A Practical Guide for
Civil Society Organisations
in Lebanon on

COMMUNICATION & VISIBILITY

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Introduction

In Lebanon, NGOs actively engage in multiple fields of work and advocate various human rights issues and projects aimed at addressing the issues that arise and bringing about the desired changes. As a result, these organisations have become more aware of the importance of reaching their audiences, highlighting their work and, therefore, ensuring their sustainability. On a broader level, CSOs have become more convinced of the need to involve specific audiences, and public opinion in general, in their activities and the path they take to achieve their objectives. NGOs now have a growing need for Information and Communication specialists, whose task usually consists of supporting the organisation by shedding light on its activities, organising its media campaigns and communicating with external parties, which would yield benefits to the organisation's projects in the field of development, charity or change.

The purpose of this guide is to provide NGOs with key information and guidelines pertaining to the major aspects of communication and ways in which they can highlight their work, through six main sections.

The first section of the guide provides a general description of communication activities and the need to develop communication strategies prior to conducting any communication activity. The main objective is to answer the following question: "Why do we do what we do and how will we achieve the intended goal?" The second section delves into the realm of content, its production, and the ways of devising it, before tackling the related information campaigns and strategies in the third section. In the fourth section, the guide recalls a number of classic journalistic tools available to users, inviting the latter to think and write in an interesting journalistic style which captures the attention of the media and the wider public. Given that each organisation possesses its own websites and platforms on social media nowadays, it is essential to address, in the fifth section, the strategic use of social media to help the organisation achieve its objectives. The sixth and final section outlines some broad details related to communication with actors in the art and advertisement sectors, along with the types of promotional advertisements available on the market.

This guide is primarily useful for workers in the Information and Communication departments at NGOs, or for those who are willing to engage in this field within their institutions. It examines the major aspects of enhancing the organisation's communication and visibility. This guide can also be used by all NGO workers, as it allows them to develop their knowledge resources pertaining to the most prominent components of this field.

01

General Communication Activities

1. Key Tasks of the Communication Department

Not all NGOs possess an information and communication department. However, the presence of such a department within each organisation is preferable, as it brings together several cross-cutting competences, not to mention that their role has become an integral part of the organisation's projects over time and a prerequisite for achieving its near- and long-term goals. This department alleviates the workload of employees working in other departments within the organisation, particularly those who are not familiar with communication, information, and creativity. The department also complements and builds on their work, as it contributes to organising tasks more clearly within the same institution, as well as achieving harmony and cohesion amongst its various departments.

It is worth noting that information and communication departments also carry an internal benefit that is no less important than the external one. In fact, this department raises the morale of employees, as it gives visibility to the organisation they work for and allows employees to share their activities across various public and private communication channels: Internal ones, i.e. belonging to the organisation, such as its website, social media and periodical newsletters, and external ones, i.e. external to the organisation, such as various kinds of media outlets, websites, online pages, advertising spaces, and public discussions, amongst others.

How can information and communication departments be described?

They are the bridge linking the organisation and the outside world, as well as members of the same organisation.

One of their most important functions consists of creating a space for participation and interaction, and offering opportunities to advance the organisation's reputation and visibility.

The keywords that could summarise the role of such departments are: Presence. Production. Change.

Tracking revenues and expenses

♀ Tips

If your organisation includes an information and communication department, or if you intend to create one, here are some guidelines that could help you identify its responsibilities: Be organised and systematic

- Prepare a communication strategy that is consistent with the general strategy of the organisation.

- Create diverse content that is consistent with the identity of the organisation, promotes its goals, reflects its achievements, and maintains its visibility.

- Document media and electronic content that is of interest to the organisation.

- Ensure that the organisation's visibility is taken into account in any activity that the organisation carries out or participates in.

- Follow-up on the production of information and advertising campaigns, such as developing plans, preparing content, publishing and distribution.

- Manage the organisation's online presence via its own website and relevant social media pages.

- Oversee the technical production of the organisation's materials, such as diagrams, designs, videos, pictures, and publications, in coordination with technical experts, particularly external ones (planning, design and printing).

- Manage the relationship with media contacts to enhance the organisation's visibility and secure the required coverage for its activities and the transmission of its messages.

- Create contact lists that are periodically updated for media professionals, technicians, and influencers in the institution's field of work, and maintain periodic and constructive communication with them.

Do not worry! These points will be discussed in more detail in the various sections of this guide.

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2. Practical Steps to Showcase the Organisation's Work and Enhance Its Visibility

Organisations often feel that their work is undervalued or does not receive the attention it deserves, for reasons related to their inability to showcase their work properly, or to the poor response to their activities. First, automatic self-abasement and blaming the staff should be avoided, as such behaviors only reinforce frustration, thus nipping any persistence or enthusiasm in the bud. There are, on the other hand, practical steps that contribute to the success of your activities and enhance their visibility. These include the effort to devise a clear communication plan, build an "infrastructure" and identify the elements that define the organisation's presence.

The communication plan represents an essential step that will be repeatedly mentioned in most sections of this guide, as it will help enhance the organisation's visibility and presence.

In addition to devising the plan, organisation should follow the tips for organising activities and using the visibility tools mentioned later in this part of the guide.

A. The communication and visibility enhancement plan should include

Figure 1: Stages of the communication plan
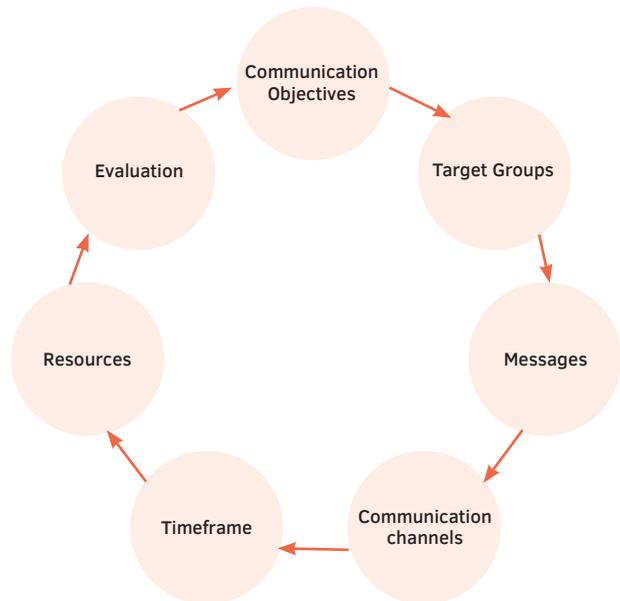
While drafting the communication plan, make sure to specify the following:

○ **Specific communication objectives:** Ask yourself: «What do I want to say?» Usually, the organisation defines the objective of the campaign or activity it is carrying out. It would be useful if this objective were coupled with another communication objective that will contribute to achieving it. For example, if the organisation wishes to amend an unfair law, this objective would entail exposing the injustices in the law in question and deciding on the form of publication and its channels.

○ **Specific target audiences:** "Whom do I want to address? Which groups or individuals?" For each communication objective, there should be one or more target groups to whom the organisation wants to communicate the request or message. These should be identified, as accurately as possible, in any communication plan the organisation is working on.

○ **Key Messages:** «What message do I want to communicate and to which audience?»

The best message consists of an idea that the organisation wants to communicate to the public. The more direct and concise the message is in addressing the target group, the more effective and the clearer it is.

○ **Specific communication channels:** «Which communication channels will I use to convey my messages? Which channels are best suited to the context of my plans?» The available communication channels vary and include a wide range of possibilities, from electronic channels to traditional ones, including media outlets, leaflets, specific sites and groups on social media, and direct field communication channels.

○ **Specific timeframe:** «What is the timeframe for the execution of the communication plan? When does it start and when does it end?"

○ **Human and Financial Resources:** «What resources will the full implementation of my plan require?» Communication activities require human and financial efforts, as is the case for all other projects. Therefore, it is important that the organisation mobilise the minimum resources required for these projects.

○ **Monitoring tools for communication activities** and evaluation indicators to gauge whether the communication plan has achieved its objectives (Monitoring and evaluation indicators): As is the case when implementing advocacy, mobilisation, and support projects, among others, monitoring and evaluation tools are required in carrying out communication plans. It is necessary to identify, from the outset, the indicators that would measure an activity's success or shortcomings. It is also necessary to monitor these indicators and their implications and build on their results, whether to validate or make any modifications to the plan, throughout its implementation period, until the final evaluation is conducted upon its completion.

The communication plan varies according to its objectives and its target audience, which require different messages and means of communication.

For example, message styles range between simplified and straightforward (usually directed to the general public) to technical or potentially complex (usually directed to a specialised audience), and between messages resembling a formal letter (usually directed to a donor or decision maker) or an informal letter (to a partner).

The audiences targeted by NGOs usually consist of the following groups:

Beneficiaries of the organisation's activities or services, partners, donors, decision makers at the national, regional, or international level, national authorities and public administrations, local authorities, influential persons, journalists, publishers, the wider public, etc.

B. Organising an activity to promote a new message, event or project

———————

In order for the activity to succeed, the organisation must consider and attempt to adopt the following tips:

• Choose the appropriate timing and ensure that it does not conflict with an important occasion, a similar activity, or an important event that might draw the full attention of the media and the public.

• Identify the main point that will characterise your activity, in terms of content and presentation, and, more importantly, make sure that it contributes something new.

• Carefully plan the duration of the activity to avoid boredom and make use of this period as much as possible.

• Highlight all references to your organisation on the promotional materials available listed in the following paragraph.

C. Visibility Tools

———————

Visibility tools usually include the organisation's logo and are often produced in a way that is consistent with the organisation's identity or public image (branding). This task is usually the responsibility of a dedicated creative team. This identity or "branding" includes everything that distinguishes the institution, including the name, logo, choice of words, symbols, and visual signs used, which must be clearly and consistently available on a specific set of materials, or on all the organisation's promotional materials or tools mentioned below. The trademark, on the other hand, refers to those elements which make up the institution's identity. The trademark is usually registered with the relevant official departments, which enables any institution to object to the use of identical or very similar branding by other institutions.

As for the tools used for promotion, they usually include: All types of publications, files that include key documents and data, press releases, special photos, posters, videos, labels, signs, campaign advertisements, and even attendance sheets, evaluation papers, electronic publications on all platforms (website and social media platforms), newsletters, etc., provided that these methods are also present and showcased in the relevant activities.

3. Developing a General Communication Strategy for the Organisation

No organisation strategy, no communication strategy!

As mentioned above, in order for it to be successful, any communication and information activity requires a clear and specific communication plan that incorporates all the elements mentioned above. However, it is important for your organisation to bear in mind that its communication strategy stems from the mission, vision and objectives adopted by the organisation upon its establishment, and it primarily draws on its overall strategy, in which the major objectives and paths are clarified.

The communication strategy is inspired by the organisation's overall strategy and answers the following question:

How will communication activities contribute to achieving my organisation's goals and moving forward with its mission?

Communication strategies often utilise components from the broad field of communication. All or some of these components may be adopted, depending on what the organisation seeks to accomplish.

💡 Tips

The communication strategy should provide answers to the following questions:

• What are the general objectives of communication?

• Who are the target groups?

• Which language and style will we use to address this group?

• What are the roles and responsibilities?

• What are the means of communication with the organisation?

Key components of communication in any organisation

List of key communication components:

• Public relations (Which relationships will be we strengthen? Who do we appoint to manage the relationship and communication?)

• Relations with the donors and stakeholders (With which entities will we cooperate? Who in the organisation will communicate with them)?

• Relationship and communication with the media (When do we appear on the media and through which outlet? Who coordinates this communication? Who will be speaking on behalf of the organisation?)

• Promotional and advertising activities (Which advertising channels do we adopt? With which companies do we cooperate? What are the spending limits?)

• Publications, productions and promotional tools (See paragraph 1.2.3)

• Design and printing guidelines,[1] among others.

List of key internal communication components:

• Periodic meetings of the working group

• Periodic emails and data-sharing programs

• Visits between departments or branches

• Direct communication with the administration to discuss major developments

• Request petitions and complaint mechanisms

• Approved forms of internal organisation

• Communications audit or communication performance evaluation within the organisation.

While there is no standard model for communication strategies, several models can be adopted[2] and designed according to the nature of each organisation. Below is one example of a direct and simple model.

Exercise 1

Building on the following model, develop a general communication strategy for your organisation.

Note: The first communication objective is only an example.

The target groups can be changed in line with your organisation's field of work.

	The organisation's vision			
Specific Communication Goals	**The Objective to be achieved**			
Communication objective 1	**Target groups:**	**Beneficiaries of the organisation's services**	**Decision makers**	**Local authorities**
Encourage those affected by a specific problem to communicate with the organisation	Main messages (What should this group know?)	Message 1: The problem is that your rights are being violated. The solution lies in enhancing the concerned party's response to your demand and forming a lobbying group to achieve this. Message 2: You are not alone. We are here to support you. You can visit this place to request support.		
	The materials adopted for spreading the message	Electronic publications; A major advertising video		
	Communications channels	Partner TV that contributes to spreading the information, Local media (As well as regional, if the organisation's work focuses on a specific geographical area) The organisation›s website The organisation's Facebook page Activities targeting potential beneficiaries		
	Language and style of communication	Promotional Solidarity-based Direct		
	Mode of communication with the organisation	Phone, Service Center Email		
Choose a goal and fill in or change the fields according to the requirements of your organisation and the groups you want to target				

02

Content Curation

1. Content and Material Selection

As is the case of any activity that you wish to carry out, the main question regarding any action is the following: "What is the intended objective?" Based on the objective, you would choose the type of material and content. In many instances, you might experience what can be described as an intellectual block, where you would be unable to find anything to publish on your organisation's communication channels, including the social media pages you manage, which we will address in section five of this guide.

Content serves several purposes. By specifying your goals, you would be in a better position to create content that is worth sharing.

Ask yourself the following question: What purpose do I want to achieve through this content?

As for materials, they represent the means through which content is conveyed. They may consist of texts (i.e. texts published on the organisation's website or social media pages), printable materials (leaflets, posters, studies and reports), audio materials (podcasts) and visual materials (videos, photos, diagrams, and tables), among others.

Materials that deliver content may be used in many different settings. For instance, diagrams and abstracts are oftentimes used in studies to fulfill an educational purpose.

Pictures and posters, on the other hand, are more in line with motivational or appealing content, while videos are deemed appropriate in showcasing snippets from reality or success stories, raising awareness, or sharing inspiring experiences, interviews or field activities. On the other hand, the use of podcasts has now become very popular to share short, medium and long discussions regarding sensitive or intimate issues, through dedicated applications.

Texts and press releases or e-news usually fulfill an informative purpose; The photos attached thereto generally add a humanitarian, emotional and realistic dimension to the subject in question and can play a role in promoting the content's credibility.

It is worth noting that this classification is flexible, and content is therefore not necessarily limited to one form of publishing. There is no denying that the means of publishing is related to the nature the purpose of the content being published, but it is also influenced by other factors, such as the remaining time available to complete the material, along with the organisation's available resources, skills, and technical expertise.

✅ Checklist

Types of purposes

- ○ Educational: When the content showcases valuable information or facts

- ○ Awareness-raising: When the content clarifies, warns against, or provides guidance regarding important and unknown aspects of a particular issue

- ○ Motivational: When the content prompts the receptors to act or take an initiative

- ○ Informative: When the content relays news or events worth covering, sharing and following-up on

- ○ Demand: When the content carries a specific demand targeting a specific category or authority

- ○ Appealing: When the content includes an appeal for help or support for a specific humanitarian situation

- ○ Narrative: When the content presents real stories

- ○ Solidarity: When the content relays news from other friendly sites, in order to share their content or to show support on a specific matter

2. Creating engaging content

A. Identifying stories or information worth sharing

This requires the organisation to invest its resources and information in producing clear and interesting content that is able to capture the receiver's attention. Organisations oftentimes overlook the resources and content they produce. That is partially due to the lack of a person in charge of coordinating communication between internal departments, receiving the news and developments they may have and sharing it with other entities, both internally and externally, particularly if the organisation is large. Simply going over the organisation's activities across its different programs, referring back to its studies, productions, and archive, or conducting a quick search can sometimes lead to a quick survey of available content, thus allowing the organisation to select the optimal content to produce information or stories that are worth sharing. These may consist of:

- Stories of beneficiaries, along with their successful experiences or challenges

- Small and big accomplishments made by your organisation

- Media interviews with your organisation's staff

- Photographs from the activities carried out by your organisation, particularly in the field (instead of meeting rooms!)

- Documented stances and opinions by officials or decision-makers vis-à-vis an issue that your organisation addresses

- Excerpts from studies, including summaries on behaviors and stances, survey results and statistics

- Awareness-raising content that fulfills a tangible need, oftentimes published in the organisation's leaflets and publications

- Important information relating to a current issue, from diverse and documented sources

However, the abundance of content and information may become overwhelming, to the point where r it all seems important and worth sharing. How do we solve this dilemma?

B. Producing engaging content

After conducting the search for proper content for your organisation, particularly if you plan on publishing it on social media, you might find yourself overwhelmed with information, stories and events. In this case, you must select the content that is appropriate to the group which your organisation wishes to target at that moment. How can you choose the material that is worth sharing? The answer to this question is not always easy, but it generally depends on eight factors than can play a role in the content curation process.

- Relevance: To what extent is the information related to the issue that interests the organisation and its audience?

- Need: What need, expressed by the target group, does the content respond to?

- Added value: What added value does the content bring to the target group?

- Actuality: Is the content related to the present reality and current events, particularly those affecting the target group?

- Credibility: Is the content found during the search process accurate and validated?

- Diversity: Is the content showcased by the organisation limited to a single model and type of news?

- Originality: Do you share redundant and previously shared content, or is your content original?

- Interest: Does the content you share stir the interest and catch the attention of the target group?

In short, content curation stages are the following:[3] Search, collect, select, create, share.

03

Overview on Campaigns

1. Drafting Campaign Communication Strategies

Drafting the communication strategy for a specific campaign is not largely different from communication strategies in general, the elements of which were previously laid out in paragraph 1.3.

The main elements for communication strategies remain the same: Setting specific communication objectives, identifying target audiences, drafting messages, determining communication channels, allocating the required resources, setting a timeframe, monitoring and evaluation. However, communication strategies for campaigns generally have a specific objective, in terms of the nature of the desired results and timeframe. They are also part of the broader strategy, which seeks to fulfill the general communication objective set by the organisation on the long term.

Figure 2:

In general, every campaign should have a communication plan based on different target groups, in following form:

Target Groups	Messages and types	Appropriate means for conveying the message
Specific group Ex: Those affected by the issue at hand and residing in a specific area	Campaign messages usually offer a brief description of the issue, along with general evidence and concrete examples showing its impact, while underlining the need for change, promoting a sense of solidarity, and steering clear of technical wording	The organisation's website, articles in newspapers and on websites, short videos, and the organisation's Facebook page.
Specific group Ex: Decision makers	Messages are based on arguments and examples, within a comprehensive file, underlining the legal, ethical and international duties and commitments of decision-makers; The discourse used is determined based on the circumstances.	Proposed policy papers sent directly, closed meetings or press conferences, media reports, meetings with political parties (should this fall under the organisation's scope of work), and Twitter, where most politicians are active.
Broader public	Messages includes touching and direct stories and examples that render the cause more concrete, allow the target audience to understand it, and convince them of its legitimacy.	Material which expresses real-life stories and experiences, concise and clear messages on the organisation's social media pages and those of partners, ad-hoc groups on Facebook, specific partner media outlets, publications distributed at agreed upon locations.

2. Advocacy Activities

It is important for your organisation to have a clear idea on advocacy campaigns, which may also be referred to as campaigns to garner support. This type of campaign is common amongst local and international NGOs and grassroots organisations, which mainly seek to effect change at the level of legal systems, community practices, and general behavior.

💡 Tips

What does advocacy stand for?

- Advocacy is not activity, but rather a course of action composed of several organised activities aimed at effecting change at the level of a certain cause, law, policy, practice, behavior, or cultural norm.

- Advocacy campaigns seek to find a solution to a specific problem.

- They adopt multiple strategies and components that are well-prepared and used to find a solution to the problem at hand. The most widespread solutions consist of the restoration of a specific group's rights, and carrying out the desired amendments that the group may deem appropriate to solve the issue (whether on the short, medium or long term, or on the local, regional or international level).

- Advocacy directs the target community's attention to the cause and guides influential stakeholders or decision-makers to the proposed solution.

- Advocacy plays a role in garnering community support for the cause at hand, through collective, rather than individual, action.

- Each advocacy campaign adopts special means and discourses that are subject to change, depending on different phases and developments.

The media assumes a crucial role in the success of advocacy campaigns, particularly in Lebanon, where media outlets can shed light on several causes and contribute to effecting change, to a certain extent. The level of interest in an advocacy campaign may be affected by the media outlet itself, its preferences, its news agenda, the prevailing circumstances in the country, the prioritisation policy, along with the strength of the personal bond between the organisation and journalists.

Advocacy is a course of action that aims to effect change vis-à-vis a specific cause by engaging stakeholders, conveying key messages, introducing new ideas for discussion and deliberation, and convincing stakeholders of the need to adopt the proposed solution, while media outlets are the most capable of conveying opinions and creating a space for discussion, where new ideas can be shared.

When your organisation launches an advocacy campaign, special attention must be paid to the role of the media.[4] Hence, it is preferable for the campaign to fulfill the following points:

○ The organisation shall allocate the necessary human and material resources to coordinate with the media.

○ Partner media outlets or journalists with whom communication shall be specifically carried out shall be identified.

○ The organisation shall form a team of journalists who shall cover and follow up closely on the campaign, in order for them to be referred to as "media partners".

○ The organisation shall prepare a special file for journalists, which shall include essential information regarding the cause in question and the advocacy campaign related thereto.

○ The organisation shall tentatively determine the types and content of media material to be shared.

○ The organisation shall set a tentative timeframe for sharing updates on the campaign or its content through the media.

○ The organisation shall design special activities to motivate and engage journalists (journalist focus groups, special reporting, etc.)

3. Main Tools for Evaluating Communication Strategies

There is no use for any general or campaign-specific communication strategy if it does not include an evaluation dimension that allows your organisation to know whether or not it has achieved its communication goals and to benefit from the findings and lessons in the future.

Have many failures been recorded and have many resources been wasted? Or did the strategy succeed, meaning that the resources were used effectively?

The evaluation tools that your organisation adopts vary depending on the nature of the campaign or communication activity. Below are some general indicators that can be adopted to evaluate the communication strategy:

Increase in the number of contacts
or visits of beneficiaries, during and
after the campaign

Important achievements for the organization,
or the achievement of a goal, such as passing
a new law, or recording a noticeable behavioral
change due to the campaign

The reactions of stakeholders and
decision-makers and their engagement
with the campaign or issue raised
(discussion, adoption, rejection)

A number of related
media reports

**Evaluation indicators
for communication
activities**

Positive content in
media reports and
what it may indicate
regarding the success
of the campaign or the
concrete understanding
of its messages

Increase in the level of
interaction on social
media

Increase in website
visits and other online
analytics indicators

Increase in the level of
donations via the website
or direct transfers

Reports of private companies evaluating
advertising campaigns through a special
questionnaire targeting a cross-section
of the audience

Positive interaction
during the meetings
with the concerned
groups

Opinions of focus group members,
consisting of people concerned with
the topic covered by the campaign

Figure 3: Evaluation Indicators for Communication Activities

A few points worth mentioning about the evaluation:

• Evaluation is not a wrap-up activity, but an activity that
runs in parallel with all steps of the communication
process.

• It is important to dedicate a budget and human
resources for the evaluation.

• It is best to prepare the final evaluation soon after the
campaign ends to assess the process objectively and
calmly reflect on the events.

04

Journalistic Tools

1. Organising a Press Conference

One of the main tasks of any communication and information department is to build constructive relationships with media workers and ensure that important information is communicated to them, and, through them, to the target groups or public opinion in general. Oftentimes, organisations hold conferences that are mainly directed at journalists, to present a new issue or project and answer their questions.

The presence of journalists is seen as a guarantee for imparting knowledge and covering news or updates that the organisation believes should be shared with the public.

Press conferences transform "information" into "events"

Press conferences are one of the main journalistic tools used by NGOs because they help in communicating directly with the media and, through the media, with the public and target groups. Press conferences are usually quick to organise and inexpensive, and they are linked with current events.

The main goals of press conferences range between hot goals, such as:

• Transfer of new information related to the organisation's work or to a case that the organisation is currently following-up on;

• Keep the public informed of new updates that are happening at a rapid pace;

• Respond to an urgent humanitarian or political crisis and keep relevant persons abreast of the situation;

• Clarify any confusion or misunderstanding about a specific issue that has already been raised;

• Pronounce an important position towards an issue or debate concerning the organisation;

And cold goals, such as:

• Organise an event related to the nature of the organisation's work;

• Launch a new demand or media campaign;

• Introduce the audience to a new program, service or partnership.

Preparing for a press conference is very similar to preparing for any activity your organisation would like to conduct.

To organise the event successfully and enhance its visibility, your organisation must be aware of several issues, the most prominent of which are listed in the following tips:

Practical Preparation for an Activity and Ensuring the Success of the Communication Strategy

• Clearly define the goal of the activity, formulate it, and define its main message clearly and briefly.

• Specify the groups targeted by the activity: With regard to press conferences, the press can be the target group. Some specialised individuals from the press or some specific media outlets (local or international, etc.) can also be the target group. The group targeted by the activity should be considered, and the potential invitees should be carefully selected from the start.

• Choose the speakers and facilitator: It is recommended that speakers come from a variety of backgrounds to avoid content monotony. The speakers should be clear and engaging and should have a solid grasp on the topic they are addressing. It is preferable that the number of speakers does not exceed 3. The speakers are usually asked to prepare their interventions and present copies of them in advance to distribute them to the press and include them in the press release.

• Choose a timing that suits the goal of the activity; provided that it does not conflict with other events, holidays, or major activities of other organisations. The activity should also be scheduled by taking into account the schedules of all the targeted invitees as much as possible. As for press conferences, it is better to hold them at 11 am or 3 pm, so that journalists can attend and then complete the work in their offices before closing newspapers or broadcastings on TVs.

• Choosing the right place to hold the activity: The organisation should think about the purpose of the activity, its size, the available budget and accessibility to the place. It should also announce a request for proposal in advance if the place is a private commercial company. It is also important to ensure that the logistics serve the goal of the activity.

• Duration of the activity: Changes according to its nature and purpose. With regard to press conferences, it is recommended that the duration does not exceed 40-45 minutes: 20 to 25 minutes for welcoming, speaking, and presenting and 15 to 20 minutes for questions and answers. Press interviews may take place before or after the conference.

• Develop a communication plan for the activity to reach the target groups before and after it is held: Make invitations and/or posters, send them two weeks prior and send one reminder two days prior to the activity (direct calls), prepare a news story or a statement about the activity, choose publishing channels, and use social media or traditional media to promote the activity or conference, and to promote its outputs at a later stage.

• Ensure that the visibility and promotional tools, mentioned in section 1 - paragraph 2, are used before, during and after the activity: Enhance the organisation's visibility and add its logo on key materials or tools related to the activity.

• The press release or news story related to the activity must be sent personally and directly to the journalists, and to the editors-in-chief if the organisation is on good terms with them, on the same day, via e-mail. The text must be added inside the e-mail itself and within a document attached to the email to ensure that it reaches the journalist and to facilitate its handling. It is best to write the press release before the conference starts.

2. Drafting Invitations, Press Statements, and News Stories

A. Invitations

In general, invitations sent by the organisation must include the points in the template below:

The design of invitations should be comfortable to look at, in terms of font, color consistency, and space between paragraphs. It is also desirable for the design to reflect the organisation's visual identity, the activity's idea, or the campaign identity.

> **Organisation's logo**
> *(as well as the logos of partners or donors, for transparency)*
>
> **The name of the organisation or host**
>
> **Activity title**
> *(and the general program that it falls under)*
>
> **Time and place**
> *(Activity program items, if short.*
> *It can be written on the back, if the English version is not printed there)*
>
> For RSVP:
> Before this date, on this email address, the organisation›s phone number

B. Press Releases

A journalist's inbox is filled with press releases that flow from everywhere. So, what are some key steps to follow in order to write a successful and attractive press release?

✅ Checklist

Before writing a press release, ask yourself the following:

○ First: What is the story? Put yourself in the journalist's shoes.
What makes your story so important and worthy of converting into a statement to distribute to the press? Write your story in one sentence.

○ Second: What is the ultimate objective of the press release? Does the organisation want to involve public opinion? Does the organisation wish to influence any policy or official debate? Or is it a response to an action or a statement? Identify the goal in your mind first.

○ Third: Is the organisation ready to cooperate if a journalist shows any interest?
For example, are there any beneficiaries, affected people, or stakeholders who are ready to speak? Does the organisation have relevant reports and case studies that enrich the topic that the journalist wishes to cover? Is there anyone willing to follow-up and coordinate with the press?

○ Fourth: Does the organisation wish to collaborate with a specific media outlet to ensure that the release is published or broadcasted at a specific time? Or does it want to distribute it to all media outlets?

The press release must include the logo and name of the association, a clear and prominent title, the date and place of issuance, the point of contact and method of communication, and the organisation's address and e-mail. You should make the subject of the press release clear from the beginning and in the first paragraph. The opening sentence should be attractive and should encourage the reader to continue reading. In any press release or publication related to communication, answers to the "5W" questions are provided in the introduction:

- What?

- Who?

- When?

- Where?

- Why or how?

It is recommended that the statement does not exceed five paragraphs, and that it addresses the various aspects of the topic that the organisation wishes to shed light on, while avoiding repetition and long sentences. The statement is concluded by reiterating its basic message and announcing any future steps

C. News Stories

In general, the golden rule for writing news stories is taught in the faculties of press and information. Whether the item is a press release, report or news story, the "inverted pyramid" rule is applied. This rule places emphasis on writing key information at the beginning, to meet the requirement that consists of arranging the story from the narrowest and most important perspective to the most comprehensive one. This rule enables readers and users to understand key elements of the topic from the beginning, even if they do not continue reading. Of course, there are other possibilities for arranging the story, such as: Delaying the introduction and starting with a quote, a shocking fact, or a strong statement, or starting with a summary of the topic and detailing it later.

As for the news stories prepared by NGOs, they often include coverage of a human experience or a success story. It would be useful to conduct an interview with the person in question, add key quotes, apply the same hierarchical rule and almost the same distribution indicated in the press release form. Do not forget to include in the press release or news story one or more expressive photos, tables, diagrams, quote boxes, videos and other materials related to the story or campaign addressed by the organisation.

3. Preparing a Press File

The press file is a somewhat classic tool, but some organisations still use it out of habit.

Oftentimes, press files are prepared in advance and distributed to the journalists who visit the organisation to learn more about its work or to interview one of its members. Press files can also be distributed to journalists who participate in a press conference or any activity carried out by the organisation.

On the file, the title "press file" is written with a related secondary title. The file usually includes:

A brochure on the organisation, a press release when necessary, an identification card for the information and communication coordinator, a related report and/ or paper that presents the main summaries, data and numbers with graphs (when possible), the conference program if the file is distributed during a conference, the speeches of the speakers, and sometimes high-quality copies of the video or advertisement.

What	Why	To whom	How
What message?	To give what information/image/ impression?	To which party?	What is the adopted method?
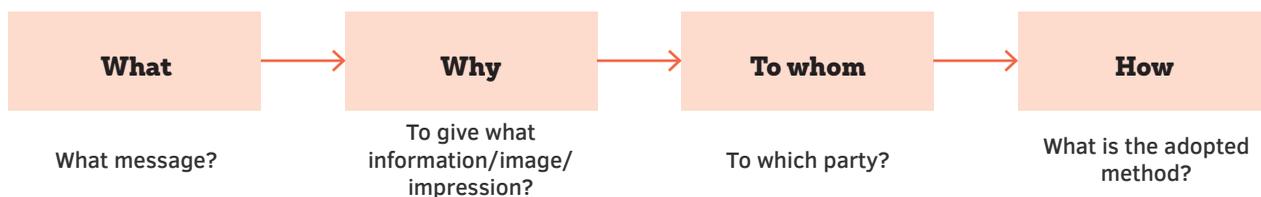
4. Building a Sustainable Relationship with the Media

The relationship with the media is not limited to contact lists that include numerous contacts, phone numbers, and email addresses. There is no doubt that organising such a contact list is still an important and much required practice and should be developed on a regular basis. However, building a good relationship with media workers goes beyond sending lists, data, and news stories from time to time.

5. Conducting Interviews

💡 Tips

The following practical steps will help you conduct a successful media interview:

- First: Understand the message content and check basic information before the date of the interview, and find a unique way to link between them.

- Second: Focus the message on the main idea for which you are conducting the interview.

- Third: Follow the ABC (Acknowledge/Answer, Bridge, Communicate) approach:[5]

  - Acknowledge/Answer: Answer and/or acknowledge that what the journalist asked or said and show that you are not ignoring him/her, even if you do not have the perfect answer. Answer the question honestly and clearly.

  - Bridge: The bridge is the stage that puts you back in control in order to go back to discussing your main idea, by linking what was previously said with what will follow, i.e. what you want to say.

  - Communicate: Here, focus communication on the main idea for which the interview was arranged.

Always place yourself in the editor's shoes (text or video editor) and edit your speech directly during the interview, in a way that makes it difficult for the editor to edit out your sentences. Keep your sentences short.

✓ Checklist

Several conditions must be met to ensure a good and thriving relationship with the media, including:

◯ **Point of contact:** The presence of a media official coordinating this communication, who is familiar with both journalists and the organisation itself. It must be noted that the organisation should allow this person to access all current developments, updates, and decisions from internal sources of information.

◯ **Long-term relationship:** Adopt a long-term policy with the press whose aim is to build a solid and long-term partnership between the two parties and to portray a positive image of the organisation in the long run, through its sincere work.

◯ **Added value:** Provide the press with clear and accurate information on the issues being addressed. Specialised information is key to the success of the relationship.

◯ **Comfortable pace:** Communicate periodically with journalists to inform them of developments without bombarding them with messages on every single event.

◯ **Partnership:** Communicate with journalists as influencers and strategic partners. They are, of course, entrusted with the information and they pass it on to the public, but their role goes beyond just that. They also contribute, through their public position, to raising awareness about the issue that the organisation is addressing, and they sometimes help put pressure on decision-makers and hold them accountable. Collaboration with journalists can also disseminate guidelines and contact information and reduce the suffering caused by a problem or crisis.

◯ **Credibility:** Enhance confidence in the organisation and the data and information it provides. Wrong or inaccurate information severely harms an organisation's reputation. Therefore, when there is uncertainty, it is best to wait before giving any information to the press, even if this comes at the expense of a press scoop or a scoop between organisations.

Exercise 2

Choose an activity or conference that you expect your organisation to conduct (think of the nearest event or occasion and imagine it). Write the first paragraph of the draft press release following the tips presented in this section (you can also choose an event that has already been held and write the first paragraph of the related press release again).

Exercise 3

Interview a colleague of yours in the organisation about this activity or event, following the tips presented in this section. Interchange roles and do not interrupt each other. Share the notes after playing both roles; the role of the journalist and the role of the interviewee. Don't forget to auto-edit!

05

Using Social Media to Serve the Organisation's Goals

1. Defining the Goals of the E-Strategy

At this point in the guide, it is time to understand the importance of preparing the strategy, clearly identifying communication goals, and identifying the groups targeted by your organisation before starting to implement any communication option.

Electronic goals are those that the organisation wants to achieve by implementing a set of steps and procedures online or digitally. There are generally three types of these goals:[6]

- Enhance visibility and increase exposure to certain content

- Foster engagement and participation

- Increase the presence of the brand and identity (or increase the sales/donation ratio, which is a popular goal for commercial companies).

Through these goals, the organisation targets an audience that should be well-considered and defined in advance, above anything else. One of the tools that helps in defining the audience is the User Persona drawing technique. Through this medium, the organisation tries to build a picture of the target audience[7] and asks itself: "Am I targeting a group of women, men, married couples, adults, young adults, parents, journalists, or refugees?"

After determining the audience, the organisation selects the appropriate online platforms, according to the characteristics of each platform and its ability to ensure the organisation's reach and interaction with the target audience. The following question must be answered: "Where is your organisation's audience located?"

The social media platforms that your organisation can choose from consist of the following:

Facebook page - closed or open group on Facebook - groups on WhatsApp - Instagram account - YouTube channel - Twitter account - LinkedIn account - Snapchat account - Tik Tok account – among others.

2. Best Ways to Use key Online Platforms and Evaluate Performance

General tips on using key online platforms:

Platform	General tips	Evaluation tools
Facebook	• Post regularly and daily during working hours, i.e. between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. on weekdays, as well as on weekends • Get to know your Facebook audience well • Set a schedule for the content (daily or weekly), and diversify the forms of materials (visual, short text, figure ...) and topics • Open a debate or start a conversation on an issue of interest to your audience by asking a question in the post, for example. Engaging the audience can make them feel valuable and important. • Share the content your audience sends after checking it and verifying that it is of relevance to the work of the organisation • Increase visual content, such as pictures and short videos, and minimise the length of written posts • Tag people or organisations concerned with the content • Ensure that the page is attractive, in terms of profile and cover pictures and the general nature of the posts • Use buttons that call for an action, such as «contact», «donate», and «join» (tabs) • Use paid ads for key content • Invite members of the organisation›s network or volunteers to interact and comment	Use page insights periodically to learn more about your audience, determine which posts the audience interacts with, and the reasons behind such interaction, or use social media management software (often not free, such as Hootsuite, SocialBakers, and SproutSocial...)

Instagram	• Set specific times for posts and content. Posting regularly enhances your chances of appearing on Instagram	Use Instagram Analytics for your Instagram business account or social media management software (often not free, such as HootSuite, Iconosquare …)[9]
	• Create a «business» account for your organisation, add its address and phone number, and add paid advertisements on it from time to time	
	• Add a link to your website or any link with a content that you wish to promote in the bio	
	• Get to know your audience on Instagram (young people, women…?)	
	• Share attractive visual stories (expressive images and short videos) and explain them with a short comment and through popular hashtags	
	• Use hashtags to ensure that your content easily reaches the audience and link it to other content on the topic under discussion.	
	• Use mentions to refer to other accounts and promote the reach of the organisation›s content	
	• Repost content sent to you by your followers after checking it, through the Repost app, for example	
	• Follow pages and people that are of importance to the organisation	
	• Use the «stories» and live broadcast features when needed	
	• Invite members of the organisation›s network or volunteers to interact and comment	

Twitter	• Post 1 to 5 tweets per day • Use Twitter to post quick or real-time news • Add a hashtag to the post, and adopt a particular hashtag to use frequently and consistently when discussing the same topic • Mention other relevant accounts (especially decision-makers who are highly active on Twitter) • Use Twitter lists to follow accounts that are specialised in a specific field of interest to the organisation • Change the settings for direct messages to the organisation to «open" so that you can receive messages from everyone • Invite members of the organisation›s network or volunteers to interact and comment	Use Twitter Analytics or social media management software (often not free, such as HootSuite, SocialBakers, and TweetArchivist...)
YouTube	• Create a dedicated channel and upload videos on it regularly • Get to know your YouTube audience • Create short, attractive, and easy-to-find videos, write a short description of the video with links, and add tags according to topic • Choose a clear and attractive thumbnail to accompany the video • Promote key videos by placing ads through your Google account • Pay attention to the comments of users/subscribers to the channel • Create multiple internal channels for the organisation›s various programs if there are many large-scale programs with a high rate of video production • Create playlists for series	Use YouTube Analytics to learn about the performance of videos, who watches them, and subscribers to the channel

Website	• Understand that the website is the interface of the organisation and reflects its identity in form and content	Use special programs provided by a web developer - such as programs that analyse targeted messages sent via email and how to respond to them - and Google Analytics that provide highly insightful indicators and evaluation forms at the level of the audience's relationship with the site, how they use it, frequency of use, duration of use, the most popular content, and demographic information about the audience, through easy-to-read reports and graphs.
	• Ensure friendly design and easy navigation	
	• Allow engagement and interaction	
	• Allocate a special space for the affected people or beneficiaries to provide them with basic information and ensure communication with them	
	• Give high priority to the homepage	
	• Clearly display the work of the organisation and its most important programs and news	
	• Add a search field on the website	
	• Increase website visibility on search tools (via keywords), especially Google, using specific technical features	
	• Connect with social media	
	• Adopt one language or create two sites to use two languages (Arabic and English, for example)	

💡 Tips

The electronic performance evaluation process usually answers the following questions:

• Did the organisation's publications result in greater, less, or equal interaction when compared to its previous electronic publications and procedures?

• Has the e-policy attracted more people to its social media pages?

• Did its messages reach the target audience or a new audience?

• Did it lead to a high conversion rate? For example, did a sufficient number of people sign your petition?

06

Communication with Advertising Companies and Experts in the Creative Field

1. Outline of Communication with Expertsin the CreativeField

As mentioned earlier, one of the tasks of the communication and information departments in organisations is to follow up on the production of media and advertising campaigns, starting from the development of the plan and preparation of the content to launching, publishing and distribution, as well as to follow up on the technical production of campaign materials, such as graph, designs, videos, pictures, and publications, in coordination with technical experts.

In these two fields, the organisation is likely to engage with numerous experts and specialists, including:

Producer or production company, creative team, director, copywriter, designer, printing press, etc.

✔ Checklist

When communicating with these actors, it is very important to focus on the following:

- ◯ Choose the main coordinator and point of contact between the two parties and abide by this choice until the end.

- ◯ Directly and clearly communicate the request of the organisation to the concerned authority, in order to deliver the tangible offer or prepare the idea and submit it (also known as pitching). The organisation's request to the company includes information about the nature of the campaign/product and its objective, context, target audience, and other details that could be of use to the team, such as the text that the organisation wishes to highlight.

- ◯ Share key updates with the concerned members of the organisation's team and request their opinion at key stages before the final product is done.

- ◯ Adhere to the goal for which the organisation is cooperating with the external party, while maintaining a minimum level of flexibility that allows the organisation to benefit from the expert's competence, his/her view on certain matters, and his/her artistic vision.

- ◯ Written participation via e-mail on agreed points or points that must be followed up, without relying solely on phone calls, even after signing any contract.

- ◯ Clearly define the role of participants, i.e. give credits with transparency.

Exercise 5:

Your organisation wants to produce a short educational video on an issue it is currently addressing. The video is intended to be published on social media. Define the video's subject and purpose, its approximate duration, the principle approach you deem appropriate for it, and ways to strengthen its circulation through online and offline procedures.

Endnotes

1. It is recommended that design specialists prepare general visual guidelines for the organisation (including, for example, font type, size, colors, approved logo, location of the logo on the cover and/or inside the publication, the size of the publication, depending on its purpose, and the form of the first pages of studies, etc.)

2. For more information on the communication strategy, please refer to this brief presentation by Bright One, entitled "Creating Strong Communication Strategies," on the following link: https://www.slideshare.net/benrmatthews/charitycomms-what-does-a-good-communications-strategy-look-like (Last accessed in December 2019)

3. For more information on content creation, please refer to the following link: http://www.curata.com/blog/content-curation-strategy-a-5-step-journey-infographic/ (Last accessed in December 2019)

4. The relationship with the media will be tackled in part four of this guide.

5. Delton, Jacqueline. "Lifeline: Working with Broadcasters in Humanitarian Crises. Tips for aid workers on working with media to save lives." London: BBC Media Action, 2016. Accessed June 3, 2020. http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/pdf/guide-for-humanitarians-working-with-broadcasters-english.pdf

6. Sauliere, Saya. 2016. Digital and Social Media Monitoring and Evaluation for NGOs Guide. Oxfam.

7. The Buyer Persona is a virtual picture of the typical person who is likely to be interested in the content or product of the publisher (questions such as the following must be answered: How old is the person? Where does he/she live? What does he/she do? What is his/her marital status? What is their biological gender? What is his/her purchasing power, etc.). SWAT.io and HubSpot. The Art of Social Media Content Creation, The Ultimate Guide from Idea Creation to Publishing. 2017.Accessed June 3, 2020. https://blog.swat.io/ebooks/the-art-of-social-media-content-creation/

8. The Buyer Persona is a virtual picture of the typical person who is likely to be interested in the content or product of the publisher (questions such as the following must be answered: How old is the person? Where does he/she live? What does he/she do? What is his/her marital status? What is their biological gender? What is his/her purchasing power, etc.). SWAT.io and HubSpot. The Art of Social Media Content Creation, The Ultimate Guide from Idea Creation to Publishing. 2017.Accessed June 3, 2020. https://blog.swat.io/ebooks/the-art-of-social-media-content-creation/

9. HootSuite, 2019. "Best tools for measuring performance on Instagram." HootCity. Accessed December, 2019. https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-analytics-tools-business/