



## VIII. MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS (PR) STRATEGIES

The extent to which you involve the media will vary significantly depending on the overall objectives you have set for the tribunal/hearing. If gaining wider visibility for women's human rights issues, raising public awareness, and influencing policy makers are primary goals then a more comprehensive media strategy is required than if the goal is community education or the empowerment of a particular group of women. Developing and implementing an effective media strategy ensures that the message of the tribunal/hearing will reach a wider audience, both at the time of the event and subsequently.

Keep in mind that there are many barriers to getting the right kind of media coverage for women's concerns. Achieving constructive, non-sensational and non-sexist visibility in mainstream media - at the local, national, or international level - can be a difficult goal to realize. The following points are provided as guidelines to help shape a media strategy to suit your goals. They are not intended to be exhaustive and the extent to which you implement them will depend on the degree and type of media attention you want to attract.

### **GETTING STARTED – THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT PHASE**

#### **Using Outside Media Consultants**

If resources permit, engaging an outside media consultant can be very helpful in ensuring that your media strategy is targeted and effective. If necessary, a consultant can also assist with training staff and tribunal/hearing speakers on how to conduct media interviews and take advantage of opportunity for media attention. As the tribunal/hearing approaches, it can be difficult to develop and manage an effective media strategy alongside all the other demands of the tribunal/hearing, especially if you are new to the process. If media attention is high on your list of goals and resources permit, you should identify a consultant who is familiar with and sympathetic to the issues you want to highlight and has well-established contacts with various media outlets. If you do not know any consultants in the area, contact some of your key partners or other NGOs to ask if they can recommend someone. It also may be possible to secure reduced fees for social justice events such as a tribunal/hearing.

## **Creating a Media/Press Contact List**

Make a list of newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations as well as specific radio/TV programs, and websites that you want to target including both mainstream and alternative media. At the same time, identify specific journalists that are likely to be interested in the planned event and the issues that will be addressed. The list might include daily news journalists as well as columnists and broadcasters who specialize in women's and/or social issues, community/local stories, education and health, human rights and justice issues and so on. Compile a list of telephone and fax numbers as well as email addresses, if available, for each one. It is better to obtain the names and contact details of individual journalists and editors as distinct from general titles (like "news editor" or "health correspondent") and general contact information. Again the media contacts you include will depend on the issues to be highlighted by the tribunal/hearing.

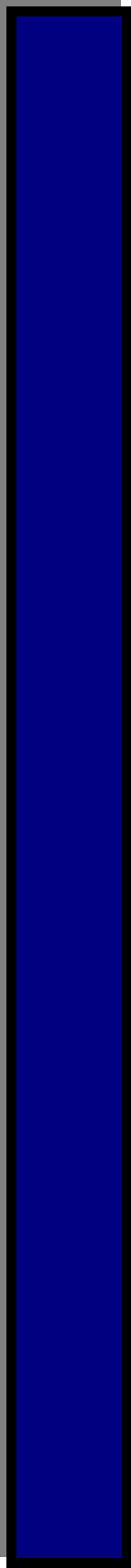
Ask sponsoring organizations, testifiers and all committee members to forward any relevant media contacts that they have established. Combine and update your media/press lists to include these additions. Pay particular attention to those media outlets that have provided positive media/press attention for previous events, or for work on a particular issue; be sure to build on this success and establish contact early on with these journalists. If this is the first media event you are organizing, it is important to take some time to research the interests and earlier work of journalists and particular newspapers or programs so that you can highlight the aspects of the your tribunal/hearing that will grab their attention.

## **Timing and Preliminary Notice of Event**

In selecting the date and time of your event, ensure that it will not clash with another event that your target audiences may also wish to attend. Once the time, date, and venue of the event have been decided, it is a good idea to send everyone on your media/press list a preliminary notice. The notice should indicate the title and nature of the event, in order to flag the date and give editors working on longer cycles the opportunity to include it in their schedule of features and programs.

## **Consent of Testifiers and Tribunal/Hearing Participants**

Before releasing names of tribunal/hearing participants to the media, it is very important to ensure that you have their written permission to do so. Create a "media release form" to be signed by each participant indicating that they are



willing to speak to journalists and are giving the tribunal/hearing organizers permission to include their names and copies of their testimonies/statements in the materials circulated to the media/press.

At this time, it is also important to identify any special requests or safety concerns around protecting the identity of testifiers who may be put in danger through their participation in a tribunal/hearing. Where necessary, tribunal/hearing organizers should use pseudo-names for testifiers who wish to conceal their identity and ensure that these testifiers are not photographed, videotaped, and/or audio-taped during the tribunal/hearing

### **Preparing a Media/Press Packet**

A media/press packet should be compiled to distribute to journalists on the day of the event, either at a specially convened Press Briefing (before or after the tribunal/hearing) or at the event itself. The packet can also be given out selectively to interested journalists prior to the event. However, this should not discourage attendance at the event, the main objective in terms of achieving media coverage.

### **Contents of a media/press packet**

- A copy of the press release
- A program/schedule for the event indicating approximate times and order of speakers
- Basic information and bibliography of resources on women's human rights
- Short biographies of each testifier alongside a brief summary of the testimony they are presenting
- Optional one-page background papers aimed at educating the media on specific issues being addressed by the tribunal/hearing (for example, violence against women, reproductive and sexual rights, women's health, gender and poverty, and so on).
- Short biographies of judges/respondents
- Information about the sponsoring organizations

### **Design and Production of media/press packet**

A media/press packet that provides the necessary information can be produced relatively inexpensively on a personal computer (PC) using word processing or desktop publishing software. However, a well-designed and professionally printed media/press packet that makes good use of color and images can be a

very effective tool in capturing media attention. It may be possible to have these services donated or obtained at a reduced rate by contacting individual graphic designers and/or design or print businesses. All such in-kind contributions should be acknowledged in any promotional materials for the tribunal/hearing.

## **Press Release**

Your press release for the event should be a concise 1-2 page document that includes:

- The words “Press Release” printed prominently across the top of the front page
- Name, phone number, and email address of the contact person at the top right front page
- Title, venue, date and time of the tribunal/hearing at the center top third of the front page
- A 2-3 paragraph description including the reasons for holding the event and what it aims to achieve; a list of the main issues to be addressed; some details about the cases which will be presented; 2-3 effective one-line quotes from testifiers and, 1-2 lines on each of the judges/respondents
- A list of sponsoring organizations and brief organizational profiles of the main organizing group(s)
- Brief directions on how to reach the venue

When identifying the contact person, choose someone who can respond to inquiries from the media at anytime. It is also important that they be familiar with the organization(s) involved, the tribunal/hearing objectives and process and the cases to be presented. If possible, include two names as contacts in order to make it easier for the press/media to get in touch with someone.

The Press Release should be sent to everyone on your media/press list 2-3 days prior to the tribunal/hearing. If your tribunal/hearing is taking place within a much larger national or international conference at least two Press Releases should be sent - the first about two weeks before the event and a revised/updated release nearer the day of the tribunal/hearing. Your designated media/press contact person(s) should follow up any Press Release with a phone call within 24 hours. If necessary, repeated attempts should be made to talk directly to editors and journalists who have received the Press Release and to obtain a commitment that a journalist will be sent to the tribunal/hearing and/or Press Briefing.

## Reaching Target Audiences

While media attention is important, it is also critical to ensure that you attract a sizeable, supportive audience to the actual event. This can be achieved through the strategic placement of flyers and posters in the days leading up to the tribunal/hearing. In addition, coordinate mailings of invitations (regular and/or email) anywhere from 2-6 weeks before the tribunal/hearing depending on the scale of the event and likely competition for audience attention. Again, if you are planning a large-scale event that is part of a wider conference, it is advisable to send out two announcements a number of weeks apart.

- Promotional materials – flyers, posters, websites: Use the information compiled for the Press Release to create flyers/announcements that can be posted at various venues and mailed to target lists to publicize the tribunal/hearing. Producing these materials and displaying them in high traffic areas will help promote the event. Where possible, use bold graphics and colors to draw people's attention. Also, consider producing larger posters that can be used for publicity purposes leading up to the event and as visual props at the event.
- If your organization has a website, include a copy of the flyer in a prominent position on the opening page. You can also distribute the flyer to key partners to post on their website, along with circulating it to news-groups and email lists.
- Mailings: In addition to Press mailings, take some time to consider your target audience and compile a list of all the individuals, groups and agencies that you would like to receive a flyer/announcement. The list can include:
  - Government departments and statutory agencies
  - UN, international and regional agencies
  - Women's NGO's
  - Other NGO's including community development, human rights groups, trade unions, etc.
  - University institutions and school groups
  - Relevant internet sites

Most NGOs, government agencies and educational and international organizations put out regular newsletters. It can be advantageous to obtain publication schedules for these newsletters, which are often quarterly, and request that notice of your event be included in appropriate sections. In addition, you could provide flyers to be used as inserts in upcoming editions.

In the case of "VIP" guests it is a good idea to write personalized letters of invitation and request that they RSVP.

## **ENGAGING WITH THE MEDIA**

### **Identifying Potential Speakers/Interviewees**

In the weeks leading up to the event, try to identify the issues and cases that the media are most likely to be interested in covering. Prepare testifiers, judges and human rights experts to address these issues, if requested. Selecting interviewees in this way, beforehand, will allow time for preparation, especially for those who are not familiar with media interviews. It will also allow you to schedule interviews in advance. Availability is key with the media so it is good to be prepared and punctual for interviews.

### **Providing Media Training**

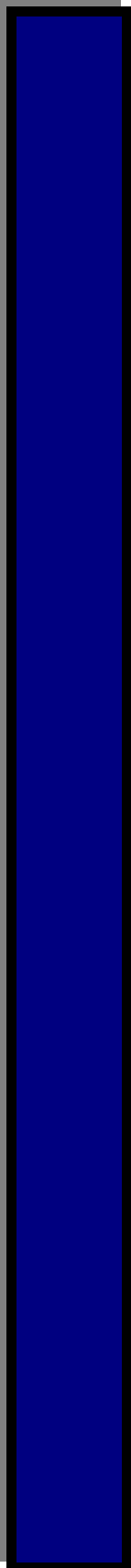
Even if you do not hire a media consultant to assist with the development and implementation of your overall media strategy, it is advisable to seek the assistance of someone with significant practical media experience to facilitate a media training session a few weeks prior to the event. Such a session should include all staff and speakers (where available) and help them prepare for media interviews before, during and after the event.

One task of the session could be to compile a list of responses to some commonly asked questions. Among others, this might include responses to the following:

- What is a tribunal/hearing in this context?
- Why are you holding the tribunal/hearing?
- What will women achieve by testifying if the tribunal/hearing has no real power?
- What do women want out of the event?
- What progress has been made for the realization of women's human rights?
- What does your organization do and what is its mission?

### **Press Briefing**

Organizing a 30-40 minute Press Briefing, either directly before or after the tribunal/hearing, can be a good way of attracting journalists and shaping the “stories” that emerge from the tribunal/hearing. It can include a panel of 2-4 speakers that includes at least one well-versed person from the organizing committee, 1-2 testifiers, and 1-2 judges. Panelists should deliver brief 1-2 page pre-



pared statements - which are made available to journalists in a printed format - followed by a Question and Answer session. Generally, if there is major media interest in the cases and testifiers, a pre-tribunal/hearing Press Briefing works best and draws the media into the event. On the other hand, if the judges or respondents are well-known figures, a post-tribunal/hearing briefing highlighting the judges' findings can work well.

### **Coordinating Interviews**

In the time leading up to and during the tribunal/hearing, a dedicated media/press person should liaise with media and the tribunal/hearing participants to schedule interviews throughout the day at appropriate times and locations.

### **EVALUATING THE VENUE**

When deciding on the set-up for the tribunal/hearing space, keep in mind the requirements of the media. Be sure that the media contact person evaluates the space in conjunction with other staff to ensure that media requests are taken into account at the beginning of the planning phase. The media are generally clear about specific needs they may have. Their requests usually focus on the sound system, a central system for all TV cameras, lighting for TV and photographers, and the positioning of posters/banners and other visual props at the venue. Again, a professional media consultant can be especially useful here as they have a better sense of media needs.

When evaluating the space, also ensure that there is a small room or space nearby, in a relatively quiet area, where the media can conduct interviews on the day of the tribunal/hearing. At the event, be sure to have media/press packets, additional press releases, as well as any other information about the event, issues, and speakers readily available.