOL 41: Written media messages. They do not have to write correct prose; key bullet points would be sufficient.
  4. Each group (or selected individuals) should present their press release.
  5. Lead a plenary discussion and give feedback and any further guidance on writing news releases.



### EXERCISE 47 Radio interview

**Aim** To gain experience and confidence in giving radio interviews

**TIPS** It can be a good idea to record the interview, in which case a video recorder or audio recorder needs to be found and set up in advance

**TYPE** Small group exercise (two to four people)

**METHODS** Interview, feedback, plenary discussion

**HANDOUT** TOOL 42: Verbal media messages

- STEPS (VERSION 1)**
1. Provide participants with a story for which they want to gain media coverage or ask them to think of one themselves.
  2. Give out TOOL 42: Verbal media messages.
  3. Give them 15 minutes to prepare for a radio interview that will be no longer than two to three minutes.
  4. Facilitate a pretend interview, in which you are the radio presenter, conducting the interview. Record it, if possible, using a video camera or audio recorder. Make sure that you ask a variety of questions (with some more aggressive and some easier, for example).
  5. If possible, play back the recording, and ask the interviewee (or group) to share how they found the process and what they learned from it.
  6. Give feedback, as the interviewer, to the interviewee (or group) from your perspective.
  7. Facilitate a plenary discussion about what worked and what did not and why.
- STEPS (VERSION 2)  
– INSTEAD OF  
STEPS 4–7 ABOVE**
4. Ask them to interview each other and provide feedback.
  5. Generate a plenary discussion to share learning.