

Training CHANGE Champions

Module – How to deal with the Media

Recommended time: 6-8 hours

Structure:

Objectives

Introduction

1. FGM and the Media
 - 1.1 Gender sensitive reporting
 - 1.2 Culture sensitive reporting
2. Communication techniques
 - 2.1 Verbal communication
 - 2.2 Non-verbal communication
3. Working together with the Media
 - 3.1 Involving local Media

Conclusion

Objectives:

- Developing critical thinking about Media and Media reporting concerning gender and cultural groups.
- Developing both theoretical and practical knowledge to communicate effectively with the Media.
- Learning how to talk about FGM with the Media.
- Learning how to undergo an interview with the Media.
- Learning how to do a presentation/public speech with the Media.
- Involving journalists and local Media in the fight against FGM.

Introduction

Nowadays the Media are the most important channels of massive communication and information worldwide. All of us is daily confronted with the Media, while reading the newspaper or listening to the radio. The Media have a great impact on the way we see and read the world around us. They do not just tell us what happen, where and when, but also selectively choose what and how to tell. This is both the limit and the power of the Media: the limit because of their subjectivity; the power because of their capacity to shape public opinion about facts.

The main objective of this Media training is to learn more of how to deal with the Media, developing critical thinking and learning how to use the Media in order to abolish FGM. In the first part we will analyze some important aspects of talking about FGM with the Media; in the second one we will practice some communication techniques in order to communicate effectively with the Media about FGM.

1. FGM and the Media

There is always a subjective perspective, message and goal behind the news. This is why it is very important to listen 'critically' to what and how the Media communicate about FGM. Women and African countries are often stigmatized by the Media: they are portrayed as 'victims' of 'bad' cultures. Even when speaking about FGM, this stigmatization can be carried on with the result that African cultures may be perceived as 'wrong' and women may be seen as unable to stand for their rights. When we hear or talk about FGM on the Media, we should pay attention on how and what is communicated.

1.1 Gender sensitive reporting

The way we give a message against FGM on the Media needs to be gender sensitive, which means reporting news by paying attention on gender. A gender sensitive report is a report where both men and women are portrayed in the story or their specific situation is highlighted; it does not reproduce gender stereotypes and does respect woman's dignity. While hearing or telling a story about FGM there are some questions that can lead us to find out whether a report is gender sensitive:

- Are men visible in the story where they should be visible? (Think about decisions, words and actions of men in the story of a girl's circumcision)
- Does the report contain voices and perspectives of women and men?
- Does the report contain stereotypes? (Think about assumptions regarding the roles, activities, profession or capabilities of women and men)
- Does the report contain stereotyping language? (Which adjectives are used to describe the women? And the men?)
- What do the images of the report show? (Are they respectful? Do they show both women and men? Who is in the foreground? And who is in the background?)
- Does the report promote equality? (What does the story make us think about women? About men? About the relationship between them?)¹

Exercise:10 minutes

Ask the participants to analyze an article on FGM based on these questions.

1.2 Culture sensitive reporting

A message against FGM on the Media also needs to be culture sensitive, which means reporting news with respect for cultural groups. Some of the ways to identify whether a report is culture sensitive, is to ask ourselves:

- Does the report take different cultural values into account?

All cultural groups are different and have different values. When differences are not taken in consideration while reporting, a report may result disrespectful towards the groups involved. FGM is a very sensitive subject. For an African it may be very difficult to talk about FGM publicly as FGM is considered as a taboo. This is why it is very important to take cultural differences into account and to pay attention on the language and images we use while reporting FGM's stories. As interlocutors in an interview, for example, we do not need to answer all the questions when we think they are

¹ Oxfam. *Working with the Media on Gender and Education. A Guide for Training and Planning*. Pp.: 29-31. Online at: http://www.ungei.org/resources/files/beyond_access_media_guide.pdf

meant to provoke, disrespect or stereotype our cultural identity. Furthermore we can always ask the journalist to let us read any reports where we might be mentioned before they are published.

Another question we should ask ourselves is:

- Does the report stereotype (any aspect of) cultural groups?

Cultural groups, just like women, are sometimes stigmatized by the Media. FGM is a 'bad' tradition, but it does not mean that African cultures have to be rejected in general. It is very important to avoid such stigmatization in Media's reports. In this regard it may be very important to relate not only tragic stories about FGM, such as the death of a girl during her circumcision, but also positive ones, such as the story of an African couple choosing to not let circumcise their daughter². This kind of story will contribute to the fight against this practice in a gender and culture sensitive way as they do not strengthen stereotypes about gender and cultural identities.

Exercise:20 minutes

Write a positive story and a negative story about FGM, e.g. a story that is gender and culture sensitive and a story that is not, as they may be reported by the Media (journalist or TV). Explain which are the aspects that make you consider the stories as positive or negative.

2. Communication techniques

In order to speak effectively about FGM with the Media it is very important to learn how communication works. In this section we are going to have a look at some communication techniques which are very important to develop in order to use the Media to abolish FGM. These techniques can be gathered in two different categories: verbal and non-verbal communication. We are going to analyze and practice these communication techniques in the context of the presentation and the interview with the Media.

² AIDOS. Associazione Italiana Donne per lo Sviluppo. *FGM/C. A short guide for involved media towards the abandonment of female genital mutilations/cutting*. Seite 1-9; p.: 5. Online at: <http://www.aidos.it/files/1395752732FGMC%20short%20guide%20viola.1-9.pdf>

Exercise: 15 minutes

Look at this example of interview and presentation. Reflect on the communication skills of this activist and write down things that you find relevant in her words, voice, gesture, posture, attitude and appearance. Then discuss your observations with one another.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WrYg-OcfhXk>

2.1 Verbal communication

Communicating verbally (through spoken words) with the Media is not just about speaking and being understood. Talking to the Media is all about communicating intentionally. This means to have clear in mind what the goal and the target of our message is. This is why a careful planning is really important before delivering a presentation.

A presentation must have a clear structure, which includes:

- opening
- main body
- ending

While preparing the opening of our presentation about FGM we should identify the goal, evaluate the topic and our audience (target) by taking into account their interest and level of knowledge on FGM as well as their cultural backgrounds. We should also know how to drive the attention of the audience in order to communicate effectively.

While developing the main body we should provide some arguments related to the main message and linked to each other in order to guarantee a logical flow of the presentation. At this stage we can decide to introduce some supports such as visual-aids.

The ending should be prepared by summarizing and concluding the presentation with a clear and strong final statement.

By using this structure, we outline what we think about FGM, the action we ask our audience to do or the statement we ask our audience to believe and the positive outcomes that can be achieved by taking the proposed action or

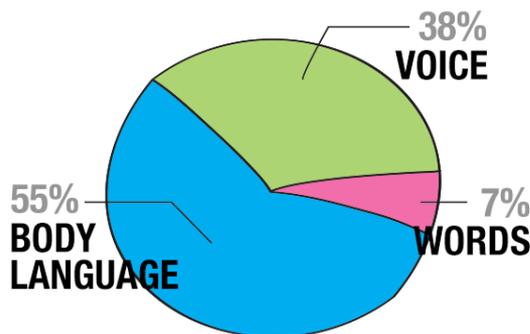
believing the proposed statement.³

Exercise:40 minutes

Each Champion writes and presents a story about FGM trying to follow the structure opening, main body and ending, as shown above from the trainer.

2.2 Non-verbal communication

Only a little part of our communication is verbal. Non-verbal communication, which includes our body language, our mimic and our voice, is the primary way we communicate feelings, attitudes and intentions. In order to communicate effectively with the media, it is important that our non-verbal communication is as much intentional as our verbal communication.



Mehrabian & Ferris' research results of communication during a presentation.
"Inference of Attitude from Nonverbal Communication in Two Channels"
The Journal of Counseling Psychology 31,
S. 248-252, 1967

How can we make our non-verbal communication intentional? Below some aspects we should consider to make our non-verbal communication intentional:

- Eye contact: maintaining eye contact with people gives the audience the feeling of being directly involved and raises their interest in the topic.
- Speak clear and loud: an audible voice by everyone is very important since not being able to hear well would distract or annoy our audience

³ Mandel, S. (2000) *Effective presentation skills a practical guide for better speaking*. Los Altos, CA. Crispy Publications.

- Pleasant appearance: having a pleasant appearance assures to make a good first impression. This is very important as the first impression is hard to change and can affect the outcome of the whole presentation.
- Respectful behaviour: know how to interact with your audience, taking into account their cultural backgrounds.
- Keep audience attention: varying the tone, using the appropriate pace as well as a good use of pauses to create suspense. Use appropriate stories, anecdotes and jokes emphasises the core of the message and will keep audience attention during the presentation .⁴

Exercise:40 minutes

Each champion presents his/her story, paying more attention to non-verbal communication.

3. Working together with the Media

The Media have great power to shape public opinion. Nowadays it has become extremely important to involve Media and local Media in the fight against FGM. Research shows that if some prevention programs of FGM are now giving us some good results it is also due to the media. The Media, through effective and gender/culture sensitive reporting, give more visibility to the people involved; they give a voice to those who are directly concerned by the decision to circumcise or not to circumcise. When the Media report of people who have abandoned the practice, these people, better than any expert, can relate how they faced the issue and dealt with the social expectations, and they become a model for many to imitate⁵.

3.1 Involving local Media

Local papers need local stories, and communities want to feel connected with local issues. Telling local stories about FGM through media and social media

⁴ Crowley, T. (n.d.) *Presentations, general guidelines*. Online via Kaplan eLibrary at MySkills University of Essex.

⁵ AIDOS. Associazione Italiana Donne per lo Sviluppo. *FGM/C. A short guide for involved media towards the abandonment of female genital mutilations/cutting*. Seite 1-9; p.: 5. Online at: <http://www.aidos.it/files/1395752732FGMC%20short%20guide%20viola.1-9.pdf>

will help raise awareness, and could help gain support. But how to involve local Media for FGM cause? Below we will analyze 4 simple and essential key points when we are to involve local Media:



1. Invite journalists to attend events: journalists need to be motivated and convinced our cause is worth to be reported. Participating in an event will increase journalists' interest and motivation in supporting our cause.
2. Provide local stories/information: journalists want local stories about local issues. We should supply them with information about FGM that make them feel FGM is an urgent, current and local issue. This will create more opportunity for our voice to be heard. Some examples are:
 - Human stories: stories of local people always make news.

- Conflict/controversy: Is anything important happened locally about FGM that had caused some conflicts or controversy? This would be a good opportunity to involve local Media and give voice to the cause.
- Statistics/research: Is any local research be done about FGM? Journalists are always interested in the results of research. Providing facts and figures is a good way to get local Media involved in the cause.
- Innovation: Is any news or original stories about local people or organizations fighting against FGM? Such stories would catch the local Media attention.
- From local to national: Sometimes it is possible to present local issues in the context of national debates, such as welfare reform. This is extremely powerful as it gives local stories more political clout and makes them more appealing to journalists and editors.

Also provide journalists with willing and relevant interviewees: this is what we like the least, but the result we can reach by undergoing an interview with the right preparation, can really make a difference.

3. Keep contact with local Media: We should keep local Media up to date with what is going on locally and the work we are doing, and not just involving them once. They will soon forget our cause or they will think it is not the local attention worthy.
4. Use Social Media and Press releases: Social media offers an opportunity to communicate messages to an enormous audience. Almost all councilors, MPs, journalists, and organizations are now on Twitter, so this is a great way of building networks, interacting and sharing information. Getting a following on Twitter can really help get a campaign or issue into the public domain⁶.

Press releases are a useful tool for setting out our story and selling it to journalists. A press release isn't always necessary though. Calling journalists to tell them about a campaign, a project or an event is often

⁶ Speak Out: a guide to local influencing. Involving the media. Online at: <http://www.homeless.org.uk/our-work/resources/speak-out-guide-to-local-influencing/involving-media>.

the quickest way of building relationships with the local press.

Exercise:10 minutes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WrYg-OcfhXk>

Watch the video once again and reflect on the way this activist has involved local and national media for FGM cause.

Conclusion:

Media have a great power in shaping public opinion about FGM and in mobilizing people for action. Media cover vast distances, but we should not underestimate the power of local Media. The Champions should become aware of Media's capacity and realize the impact that local reported story may have on a regional, national and international scale. As FGM crosses national and cultural borders, the pace that links local stories to national and international ones may increase considerably. The Champions should learn to work consistently and effectively with local Media in order to promote our campaigns and carry forward the fight against FGM. This module tries to provide the Champions with some practical suggestions of how to achieve this goal.