

## The right to know

### How to start a media campaign



© © UNICEF/HQ 01-0197/Pirozzi

In Botswana, two girls from a junior secondary school record their discussion on HIV/AIDS prevention at Radio Botswana, the national radio station.

As an informed young person, you can help educate your peers and your community. If you are part of a group that would like to address HIV/AIDS, a media relations campaign is one of the most effective ways to reach the people you want to get through to (your target audience).

The first step is to review what your group is trying to accomplish with its communication programme. This will help you develop effective media activities and messages. Ask yourself:

- What goals do you want to accomplish in your event or activity?
- Who is your target audience?
- What messages must be developed and spread to influence your target audience to make the desired changes?
- What role do you want the community at large to have?
- What types of media outreach would be efficient and cost effective for accomplishing the above?

Two keys are needed to open the door of interest for the media:

1. Understanding what the media want in a story.
2. Making sure that the information is provided to them in a clear and timely manner. Types of news media

There are several categories of news media: television, radio, newspapers, magazines. They can each play useful roles in any media campaign, providing you are aware of their different characteristics, deadlines and ways of using media material.

MEDIA	CHARACTERISTICS	DEADLINES
Television	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A highly-visible medium that can reach large audiences, particularly in industrialized countries.</li> <li>• Good for reporting stories that visually show the importance of your message.</li> <li>• Huge competition for broadcast time.</li> <li>• Stories are brief (30 to 60 seconds)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The day before to alert the newsdesk, particularly if you are planning a live event or activity.</li> <li>• 10am for the 6pm or evening news for last-minute events or announcements.</li> <li>• Three to eight weeks in advance for public announcements.</li> </ul>
Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both national and local radio are usually hungry for news stories.</li> <li>• Uses 10 to 15 second 'sound bites', short statements that you can use to sum up your key message and actions. Sometimes longer interviews.</li> <li>• Have your spokesperson practice before going on air. Speak clearly and firmly, don't hesitate in responding to questions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow several days notice for public events that need outside coverage.</li> <li>• The same day is usually fine for studio-based news items.</li> </ul>

Newspaper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides more in-depth treatment of a subject.</li> <li>• Print reporters may use direct quotes from press releases and statements, or interview spokespeople directly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By 2-3pm of the day before for a daily newspaper.</li> <li>• Three to five days before the newspaper comes out for a weekly paper.</li> </ul>
Magazine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targets specific segments of the public</li> <li>• Can enable you to explain complex health and behaviour issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two to eight weeks before the magazine is printed, depending on whether the magazine is published weekly or monthly.</li> </ul>

### Making the most of the media

Before the event, track your media contacts by having your group call the media you want to reach, find out the name of the news editor or specialized correspondents and gather contact information and other details on a simple form. This will make it much easier and more efficient to issue your press release to the right people.

Press releases should include in no more than one to two pages the five W's and an H:

WHO is involved

WHAT happened

WHEN did it happen

WHERE did it happen

WHY or HOW did it happen.

The first or 'lead' paragraph should answer these questions in one or two sentences. The second and third paragraphs should include a 'colourful,' interesting quote reporters can use in their article. The rest of the release can provide more detail on what you have and hope to achieve.

Your news release may target specific groups, such as people of different age groups, ethnicities or genders. For best results, it should announce something new or topical. Some suggestions for releases include:

- A profile on an active community member - what he or she has done and why.
- Fundraising events and projects that local groups organize in support of HIV/AIDS.
- Personal stories of people living with HIV/AIDS. (Remember to be sensitive when putting such a story together and respect of their requests about whether they agree to be identified or not. In particular, consider the implications for privacy and personal safety of anyone under 18 years old.)
- The launch of targeted prevention programmes for those at high risk for infection.
- The announcement of an exceptional HIV education programme at a local business, place of worship or school.

Your release should be accompanied by a media kit. The "media kit" is a collection of information prepared especially for the media to be released on the day of the event. Often, organizations have standard media kits filled with information and materials that serve as an introduction to their organization. Examples of materials that might be included in a media kit are:

- Statistics on the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in your country/region.
- Information on your organization and its HIV/AIDS prevention programme.
- Information on national, state or local HIV/AIDS hotlines.
- A business card with contact details for the media to contact your group about HIV/AIDS issues.
- Brief, one-page biographies of the key people in your group.
- Photographs and camera-ready graphics, such as charts and logos. If you can include these in digital form on a disc or CD so much the better. Remember to include them at the right resolution. Print media require the highest resolution of 300 dots per inch or dpi. Materials at this resolution would be fine for other media to use as well.

If the pack is accompanying a press release about a special event, you could also include biographies of people involved, such as speakers or guests, and copies of relevant materials, such as a report being released, statements to be given or speeches.

## Tips to boost your success

Good planning is the key to a successful media event or activity.

Two weeks ahead of your event:

- Write a letter for publication in your local newspaper to influence public opinion about issues that relate to your event or activities.
- Pick a central location for the event that is easily accessible (some popular venues may need to be booked weeks or even months in advance). Be aware of permissions needed for events in public places.
- Contact the reporters who write about ('cover') community or health events.
- Call community calendar reporters at area newspapers and TV, cable and radio stations, and ask them to place a calendar notice about your event.
- Hand deliver or mail invitations to the event two weeks.

The day before the event:

- Call the media again to politely remind them about the event.

On the day of the event:

- Set up a media sign-in table at your venue with media kits to distribute.
- When the reporters arrive, have members of your group detailed to greet them, set up interviews with the right people and escort media to the appropriate spokesperson.
- Issue everyone with name badges to promote better communication between media and individuals.
- Have someone from your organization take photos to accompany articles in newsletters and other publications and for your own files.

After the event

- Send an immediate news release to any reporters who were unable to attend.
- Send follow-up letters for publication in local newspapers to thank the community and inform of your success.
- Write a follow-up article for inclusion in appropriate community publications. Illustrate with photos from the event. Include information on how many people attended, what the results were etc.

For more helpful information consult (This link opens in a new window and will take you to non-UNICEF web site.)

- [Do Something website](http://www.dosomething.org/)<sup>1</sup>

---

## Links

1. <http://www.dosomething.org/>