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Media Relations For NGOs

USAID/OTI Lebanon Civic Support Initiative

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Media are one of the key channels and means to reach out to a wider audience, to educate, inform on achievements, promote alternative policies or behavior, or advocate for change on the local or national level. In the arena of ideas, media are possible independent players, potential partners, or an independent space where ideas are presented and compete for supporters in the change process.

As such, media are one of the most important partners and tools for civil society organizations engaging in civic activism and promoting change in their community. This manual targets youth groups and NGOs, specifically USAID/OTI grantees and partners, by offering them assistance and advice on working effectively with mainstream and social media. The manual is only a part of a wide range of services and tools that OTI offers to its partners, including media relations training, spokesperson training, use of social media in campaigning, production of new media content, and coaching in these areas.

Although developed primarily for USAID OTI grantees, this manual can be readily used by other NGOs in Lebanon. It is a living document and will be updated on a regular basis. Suggestions for revisions or additions are welcomed and should be provided to advocacy@otilebanon.com.

We wish you luck and success in reaching out to the media and in the work in your communities.

Nebojsa Radic

Advocacy Team Leader

Lebanon Civic Support Initiative

Good work goes unnoticed if no one knows about it. Publicizing the work of civil society organizations is critical to generate support, attract volunteers, raise funds, and amplify impact. The media can be allies in this process.

Civil society organizations create positive change in the communities where they work. However, the role of the media in these local initiatives is often limited due to several reasons. The most important is the Lebanese media's preoccupation with political and security-related news, as well as limited financial and human resources that create pressures on journalists' time. As a result, civil society activities are often absent from the media's agenda, except for a few initiatives led by Beirut-based NGOs that usually focus on issues that are of interest at the national level.

The objective of this guide is to build bridges between civil society organizations and the media through a series of tips and recommendations on how to cultivate media relations, spread the news on civil society efforts, and share experiences with civil society activists across the country. Recognizing the professionalism and openness of the Lebanese media environment, the guide aims to increase civil society organizations' awareness and understanding of the functioning, priorities, and constraints of media organizations and professionals in order to equip civil society activists with the knowledge and skills needed to realize their public outreach goals. This requires building the capacity of civil society organizations to develop media savvy human resources, invest in establishing professional relations with the media, and create effective outreach materials that facilitate the work of journalists open to covering issues of interest to the civil society sector.

Ahmad Karout

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Media are one of the key ways for civil society organizations to improve the visibility of their work, build a good reputation, and promote the issues they are involved with. Good reputation will open many doors: meetings with elected officials will be easier to schedule, donors will be more willing to fund an NGO's initiatives, and volunteers and project participants will be more likely to join. For all of these reasons, every dollar invested in media relations will provide multiple returns. Therefore, it is strongly recommended for NGOs to develop the media relations capacity of one or more of its staff members or most devoted volunteers. There are four major functions/roles of media relations in an organization:

1- The Spokesperson: The Spokesperson represents an organization, gives it a face in the media, gives interviews and statements on various issues, and speaks at conferences. It is recommended for this role to be filled by the NGO director or one or two Board members.

⇒ Self-confidence, good communications and public speaking skills and strong commitment are key prerequisites for the position of Spokesperson.

2- The Media Specialist: The Media Specialist will be directly in touch with the reporters and editors from the NGO's media list. He/she will answer media calls, coordinate interview requests with spokesperson(s), brief spokespersons on media interview requests, recommend selection of interviews, brief them on possible difficult questions and coordinate message development for the NGOs. He/she will coordinate data collection and responses to media requests for information. He/she will call media and pitch stories on various activities, draft press releases, backgrounders, Q&A sheets, fact sheets, newsletters and other media materials.

⇒ Excellent communications, writing and copy-editing skills as well as personal commitment to the work of the NGO and the issues it is covering are key to the position of Media Specialist.

3- The Media Assistant: this role involves developing and maintaining a press list; monitoring the media; and collecting articles about the NGO or the issues it is focused on, filing them in press clipping archives, and distributing them to colleagues in the NGO, Board members or to an external mailing list. He/she will also distribute press releases written by the Media Specialist to journalists and editors on the media list and make follow-up calls to check if the releases were received by the media. It is recommended for this role to be filled by the NGO's administrative assistant, receptionist or similar.

⇒ Good communication and administrative skills as well as attention to details and cultural sensitivity are the key prerequisites for the Media Assistant job.

4- The Copy Editor: The Copy Editor will review and edit all publications for language and style, including brochures, newsletters, press releases, op-eds, backgrounders, Q&A sheets, website entries, as well as the written content of Facebook page(s) and other social media.

⇒ Excellent written communications skills, native Arabic skills and excellent written Arabic, and if possible good command of English and/or French are key requirements for this position.

In most organizations the Director and/or Chair of the Board are spokespersons, and most often the Media Assistant, Media Specialist and Copy Editor functions are covered by one person – the Media Specialist, often also called Press Officer or Media Officer. The job description of such a Media Specialist is enclosed in Annex 3.

Visual Media

An ever-increasing role is developed for the “**do-it-yourself**” visual media. In the era of social and online media, taking photos or developing video footage has become rather easy. It is recommended to have one person on staff that will be specialized in developing program-related photography and video and upload to the web. In addition to that person, the Media Specialist should receive basic visual media training as well.

A press officer represents the work of the organization and acts as the point of contact for media representatives. He/she is responsible for maintaining the image of the organization, gaining publicity and disseminating information to members of the press. Here are key rules for how to be a good press officer:

- 1. Stay in touch.** Call journalists regularly, occasionally offer stories, and sometime just discuss current events. Spend time on the phone, not at meetings.
- 2. Be approachable.** You should be available to take calls from journalists anytime - evenings and weekends included.
- 3. Develop relationships.** Try to understand the reporter's agenda. Be helpful, even if this does not bring an immediate gain to you. Public Relations is like putting your money into the bank and withdrawing it when you need it - with interest.
- 4. Never lie to a reporter.** You are an advocate for your organization, but that does not mean you should risk the credibility of your organization or yourself by lying or misrepresenting the truth. If you don't know the answer to something, simply say you will be back as soon as you find out. Give facts not spin.
- 5. Be the first to tell.** Some argue that it does not matter what you say as long as you say it first. People remember the first news, not its defense, attacks, or explanations. So, be the first to tell and give your own interpretation.
- 6. Know the "scoop".** Use all available channels and develop new channels to collect information from your organization and the field you work in. Have daily and weekly meetings with your colleagues; stay in touch on the phone with heads of programs. Have access to the project development meetings. In order to be a reliable source of information for reporters, you have to know what is going on in your organization and in the field.
- 7. Everything you tell to a reporter can be published.** Before you get some experience and know the reporters personally, everything should be treated as on the record!
- 8. Be professional, demand professionalism.** Be punctual, and deliver what you have promised. Know the media code of ethics and demand professionalism from reporters.
- 9. Monitor the coverage.** Read, watch and listen to the media as much as possible. Every morning search the Internet for the keywords (it is easy to develop automatic Google notifications on new web materials with those key words). Compare and analyze media reporting trends over time, geographically, or in specific outlets. Analyze individual reporters who cover your topic (i.e. disability, minority, social issues, human rights, etc). Know your media – their interests, consumers, cycles and formats.
- 10. Give honest and professional advice.** Explain the 'worst case scenario' to your boss and the likely media response to his/her proposed initiatives. You need to practice with your supervisor the message he/she wants to deliver, offer praise when appropriate and criticize constructively when necessary.

¹In journalists' jargon, the "scoop" is the breaking news, the news, information that no one else has.

Newspapers and Magazines

Newspapers are the world's oldest media. They have several advantages against the audio-visual media (radio, TV):

- They are a document, which is durable and can be kept for months and years. They do not depend on the moment the way radio and TV do. As historical documents, they are accessible to a much larger number of researchers than radio or TV tapes. Articles can be cut and kept in an archive.
- They can be re-read several times; if the reader does not understand something he/she can go back and read it again. That is one of the reasons why print media in general have coverage that is much more in-depth, more analytical, with more figures than other types of media. This is not possible with radio and TV, and this is one of the reasons why radio and TV reports are on average much shorter.
- They can be read whenever the reader wants. The reader controls the timing, while the viewer and listener, if they want to do so, have to document (record) the broadcasts.
- They can be read wherever the reader wants: at home, in the office, in a café, in a bus, in a train...
- They are more democratic because they leave an option to readers' reaction and correction.
- They can publish photographs as opposed to the radio, which uses only sound.

Print media also have disadvantages:

- Readers have to be literate – that limits the accessible audiences in some cases.
- Newspapers and magazines are expensive, especially in developing countries.
- They have to be distributed – and distribution is sometimes undeveloped or is controlled by the government, which refuses to sell opposition papers.
- Newspapers are slow as compared to radio and TV.
- Time and reading habits are needed for reading papers – watching TV or listening to the radio is an easier and more passive activity.
- Print lacks real voice and in-motion pictures and is in a way less trusted by the audience.

Among all the mentioned disadvantages of the print media, timing influences their editorial policy the most. News stories have to be timely – they have an “expiration date”, after which they are “old”, and old news is no news. Print media have daily, weekly, or monthly production cycles. A daily newspaper usually “closes” at 5-6 pm, after which time no changes are accepted in the next day's edition. Some dailies will have a “service” page, usually the back-page, which is opened until 8 pm or so. After the closing time language editing, news editing, page editing, printing and distribution take place, so the paper is at the newsstands across the country in the morning hours. If something happens after the paper is closed, it can potentially be covered only in the issue published two days later – by which time the news will be old. The weeklies close three or four days before their publishing date. The time between writing a story and having it published/broadcasted is called lead-time. Lead-time is shortest on radio as the program most often goes live. TV has a longer lead-time because of the complicated technology, but still shorter than print, which are the slowest media.

The production cycles profile the media. Radio is listened to for on-the-spot news, road conditions, weather, etc. Weekly and monthly magazines will focus more on news analysis than on the news. They will publish in-depth stories and reviews of social phenomena. Daily newspapers will mostly report about daily events taking place before 1 or 2 pm, so that the reporter has time to file the story before 5 pm, by which time it should be on the editor's desk.

Newspapers and magazines often target smaller groups by age (teenage magazines), gender (women or men's magazines), interests (human rights, foreign policy, parliamentary issues, medical topics, etc), national groups (i.e. minority language weeklies), etc. They all are called specialized media, as opposed to mainstream media that are read by the majority or general audiences.

Tips: Working With Print Media

- ⇒ Find out the closing day of the most important weekly magazine(s) you would like to work with. If you know the closing day, you can time your event/report so it is mentioned in the next issue.
- ⇒ Ask the daily newspaper reporters what is the ideal time for them to get a story idea so they can cover it before the closing time. If you know it, you can time your activities so they are reported in the next day's issue.
- ⇒ Print media can publish more analytical articles, for which reporters need to understand the topic better. Print media reporters need more of your attention and assistance.
- ⇒ Think of providing photo materials to reporters.

Radio

Radio is often the most important media for outreach to rural areas. Here are its advantages as compared to print and TV:

- Radio is the cheapest medium. Nowadays it is relatively cheap to run a radio station. It can be placed in one room, no cameras needed, no printing and distribution costs.
- It is the fastest medium. The lead-time can be zero, in case of live coverage. Live coverage is the cheapest coverage.
- Radio enables continuous coverage of events. As of a few years ago, there are now TV stations focusing on round the clock news coverage (pioneered by CNN).
- Radio was for a while the only medium with a possibility of live coverage of events. Although nowadays it is possible with TV as well, TV is still very expensive and technically complicated, so radio still leads in live programs.
- It enables easy and inexpensive two-way communication between reporters and listeners, more than in the case of print media or TV. Contact programs are still very popular and very common on radio stations. They make public discussion about various issues (possibly for your initiatives) much more visible, democratic, and authentic.
- It has the biggest outreach – no literacy required, no TV sets needed, and even a lack of electricity is not a problem: radio receivers can work on batteries.
- It is easier to listen than to read, and people sometimes tend to listen to the radio in the background while doing other things.

Tips: Working With Radio

- ⇒ Because radio only uses sound, it is best to use simple and understandable language.
- ⇒ People rarely sit and focus on listening to the radio – they listen to it while doing something else. Be concise, use short sentences, simple examples and do not use complicated numbers. Instead of “14,256 people” say “around 15,000 people”.
- ⇒ Radio does not have pictures, as sound is its only component. Avoid speaking with a monotonous and flat voice - try to use intonation, pauses, and volume to express yourself better.

However, radio has its disadvantages as well:

- Similar to TV, radio is momentary; the program has to be heard in the moment of broadcasting, unless it is recorded. Except in prime times, the effect of radio coverage can be weaker than in case of the print.
- It does not provide pictures and is consequently less trusted than TV.
- People listen to it in the background, without the possibility to listen again if they did not understand something. That is why coverage has to be simple and short. No complicated analytical reports are allowed.
- Because it is one of the most democratic media, the language used should be simple and understandable. In the morning and afternoon rush hours, drivers often switch on the radio to hear the weather and news and find out about possible traffic jams. Those are the times with the highest ratings for radio stations.

Television

- Television is the only medium that combines picture, sound, and movement. As such, it is more realistic than any other media and people trust it more than print or radio. It is the most influential media of today.
- Television is mostly an entertainment medium. As on the radio, the emphasis is on short and simple reports.
- An average TV viewer is less educated than newspaper readers. Simple language and short sentences should be used.
- TV is technically complicated and because of that, it is a slow and expensive medium. In a production of a short interview in a community center, a team of up to five people might be involved (producer, reporter, cameraman, light engineer, driver).
- It is faster than print media but slower than radio.
- The prime time for TV is between 8 and 10 pm, with the biggest number of viewers. The main daily news journal is shown, followed by a soap opera or a studio discussion. Friday and Saturday evenings have an extended prime time that can go as late as 10 pm, with more entertainment on the program as viewers can sleep longer the following morning.
- As opposed to radio, morning programs on TV are not prime time. Mostly children, housewives and retirees watch them.

Internet

Internet provides a combination of the good features of electronic and print media.

- Its content can be updated continuously, in real time, similar to the radio.
- It is also a “print” media, with electronically published text and with possible repeated and slow, convenience reading – similar to newspapers.
- It also has photographs (like newspapers) and films (like TV).
- With broadband Internet, we are actually witnesses of a convergence of media.
- Computer screens become TV sets, radio sets, newspapers, magazines, and telephones – all in one.

Interviews present one of the best media opportunities. It is your five minute chance to tell to the world what you want to say. As an interviewee, you can influence, design, and even lead the interview. The basic rule: Never go to an interview before knowing why you are going there and what you want to achieve. Decide on your message and what are the words to communicate it. Your objective is to send a strong message using few, simple words. If you use too many complicated terms, viewers' and listeners' attention will drop and your message will not reach them. The message should consist of three points that you want to make, A, B, C, that will keep it focused. A good way of crafting the message is to think of the headline you would like to appear in the newspapers the day after your interview.

Questions to ask before the interview:

- If possible, get the interview questions in advance; if not possible, find out about the topic of the interview. Talk to the host who will interview you. Find out what he/she knows about the topic. If possible, brief the host.
- Find out about the context in which you will be interviewed: will you be interviewed alone or in a group? Who else is on the show? Information about other participants can be crucial for you to prepare properly.
- Find out about the show in which you will participate. What is the format of the show – a Q and A, profile, reportage, news program or other type of show?
- What is the profile of the viewers/listeners? If you know who the viewers and listeners are, you can adopt and fine-tune your message to their language and interests.
- At what time is the show broadcasted?
- Research previous reporting on similar subjects. Does the show/reporter have a particular stance?
- Is the reporter who will interview you friendly or difficult?
- How long will the interview be?
- Will the interview be recorded and edited or will it be broadcasted live on air?
- If it is live broadcasting, will the viewers/listeners be able to interact and ask questions?

Get prepared:

- Decide on the three points (A, B and C).
- Get ready for the subject; find examples, facts, stories and anecdotes for each point.
- Rehearse in front of the mirror.
- Be prepared for surprises. Think about possible controversial and difficult questions. How will you answer these questions?
- Prepare a briefing for the reporter – send backgrounders and fact sheets on the topic ahead of the interview.
- Suggest topics or questions that would be interesting to discuss.

During the interview:

- Lead the interview. Direct the discussion towards your three points.
- Be short and concise. TV and radio do not like long sentences and in-depth analysis.
- Use sound bites. They are short, pithy statements on your three points that are easy to understand and remember.
- Use straight and simple language: not “owing to the fact that” but “because”. Not “the fact that he had not succeeded” but “his failure”. Do not use professional jargon; use simple terms instead.
- Avoid “fillers”, words and sounds that we make while thinking about what to say next, such as “well”, “like”, “hmmmm”, “ahhhhh” and similar. In order to avoid fillers you need to know that you are using them. That is possible if you tape yourself or have someone listening while you practice.
- Do not be afraid of silence. Long silence in the program is the reporter’s responsibility, not yours. Think before you answer.
- Occasionally repeat your three points, A, B, C, so the message gets across. Do it so that it sounds logical and change angles, examples and even language. Relate all the questions to the three points.
- First give conclusions then back up with facts. Learn to talk in this “upside-down” fashion. Go straight to the point first, and leave the explanations for later.
- In case of a question that you don’t want to answer, try to “bridge” it and transition it to your three points. For example: “Yes, you are right, I absolutely agree that misdiagnosis is a big issue, but protected employment is even more important because...” Be careful when you use bridging, as it can sometimes be counterproductive.
- Bridging is used not only to avoid undesired questions, but also to stay focused. Useful bridges are: “Yes, and in addition to that”, “I would like to add that”, “The most important point to remember is”, “Let me clarify”, “This reminds me of”, “Let me emphasize that”, “I am glad you asked me that”, “The truth is”, “This is a part of a larger issue”.

- ⇒ Stay positive. If you are asked a bad question, answer the best you can, but do not antagonize the reporter. Keep a friendly demeanor with the reporter.
- ⇒ Use facts. Use facts and figures to substantiate your message. Be careful though – TV and radio do not like too many numbers as viewers can not remember them. Instead of “nine-hundred-fifty-eight thousand” say “almost a million”.
- ⇒ Don't be taken out of context. However difficult it is, you should try to avoid statements that can be taken out of context and used against you. For example, do not repeat false statements about you. Not “it is not true that our activities are damaging environment”, but “I can assure you that it is not true”.
- ⇒ Tell the truth. Always tell the truth. Do not be afraid to admit that you don't know the answer to a question. Promise to be back with the answer once you find it, and do so.

After the interview:

- ⇒ Add the name of the reporter to your media list.
- ⇒ Analyze the interview, what went wrong, and what went well. Discuss lessons learned.
- ⇒ If during the interview you promised additional information to the reporter, act immediately to provide it.
- ⇒ Ask for the tape of the interview and save it.
- ⇒ If the interview was published in print media, collect the press clipping and store them in the press clipping archive. If it was very good, use it as a part of your press kit, for further publicity.

Interview with print media

All of the previous rules apply to an interview for print media, plus the following:

- ⇒ Before the interview, find out if a photographer will accompany the reporter. If yes, then think of shooting locations – maybe with bookshelves, artwork or plants in the background.
- ⇒ Print media usually go into more detail in exploring an issue. Therefore, you can use more facts and figures than on radio/TV.
- ⇒ Beware that taking things out of context and changing the meaning of sentences is much easier in print media than on radio/TV. If the piece will be printed as an interview, you can request an authorization for authenticity of the dialogue. This authorization enables you to check if your words were properly presented in the written text, but it is not an opportunity to change your statements.
- ⇒ Print interviews are sometimes done by email/fax. In this case, you get a list of questions from the reporter and at an agreed time send back answers by email/fax. Reporters in general do not like this format, because it is not spontaneous. For this reason, this type of interview is usually practiced only with celebrities and high level politicians who do not have time to meet with journalists in person.

Eyes and Body Language:

- ⇒ Look at the reporter's eyes. Do not look down or to the side.
- ⇒ Do not look at the camera; ignore it.
- ⇒ Do not sit stiff with your hands glued to the table in front of you, which does not look natural on camera. Sit comfortably in the chair, and relax.
- ⇒ Be as natural as possible, as if you were alone with the reporter. Use your body language as you normally do: move your eyebrows and hands, control the volume and pace of your speech. For example: when you want to emphasize something, you can slow the pace and at the same time raise your voice. You can also pause, with the same result. You can nod your head to approve or disapprove something, raise your eyebrows in surprise, etc.
- ⇒ While speaking, breath deeply, slowly and rhythmically, with the diaphragm. That will lower the tension and slow down your heart beat if you are nervous.

Appearance/Dress:

- ⇒ Serious and conservative attire demonstrates seriousness.
- ⇒ Wear solid mid-range colors; avoid white or full black. Avoid shiny fabrics.
- ⇒ Men should not wear dark suits with dark shirts or a shirt darker than their tie.
- ⇒ If you wear glasses, they might reflect light, so if you can do without them, you might decide to take them off.

Confidence:

- ⇒ On TV you must never let them see you sweat. Sweating means lying on television. In order not to sweat, avoid nicotine and caffeine before the interview, as they increase heart rate. Make-up can help as well.
- ⇒ Try to control the nervous rhythmical movement of your legs, avoid playing with your pen, scratching your face or hair, or tapping on the table with your fingers. The perception that such behavior gives is much worse than technical problems with the microphone. By moving without control, looking away from the reporter's eyes, you are actually saying that you are insecure and nervous. That is not helping you looking trustworthy: it actually looks like you might be hiding something.
- ⇒ Have some water on hand, in case your throat gets dry.

A press conference (news conference, media conference) is called for when an NGO has something newsworthy to tell to the media, and when more in-depth approach and discussion are needed that can't be said in a press release. A press conference gives reporters a chance to ask questions, get explanations, quotes, and a photo opportunity.

- An invitation to the conference should be sent to reporters and desk editors a week ahead. Closer to the date – a day or two before – a phone call can be made to remind the reporters about the event.
- The press conference should take place between 9 am and 11 am. After that time, reporters will not have enough time to file a story for the next day newspaper issue.
- Ideally, the conference will have several people attending: the press officer who knows the reporters will open and facilitate it. One or two prominent figures should be present. They will give a 10-minute statement each on the issue (project, release, donation, opening, or similar), after which the facilitator will open the floor to reporters to ask questions. All in all, ideally a press conference should take 45 minutes. After that individual interviews can be given.
- A “press kit” is usually distributed at a conference, containing a press release, backgrounders, a report, research results, fact sheets, list of experts, etc. Sometimes even filmed material or photo material is distributed. After the conference you should send the press kit through a messenger to media outlets that didn't have a representative at the conference.
- Reporters like to say that “A press conference should scream for a headline” – meaning that there should be breaking news released at the event. If a conference was held with no such news, journalists will not forget it - there is a chance that next time, even if you have breaking news, nobody will show up at your conference. Because of the proliferation of press conferences, media outlets often send new reporters to cover them.
- If possible, media events should be organized instead of press conferences. Yet, if one decides to organize a press conference, there are a number of technical details to be taken care of. These include:

Press Conference Checklist

Location

- Accessible by public transportation
- Available parking
- Exact address, phone and fax number provided to media
- Registration desk at the entrance, with a hostess greeting the reporters
- Translation booth if foreign reporters are expected

Site

- Are there enough electricity plugs for TV crews?
- Are the fuses strong enough?
- How many people can attend?
- Tables and chairs – number and position
- Platform for camera and photographers behind the reporters
- Check the light, heating
- Is there a photocopy machine available?
- A desk with press kits
- Table for the participants – seating arrangements
- Glasses with water on the participants' table
- Where do the participants enter from and where do they leave?
- Is there a separate room for individual interviews?
- Where are the restrooms?

Audio-Visuals

- Dropdown screen with the organization-action logo above the participants
- Projectors – transparencies, video, LCD
- Computers, laptops, monitors - platform – Windows or other?
- Microphones for participants, and wireless microphone for floor questions
- Loudspeakers
- Recording – audio, video, photographer?

Media events are a useful tool and an important part of a successful communication strategy. Media events, beyond news conferences or briefings, include site visits, street fairs, open houses, the opening of a new facility or school, or any other event staged to attract media attention and promote a message.

They may be focused around the beginning of the school year, the publication of an important document, submission or approval of a bill, or the release of a study. Media events usually generate news coverage and enable the organizers to set and control the agenda. To plan a successful event, picture your event from a journalist's point of view. Decide on a news angle—the aspect that will make the event newsworthy and not just an exercise in self-promotion.

Planning a media event:

If your event is extensive (an all day, all week, or all month event), it is more effective to establish a planning or coordinating committee involving key decision makers. The committee should be established well in advance of the event, and should develop a strategy to design, implement and monitor the event. The committee is responsible for ensuring that all the financial resources and personnel necessary to stage the event are available.

- ⇒ Know what you want the event to communicate; know your message and prepare a news release communicating it.
- ⇒ Prepare a news advisory in advance of the event explaining the event to the media, and describing what they can and can not cover.
- ⇒ Select an easily accessible site that will enable all those interested to attend.
- ⇒ Time the event to maximize media coverage (late morning hours are often the best for both television and newspapers), and make sure your event does not coincide with another media event.
- ⇒ Make it easy for journalists to cover your event; be accessible, provide them with news release, assist them in obtaining interviews and in selecting the location from which to broadcast. Send your news release to journalists who can not attend the event; they may just print the release.
- ⇒ Always remember that good planning is your best insurance for a successful event, and that a well-planned event requires a good deal of work well in advance.

If your event involves the public, and the participation of non-governmental officials:

- ⇒ Select your participants or speakers carefully. Know what they will say; obtain their remarks in advance. When they can support your message with the media, help arrange media interviews for them.
- ⇒ Encourage public attendance. Promote your event to the public most involved in the issue, and encourage their involvement. Get support from other CSOs and if possible from independent supporters and where applicable, from the government.
- ⇒ Consider corporate sponsorship of the event to help defray expenses perhaps allowing the corporate sponsor to produce souvenirs, such as T-shirts, caps, or key-chains that promote both the event and the corporation.
- ⇒ Consider the establishment of contests – among journalists, school children or schools as a method to attract public involvement in the event. Independent supporters or journalists could serve as judges. Journalists' involvement in the event almost always ensures media coverage.
- ⇒ Consider hiring a well-known personality or media figure to participate in your event as MC, moderator, or panelist. This can make your event more attractive for media coverage.
- ⇒ A tool for preparing media events – the Media Event Grid – is enclosed in Annex 4 of this manual.

Tips

Make sure your event is attractive for television; be creative and consider staging your story. Here are some ideas for media events:

- ⇒ Invite local government official to visit your program site;
- ⇒ Get your director to donate blood in order to communicate the benefits of blood donation;
- ⇒ Invite a municipality official to hold a discussion on education reform with parents;

Event Organizing Checklist

Small Size Event:

- Banner
- Sound system/podium microphone
- Invitations
- Sign-in list, business card collection
- Handouts on letterhead
- Media advisory – press release
- Photographer

Medium Size Event:

- Large banner/backdrop, podium sign
- Signage in hallway and at the door
- Sound system w/ microphones for audience questions
- Lights for TV/pictures
- Professional invitations, e-mail follow-up, name tags, door registration
- Event folder: agenda, handouts
- Photographer and videographer
- Sponsorship

Large Size Event:

- Event branding with logo
- Staging with backdrop, podium
- Extensive signage – banners
- Professional sound and lighting
- Video screens with live camera of speakers, presentations, videos, etc.
- Full video camera crew and mixing station
- Branded paper invitations, e-mail follow-up
- Event brochure/leaflet with invitations
- On-line registration
- Attendee packet pick-up w/ name tag
- Event binder with topic info, agenda, handouts, presentations, sponsor info, etc.
- Event website
- Media invitees seating, camera platform, press work room, press releases, interview schedules
- Giveaways – pens, mouse pads, notepads, etc.
- Multiple sponsors

Here are the basic rules you should follow when preparing and sending out a press release:

1. Write it only when you have news that you want to provide quickly to a large number of media outlets.
2. Write it in the same format and structure as a news article. The media will often publish it as it is, without further editing.
3. Write in the third person. For example: a release issued by YYY organization would say: “YYY today announced a project to support tourism in Lebanon”.
4. Have a catchy headline. Do not be legalistic – try to be intriguing.
5. Use the pyramid form: the title and the first paragraph should tell the main news. Other important information goes in the second paragraph, while a quote should be in the third paragraph. End with a short profile about the organization issuing the release.
6. In the first paragraph, answer the five “W” questions: Who, What, When, Where, and Why/How?
7. Add a quote by your organization’s director, chief researcher, donor, or a respectable third party who supports the project.
8. Use double spacing and do not write more than two pages.
9. Enclose fact sheets and backgrounders with additional information.
10. Your release should have a dateline, a strong headline, and contact information (name, phone, e-mail) for those who would like to have further information or an interview.
11. Use simple, understandable language, not academic or bureaucratic jargon. Write in short sentences, similar to those we used in this manual.
12. After you send out the release, make a round of calls to the reporters. Ask if they got it, if they understand it, and if they need additional information. Do not ask if they will publish it.

News Hooks for Press Releases

Dramatic Human Interest. Include the stories of real people, their triumphs, tragedies, adventures and anecdotes.

Trends. Use stories that suggest new opinions, behavior patterns and attitudes. There is a trend; find at least three examples to assert that a new trend is emerging.

Timelines / Calendar. Capture an event coming up on the calendar. “Back to school” can be a hook for toxic pollution in your children’s schools. Mother’s Day can be a hook for a new breast cancer community hotline.

New Announcement. Use “unprecedented” or “groundbreaking” or “first-ever”. Reporters are only interested in new news, not old news. Make your news fresh.

Localize National Story (and vice versa). Take a nationally breaking story and emphasize its local impact, i.e. how a welfare reform bill is affecting people living in your community.

Anniversaries / Milestones. Tell the story of one year later, one decade later.

Fresh Angle on Old Story. Take an old story and put a fresh twist on it. Release photos of same motif before and after the reconstruction you funded.

Profiles and Personnel. Feature individuals, community leaders, or spokespersons who may become news themselves because of their fascinating stories.

Special Event. Focus on a big conference, rally or gathering. Frame an event to capture the issue and its importance.

Respond and react to news others have made.

Celebrity If you have a nationally-known celebrity on your side, make sure they are included in the story.

A fact sheet or backgrounder is one of the most important media tools. In a time when competition for media space and attention is getting fierce, and when journalists have no time for research, furnishing them with carefully selected, organized and presented facts, figures, quotes and additional sources about a topic is of crucial importance. Here are tips for writing effective fact sheets and backgrounders:

- A Fact sheet/Backgrounder provides facts, quotes, figures, summaries of reports and speeches that give journalists “background information” about a certain story/issue/theme.
- It helps the reporter understand the issue, see where the story is, and possibly, to write an article. Even if coverage is not an immediate result, backgrounders keep journalists in the loop about the issue. They also decrease the likelihood of misinterpretation.
- A backgrounder increases the probability that the story will come out with the angle you desire.
- You should have backgrounders on-hand about all main issues and projects that your organization deals with, and prepare new ones for special events and actions.
- Backgrounders should be updated regularly with new information, facts, and developments.
- Backgrounders can be issued independently, or can also be attached as an “expanded press release”.
- Backgrounders are also referred to as “Fact sheets” or “Info sheets”. “Q&A Sheets”, and “Frequently Asked Questions-FAQ”, “Policy Highlights”, “Quote List”, “Speech Highlights”, “Biography Sheet” are different formats of backgrounders.

Tips for writing backgrounders

- ⇒ Although they can be written in the form of an article, backgrounders are more likely to attract a reporter’s attention if they are brief, readable, and easy to grasp.
- ⇒ Q&A format, bullets, and chronological approach are highly recommended. They should be two or three pages ideally and can reach a maximum of five to six pages.
- ⇒ Where possible, mention sources of the facts/statistics you used for more credibility.
- ⇒ Mention additional sources on the issue: literature, websites, film footage or photo material available, etc.
- ⇒ Include your name, telephone, fax and e-mail for those who need additional information.
- ⇒ Distribute backgrounders in printed form and online.
- ⇒ Produce them on letterhead, with contact information.
- ⇒ Example of backgrounders – Q&A sheet and quote sheet – are enclosed in Annex 1 of this manual.

An op-ed is a newspaper article that expresses the opinions of a named writer who is usually unaffiliated with the newspaper's editorial board. However, he/she is a practitioner or an expert in the given topic. Op-eds are different from editorials, which are usually unsigned and written by editorial board members. Here are a few tips for writing an op-ed:

Getting Started

1. Research. Look at the editorial pages of your local newspaper for several days to get an idea of how it covers opinion (op-ed) material. Besides “letters to the editor,” there are columns written by readers, like “In My Opinion,” or “Commentary.” Read lots of op-eds to see how they’re constructed. It may help to notice style, content, tone, and incorporate this into your own piece. Remember, this is an OPINION, but an editor makes the decision to run it.

2. Call the newspaper. The number is listed in the newspaper, or you can always find it in the phone book. Ask to be connected with someone who can answer questions about their editorial policy towards submitting op-ed material. Once you reach the person with the accurate information, ask questions about how to submit an op-ed: how many words, what format, timeframes, how to submit (fax, e-mail, or hard copy by mail, etc.) Get the opinion page editor’s name (correct spelling) and contact information so you can send your article directly to him/her.

Writing Your Commentary

3. Write the body of your op-ed piece now. Op-eds are generally about 750 words, so you should prepare a piece of about 600 words as a first draft. This will be the body of your op-ed. If the op-ed is newsworthy right now, get it in immediately. However, you might think about preparing a piece long before it is timely or newsworthy. For example, write an op-ed in advance of an anniversary, or in anticipation of an event you are sponsoring. If you prepare the op-ed piece well in advance, you can fine tune it and have it ready to go when something newsworthy happens related to the issue you’ve written about.

4. Tie your op-ed to a good “news hook” related to breaking news whenever possible. Your op-ed should be slated to run on or near the date of something newsworthy, for example, a Supreme Court challenge, an event sponsored by a disability organization, or even direct action.

5. The op-ed editor must realize that this is BIG NEWS. Be sure to have information that shows that this is a big news story. Use articles that have appeared over the past few months (called clips.) Use the “news hook” and lead your op-ed with that. Express your point of view clearly and boldly in the first paragraph. If you have the body written already, you can just add the “hook” when you are ready to get it to the editor. That way, you can do it quickly; and speed is essential.

What Editors Want

1. Timeliness. You MUST get your op-ed to the editor in time for it to be newsworthy. It WILL NOT get published unless you strictly adhere to the editor’s guidelines, and get it in by any deadline he/she may set.
2. A well stated point-of-view with a topical beginning hooked to the news.
3. The view of someone with “standing.” Standing means that you are an authority on this issue. Examples: “A parent who has battled his child’s school district,” or “Self-advocate who has escaped from a developmental center.” If you are on a board or appointed to a council, and can demonstrate your authority, play it up!
4. Make sure your piece is the correct length.
5. Keep it Simple. Boil your argument down to three major points. Use simple, short sentences. Avoid fancy words, jargon, and acronyms. Make your paragraphs short—no more than three sentences each.
6. Power Ending. Close on a strong note. A short, powerful last paragraph should drive your point home. Be ready to move your opinion piece the moment big news happens.

*Adapted from an article originally published in *Ragged Edge* magazine in May / June 1999 issue

A newsletter is a regularly distributed publication about your organization and its activities. While some organizations choose to use mainstream or social media, others prefer to produce their own media. A newsletter publication enables the organization to control the timing and the message as opposed to other types of media.

Why: Be sure you know why you are sending out a newsletter! A newsletter should promote specific goals or achievements, or contribute to advocacy initiatives of your NGO. It should fit your overall message.

Who: Be sure you know whom to send your newsletter to. Develop and maintain an up-to-date mailing list. The format and content will depend on who your main audience are. The mailing list can include all your main target audience such as:

- NGO Board members, staff and volunteers
- Donors
- Universities and schools
- Federal and municipal government, youth committees, agencies, Members of Parliament
- Other NGOs and foundations in the region or elsewhere with similar goals
- Private companies' representatives
- Foreign embassies, cultural centers and representative offices
- Media

How: Be sure it has a good format:

- Easy to read
- Simple sentences and short paragraphs
- Consistent logo and front page format
- Consistent style and recognizable design

What: Be sure it has appropriate content:

- A balance of photos, charts, white space and text
- Letter of the Executive Director or Chairman of the Board
- News and updates
- People/profiles of leading players
- Personalized, localized and humanized
- Events with dates and places
- Educational information
- Interactivity possibility
- Information on additional sources on the internet or name of contact person after each feature text

Ten Practical Tips

1. Write for your readers, not for yourself. Always think about ways to benefit your readers with your newsletter.
2. Make your lead article interesting or they won't read any further.
3. Make the design interesting (use a multi-column format and graphical elements). Use graphics and photos generously. Use the "dollar bill" test: you should not be able to lay a dollar bill down anywhere on your page without it touching a graphical element.
4. Avoid clip art on external newsletters unless it's really excellent, in which case try hard to avoid it anyway. It cheapens your publication, though it's fine for a homey internal newsletter. If you do choose to use clip art, make certain it's all from the same "family" of style (don't put cartoon characters in the same publication with high quality line art, for instance).
5. Use two colors (black plus one accent color is fine); this provides a much more professional look than a one-color publication.
6. Use no more than two or three typefaces. Generally text is in a serif typeface (e.g., Times New Roman) and headlines in sans-serif (e.g., Arial or Helvetica).
7. Be eco-friendly. Use recycled paper where possible and let your readership know you're doing so.
8. Include an editorial box with contact information for the publisher, editor and staff so your readers know where to send their comments and suggestions.
9. Publish your newsletter on a regular basis (quarterly or semiannually). Time publication dates to coincide with significant events and/or observances when possible.
10. Ask for feedback regularly. You can do this by simply adding a "feedback please" line in your editorial box or by including a mail-back survey in the newsletter itself.

The Internet provides excellent communication opportunities - it combines good features of both electronic and print media. In order to get the most out of it, think of doing the following:

- ⇒ Update your website continuously. Websites can be updated in real time, similar to the radio. That is their advantage against print media, which are updated weekly or daily.
- ⇒ Use photographs, and if possible sound and movies. The Internet enables the convergence of media – photography, film, radio and TV. Your website can contain sound, movie, text, and photography files. This possibility is revolutionized by the appearance of reasonably priced digital cameras and voice recorders.
- ⇒ Try to make your website a dynamic, interactive news-carrying multi-media publication, rather than a static “identity brochure” about your NGO.
- ⇒ Have a dynamic and changing front page. The most current news and events should be on the highest level of the website, not buried inside several layers and mouse-clicks.
- ⇒ Part of the content can be outsourced through Internet search engines (that monitor the Internet and news agencies and find the articles on the given topic).
- ⇒ The website can be an excellent media relations tool – place your press releases, media invitations, backgrounders and press clips on it.
- ⇒ Place photos and film clips that accompany your press releases on the Internet. Give the address to newspapers and news portals so they can be downloaded and published for free.
- ⇒ The Internet can be used as a cheap survey tool. Make online surveys on particular issues.
- ⇒ Internet votes on certain issues (i.e. different vote every week) are indicators of public opinion among Internet users. They are accompanied with graphs that visually show the current voting results. They are available for free on the Internet, as small software packs.
- ⇒ The Internet makes it easy to track the number of visits, the most wanted content, the time spent on the site, and geographical origin of the visitors. Ask your web developer to provide you with such a tool (it can be downloaded for free from the Internet).
- ⇒ The website is an excellent channel for feedback from your target audience and accidental visitors. Ask visitors to provide comments, recommendations, or to ask questions. Questions are automatically sent as an e-mail to a person in your organization. It can be the Media Specialist, or a web administrator who then directs the questions to appropriate staff who are qualified to answer them.
- ⇒ Websites are also a “meeting place” and can have discussion portals, classifieds for your community, and chat rooms.
- ⇒ Your website can be a tool for collecting names and addresses of those interested in your work and news. The visitors simply click on the “Subscribe” button and fill in their e-mail details. Un-subscribing is also done without an engagement from the web-master. Ask your web developer to provide you with such a tool (it can be downloaded for free from the Internet).
- ⇒ The web designers provide software for the site’s functioning. They also design the “site map” of the website (so that it is easy to navigate and has a logical structure) and also provide good visual design.

Real life examples of how people benefit from your initiatives and how their lives are changed by them are one of the best ways to highlight the impact of your work. Such examples should ideally provide a personal story that media consumers can identify with, and in this way better understand sometimes difficult projects and initiatives. Numbers and statistics are important as they can show the scope of your project, but for someone who does not know anything about your project, an example of someone who benefited from it will greatly improve the understanding and appreciation of the project. You should brainstorm with your colleagues and find example of people who benefited from your work. Include their story in your press release or offer to introduce the media reporters to this person for an interview. While at times it will be relatively easy to find such personal stories – for example when your project provides vocational training – at other times it will not be as straight forward. Here are two news stories that explain how youth had an opportunity to change their lives through OTI grants.

The following story was written by Rouba Abu Amu, and was published in *Al-Akhbar* newspaper on July 7, 2010.

Hassan and Monif: The Street is Ours!

To be a “street boy” does not necessarily mean that you are violent.

Simply, you could be a runaway child who felt unwanted or unloved. You resort to the street, set up a tent, shower in sea water, and practice a hobby that suddenly becomes a career.

The following is the story of two young people who both live a street life and share a passion for dancing. Not only do Hassan and Monif live in the street, but they also dance in it too. When they dance, all of their body parts move in harmony with the music and their feeling is translated into body moves that spring from the suppression they have been exposed to throughout their childhood.

Hassan and Monif first met in Ouzai and were both part of the “Alternatives for Education and Skills Development”, a project implemented by Lebanon Youth, which allowed them to discover their talents. Hassan is 19 years old. When he was 10, he won Lebanon’s Championship in gymnastics. His mother enrolled him in a boarding school after the death of his father. But he found the life there very boring so he decided to leave the school and continue his studies at a vocational school.

He moved to live with his mother and step-father, but he disagreed with the latter and decided to live in the street. During the last four years he has lived in a tent that he himself set up. He felt dance was a cure for all his problems and started learning some special body movements.

Hassan further developed his dancing skill in the Shore Line Academy set up by Lebanon Youth, where he consequently worked as a trainer.

Hassan and Monif were colleagues at the same boarding school, and after several years, they accidentally met on the street. Monif’s father married his American wife in Africa. When he died, his mother went back to live in the United States and Monif had to live with his aunt. But after many quarrels in the family, he decided

to leave and start his life on the street.

Seven months later he met Hassan, and they continued to explore the streets together. Ever since his early childhood, Monif was fond of dancing. His hobby was to watch and memorize the moves of Michael Jackson.

Hassan and Monif together joined the Dance Club of the Shore Line Academy. After some time, the project director Randa Ajami, enthusiastic about their talent and story, offered them to work as trainers. That was their opportunity!

The following is an excerpt from a story written by Suheib Ayoub, published in *Al-mustaqbal* newspaper on July 8, 2010.

IT as a Social Service Provider

Ahmad Bakawi, a 23-year old man, leaves his home every morning and tours four different stores in his neighborhood in Bal Al Raml to sell and repair cellular phones.

Ahmad seems to be confident as he is no more tramping in the streets, after developing his own profession, “although a small one”, he says. This young man used to know nothing about this profession, which is definitely not taught in the universities, until he took part in a project led by the IT Association, which supported young men from different conflict-prone zones in Tripoli by providing them with a two-month free of charge vocational course. The project funded by USAID attracted more than 600 youth from the targeted areas in Tripoli.

“We did not expect such numbers”, says Hadi Ammar, the project manager, adding that “our initiative aimed at providing the youth in the suburban districts with basic computer skills in order to overcome their poor access to technology, with skills to repair mobile phones and promote their services”. Hadi ended by concluding that Ahmad’s story began when he realized how difficult it was to live in a poor environment without work. Being unable to complete his studies urged him to search for new alternatives, and the IT Association provided him with an opportunity.

International observances (also known as international dedications) denote a period of time – usually one day, but could be one week, two weeks or even a year – to observe some issue of international interest or concern. They are used to commemorate, promote and mobilize for action. Many of these observances have been established by the United Nations. Similarly, each country has a number of domestic observances and holidays, which are devoted to commemorate, promote or develop national memory on significant dates in the past.

Both international and national dates present an opportunity for NGOs and youth groups to organize public events, community projects, regional campaigns, or similar activities.

Especially if endorsed by the government, the dates will provide an increased opportunity for civil society organizations' interaction with elected officials, as they might look for a way to become a part of the positive spirit and message of the observance.

Around those dates, media are on the look out for different and unusual news coverage connected to the topic of the observance. They prefer coverage that goes beyond government's statements and communiqués. They will be open to interviews with NGO activists and in-depth coverage of different issues and initiatives more than they usually are. You should plan such coverage well in advance.

Look through the calendar enclosed in this manual and select the dates that can be connected to your case, community or work.

- Brainstorm with your colleagues and decide on activities you could develop around those days.
- Three to four weeks before the observance, pick up the phone and announce to the reporters from your media list your activities, their timing, content, objective and people involved.
- One week before the event, send an invitation to the media, by e-mail or fax.
- If you won't plan an event but have somebody who can talk about the issue connected to the date, offer an interview one or two weeks in advance.
- In both cases – interview or event – you could produce a Q&A Sheet about your issue and how it is connected with the observance.
- Good luck!

January

*January 1 - Global Family Day - formerly Day of Peace and Sharing**

January 28 - Data Protection Day - recognized by the Council of Europe

March 21 - World Poetry Day, recognized by the UNESCO

*March 22 - World Day for Water**

March 27 - World Theatre Day

May 6 – Martyrs' Day

May 8 - World Red Cross & Red

May 10 - International Mothers Day

*May 15 - International Day of Families**

*May 17 - World Information Society Day**

February

February 4 - World Cancer Day

*February 20 - World Day of Social Justice**

April

*April 3 - World Press Freedom Day**

*April 7 - World Health Day**

April 21 - World Creativity and Innovation Day. Celebrations begin

April 15 - Leonardo da Vinci's Birthday

April 22 - Earth Day

*April 26 - World Intellectual Property Day**

April 29 - World Dance Day

May 18 - International Museum Day

May 19 - World Hepatitis Day

*May 21 - World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development**

*May 22 - International Day for Biological Diversity**

*May 31 - World No Tobacco Day**

March

*March 8 - International Women's Day**

March 14 - International Day of Action for Rivers

March 15 - World Day of Muslim Culture, Peace, Dialogue and Film

March 15 - World Consumer Rights Day

March 20 - World Day of Theatre for Children and Young People

*March 21 – International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination**

May

May 1 - May Day - Labor Day

*May 3 - World Press Freedom Day**

June

June 1 - International Children's Day

*June 5 - World Environment Day**

June 12 - World Day Against Child Labor

*June 14 - World Blood Donor Day**

*June 17 - World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought**

June 18 - International Picnic Day

*June 20 - World Refugee Day**

June 21 - World Music Day

*June 26 - International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking**

*June 26 - International Day in Support of Victims of Torture**

July

July 8 - Writer's Day

*July 12 - World Population Day**

August

*August 12 - International Youth Day**

August 19 - World Humanitarian Day

September

*September 8 - International Literacy Day**

September 11 - World First Aid Day

*September 10** - Eid al-Fitr*

*September 15 - International Day of Democracy**

*September 16 – International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer**

*September 21 - International Day of Peace**

September 22 - (World) Car Free Day

September 27 - World Tourism Day

September 28 - Right to Know Day (RightToKnowDay.net)

October

*October 1 - International Day of Older Persons**

October 2 – International Day of Non-Violence, rec. by the UN, M.K. Gandhi's birthday

October 4 - World Animal Day

October 8 - World Humanitarian Action Day

*October 10 - World Mental Health Day**

October 10 - World Day Against Death Penalty, recognized by the WCADP

*October 15 - International Day of Rural Women**

*October 16 - World Food Day**

*October 17 - International Day for the Eradication of Poverty**

*October 24 - United Nations Day**

*October 24 - World Development Information Day**

November

*3rd Sunday - World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims**

November 9 - World Freedom Day

November 10 - World Immunization Day

*November 14 - World Diabetes Day**

*November 16 - International Day for Tolerance**

November 17 - International Students Day

November 16 – Eid al-Adha*

*November 20 - Universal Children's Day**

November 22 – Independence Day

*November 25 – International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women**

*November 29 – International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People**

December

*December 1 - World Aids Day**

*December 2 - International Day for the Abolition of Slavery**

*December 3 - International Day of Persons with Disabilities**

*December 5 – Int'l Volunteer Day for Economic and Social Development**

*December 7** – Islamic New Year*

*December 9 - The International Day against Corruption**

*December 10 - Human Rights Day**

*December 11 - International Mountain Day**

*December 18 - International Migrants Day**

*December 20 - International Human Solidarity Day**

* Recognized by the UN

** Actual date of these religious holidays may be adjusted according to lunar calendar as determined at the time.

Weeks

*March 21-27, Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination**

4th week of September - International Peace Week

November 22-28, Road Safety Week

Years

2010 - International Year of Biodiversity – Declared by the United Nations General Assembly

2010 - International Year of Youth – Declared by the UN General Assembly

2011 - International Year of Forests – Declared by the United Nations

Questions and Answers about Cross Arts

(An example of Q&A Sheet - Backgrounder)

What is Cross Arts?

Cross Arts is a non-governmental organization established on February 11, 2010. Cross Arts was chosen as a name since art was selected as a direct tool to contact the youth. In addition, the NGO didn't adapt any specific art, knowing that arts cross each other.

How is Cross Arts different from other NGOs?

This NGO is known to be the newest forum to contact youth through a new, non traditional way. They chose art since they believe that it is the best way for youth to express their feelings and creativity. The NGO targets youth through arts that can be seen as a modern strategy.

Who are the founders of Cross Arts?

The founders are Kamal Abbas and Baraaq Sbeih. They know each other since long ago as they were neighbors in Tripoli, the city they grew up and still live in. Kamal was a chef in a restaurant and quit recently as he decided to devote his time to arts through his NGO. Baraaq teaches arts, mainly theater, in one of the academies in Tripoli. They share creativity and devotion to arts, so it was a natural decision to work together.

What are Cross Arts' objectives?

Cross Arts aims at actively participating in human development. It focuses on youth and strives for abolishing violence in favor of dialogue, confirming the concepts of collaboration through arts between all Lebanese, Arab and other communities. The NGO also aims at consolidating the meanings and of co-existence among different religious sects, and eradicating sectarianism among people. So far theatre and music have been used as the art forms to fulfill these objectives.

What are Cross Arts' achievements?

Cross Arts has completed projects designed for youth, in cooperation with local government, national cultural institutions and international donors. In collaboration with OTI, Cross Arts developed a play - the first theatre piece in Lebanon that included rap songs - entitled "The Mayor: 100 % Youth". Cross Arts also represented Lebanon in the World Music Festival on June 19, 2010 in Paris, France.

Who funds Cross Arts projects and concerts?

Concerts are funded by local organizations. The first Cross Arts theatre project "The Mayor: 100 % Youth" was funded by USAID / OTI. The association has cooperated with the Municipality of Tripoli, Al-Safadi Cultural Centre and the Cultural Centre for Determination and Happiness, the Cultural Attaché at the U.S. embassy, the Cultural Attaché at the French Embassy, the Forum of Arab World in Paris, the French Assembly to Maintain the Heritage of Tripoli, and USAID.

What is the purpose of the play?

The play raises awareness on the role of youth in society and highlights the need for them to be responsible citizens. Mohammed Rislán, one of the youth participants, said, "in order to achieve change youth must take part in decision making and this is what we encourage youth to do through our rap songs".

Where was the play presented?

The play was shown on several occasions around Lebanon; in Tripoli on May 25, 2010, in Halba on May 27, 2010, on June 10 at the Unesco Palace in Beirut, and in Qobayat on June 16 and 24, 2010. The performance at the UNESCO Palace was attended by the U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Michele Sison.

Who are the youth groups you work with?

Cross Arts work with two street dance groups: Sabaa Ta'at, and Tripoli B Boys Team.

What are the Cross Arts future plans?

The groups is also planning to establish a theater in Tripoli, through which they would disseminate their messages of peace and reconciliation and educate youth.

For more information, please contact: Baraaq Sbeih

Phone: 70199365

E-mail: ahirom33@hotmail.com

Address: Biat – Trade and Industry Department, Tripoli

Each organization should develop its own media list. It will include media reporters, editors or producers from the media that the organization works with. For civil society, reporters covering social issues, youth, and local community issues are probably the most appropriate.

Building and updating the media list is a constant, continuous process. Whenever you give an interview, were called by a media reporter, or participate in a show, you should add the name of the reporter and/or editor to the list (in case they are not there already), his/her title, name of the media outlet, and contact details such as e-mail, phone, and fax number.

Enclosed here is a very basic list of some key media outlets and reporters covering related issues in Lebanon as of November 2010. Listed are only the office numbers and e-mail addresses that are generally available in phone directories or on the Internet. As you develop your relationship with reporters, you should be able to get and include their private mobile phone numbers. This list should be considered as the basic starting point in building your own targeted and personalized list of contacts in media.

Good luck!

TV Stations

Future TV

Morning News:

Producer of the program: Mona Saydoun

E-mail: monas@future.com.lb

“Morning World”(Aalam Al-Sabah):

Producer of the program Ghada Abo Adal

E-mail: ghadaa@future.com.lb

“Mazaj”, a program which targets youth and covers their activities.

Contact: Mark Khalife

E-mail: markkhalife@gmail.com

MTV

Morning program “@ MTV”.

Contact: Elsa Yazbek

E-mail: elsayzabek@hotmail.com

NBN

“Akhbar Al-Manatiq” (region’s news) program.

Contact: Kassem Doghman

E-mail: kassemdoghman@nbntv@hotmail.com

Télé Liban

Morning Program “Good morning Lebanon”.

Contact: Abeedo Basha - Tel: 01-743768

Radio Stations

Sawt Al-Shaab (Voice of the People)

“Min Bayn Al-Nas” program is presented by Hala Ibrîq.

E-mail: halaibrik@hotmail.com

Sawt Lebne (Voice of Lebanon)

“Youth Parliament” program

Contact: Charles Saba. E-mail: charle_saba@hotmail.com

Website

EI-Nashra (www.el-nashra.com)

Contact: Joseph Semaan. E-mail: akhabar@elnashra.com

Daily Newspapers

Al-Akhbar newspaper

There is a page called “Municipalities” that is published every Wednesday and focuses on the municipalities in Beirut and the regions, in addition to the youth page.

Contact: Rouba Abu Amu

E-mail: rouba_abuamu@hotmail.com

Al-Balad newspaper

The education and civil society page.

Contact: Rif Nafaa

E-mail: rifnafaa@albaladonline.com

Al-Mustaqbal newspaper (Future newspaper)

Youth page is published every Thursday. This page gives youth a space to express themselves, as the writers are mainly youth, and they try to highlight their problems, dreams, worries, activities, etc.

Contact: Sara Shal

E-mail: sara-shall@hotmail.com

Tel: 01797779

AnNahar Newspaper

Nahar Al-Shabab is interested in youth’s activities and has an additional education page.

Contact: Rosette Fadel

E-mail: rosettefadel@hotmail.com

AsSafir newspaper

Youth page is published every Thursday. This page gives youth a space to express themselves, as the writers are mainly youth, and they try to highlight their problems, dreams, worries, activities, etc.

Contact: Ibrahim Sharara

Tel: 01350080

Requirements: Excellent communication, writing and copy-editing skills as well as personal commitment to the work of the NGO and the issues it is covering; good knowledge of social media, video and photography capturing and uploading on the Internet. Native Arabic, knowledge of English. French is a plus.

Responsibilities:

- Reports to NGO Director
- Coordinates media relations
- Promotes the NGO, its activities and issues in the media
- Approaches media and pitches possible stories to reporters and editors
- Drafts press releases together with project coordinators and NGO Director
- Organizes press conferences and other media events such as press breakfast, open door, press visits
- Answers cold calls from media representatives, takes requests for interviews
- Coordinates with NGO Director granting interviews to journalists
- Briefs NGO Director about the media to whom the interview will be granted, their approach to the issue, possible difficult questions and message in the interview
- Writes organizational or campaign Newsletters, Q&A sheets, backgrounders, and reports; develops and maintains distribution lists for them
- Writes speeches for NGO Director
- Edits and produces content for NGO's website and Facebook page
- Coordinates advertising (media ads, billboards, posters, etc.)
- Develops and regularly maintains the Media List with the names of reporters and editors the NGO worked with, their positions, phone numbers and e-mail addresses
- Monitors media, collects press clipping on the NGO, its activities and issues it is working on; distributes press clippings to Board members, NGO staff, volunteers and friends
- Edits bulletin board in NGO offices

It is recommended to hold a short media planning strategy session before each public event that your organization will hold, and to which media representatives will be invited. Enclosed is a simple media planning tool.

Media Planning Grid

Fill in each section exactly as you would like it to appear in the media.

News event (Describe the activity around which the media is covering your news)

Headline (What would you like to see on the front page of the newspaper?)

Lead (What does the first paragraph say? How does the TV anchor introduce you story?)

Visual (What is the image that is shown on the front page of the paper? Or on TV?)

Spokesperson quote

Supporter quote (What will supporters/experts say?)

Factual information (What supplemental material will you provide the media? What details do they need to cover your story thoroughly?)

Follow-up events (How can the story live on?)

Questions and Answers (Anticipate what the media will ask)