

# 8. Getting media coverage

*Engaging with the media can be a useful tool to influence governments to pay attention to your message, build public awareness and support and generate publicity for your campaign and its activities.*

## Media

## Interviews

## Television

## Radio

## Newspapers

### The media landscape

To be effective at communicating your message, it is important to get to know the media landscape in your country. Investigate where and how people get their news. What are the main types of media at work, which are the influential newspapers or broadcasting channels? Which media outlets are influential among politicians and decision-makers, and which do they utilise to get their messages out? Which news outlets are the most popular with various audiences and what are the different editorial approaches? Find the names and contact details of newspapers, wire services, magazines, blogs, television and radio stations/programmes to compile your media list.

As well as obtaining the contact email and phone numbers of a publication's news desk, or broadcaster's forward planning desk, also take time to identify influential journalists, and the journalists most likely to cover your issue. Keep a list of journalists that write or broadcast stories about disarmament/disability/domestic or international politics/ defence or security for example. Build up your contact list (including Twitter handles), and depending on your capacity, take time to develop

relationships and build trust with these media contacts. Not only can you learn what their interests are and when their deadlines are, you can also let them know you're available if they need more information on another story.

Along with journalists, you might want to research and develop relationships with writers, photographers, bloggers or film makers who would be sympathetic to your cause and could promote your message. You may also want to develop relationships with some high-profile people in your community who have visibility with the decision makers you are trying to influence or who can otherwise bring attention to your campaign message and actions. Though tread carefully and make sure they are on message!

### Burim Hoxholli, Focus, Kosovo:

"Invite a famous person in the community to your activities, it draws attention. Create friendships and follow up with journalists, in order to be able invite them again. If you're able to make friends with them, you will always have them at your campaign events."



John Rodsted being interviewed about the Ban Bus  
© Jan Lillehamre



Branislav Kapetanovic, CMC spokesperson,  
at a press conference at 2MSP © John Rodsted



## Engaging with the media

- **Proactive communication** is when you hold an event, make a statement or organise an action to generate interest among partners and the media.
- **Reactive communication** is when you comment on an outside event or announcement or incident. It often means you have to react very quickly to respond to whatever is happening and to make the most of the opportunity.

## Examples of when the media could be interested in publishing or broadcasting a story with your help:

- Problems such as new use of cluster bombs or a cluster bomb incident
- Release of the annual [Cluster Munition Monitor](#) report, or other nationally relevant research or statistics
- International, regional or national conferences you participate in
- A development in your government's cluster munition policy, e.g. a government announcement on joining the Convention on Cluster Munitions, a ministerial statement against use of cluster munitions, completion of clearance and becoming cluster bomb-free, or starting a new survivor assistance programme
- Local events such as a practitioners' workshop, the releasing of cleared land to a community, a fundraising event, or a religious ceremony

- The launch of a new programme by your organisation, such as vocational training, a day camp for young survivors, peer-to-peer counselling, or a data collection project
- Key anniversaries such as 1 August (the Convention on Cluster Munitions entry into force) or participation in national or global Cluster Munition Coalition campaign actions. Invite policy makers to participate in global days of action. As well as helping to engage them, media presence can encourage them to speak positively on the issue
- International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action (4 April), International Day of Persons with Disabilities (3 December), or other days such as Children's Day, Women's Day or Earth Day - (It is useful to prepare a calendar at the beginning of the year with an overview of all important dates)
- Country visit by Cluster Munition Coalition staff or representative, or by a Monitor researcher
- A profile of a cluster munition survivor, giving personal testimony of their experience and calls to action.

### Elir Rojas Calderon, Centro de Informacion en Zonas Minadas, Chile:

"Provide or offer exclusive news or information to a big media outlet. This is good for their ratings. Tools the media likes include exclusive pictures, strong testimonies - and, of course - the real truth of the impact on each country."



Esther VandenBroucke of Netwerk Vlaanderen (now FairFin) is interviewed about the divestment campaign ©Jeppe Schilder/PAX



Article about cluster bombs in a Malian newspaper



Grethe Østern is being interviewed at the Oslo signing conference © Jan Lillehamre



## Choosing your media tools

There are lots of ways to get your message out via the media including by a press release, media advisory, radio phone-in, letter to the editor, press conference, becoming an audience member, inviting a journalist or production team to an event or location, Twitter, photo call or stunt for example. We'll outline some of these media approaches in this section, but also look at the Online Campaigning section for more.

### **Dr. Eva Maria Fischer, Handicap International, Germany:**

"Use the days when journalists have to write on this or related topics – like UN-days or big conferences. Tell them stories not only facts. They won't read endless factsheets and press releases full of quotations unless you get their personal interest and empathy."

### **Amir Mujanovic, Landmine Survivor Initiative, Bosnia and Herzegovina:**

"An efficient way to get a journalist's attention is to invite him or her for lunch or a cup of coffee."

## Media advisory

A media advisory is a short announcement for an upcoming event. It includes information on:

- **What** the event is
- **When** it will take place
- **Where** it is
- **Who** will be involved in the event and available for interviews such as: experts, local personalities, groups. Who needs to act to make the change you seek?
- **Why** the event is interesting for the media or how it relates to a current event or news trend

It can also mention a photo opportunity, for example a high level official who is attending your event or an unusual activity such as a Flashmob.

It must include your contact details including a mobile/cell phone number! If additional information is available on a website, indicate the web address. If the media are only invited for a specific part of the event, for example the opening ceremony, make that clear.

Media advisories are sent out to the media ideally a week before your event. Follow-up phone calls should be made a day or two before your event to remind them and to check if they are coming.



Anyalem Zenebe being interviewed during the 4MSP



Journalists interview Kokou Aklavon at the Lomé regional conference



© Stephane De Greef

## Press release

A press release is used to let the media know of something new that is happening. This could be a new development on an issue, a new action that has been taken, or a reaction to a current event. Press releases are sent out on the day of your news or dated for release on the day of your news. It is not usually necessary to distribute a release under 'embargo' but you might do this if you are circulating advance text of a speech, or want to give journalists time to analyse and write up new research findings.

Journalists get many press releases every day, and they cannot spend a lot of time reading them, so think of an angle to make yours stand out, and keep it concise (one or two pages). Use a headline that states what the story is about and grabs the reader's attention. Ensure your opening paragraph has the most important information and is engaging.

As per media advisories, include the five 'Ws':

1. **What** is the news?
2. **When** are things happening?
3. **Where** is the impact?
4. **Who** is involved?
5. **Why** is it important?

Use short paragraphs, short sentences and short words. The words and ideas should be easily understood by people who are not experts on the topic (avoid jargon and abbreviations!).

The three most important elements of a press release are the headline, the first paragraph and the quote. If you get them right, the rest will be easy.

- On top of the page, write: 'Press Release – For Immediate Release', or 'Press Release – Embargoed Until [Date & Time]'.
- The headline is short and to the point. It emphasises what's new and highlights your main message.
- The first paragraph summarises what is new, most interesting and most important, in one or two sentences. It starts with '[Your city and the date]'.
- The second or third paragraph should include a quote that comments on or conveys the main message of the press release. If punchy and interesting, it will draw a journalist into the release.
- The other paragraphs provide extra relevant information (e.g. explain why the story is important, convey your main messages, provide additional background or facts and figures, and include additional quotes from people in your organisation).
- The last paragraph or a notes section below the press release can include basic information on your organisation and on the Convention on Cluster Munitions.
- At the end of the press release, write the word END, and put your contact details. If journalists want additional information or interviews, they will contact you. If you do not access your emails several times a day, write only your mobile number and keep your phone with you at all times.
- Notes to editors: You can include extra details at the end in case a journalist runs a longer story. Make sure you use bullet points and keep it short. You might include extra background information, statistics, details of photos available or interviewees.



Chanthava Podbouly gives an interview for Laos TV © Handicap International



The closing press conference at the Oslo Signing conference © Federico Visi



Former CMC Director Laura Boillot (née Cheeseman) speaks to Norwegian television during the 3MSP in Oslo © Stephane De Greef



Quotes should be short, engaging and able to stand alone. A journalist is much more likely to pick up your quote word for word than any other part of your press release. Each quote can only come from one person and should give the name and title of the person. You can include more than one quote in a press release – try to include a gender balance, consider quoting an official or someone high profile, and be sure to quote survivors when speaking about victim assistance. A quote is an opportunity to express an opinion or say something emotional and human. When writing a quote, pause and say it out loud, to hear whether it flows well.

After you've finished drafting your press release, read through it again to check for spelling mistakes or missing information. If possible, it's always good to have another person check over it too. When you read your press release back to yourself consider the following: would it make you stop and want to learn more? Is it a story that you would find yourself telling other people? If yes, you have written a good media release.

Take time to consider when to send your press release to media. Will you get more pick-up if you circulate your press release in the morning or in the afternoon for example? You can find out the copy deadlines by calling the news desk or getting to know your target journalists.

After you send a press release out, it helps to follow up with phone calls to see if journalists received it and are interested in covering it, as well as to offer your help if they need more information or want an interview. This also makes sure that your press release does not get dumped in their spam folder. Don't lose heart if your press release isn't covered – there might just have been bigger news stories. It's ok to ask journalists why it has not been picked up to learn for next time.

## Opinion editorial

Opinion editorials (also known as commentaries, opinion pieces, or "op-eds") allow you to express a more in-depth opinion on a current event or issue. If you want your opinion editorial to be run during a specific time period, for example for a treaty anniversary, or impending policy decision, contact the editor a few weeks in advance. Ask the editor if there is space available during that time and if there is any interest in your article. Or, act quickly if you want to react to a current news event (for example use of cluster munitions). Including a high-profile name as an author also helps.

An opinion editorial should:

- Have a title that incorporates the main message.
- Have an engaging opening line to draw the reader's attention.
- Clearly identify the author, including name, title and organisation, as well as why he/she is qualified to comment on the issue.
- Be approximately 400-800 words (check with the newspaper first, as they differ in their requirements)
- Provide the relevant background information and statistics to support your opinion.
- Be a finished article – an opinion editorial differs from a press release because it is personally written, rather than a journalist's interpretation of your story.



Attracting the media using impressive visuals at a global day of action New Zealand



Youcef Rafai from Algeria gives an interview © Youcef Rafai



CMC spokesperson Brislav Kapetanovic

## Media interviews

When preparing for media interviews:

- Find out whether the interview is pre-recorded or live
- Decide on two to three key messages that you want to communicate
- Know your background information
- Practice your messages with someone
- Get the questions ahead of time if possible - it's ok to ask!
- Ask who will be interviewing you and approximately how long the interview will be
- Prepare a 'sound bite'; a one-sentence summary that captures the essence of the message that you are trying to bring across - try to use it during the interview

### More resources:

- [Online Campaigning](#)
- [Crafting your messages](#)
- [Getting Coverage: A Practical Media Guide for CMC and ICBL Campaigners](#) for easy-to-use examples of these media tools and more tips.
- [Calendar](#) of key events and anniversaries
- [Photos and videos](#) from the Cluster Munition Coalition media room



When being interviewed:

- Keep calm, and speak slowly and clearly, and try not to fidget
- Give the important information first
- Give short answers and examples
- Be yourself
- Use simple language, avoid acronyms or technical words
- If you don't know the answer, don't make it up. It is always better to say that you are not sure. Alternatively drive your answer to the message that you want to give or continue with general facts related to the question. If relevant, you can offer to find out the answer and get back to the journalist before his/her deadline.
- Remember that everything you say can be used by the journalist, even things you say after the interview is over. If you think you need to correct something you said, it is fine to come back to the question and correct your answer
- If you are interviewed alongside someone with very differing opinions, remain courteous, positive and don't let them aggravate you
- Try to get the Cluster Munition Coalition or your campaign/organisation mentioned towards the beginning
- In broadcast interviews, be ready with a call to action or information for viewers/listeners who want to get involved

It's worth spending time practising for interviews with colleagues or on video. Don't be afraid to ask for constructive criticism, and to analyse how you come across.

Also spend time identifying your spokespeople and preparing key points, media briefings or short answers to difficult questions, so you are prepared for reactive interview opportunities.