

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

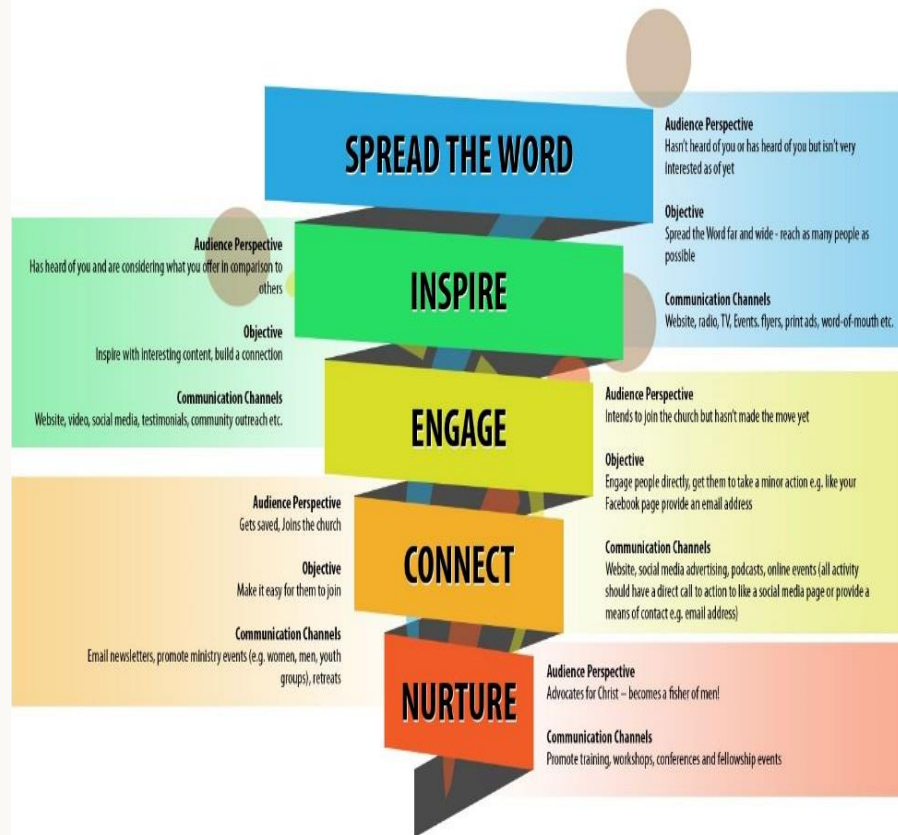
DEVELOPING A GOOD STRATEGY WITH PARTICULAR
FOCUS ON WORKING WITH THE MEDIA
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Objectives and what we'll cover in the session

To help develop your understanding of working with the media, what you need to consider and techniques to help.

- Communications strategies and what they might cover
- Why work with the media?
- What a good media plan would include.
- What makes a good story? and Exercise 1:
- Types of activities with the media.
- Developing message frameworks inc. islands of safety, key messages, sound bites
- Exercise 2.
- Developing a media list.
- Drafting press releases.
- What to do when the media gets in touch.
- Media interviews.
- Resources.
- Timing.
- Evaluation.
- Media logs.
- Questions?
- Handout 1: *What to do when the media gets in touch / media interviews.*
- Handout 2: *Pausing and rhetorical techniques.*

What is a communications strategy?



A communications strategy (sometimes also called a communications plan)

= plan of action to achieve a long-term or overall communications aim

Must link closely with organisational strategy or in this setting, to the National Partnership's strategy

What should it cover?

It will normally contain a number of elements:

- Media engagement
- Marketing
- Brand development / management
- Digital (website and social media)
- Publishing (posters, reports, newsletters etc.)
- Events
- Photography / video

Although how extensive these areas are will depend on the size of the organisation and the team.



Step 1: the media - why work with them?

- To reach a **wider audience**: the general public, decision makers, donors / potential donors
- **Raise awareness**: to increase awareness of child marriage and your organisation
- **Create a positive attitude** toward ending child marriage and your work = more support inc funding

Media work can be:

- **‘Proactive’** - you contact them about a story / project / launch
- **‘Reactive’** - they contact you and you react

To get the most from the media you should do **both**.

Step 2: what a good media plan would include

Your media plan should include:

- Your objectives – what do you want to achieve through your work with the media?
- Your target audiences – who you are trying to reach. Make a list.
- Your audiences' media habits – what media outlets do they read / listen to / watch? Some of this will be guess work. Make a list.
- Your key messages – the key things you want to get across when you speak to the media.
- Activities – that are designed to reach your audiences in the most effective way via the media.

Step 2: a good media plan

- Timings - when you will target a particular media outlet with your messages (think of hooks)? Bear in mind editorial calendars:

Dailys – very tight – a couple of hours.

Weeklies – need 2-3 days advance warning for most stories.

Magazines – varies, can be up to 3 months depending on outlet.

- Resources (people, budget etc) – a lot of media can be done very cheaply.
- Evaluation – set your Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) so you will know when you are successful (or not). What worked well and what needs to be improved upon?

When working with the media, as with most things, preparation is key.

An example media plan

<p>Jan</p> <p>Audience 1: stakeholders</p> <p>Outlet: The Daily News</p> <p>Activity: story (with + examples of how funding has helped and impact)</p> <p>Key message: the funding crisis facing ending child marriage programmes</p> <p>Timing: 3 weeks in advance of African Union Meeting</p> <p>KPI: contact made with finance minister post story and meeting arranged to discuss issue</p> <p>Lead person: Hope</p>	<p>Feb</p> <p>Audience 2: The general public</p> <p>Outlets: 5 local radio stations, 2 national, 5 local papers and 2 national</p> <p>Activity: pitch story of how we used radio to reach x communities to end child marriage</p> <p>Key message: radio is vital in the fight against child marriage</p> <p>Timing: World Radio Day (13th)</p> <p>KPI: story covered in 2 new local areas and 1 new national, 2 new community leaders engaged in campaign</p> <p>Lead person: Joseph</p>	<p>March</p> <p>Audiences 2 & 3 (local communities):</p> <p>Outlets:</p> <p>Activity: launch event in x community with media from x, y and z invited</p> <p>Key message: the intrinsic value of girls</p> <p>Timing: International Women's Day (8th)</p> <p>KPI: Chief x speaks out publically about ending CM and value of girls, 10 sets of parents ask for more information about the local campaign</p> <p>Lead person: Monica</p>
April	May	June
July	Aug	Sept
Oct	Nov	Dec

What makes a good story?

- Exercise 1 – working in your groups take 5 minutes to brainstorm what makes a good story?

Note: anything can be news, but not everything is newsworthy.

Clue: there are around **10 elements** that might make any story newsworthy.

Step 3: what makes a good story?

Here are somethings that make something newsworthy:

Timing - does it coincide with an announcement, a larger story, an anniversary?

Superlatives - is it the first, the largest, the oldest, unique? Uniqueness i.e. “Dog Bites Man” is not a story but “Man bites dog” is.

Relevance - can people relate to the story?

Human interest - is there an interesting personality at the centre of the story?

People like to read and hear about other people. They like stories they can relate to or about issues they can talk about.

Step 3: what makes a good story?

Shock factor - shocking news such as that involving change resulting in widespread impact, tragedy, unexpected victory etc.

Proximity - audiences relate more to stories that are close to them geographically – local papers like local stories, national papers like national stories.

Recentness - journalists are competitive about **breaking news** – revealing stories as they happen. They want to be the ones that brought it to you first.

Exclusivity - if a newspaper or broadcaster is the first and only news outlet to be covering that story then they will rate it highly.

Step 3: what makes a good story?

The elite - any story that involves an important / famous person generally has great value e.g. famous / important child marriage champion locally = coverage

Currency - stories that are already in the public eye but are deemed valuable and so run and run, even if nothing new really happens e.g.

When developing story ideas ask yourself - **will anyone care?**

Sounds harsh but although you may be interested in what you are doing / the project you are working on, unless there is something really newsworthy about it, no one else will.

Not sure whether your story is newsworthy? Read / watch/ listen to the publications or programmes you'd like coverage in to get a feel for the kind of stories they typically cover.

Step 4: what sort of activities can you do with the media?

Lots! Ranging from free / low cost activities to more expensive options if you have the budget.

- Press releases
- Face to face meetings with the media to develop contacts
- Launch events with media invited
- Letters to the editor
- Op eds (written opinion pieces)
- Radio interviews
- TV interviews
- News on your website
- Social media posts (twitter, Facebook)
- Engaging with bloggers
- Media briefings
- Press conferences
- Paid advertising – radio / TV / print / bill boards

Most of the above involve little cost.

Even with a small budget you can still get impactful media coverage if you have a good story and pitch it well to the right outlet.

Step 5: developing your messaging framework

When developing your messaging framework think through:

- **Islands of safety**
- **Key messages**
- **Leading answers**
- **Sound-bites**
- **Tricky threats**
- **Magic moments**

Islands of safety - these are things about child marriage you can safely and confidently discuss - if you get asked a difficult question, return to one of these.

Step 5: developing your messaging framework

Key messages - these are the foundation of all your communication – they should be short, to the point, simple big picture statements about child marriage.

The 3 Cs: clear, concise, consistent

When developing your key messages think about:

- What are the 2 – 3 key things about child marriage I want to say? (prioritise order)

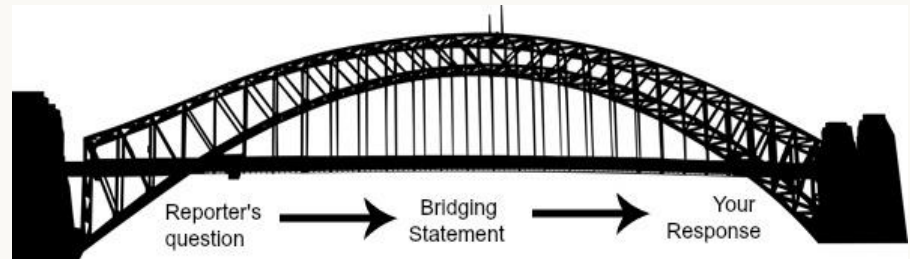
Key messages should be 10 words or less.

Do they pass the ‘So what?’ – if not, revise.

- How do we want to portray the National Partnership?

Step 5: developing your messaging framework

- How do we want to position the NP?
- If this message were repeated, what would I want to hear?
- What would most enhance the NP's work right now?
- Bridges: these are 'bridges' that help you get from a journalist's difficult question to your key message



Step 5: developing your messaging framework

e.g.

Q: Don't lots of religious texts mention girls getting married at a very young age?

Bridge: we don't know how old those girls that are mentioned in those texts were, however, what we know now is.....

A: (key message): child marriage limits girls' lives; they become isolated, their education ends and there are huge negative health and economic implications.

Have key stats / proofs points ready to back up your key messages.

Have good examples (ideally human interest) which back up your key messages.

Message sandwiches: get message out, give an example to back it up, repeat message.

Step 5: developing your messaging framework

Leading answers – if you keep your answers short and turn the conversation with the journalist to a topic you want to talk about, you will retain more power.

Q: Tell me about the Girls Not Brides Uganda National Partnership?

A: The Girls Not Brides Uganda National Partnership to end child marriage is a partnership with a difference.

The only follow up question to that is, what is the difference?

Tricky threats - think about any ‘sharks’ that may be lurking out there before you talk to a journalist. Ask yourself:

- What is this journalist’s agenda?
- Who else might they be talking to about this particular issue?

Step 5: developing your messaging framework

- What do I want to avoid talking about and how can I use **leading answers** to help myself?
- How might the journalist use emotive language to catch me off guard?

Magic moments

If you can't supply the 'magic' in an interview then the journalist will have to so think about:

- Anecdotes
- The language you use
- Rhetoric techniques to help you (see handout)

Sound-bites – concise, memorable quotes that capture the essence of what you are trying to say, usually in a few words.

Often used by the media as headlines.

Step 5: developing your messaging framework

‘We are millions moving in waves.’ Gracia Machel speaking about the movement to end child marriage.

I care as much about ending child marriage as I did about ending apartheid.’
Archbishop Desmond Tutu

An example of poor key messages

According to UNFPA, who have recently undertaken several technical workshops and evaluation initiatives on child marriage in the country, there is a huge problem in Moritasia, prevalence is highest in the West (71.6%), followed by the East of the country (68.1%) and the north (52.3%) whilst in the south, things are less bad. It falls among some of the worst Asian countries with the highest numbers of child brides (1,702,983). According to several national bodies, including MEGC, economic indicators indicate it is affecting the country's growth a statement endorsed by DFGY who said the UMPT scale will be affected significantly and there will be a definite drop in MTPPS in the next decade. UNICEF speaking at the 3rd national conference on health impact and said 2,437,250 of the young girls born between 2010 and 2015 will be married/in a union before the age of 18 by 2030, as did UNFPA's representative Mr J T Tsonga at the advance resource conference on 9th November 2015. Child marriage has many causes, impacts on girls and we believe that it needs to be tackled now.

An example of a good key messages

Child marriage is a major issue in Moritasia, driven by poverty, tradition, religion and cultural beliefs.

There are currently more than 1.7million child brides in Moritasia.

Moritasia has the 5th highest rate of child marriage in Asia.

More than 70% of girls in West Moritasia were married before 18.

Child marriage negatively impacts girls' lives: 80% leave school early, 40% of those then become pregnant.

Girls Not Brides Moritasia is working with the government and communities in all 4 provinces to end child marriage.

Child marriage has also depressed Mortiasia's economic growth, according to the Maritasia Economic Growth Committee.

If child marriage continues to increase in Moritasia, there will be more than 2.4million girls child brides by 2030 (Source: UNICEF/UNFPA).

Developing good key messages

Exercise 2 – working individually spend 10 - 15 minutes transforming messages on the handout into good key messages.

Remember: clear, concise, big picture statement

Step 6: developing your media list

A media list = media contacts who would be interested in stories about child marriage and your NP.

These contacts may include journalists, reporters, bloggers, producers, freelance writers and editors across print, online, radio and television.

Research media outlets

What sort of outlets do you think your audiences read / listen to / watch?

Make a list and include:

- The topics those outlets cover
- The medium (online, radio etc.)?
- Their readership or audience size?
- Frequency - are they daily, weekly, monthly etc.?

Step 6: developing your media list

Understanding the editorial calendar and the deadlines of the media you are targeting will give your story the best chance of being picked up.

Find the right contact - this person should have responsibility for or an interest in stories related to child marriage.

Look at articles/stories written about child marriage in your target media outlets and note the journalists who wrote those.

Also look at job titles of journalists, producers and reporters. Often their particular area of expertise will be reflected in their job title, for example 'social affairs reporter or current affairs reporter or health reporter etc.

Step 6: developing your media list

If the media outlet has a website look on that as they may list staff email addresses and phone numbers.

Or, call the outlet and find out the names and details of the person who handles news / current affairs / events etc.

Organise your information – set up an excel document or table on word, have separate columns for the name of the media outlet, contact person, job title, email address and phone number.

Keep it up to date. Media contacts often move around or change jobs to cover a different area of expertise.

Step 7: drafting a press release

First, ask yourself, is your story newsworthy? If yes, draft you may want to draft a press release (sometimes also called a media release)..

A press release is a good way of telling the media about a story they may want to cover.

Top tips:

- **Be concise** - ideal length of a press release = 1 side of A4 side (about 300 to 400 words) - the length of a short news item.

That's About 3 or 4 short paragraphs and includes a couple of quotes.

If yours is longer than that, you've probably got unnecessary 'waffle' that doesn't add anything to your story

Step 7: drafting a press release

- Write a **killer headline** if you can, but at the very least, say what your story is about – if it is about the launch of the first end child marriage project in x region say exactly that. That will help a busy journalist.
- Get your **top line** (most important line) **in the first line of your press release** – if your first sentence doesn't grab the journalist they may not read beyond it.

Your top line should be a **summary of the story** (in no more than around 15-20 words) and read like the opening of a news story.

Step 7: drafting a press release

- Another trick = imagine your story is going to be covered on a TV or radio programme.

A presenter generally has around 5-6 seconds to introduce each item e.g. "And coming up next ... why a local cafe owner is giving a free coffee this weekend to anyone born in July."

If your story was going to be featured on the radio today, how would the presenter introduce it? Asking yourself that should give you the top line of your story.

- **The 5 Ws** - your 1st paragraph should include these: **Who, What, When, Where, Why?**

Step 7: drafting a press release

- **Use quotes to provide insight, not information**

Including quotes from people in your organisation can be helpful for journalists (and on regional or trade publications are often used, word for word).

But quotes should be used to provide insight and opinion and sound like a real person said them (which they should). They definitely shouldn't be full of jargon or technical language.

- **Sub-headings and bullet points** can be useful to make information easy to digest, particularly if you're including figures or statistics.

Step 7: drafting a press release

- **Include your contact information** - email / telephone number / mobile - at the bottom of the release so the journalist can get in touch.
- **Include who is available for interview** – if someone is available for interview (about the story) also add this at the bottom of the release and say what their title is.
- **Background information** - don't include background information about your organisation in the opening paragraph. This – along with any other additional information – can be included in a "notes to editors" section at the end (it's fine to run over to a second page for this).

Step 7: drafting a press release

- **Timing –**

breaking news – something major e.g. your reaction to a high court ruling on child marriage – send the PR out **immediately**.

Put on PR: **For immediate release** – then journalist knows they can use the information asap.

other releases – send out 1 - 2 weeks before you want the story to 'land' (appear the media).

Most releases you follow up with the journalists you sent PR to (with imp. breaking news they contact you).

follow up - phone them same day / next day - have they got the PR? / will they cover story? / need extra details? / interviews? etc.

Step 7: drafting a press release

Gives journalist time to pitch story to her/his editor, write it etc. etc.

- **Embargoes** – these are about controlling the timing of when a journalist can use the information.

Used for things like confidential or sensitive information, e.g. a report launch when you really want to control when the media write about it, or a change of leadership in your NP etc.

Use sparingly. Plus, sometimes journalists don't respect them.

Embargoes are usually written:

Embargoed until: date month 00.01 hours.

The embargo goes up at the top of the press release.

Step 7: drafting a press release

- **Sending PRs out** – most now go via email. Send them to the most relevant media contacts for the audience you are targeting.

In email subject line put something like: 'Possible story, then headline from the PR.

In body of email include short outline of your idea (no more than a paragraph) and where you think it might fit in the outlet you're pitching to.

Paste your press release underneath, as a busy journalist may not bother to open an attachment.

- **Photos** – need to be of good quality and add something to the story, but avoid sending big files that will clog up peoples' inboxes.

Step 7: drafting a press release

- See press release template (handout).

Step 8: dealing with the media

When a journalist gets in touch always respond as quickly as you can.

There are some key questions you need to ask them (see handout at the end)

Even if you can't help them this time, if you are polite, helpful, responsive you've increased the chances of them coming back to you next time *and*

They are more likely to be responsive when you next contact them.

Always be honest. Never knowingly tell an untruth or exaggerate.

Never say: No comment – sounds defensive, and the media will report it. Say instead something like:

I don't have all the facts as yet to answer that accurately....

Step 8: dealing with the media

or

Actually, that relates to a much more important issue (then go back to your key message)

or

That's not what I am here to discuss, what's important is....(key message)

or

The real issue here is....(key message)

Never speculate – stick to the facts and your area of expertise, say: I wouldn't want to speculate, however, what we know is....(facts and key message)

Step 9: media interviews

If you do agree to be interviewed, your job is to be: **CAIC**

- **C**lear
- **A**ccurate
- **I**nteresting
- **C**oncise.

It can be scary, but you have information the reporter needs - or they wouldn't be in touch.

You control what you will say, and how credibly.

You also have some control over how well the reporter understands it - through your preparation and your presentation.

The reporter & her/his editors control the final product. You are then in their hands - but how they treat you depends in large part on how you conducted your end of the process

Step 10: Resources

What is your budget – as you plan your activities and products what are the resource implications?

You can do a lot on a small budget.

Everything you do has to have impact.

Step 11: timing is key

As you plan activities – think about the best time to do them i.e. when will they have most impact?

Each activity / product needs to build on previous activity / product so making progress

Step 12: evaluation

When planning activities also set up some Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure the impact of that activity e.g.

A parliamentary event with media invited – KPIs for this event might be:

- at least 10 journalists attend, of whom 25% are new to our work
- 80% of journalists rate the event as being 'very useful'
- 100% of journalists attending are given a brochure of our NPs work
- Follow up meetings / contact are arranged with x, y and z journalists
- J speaks out publically against CM and becomes a supporter of our work
- We get 2 stories about the event and our key messages in the press.

Step 13: keep a media log

Keep a media log – for every time you contact a journalist and they contact you

Put it in a table:

Date

Journalists name

Media outlet

Proactive or reactive

Outcome / result

At the end of each quarter look back at that log – how did you do? What sort of coverage did you get? What type of stories got most interest / response?

Use that information to help inform your plan for the next quarter.

What we've covered

- Communications strategies and what they might cover.
- Why work with the media?
- What a good media plan would include.
- What makes a good story?
- Exercise 1:
- Types of activities with the media.
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Handouts

- Questions to ask the media when they get in touch / media interviews.
- Pausing and rhetorical techniques to help you when you are doing a media interview.
- Press release template.
- Exercise 2: key messages

Any questions?