Dealing with the News Media in Crisis Response
Objectives

After this session, participants will:

1. Better understand the motivation of the news media and “net news value” of a crisis
2. Be able to describe the basic components of a media relations strategy
3. Be able to prepare for a television interview
We need to understand the media in order to deal effectively with them.

What are the news media?

What motivates the news media?
The “Net News Value” of a Crisis

- Impact on national/local interests
- Number of people affected
- Domestic links of an overseas story
- Human interest/human impact of the event
- Relevance of story to public concerns
- Novelty of the story
- Commercial and political priorities
- Professional/philosophical interests of the media source
Media Relations ~

... a Communication Flow

Purpose

1. Promote public awareness
2. Shape public opinion
3. Influence decision makers
4. Mobilise public support and resources.

Journalists and the Media are major players in the process of change.
Benefits of Strategic Media Relations

- Advocate for post-crisis reconstruction approaches that promote labour-absorption and decent work
- Gain visibility and credibility as a legitimate player in crisis response and reconstruction
- Positive media exposure assists with fundraising
- Educate the public about the negative impacts and threats to decent work created by crises
- Educate the public about decent work solutions to post-crisis reconstruction and peacebuilding
Media Management Strategy

- Cultivate contacts with the media
- Designate media relations spokesperson(s) and train field staff in interviewing skills
- Develop a crisis response media relations strategy with partners
- Create and circulate institutional media relations policies and interviewing tips
- Articulate two-three key messages all staff should convey if interviewed
- Be open, cooperative and direct with the media
- Invite media to view ILO crisis response in action
What Are the Different Ways in Which an Agency can Communicate with the Media?

- Interviews
- Editorials
- Press briefings
- Press releases on specific policy or real-story
- Press packages and fact sheets
- Submit situation reports to disaster information networks, such as ReliefWeb (www.reliefweb.int)
A communication process that will result in:

**LONG-TERM IMPACT**
- Create partnerships among journalists and constituents, field staff
- Promote ILO’s visibility and principles

**CONCRETE RESULTS**
- Produce:
  - Quality Services
  - Press Articles
  - Videos
  - Interviews
  - Press Releases
Interviewing Techniques and Tips
Organize your Statement

- Make your most critical points first (Add details afterwards)
- Always be aware of the short “sound bite”

Main Point

Detail

The print media generally edits in “pyramidal” fashion, so...

The print media generally edits in “pyramidal” fashion, so...
Plan your Statements

**Soundbites:**
“Jobs and decent work are critical for lasting peace!”

**Tell the human story:**
“Let me tell you about “Hassan”, a twenty year old ex-combatant who was recruited at the age of fourteen…”

**Avoid Jargon:**
Stay away from acronyms like NGO, ILO, IFP/CRISIS, LEPs, etc.
Control the Interview!

Be in control
Don’t be pushed where you don’t want to go

John…you had a question…?
Dealing with the News Media in Crisis Response

How to Increase the Chances that Your Messages will be Heard?

- Consider the “news value”
- Is there a domestic/local connection?
- What is novel about the story?
- Provide factual information and figures: number of refugees, methods of transport, names of agencies, sources of funding
- Human interest stories - what is the human factor in the story?
To Convey a Message ~

... it must be Clear, Simple and Direct

The media won’t waste time broadcasting your silence

They *might* broadcast an error made while “rambling on”
“True eloquence consists in saying only what is strictly necessary”

F. de la Rochefoucauld
Stay Positive

- Avoid arguing with the reporter - they always have the last word
- Do not state your critics’ position
- Do not repeat a negative question/hostile remark
- Speak exclusively on behalf of your work, and your agency
- Avoid criticizing other UN or NGO partners
- Disagree if necessary, but do so firmly and politely
- Do not get personal
- Never lose your temper, nor become sarcastic
Media Relations ~

... How to Speak to the Press?

ILO staff should:

- speak only on issues related to ILO’s mandate and principles
- speak only within their area of competence
- provide facts, not opinions or comments
If You Don’t Know the Answer, Say So...

Maria…that’s a good question, but the truth is that I don’t know. We are trying to establish the facts as we speak. We should have more information by tomorrow.
Your Responses Should Be Message-Driven, Not Question-Driven

Reporter is Question-driven
- Controversy?
- Scandal?
- Problems?

You are Message-driven
- Decent Work
- ILO’s role
- Importance of jobs
Avoid Saying “No Comment”, but Rather “Bridge” to Your Key Main Messages

It seems that ILO’s retraining programme is favoring ex-combatants who have raped and pillaged….

I understand your concern, but the real issue here is…..

BRIDGING
Good Media Coverage
Is the Result of Good Management:

Plan, Organize, Control, Influence

For maximum impact!