

MODULE 1:

NEW SOCIAL MEDIA FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE



Outline

User's guide:

- Objectives
- Expected results
- Principles & Methods of Work
- Duration

1. The Importance of the Media

2. The Different Media that Reinforce Local Efforts

- Understanding the media landscape

3. How to Build Strategic Partnerships with Media

4. Tools to Address Issues Designated to Media

- When and how to disseminate messages:
 - Social Media
 - Traditional Media
 - Strategic Communication Tools
- Providing good stories and making them work

User's Guide:

1. Objectives

1. Establish the importance of the media in governance.
2. Understand the negative outcomes that can result from poor interaction between NGOs and the media.

2. Expected Results

1. Know about the various ways to disseminate your organization's messages.
2. Be more conscious of and responsive to problems that the media has with NGOs.
3. Understand the difference between western media and media in the Arab region.

3. Principles & Methods of Work

- Participatory approach.
- Sharing knowledge, good practices and lessons learnt.
- Learning by doing.
- Building consensus.
- Presentation, brainstorming, discussion.
- Documentaries, role play.
- Working groups.

4. Duration: 3-4 days

1. The Importance of the Media

Media is the most powerful tool of communication. It is the mass media that an active public relies on to obtain information. An informed and educated public is crucial to the democratic public policy decision-making process. The media serves as an information source that enables its consumers to develop their proper decisions concerning public policies, government actions and social trends.

The information transmitted through the mass media comes from many sources: academic experts, government officials, businessmen, financial observers, participants in a given event, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These public policy advocates, no matter their specialization, have two things the mass media needs: accurate information and a point of view.

The media can, and should be considered a local governance actor. It is an important channel for communication and delivery of information between authorities and the public and contributes to a more transparent and accountable society. The media can empower the community at large, encouraging those who strive to make their voices heard to participate in their local governance. «Governance is more pluralistic than government, insofar as it is a shared space of power contestation by many actors, some of which would have no voice in traditional government.»¹

The worldwide web is perhaps the arena that allows for the highest level of participation. It has the potential to serve as a medium of interaction amongst citizens and between governance officials.

1- Coleman Ildiko Kaposi, Stephen. *New Democracies New Media What's New? A Study of E-Participation Projects in Third-Wave Democracies*. (p. 9)

«Its transformative potential lies in two fields: firstly, the conventionally political field of citizenship and activism, where the internet could enable new modes of communication between members of social and political movements and parties; and secondly, the field of friendship and association - that is, those social relations beyond kinship that are, according to some traditions of political theory the fundamental political relations and the basis for government founded on politics. Specifically, the Internet could be used by citizens to displace or supplement the older media that constitute 'the public sphere'...»²

Of the Internet's most considerable facets are its accessibility and its knowledge-sharing networks. The challenge lies in being media literate, and knowing how to use the Internet's content.

Exercises

2. The Different Media that Reinforce Local Efforts

-Understanding the media landscape

A brief overview of the Arab media landscape shows that the introduction of the satellite, internet, commercial television, local newspapers and radios has significant implication for communication, affecting the way audiences interact with the media inside and outside of their environments. Globalization has, through the use of a common or multiple languages, dramatically influenced the continuous changes occurring in the media. Furthermore, the press is often constrained in what it can produce as it must respect the essential nature of the state and, often, its relationship to a particular embodiment of religion, most commonly, Islam.

The new media landscape seems to be:

- Increasingly saturated with advertisement.
- Fragmented in terms of audiences, platforms, quality, etc.
- Characterized by the expansion of independent and commercial media.
- Increasingly filled with interactions between all kinds of media due to the technological developments, bringing about a nearly full integration between the visual, audio, print and electronic tools.
- Monopolized by the web essentially, the main media tool used even by international and regional specialized organisations.

In the Arab region, the media landscape witnessed a profound change in the last decades resulting from the communication revolution and the emergence of an incredible number of Satellite TV channels, most of which are private and specialized. Similar to the Internet, satellite broadcasting is not subject to geographical restrictions and can therefore be broadcast throughout the region. This was accompanied by the emergence of ideological channels. Official media, which operate under a different set of rules, continue to play a considerable role in maintaining the media landscape orientations. The audio environment also witnessed the creation of many radio stations broadcasting through the satellite or FM bands. As for print media, the limited number of newspapers mainly characterizes it as figures indicate that they have the least circulation in the world.³

The media undoubtedly plays a significant role in the cultural debate, stressing the importance of mutual understanding on the one hand, and that of sharing common interests on the other. There recently has been a growing international Arab media based and operating in Europe or sites within the region. BBC Arabic, France

3 - *Arab Woman and the Media, analytical study of research conducted between 1995-2005. Cawtar, 2006.*

24 international, Deutsch Welle Arabic edition are all examples of this recent growing trend, setting a higher standard for Arab press. The more traditional Arab media channels continue to put forth efforts to transmit and broadcast their own messages and images to the world. Many channels, such as AlJazeera TV, Nile TV, are broadcasting in English, French and even Hebrew.

Exercises

3. How to Build Strategic Partnerships with Media

Building a relationship with the media is an essential and absolutely crucial component of any communications department. It is this partnership that allows for successful transmission of any message NGOs wish to make known to the public. Though institutions are able to post information on their websites, it is their media connections that will ensure wide coverage of their issues.

Firstly, Media advocates must know whom they are working with. They must develop press lists, catalogues of the names of reporters, editors, and radio and television producers who may be interested in the organization and its issues. Secondly, they must know how to deal with the press in order to get the desired media coverage.

Successful relationships are often built on some of the following points:

- Obtain appropriate background information on reporters you want to contact.
- Know how the reporter you contact writes.

- Be honest in order to establish trust.
- Know your organization's objectives, image and issues.
- Be accurate in all the information you share.
- Assign appropriate spokespeople to speak with the media.
- Provide interesting stories and news angles.
- Write a good press release.

Exercises

4. Tools to Address Issues Designated to Media

WHEN AND HOW TO DISSEMINATE MESSAGES.

The world's best communicators have one thing in common: the ability to make their audience identify with their message, and remember it. The tools used to communicate are various, from traditional to new media.

Social Media:

Social media represents one of the most efficient tools of disseminating information to the public. Social media is free, easy to use, interactive, fast and accessible to most.

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Flickr, blogs, etc

Twitter can be used for live coverage, events, news, alerts and feedback.

Facebook serves to publicize events, brands, campaigns, interactions, contests and various issues.

Facebook page types:

- Official page: business, brand, organization, public figure.
- Community page: generate support for a topic or causes.
- Group page: professional interest or hobby.

YouTube is designed for education, events and ceremonies, news, views, consultation.

LinkedIn is a website for professional networking, groups, recruitment.

Blogs can be used for a wide variety of reasons, including recommendations, news, education, scientists, libraries.

If an institution decides to utilize social media, a policy must be developed that sets the parameters of use. This will inform the staff on what can and cannot be said via social media outlets, build a standard of transparency, protect individuals and other institutions that use this forum to communicate by ensuring their privacy when requested, and respect the medium and its users by providing accurate information and appearing professional. Furthermore, social media training could be provided to teach modes of use as well as appropriate guidelines and etiquette.

Traditional media tools:

Press secretaries and media advocates must be familiar and comfortable with these vehicles used to communicate their message to the media:

- Press releases.
- Press calls.
- Press conferences.
- Press kits.

- In-house publications.
- Newsletters.
- Website.
- Banners.
- Media events.
- Radio, television, newspaper and magazine interviews.
- Letters to the editor of local newspapers.
- Opinion-editorials.

There are several factors to consider before disseminating an organization's messages and ensure their media coverage. All media actions should be an integrated part of planning. This involves consulting with the organization's leaders, policy staff and media professionals to ask and answer important questions. They include:

1. Which issues does your organization want to focus its media resources on?
2. What is current public opinion about those issues?
3. What was the type and tenor of past media coverage of the issue?
4. What are the best ways to mediate the issues?

Answering these questions and determining how messages will be disseminated is a team effort and must result in a concrete plan of action and mutual understanding so as to avoid future obstacles relating to the media.

Strategic Communication Tools:

Media advocacy: Strategic use of mass media as a resource for advancing a social or public policy initiative. It uses a set of techniques

drawn from public relations, advertising, investigative journalism, and grass- roots lobbying. Through media advocacy, non-profits can frame public policy issues and actively enter the public debate.

Networking: Working with members of your own organization as well as with other organizations with similar goals. Networking can broaden the membership base of your organization and inform a larger number of people about what you are trying to do. It promotes the formation of coalitions and provides channels for shared work and planning.

Creating and distributing your own media: This can help bypass the mass media when they are unreceptive to your message or are uncooperative. Creative media production can complement access to mass media and make up for the limitations of news coverage. As your own media producer of documentaries, advertising spots, newsletters, or TV and radio forums you can tell your own story and explain your issues in media they control.

PROVIDING GOOD STORIES AND MAKING THEM WORK.

Editors and journalists must find your pitch interesting and worthy of writing about and publishing or broadcasting. With reference to the above section on establishing successful relationships with media professionals, an organization's press secretary or media advocate must find new and interesting ways to attract journalists. The basics of a story can include the following components:

1. What is the story?
2. Why is the story important?
3. Is the provided information timely and interesting?

4. Will it appeal to the intended audience?
5. Has it been told before?
6. Are the sources credible?

When considering what story to write, journalists will take all of these factors into account. It is therefore very important to carefully package the intended message so the press can advance the organization's media goals.

Exercises



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