

Engaging the media in TB Control: a capacity building workshop

Organised by The Partnership for TB Care and Control in India

Facilitated by REACH

3 and 4 May 2011, Chennai

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 first in a series of four, was attended by representatives of civil society organisations from across South India, all members of the Partnership.

Welcoming the group, Dr Nalini Krishnan, Director, REACH, emphasised the importance of communicating the good work being done by civil society groups to the general public via the media. She introduced the workshop facilitators – the lead trainer, Dr. Jaya Shreedhar, Technical Health Advisor of Internews Network and Anupama Srinivasan, Technical Consultant, REACH media projects.

Speaking briefly, Ms Sunita Prasad of the Lilly MDR-TB Partnership pointed to the importance of the work done by NGOs at the grass-roots and the need to make their efforts accessible to the media. She observed that it was important to understand the constraints the media faces on a daily basis and therefore identify ways to work more effectively with them.

On the morning of the first day, the participants introduced themselves, identifying their expectations from the workshop and summarising their relationship with the media in one word. Interestingly, as Dr Shreedhar noted, these words (such as matchbox, dynamite etc) all indicated confrontational or adversarial equations with the media. She pointed out that civil society organisations and NGOs often tended to look at the media from a distance, somewhat like staring at a lion in a zoo. "It can bite, so it might as well be in the cage. This reveals a lack of confidence in the way we understand and interact with the media", she said. The media is after all a space between two things, a channel of communication that attempts to make sense of the world. This workshop would be a first step in changing this attitude and in finding ways to work *with* the media rather than seeking ways to control or manipulate it.

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.

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. A discussion broke out on the key decision makers within the newsroom and Dr Shreedhar posed the following question to the group: “You are organising a TB rally. Whom will you send the invitation to? Who will decide whether the story goes into the paper?” She then 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.

The discussion then shifted to understanding what defines ‘news’. What makes a story news worthy 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

She also observed that what makes news was often relative, depending on whether a day was a ‘slow’ one or not. If there were no major breaking stories, then TB stories were more likely to make it into the newspapers. However, on a busy day, even a planned or produced story could be delayed or done away with altogether.

Participants were then divided into groups and asked to examine the various headlines in a newspaper, identifying those that they felt were particularly striking. They also discussed the differences between the various sections of a newspaper – national news, local/city news, editorials and advertisements as well as advertorials.

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. Dr Shreedhar also explained the concept of the inverted pyramid in news and the necessity of giving information in a descending order of importance.

The final session of the day focused on writing press releases, with each participant drafting releases based on a particular event. The participants were also divided into groups and each group was assigned a topic for the second day's session.

Skills-building was the priority on day two of the workshop. In the morning, each group participated in mock interviews on camera, simulating a discussion on television. The discussions were based on various scenarios including the significance of World TB Day themes, 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. In the final session, social media was the topic of discussion; participants were unanimous in their opinion that while social media could potentially have long-term impact and help in disseminating key messages, it could not be a substitute for engaging with the mass media.

The workshop was held at Hotel Deccan Plaza, Chennai on 3 and 4 May 2011, and attended by 21 representatives of civil society organisations from across South India. A full participant list is appended.

Agenda

3 May 2011, Chennai

9:45am – 6pm

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 – 12 noon (Tea to be served around the table)	Understanding the media <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Media in India• Structure of a media organisation• What makes the news and news pegs• An exercise: reading the headlines
12 noon – 1pm	Planning messages
1pm – 1:45pm	Lunch
1:45pm – 2:15pm	Icebreaker: How news travels
2:15pm – 4pm	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
4pm – 4:15pm	Tea
4:15pm – 5:45pm	All about press releases
5:45pm – 6pm	Preparation for day 2

4 May 2011, Chennai

10am – 5pm

Time	Session/topic
10am – 2pm (Tea)	All about interviews
2pm – 2:30pm	Lunch
2:30pm – 4:30pm	Developing media plans
4:30pm – 5pm	Social media and networking

Participant List

S. No	Name	Organisation
1	Mr. Chandrababu	David and Lois Rees Hospital, Chittoor
2	Mr. P.T.Mohanadoss	David and Lois Rees Hospital, Chittoor
3	Mr. V Anjan Kumar	The Rayalaseema Grameena Vikas Society
4	Mr. P S R Kanakambaram	The Rayalaseema Grameena Vikas Society
5	Mr. Anil Kumar	TB Alert
6	Mr. Sivashanker	TB Alert
7	Dr Dyson Missquitta	PATH
8	Mr. Ramesh Mangalaparathi	LEPRA
9	Mr. Suresh Chitrapu	Karnataka Health Promotion Trust
10	Mr. Chandan Nayak	AID India
11	Mr. A.K. Soman	Nilgiris- Wynaad Tribal Welfare Society
12	Ms. T. Mercy Annapoorni	Blossom Trust
13	Mr.Kasi	DACT
14	Ms.Saraswathy	DACT
15	Ms. Kanmani Chandran	INP+
16	Mr. Chidambaram	Damien Foundation India Trust
17	Mr. Raja Mohamed	Meera Foundation
18	Mr. Ranjan Babu	Christian Association for Medical and People's Development
19	Mr. S Sreeram	Indian Development Foundation
20	Dr. S Franklin	Indian Development Foundation
21	Mr. Dilip Kumar	GLRA