

Engaging the Media in TB Control: a capacity building workshop

Organised by The Partnership for TB Care and Control in India

Facilitated by REACH

22 and 23 September 2011, Puri, Orissa

A capacity-building workshop on 'Engaging the media in TB Control' was organised by the Partnership for TB Care and Control in India, with support from the Lilly MDR-TB Partnership. The workshop was facilitated by REACH. The objectives of the workshop were to help civil society organisations learn the skills required to communicate effectively with the media and develop long-term media strategies for their respective organisations. This workshop, the final one in a series of four, was attended by representatives of civil society organisations from across Eastern India including Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal. All organisations were members of the Partnership.

Welcoming the group, Anupama Srinivasan, Technical Consultant, REACH Media Projects, emphasised the importance of communicating regularly and effectively with the media, and thereby potentially, the general public. She introduced Dr. Jaya Shreedhar, Technical Health Advisor of Internews Network and the lead facilitator for the workshop.

On the morning of the first day, the participants were asked to introduce themselves and summarise their relationship with the media in one word. Some key words that came up included "friends", "pillar", "respect", "opportunity"; these reflected the largely positive equations that organisations have with the media. Participants also identified their main expectations from the workshop; these included learning how to communicate regularly and purposefully with the media; knowing how to pitch a story; understanding the compulsions of the media; and improving their own capacities to interact with the media.

Dr Jaya Shreedhar began by outlining the key objectives of the workshop. At the end of the two days, participants would have a basic understanding of and the start-up skills needed to craft health messages for the news media. They would know how best to communicate their messages to news media professionals, adapting for different target groups; how to manage unwanted publicity and damage control; and most of all, how to position news media in their strategic communications loop. She encouraged the participants to not speak of 'using' the media but instead consider ways to engage with the media, building partnerships for the long-term.

Dr Shreedhar drew attention to the differences between paid media (including advertisements, advertorials and sponsored features) and the news media (including news, editorials, feature stories, opinion). In the case of paid media, it is possible to control the time of release, the specific medium and space, and the content. However, with the news media, there is a certain unpredictability; a journalist may

do a story on TB but if there is another, more immediate breaking story, the one on TB may be dropped.

The discussion then shifted to understanding what defines 'news'. What makes a story newsworthy and distinguishes it from another that is deemed not newsworthy? Dr Shreedhar identified three key factors -

- Novelty (is it new, striking, different or original?);
- Timeliness (is it happening now or relevant now?);
- Proximity (not necessarily geographically, can include emotional resonance with an issue).

She emphasised the importance of reading the papers and watching the news everyday, if one is to understand how the media works. Knowing to identify 'newspegs' would be the immediate first step for the participants, closely followed by learning to strategically target different spaces in a newspaper. For instance, when does a story belong on the local page, as opposed to the regional or national pages? When is the right time to propose an op-ed or editorial to a newspaper? Participants were then divided into groups and asked to examine the various headlines in a newspaper, identifying those that they felt were particularly striking.

The next session focused on understanding the structure of a typical media organisation. Participants identified hierarchies and designations that existed within a newsroom ranging from the Editor-in-Chief to a health reporter and stringers. Dr Shreedhar outlined the manner in which information actually travels within a newsroom and reemphasised the importance of knowing key media players relevant to specific local areas. She encouraged participants to not always blame the reporter for errors in a news story and pointed out that a sub-editor at the desk could change the headline or the lead and even distort the story at times.

Ms. Srinivasan clarified that the workshop would focus on the news media, i.e the world of journalism. She briefly identified the various kinds of media, pointing out the relative reach and impact of each as well as the differences between state-owned and privately-owned media. It was also clarified that private radio channels are, at present, not allowed to broadcast news, due to government restrictions. Ms Srinivasan encouraged participants to develop maps of their own local media.

Dr Shreedhar emphasised the importance of developing a key message or the SOCO (Single overriding communication objective). The SOCO would serve as the basis for a quote to a print journalist and a catchy sound byte to the television journalist as well as the lead in a press release. Identifying the SOCO must therefore always be the first step - one that is often neglected. Once the SOCO is identified, supporting messages can be developed to reinforce this SOCO. The SOCO forms the basis for the seven key steps in crafting public health messages which include:

- The message - What do I want to say?
- The audience - To whom do I want to say it?
- The channel - Through what means can I convey it most effectively?
- The timing - When will I have the most advantageous effect? T
- The impact - What do I want to have happen as a result of my message?
- Evaluation - How do I assess the effect of my message
- Modification - How will I improve the message for its next presentation?

The final session of the day focused on understanding the specific compulsions of the electronic media and learning to organise events that would translate into good visuals for television and good sounds for radio. Finally, Dr Shreedhar reiterated the importance of having data at your fingertips so as to be able to answer any questions from journalists or offer them background data for a story.

The second day began with a debate on the various pitfalls and challenges in organising press meets or other events for the media. The discussion focused on ways to ensure that the SOCO for that specific event is delivered clearly and effectively, whether for the print or electronic media. The group also discussed ways to engage the media between events, by pitching stories and editorials and setting up one-on-one briefing meetings.

With skills-building as the priority on this day, the focus shifted to writing effective and clear press releases. Dr Shreedhar explained the structure of a press release, highlighting the crucial elements – contact persons, the headline and date of release. She drew attention to the importance of powerful quotes that lend emotion and credence to a release. Each participant then drafted, individually, a press release based on his/her own work on TB.

In the final session of the morning, all the participants took part in mock interviews on camera, simulating a discussion on television. The discussions were based on various scenarios including community support for those with MDR-TB, new TB diagnostics, stigma and issues of service delivery. The emphasis was on translating their SOCOs into coherent, catchy sound bytes for television. The discussions were recorded and then played back for review, with the facilitators and other groups offering their critiques.

Developing an effective media plan and strategy was the focus of the afternoon session. Participants discussed the various components of a media plan and agreed that each organisation would develop their individual plans, focusing on the period leading up to World TB Day 2012.

The workshop was held at Hotel Holiday Resort, Puri, Orissa on 22 and 23 September 2011, and was attended by representatives of civil society organisations from across Eastern India. A full participant list and workshop agenda is appended.

Engaging the media for TB Control: a capacity building workshop
22-23 September 2011, Puri
Workshop agenda

22 September

Time	Session/topic
9:45am - 10am	Registration
10am - 10:15am	Welcome
10:15am - 11am	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions • 'My experience with the media' • Workshop expectations
11am - 1pm (Tea to be served around the table)	Understanding the media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes the news and news pegs • An exercise: reading the headlines • Structure of a media organisation • The Media in India: a snapshot
1pm - 1:45pm	Lunch
1:45pm - 2pm	Icebreaker: How news travels
2pm - 3:30pm	Media Advocacy and planning messages
3:30pm - 3:45pm	Tea
3:45pm - 5:30pm	Engaging the media - key techniques and strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure of news/targeting spaces • Techniques for media engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Media events ○ Between events
5:30pm - 5:45pm	Preparation for day 2

23 September

Time	Session/topic
9:30am - 11am	All about press releases
11am - 11:15am	Tea
11:15am - 1pm	All about interviews
1pm - 1:45pm	Lunch
2pm - 2:30pm	Damage Control
2:30pm - 3pm	Social media and networking
3pm - 5pm	Developing media plans

List of Participants

S. No	Name of participant	Organisation
1	Claire Hunte	Union South East Asia
2	Dhirendra Kumar Singh	Disha Ek Prayash DEP
3	Ramashish Singh	Jan Vikas Samiti Itasagar JVSI
4	Manoj Kumar	VBSJUS
5	Ashok Singh	BMVSS
6	Susanta Kumar Balabantaray	Prastutee
7	Satrughna Sahoo	Dhakothea Jubak Sangha
8	Navneet Kumar Sinha	SANKALP
9	Bulbul Hossain	SHIS
10	S A Azad	Prasar