

## Creating the Right Message for the Right Audience

In gender and media advocacy, **one message does not fit all audiences**. The message designed for external actors who develop or administer media policy and legislation will not be the same for policy makers within the media who value their independence looking askance at outside influence.

Determining who the message is for and what you want the audience to do after receiving it are two important considerations for developing advocacy campaign messages.

Message development is a direct, simple way of communicating the core objective of the campaign to the respective audiences. Each message should be targeted as specifically as possible, and understanding the audience is crucial to determine the content and language of the message.<sup>40</sup>

For example, messages calling for the development of gender editorial policies in the media would be lost on reporters who are not the policy makers, whereas messages calling for more women as sources and subjects of the news can be specifically targeted at reporters.

Good messages are:

- Targeted for a specific group
- Focused on a specific problem
- Action-oriented
- Simple, to the point and “attention grabbers”
- Easy to understand – use local languages and common terms •

Attractive and interesting

- Prominently visible
- Repetitive
- Reinforced through the use of a combination of media (multimedia approach)<sup>41</sup>

Messages in gender and media advocacy can best be framed using the key media principles of **accuracy, fairness, balance and diversity**, and **fair representation**.

For example, the issue of the lack of women’s access to expression in and through the media can be addressed in a gender and media campaign, for example, on ‘missing views, missing voices’. The low percentage of women speaking on issues in the media can be related to the media principle of **balance and diversity**. If there are only men’s voices, and those only of men in positions of power and formal authority as the sources of news, then the news is being reported on and told in a manner that does not reflect a diversity of views and a balance of opinions.

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<sup>40</sup> Making a Difference Strategic Communications to end Violence Against Women, Jenny Drezin and Megan Lloyd-Laney, editors, UNIFEM 2003

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**Diversity and fair representation** also provide the framework for developing messages and campaigns on changing the gender stereotypes and portrayal of women in the media only as sex objects, objects of beauty, in domestic roles, or as only victims, among others. Gender stereotypes do not project women in all of their diverse roles in society.

MISA-Zimbabwe, a media advocacy group that lobbies for media pluralism, a free and independent media, and the rights of journalists, targeted a campaign at the general public to improve the quality of media content using the slogan, 'Is the media we have, the media we want'? This slogan is memorable and led the audience into the larger message of media consumers having a key role to play in demanding better professional standards, including gender guidelines and codes of ethics, of the media.

Messages and slogans must also be related to appropriate media and channels through which they will be disseminated. The medium and the message are intimately connected. The following questions should be considered when choosing the most appropriate mediums and channels:

- What is the purpose of what you are trying to do?
- Who are you trying to reach with your messages and how many people in each target group do you need to reach in order to meet your objectives?
- What is the source of information your target groups use most often and trust the most?
- What are the different messages you need to convey to cover all the important knowledge gaps and obstacles that were revealed during the target group research?<sup>42</sup>

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