

## CHAPTER THREE

# Communicating for feminist movement building



### In this chapter:

3.1	Communication as central	36
3.2	The different elements	39
	<i>Amplifying women's voices</i>	39
	<i>Changing public opinion</i>	44
	<i>Advocating</i>	47
	<i>Generating knowledge</i>	50
	<i>Mobilising</i>	53
	<i>Building our movements</i>	55
	<i>Urgent action</i>	60
3.3	Developing your communication strategy	63
	<i>Thinking about content</i>	65
	<i>Process</i>	68
	<i>Audience</i>	73
	<i>Framing</i>	77
	<i>Tools</i>	81
	<i>Risk</i>	84
	<i>Monitoring</i>	88
	<i>Review</i>	91





### 3.1 Communication as central

Communicating creatively and effectively is critical for feminist movement building. As activists, we need to know how to make the most of media to make women's voices visible and louder and to spotlight women's change agendas and experiences.

Whether we are communicating to women about their sexual rights at a local hospital in rural Zimbabwe or launching an international campaign to address violence against women, we need to be able to convey a clear message that highlights the real issues and encourages people to take action.

Along with our message, we must use tools that work in our specific contexts and that speak to our audience. This demands that we analyse **WHAT** we want to say, **WHEN**, **HOW**, to **WHOM** and most importantly **WHY**. Without this critical thinking, we will not be able to develop effective communication strategies that change the world.

#### Essential elements of a feminist movement building communication strategy

There are many reasons why we communicate for change.

1. **Telling our stories/amplifying voices** If you open up a newspaper or a magazine, stories about women are often told in biased ways that play on harmful stereotypes or aren't told at all.

One reason we communicate is to break the silence and transform these kinds of stories by making sure women can stand up and share their own stories in their own voices. We call this *amplifying* women's voices.

We can use these stories to expose the actions, hypocrisy, motives, inaction of powerful political players both in visible decision-making roles and hidden actors who wield influence and power – this exposes how *invisible* and *hidden power* are operating.

2. **Educating and shifting public opinion** We also communicate to *educate*, *inform* and *shift public opinion (invisible power)* in order to create a just

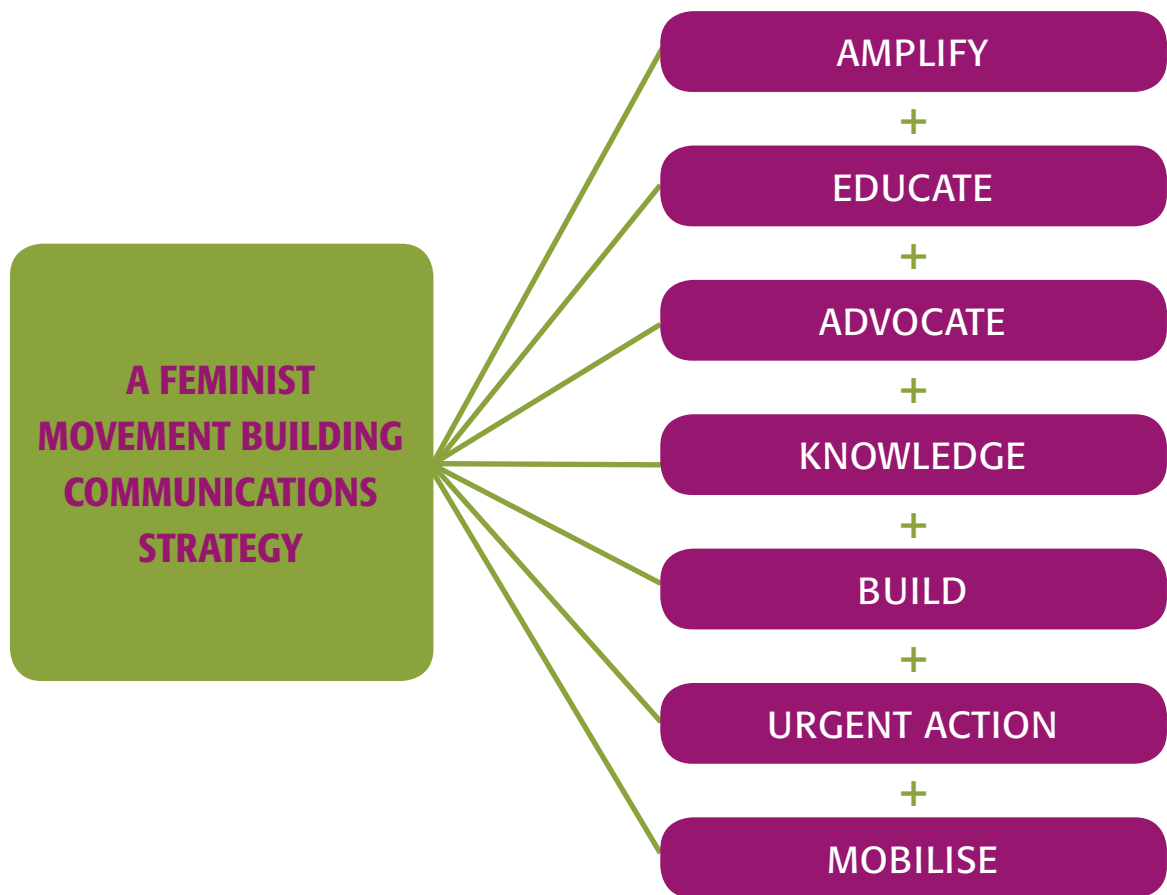
world. This is useful for *uncovering invisible* and *hidden power* through the use of popular education methodologies that bring the issues we don't usually see to the forefront.

3. **Advocating to decision-makers** We communicate to shake things up by *advocating* to those in *visible power* who make decisions that impact women's lives. By sharing women's experiences, we can provide evidence of how a specific policy or action is affecting women and make a case for improvements or changes.
4. **Generating knowledge** Through the use of popular education methodologies that bring the issues we don't usually see to the forefront, we surface our own knowledge, analysis and understandings that free us from the dominant ideas that silence and marginalise us.

If we want to be able to advocate and educate others, we need to document the work we do as activists and use this new analysis to improve our strategies. This is called *generating knowledge* and can challenge *invisible, hidden* and *visible power*.

5. **Mobilising for action** At the heart of feminist movement building is *moving* people—changing their hearts and minds—for transformation. We know we cannot do this work alone, and that together we are stronger. We need to be able to *mobilise* people through our communications.
6. **Building our movements** These ways of communicating can be external – but in order to build and sustain strong informed movements and organisations, we must also communicate *internally*. This includes work to communicate in democratic decision-making processes as well as work to educate and share skills and experiences within our own organisations and to communicate decisions/ and actions to our constituency.
7. **Urgent action** Women activists face risk and violence in their work. In order to support them, we may need to communicate for *urgent action*—this means sending out a message that elicits a speedy and organised response.





If we put all of these elements together, we can build a solid communication strategy for feminist movement building. We need to be clear about what we want to accomplish before we move onto selecting the ICTs we need to use. And when we get to selecting our technology tools, we will want to be aware of issues of safety, security, privacy and control.



*Chapter 4.2: Being secure when you use technology and the internet*

## 3.2 The different elements

In the next section we will take a deeper look at the different reasons why we communicate in feminist movement building and share some inspiring examples of women using ICTs in their organising work on a range of issues to change the world. After each case study you will find a number of thought-provoking questions that can be used by your organisation or by workshop participants to think more deeply about the critical questions related to the choice and use of ICTs in feminist movement building.

### AMPLIFYING WOMEN'S VOICES

As part of our feminist movement building, we need to challenge the kinds of stories that we hear about women. In many cases, women's voices and experiences are not visible, and it is very rare to hear women telling their own stories. One way to challenge this is to produce women's stories that put women's experiences and perspectives front and centre.

Storytelling is an effective way to get women to empower themselves by sharing their own stories. It also allows us to build community and solidarity in our organisations and movements – as we hear women share their experiences and understand better how we can learn from and relate to one other and fight for justice. The more women's stories are told and shared, the more it will become the norm that women's stories are important and valuable. By telling our stories, we create more space for other women to tell theirs.



*"Storytelling has made me believe more in myself, I have come to realise that I am not the only one in this situation, and I have learnt that others also passed in the same situation too. Storytelling makes me feel powerful because others are motivated, inspired and encouraged by what I say and what I have done. I feel I am in safe hands because when I cry they cry with me and when am happy they are happy with me and this makes me what I am now. I have been inspired with what others have said in their stories and that has helped me a lot in building my listening skills and building the movement. I have realised that stories talk about who you are and if you*



share these stories that are when we know about each other and what is happening in our communities. Short stories educate us, entertain us, inspire us and touch our hearts and it is because of the stories that make us come together with our different backgrounds and different issues and act collectively to achieve our goals.” – **Sibongile Singini, Our Bodies, Our Lives, Campaign Coordinator, Malawi**



### **Telling Herstory – Basali Amoho**

*“Traditionally or culturally-speaking women are not allowed to talk about the problems or challenges they go through. It is okay to be battered—even to death—by your spouse or for your daughter to be sexually abused and to keep silent about it. [I believe that] my story will help break the ‘barrier of silence’ that is rife in our society, enable women to come out in the open and stand up for their rights.”*

These were the words of a member of *Basali Amoho* [Women Together] after a JASS feminist movement building process<sup>26</sup>. Basali Amoho supports women in Zambia organise against a range of harmful practices.

The set of oppressions that Zambian women face daily, reinforced by tradition and culture, are hidden and often veiled in silence. This storytelling initiative started with where women are—their lives and experiences—putting into practice the principle that women’s lives, experiences and voices do matter and are critical if we hope to create sustained and effective change. The process opened the door not only for deeply personal and powerful stories of change but also for reflection and analysis. Through stories, participants were able to think more deliberately and clearly about their contexts and draw the links between their shared experiences of violence, stigma and discrimination – all of which is a vital part of activist reflection and strategising. Each woman connected to the issues that affected her and together, the group built an analysis of how patriarchy and other systems of oppression work together on women’s bodies, and at the deepest and most personal levels, to begin strategising for action.



*“It’s a vital step, that’s the starting point – after the storytelling, activities started coming up for our group. Without that, we didn’t know where to begin, we didn’t know what we as a group wanted to do and why we are here but when we told our stories we saw the issues clearly.” – Sombo Kuku, Basali Amoho, Zambia*



*“For me it’s the politicisation of the issues. When you tell stories, you then have to see the bigger issues, the way in which patriarchy and power are playing out in our lives and then you come to have an analysis. It’s important to not forget this piece of the process – where you draw the threads together and bring the collective together to think about the similarities, the differences and the implications of the story at different levels.” – Anna Davies-van Es, Just Associates, South Africa*

26. The storytelling process was supported by JASS and Youth Vision Zambia.





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*“Every woman’s lived experience is important to movement building. In the story circle, a woman can move from her individual self and begin to understand that the struggle of the woman sitting next to her is also her struggle. She realises that something needs to be done and that we must come together as women to take action against oppression.*

*Through this storytelling process we discovered that although our stories differ, we as women suffer the same problems. That the power over us from men is violent and often we have not consented to the experiences which have infringed our human rights.” – **Basali Amoho in *Zambian Women Speak****

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*We share feelings of shame and fear to speak about our experiences even though we are educated. We have experienced stigma, discrimination and backlash for speaking out. None of us has had our issues resolved through the legal system. But we also discovered that history shows us women’s power and we have all resisted and tried to change our situations.”*  
– **Nana Zulu, Just Associates consultant, Zambia**

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For Basali Amoho, the stories demonstrate how vulnerable women’s bodies are, how the ‘power over’ that women confront daily has a physical impact on their bodies.

The stories grapple with traumatic experiences of gender-based violence, stigma and discrimination, forced transactional sex, fragmentation and displacement, property-grabbing, economic reliance and abuse. However, they also show us how coming together can help build a collective understanding and cultivate different levels of empowerment. As one participant said “Although we are told ‘as a married woman, my body belongs to my husband’, empowerment has made me realise I have rights over my body. We have realised that there are norms that make us act in ways that put our bodies in situations they don’t want to be and that many of the abuse of women are hidden.”



Basali Amoho, decided that they wanted to print their stories. Many of the women they work with do not have access to the internet so it was important that they had actual physical books to share. Since many of the stories were intimate and could put the individual women at risk, the group discussed the issue of confidentiality and decided that each author could choose how to identify themselves. Some used their own names, others their first name or a pseudonym and others chose to be identified as “woman/feminist activist”.

JASS assisted in the editing and design process, so that the stories could be published as *Amplifying Women’s Voices: Zambian Women Speak*<sup>27</sup> and shared the women’s stories transcribed in their own voices and words with a larger global community on the JASS website.

By publishing their stories, Basali Amoho is choosing to break the silence and share their stories in the hope of healing the story weavers, reaffirming their individual and collective commitment to activist work and inspiring other women to come together to build women’s collective power for sustainable change. Basali Amoho members are now using the book to share their stories to mobilise other women to take on these issues in their communities and to raise funds.



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## Chapter 5: Tools – Print

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### **Ask yourself**

- *Why did Basali Amoho choose storytelling as a strategy?*
  - *What did they learn?*
  - *What support did they need?*
  - *What ICTs did they use?*
  - *Why was consent so important?*
  - *What did they use the stories for?*
  - *What other ICTs could they have used?*
- 

27. <http://justassociates.org/en/resources/amplifying-womens-voices-zambian-women-speak>



## CHANGING PUBLIC OPINION

Public opinion and worldview is shaped by social norms and dominant belief systems, in other words, invisible power. If we want to create change that gives women greater freedom, rights and resources, we have to engage public opinion. For example, we must make visible and challenge the norms and values that make it acceptable for women to be beaten or for girl children to not be offered science or maths as options at school.



If we want to win gains—for example change the way something is done at our local community centre or to change a law—we need people on our side, with the knowledge and ability to take action. We often need to break the silence on the issue, tell people what is really going on and cause outrage amongst the broadest possible group so that they will feel compelled to take action. We need to educate people outside our movement and share information. This means we need to find ways to ‘talk beyond ourselves’ – sometimes we use ‘code’ words or jargon that ‘outsiders’ do not understand. We must find ways to speak to them so that they understand our messages.

Although we need to educate people outside our movement we also need to educate ourselves – to build a collective analysis that informs action and to ensure that we are not creating an ‘elite’ within our movements who are the only ones informed enough to speak/create content.



### **Katswe miniskirt march**

*Katswe Sistahood, a young women's movement in Zimbabwe, uses a range of strategies to educate and provoke conversation. In October 2014, Katswe led nearly five hundred women in a march throughout Harare's city centre to "Reclaim Our Streets" and protest violent attacks on women wearing miniskirts and others forms of clothing that are considered "inappropriate". The march garnered national attention and proved a powerful way for Katswe to begin a dialogue with Zimbabweans about violence against women, cultural and traditional expectations of what women should and should not wear and do. Katswe was able to engage in this discussion through radio and national newspapers. Katswe also used social media (Facebook) as a way to engage a wider group of people beyond Zimbabwe's borders. Using colourful posters with provocative messages, songs, theatrical presentations and slogans, the women were able to draw scores of people to the march and gain a lot of attention.*


While **Reclaim Our Streets** sparked a national conversation it also drew negative reactions from taxi drivers and bus conductors who heckled the marchers with explicitly sexist verbal abuse. On Twitter and social media, commenters made fun of the women marchers and shamed them for coming together to fight against sexism and violence. But the protestors refused to back down. They kept marching on to break the silence on violence and sexism, as well as the particular risks that women of all ages face in the street and on public transport.



### **The miniskirt attack in Zimbabwe is not an isolated incident**

*In November 2014, a Kenyan woman was stripped naked in broad daylight by a mob of men at a city bus stop in Nairobi for what she was wearing and the brutal attack was caught in graphic detail on a subsequently viral and later-deleted video on YouTube. Women responded by taking to the streets*





*in their hundreds to defend their right to wear what they choose and uniting under the hashtag #MyDressMyChoice.*

*In February 2014 Ugandan women protested notorious Ethics and Integrity Minister, Simon Lokodo's "miniskirt law", a measure to ban women from exposing their breasts, buttocks and thighs and from "dressing indecently in a manner to sexually excite". Uganda is not the first country to consider public "indecent" legislation that is created almost entirely to monitor and restrict women's choices and movements in the city. Similar attacks have taken place throughout southern Africa, including in Swaziland, Malawi and South Africa. These attacks are a symptom of a larger patriarchal system that favours men, and demands that women be "good" women in order to be acceptable. The meaning of "good" changes depending on our contexts and the moment, and often this meaning can be contradictory. However, it does prompt an opportunity for regional solidarity and even international movements that inspire women to claim and reclaim ownership of their bodies. We can use communications powerfully in order to shed light on local problems that have regional implications.*

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**After the march, Katswe developed a number of safety and security strategies to protect themselves in demonstrations and other forms of public action. One of these was to create a private WhatsApp group to be able to check in with each other regularly and update in case of emergency.**

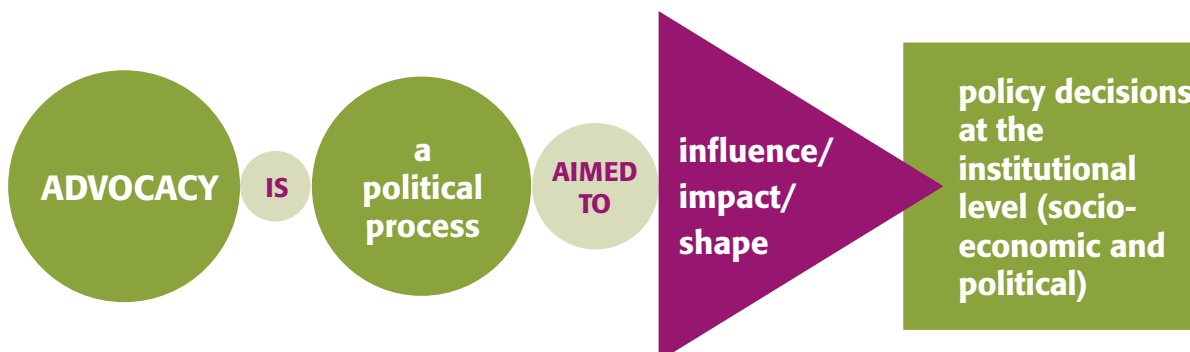


### **Ask yourself**

- *What were the key messages?*
  - *Why are miniskirts an important issue for Katswe?*
  - *Why do you think Katswe chose this strategy?*
  - *Which ICTs did Katswe use? What others could they have used?*
  - *What were the risks? Did they have a safety plan?*
-

## ADVOCATING

Lots of women's organisations focus their communication strategies on advocacy.



We usually advocate to those who have power to decide on the issue e.g. the government to change laws or an international body to take action in a time of crisis. Advocating is a way to inform duty bearers and/or decision-makers of women's experiences and hold them accountable. This is a critical strategy because it can win concrete gains if you are successful.

Advocacy is a visible strategy that makes "noise" on a particular issue. Often the mainstream media will cover advocacy attempts that are directed at the power players that they are interested in covering. Most national newspapers will cover press conferences in which their government puts out a position on an issue of interest. This can mean that advocating can both shift policy and change public opinion.

The most successful advocacy work is linked to broader movements and a mobilised constituency in which the most affected take the lead and speak for themselves.

We must be cautious about advocacy groups who are not connected to the issues or are not part of a movement themselves. There are too many example of so-called progressive laws being adopted which later have no impact on the daily lives of women and face ongoing pressure to be reversed without a movement ready to take action and defend the gain. Advocacy gains must be connected and protected!



## **Malawi Campaign for ARVs<sup>28</sup>**

The **Our Bodies, Our Lives: The fight for better ARVs** campaign is the culmination of a six-year-organising and training effort that mobilised hundreds of HIV-positive Malawian women in a unified initiative to protect the health and rights of one of the most marginalised and stigmatised populations in the nation.

The campaign launched in October 2012 at the National Women's Dialogue on ARVs was hosted by the Malawi Network of Religious Leaders Living With or Personally Affected by HIV and AIDS (MANERELA+) and JASS Southern Africa. The dialogue brought together over 250 community-based women activists and their organisations from across Malawi to celebrate positive women's organising, engage with stakeholders and decision-makers, build a collective analysis on the current context and demand an immediate roll-out of alternative quality ARVs. The convening gained national attention and included an interfaith service with over 200 congregants of wide-ranging denominations and faiths who preached and shared their own testimonies fostering community solidarity across religious differences.

Most importantly, out of the dialogue emerged a concrete list of demands anchored in the immediate needs and realities of HIV-positive women, that all involved could pursue as a united front.

Through MANERELA+'s relationship with the Ministry of Health, a group of ten women activists were able to present a communique directly to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health who committed to be responsive to the issues raised, especially in terms of stock-outs of key drugs.

In Malawi, many women wear a type of sarong called **chitenje** on a daily basis. The campaign adopted a campaign chitenje in bright blue, with the JASS and M+ logos and their key demand (quality ARVs) on it. This helped build the movement by providing a collective identity, and reaching more women with our message. The chitenje became synonymous with the campaign, raising its profile, and got a huge amount of media coverage.

28. Antiretroviral (ARV) drugs are a treatment used to suppress the HIV virus.

*Since the launch of the campaign, many gains have been achieved. Critically, through the campaign's mobilising and collaboration with other HIV/AIDS sector organisations involved in sustained organising on the issue, political commitment to rolling out alternative quality ARVs nationally was secured and roll out began in 2013. The Our Bodies, Our Lives campaign remains active monitoring the roll out and other issues affecting women's access to quality ARVs and healthcare.*

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### **Ask yourself**

- *Who led the campaign?*
  - *What did they achieve and how?*
  - *Who were the audiences and why?*
  - *Did their strategies respond to their context? Would all of them work well elsewhere?*
  - *When is using multiple strategies a good idea and why?*
  - *What tools did the campaign use?*
- 



## GENERATING KNOWLEDGE



In order to do the work of amplifying women's voices, educating and mobilising we must have information. *Knowledge generation* is a critical part of movement building. Feminist knowledge generation is about how knowledge is created in ways that respects women's experience and reflects its meaning. It is also about the politics of *knowledge production*.

There are power imbalances around knowledge production that silence women, especially in the global south. In a context where the media, organisations and so on are dominated by male experiences and so-called experts speak on behalf of ordinary people, we must produce counter-sets or alternative forms of knowledge based on women's experience. We need to challenge who gets to create knowledge as well as what we consider to be 'knowledge'.

We talk a lot in this toolkit about how important it is to understand our context and to analyse it. However often the information we need is not available, or does not specifically look at how an issue impacts on women. So it is important to produce *context-specific analyses* and *reflections* – this is a key part of knowledge generation. From this we can contribute to dialogue and debate and get feedback on strategies or new ideas.

As part of movement building it is important that we reflect on our activism, and learn from it. We can then share with other activists to exchange and



strengthen our activism across the world and across contexts. Part of this is recognising the importance of documenting women's stories and movement building processes in order to show how change happens, for women to reflect on their experiences, to see them as legitimate and to use them as the basis of mobilising. ICT tools support knowledge generation both for sharing information within organisations and how we produce knowledge for documentation of process, messages or advocacy products.

The work of knowledge generation helps us build our networks to support our work (including across divides – such as amongst activists, academics and donors).



### **Feminist Africa**

*Feminist Africa is a continental gender studies journal produced by a community of feminist scholars to ensure that African women activists and academics were writing and publishing their own knowledge, on their own terms, and in their own voices, after observing that much knowledge about Africa's women was being produced in the North and did not represent the realities, lives and experiences of women living and working in Africa.*


*The journal has an African-wide advisory committee. They are made up of women deeply involved in activist and academic struggles on the continent and who are linked into networks of feminist activism and knowledge production.*

*The advisory committee come from different disciplines. They discuss current debates, issues and trends which impact women on the continent. The committee decide themes for the journal and suggest writers, artists and contributors using email and skype to keep in touch if they are not able to meet face-to-face.*

*Feminist Africa encourages innovation in terms of style and subject-matter as well as design and lay-out. It promotes dialogue by stimulating experimentation as well as new ways of engaging with text for readers.*

*Because Feminist Africa wants to ensure that African women's knowledge production is taken seriously and that intellectual rigour is central to*





***Feminist Africa**, it is an accredited journal and has an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) which means that libraries can find and identify titles in automated systems more quickly and easily. It also means that the larger intellectual community will take the journal more seriously which is important as African women's knowledge is often published through informal means and cannot be easily located.*

***Feminist Africa** has produced nineteen issues since it started in 2002 and covers diverse topics from sexuality to technology, land and labour to militarism. It is available as full-text online, which means anyone can read, download and print the journal if they can get onto the internet. People can also ask colleagues to access the journal and email or print for others. This makes the journal accessible to many.*

*Until 2014 it was also printed on paper and distributed to anyone who was interested. Now costs do not allow this.*



### **Ask yourself**

- *Why was the journal started?*
  - *What issues does it address? What constitutes knowledge or issues worth writing about?*
  - *Who defines the content it will publish?*
  - *Who contributes?*
  - *How is it produced?*
  - *How is it distributed?*
  - *Why does the journal have an ISSN number?*
  - *What tools did they choose?*
  - *What else could they have used?*
  - *What risks are there in using this tool?*
-

## MOBILISING



To make our movements more effective and more visible we need to grow our numbers. We can do this in a number of ways but it is important to begin with the issues that affect the people in our communities and constituencies the *most*. These issues are not isolated to one or two individuals but they are part of a larger system of problems that affect many of us. Once we can connect to others based on our experiences, some of which may be shared, we can come together to build a common agenda.



Chapter 2.4: Who's got the power?

To draw even more people to our cause, we need to use creative communications to spread our message in language that many can understand. We need to agitate and make so much noise that we can no longer be ignored and we can energise people to act *with* us and *join* our action.

We also need to communicate internally in order to keep everyone updated and to inform democratic decision-making.





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### **Putting your issue out there – SMUG and LGBTI masks**

*Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) is a group that fights for the rights of LGBTI people. In 2013, the Ugandan government passed a legislative bill to punish gay sex with long prison terms. SMUG and other Ugandan human rights groups mobilised nationally and globally to draw attention to the law and push the Ugandan government to revoke it. They organised several demonstrations that sparked a national conversation about the rights of LGBTI, sexual identity and sexual diversity. One of the ways that SMUG caught the imagination of people not only within Uganda but around the world was the use of colourful masks based on traditional Ugandan designs – each painted with the colours of the LGBT flag. This was a powerful statement for Ugandan LGBTI because it expressed the fact that it is legitimate and acceptable to be gay or lesbian or bisexual **and** be Ugandan. It also ensured that participants in the march could not be easily identified and arrested. Through their efforts to raise the visibility of LGBTI experiences in Uganda, SMUG managed to get millions of signatures in solidarity with their struggle and to fight back against the government. They did this through their website and Facebook which they use for networking with other LGBTI organisations.*

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### **Ask yourself**

- *How did SMUG get attention?*
  - *What message was communicated?*
  - *How did they address issues of safety and risk?*
  - *How did they get into mainstream press/get coverage?*
  - *Why did they do this action at that particular moment?*
  - *What tools did they use?*
  - *Why did SMUG use those tools?*
  - *What else could they have used?*
  - *What risks are there?*
-

## BUILDING OUR MOVEMENTS

Often we develop communication strategies that are external. But in order to build strong informed movements and organisations, we must also have good strategies and practices to communicate internally. This includes work to stay in touch with our constituencies; to share information and consult as part of democratic decision-making processes. It is also the work to educate and share skills and experiences within our own organisations.

Building a movement may involve many different organisations, individuals and allies – this makes internal communication critical. There may be different teams tasked with different responsibilities, and they may or may not be in the same town or country. This means how they communicate and when they need to consult needs to be clear – and everyone needs to be able to use the chosen communication tools. As we organise we must be careful to ensure everyone in the organisation is clear on the agenda, is able to support each other and when necessary ask critical questions that keep the movement on track.


Internal communication is also important in regard to reporting and monitoring – so we can keep each other abreast of developments and ensure we are able to make informed changes to plans as necessary.



### ***SWEAT and Please Call Me***

*The Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT) in South Africa wanted to make their services accessible to anyone who needed them. They assumed that one of the reasons that sex workers were not reaching out for assistance was the cost of mobile phone calls. So they introduced a free call service. **Please Call Me** is a free service that allows all mobile phone users to send an SMS message to any other person, requesting them to call him or her back. The message delivered will read 'Please call me' and will feature the cellphone number of the person requesting the callback. In South Africa Please Call Me requests are free with a maximum of two messages allowed daily. The initiative was a huge success as the calls for assistance started rolling into SWEAT.*





*There are specific contextual and situational challenges very particular to SWEAT's constituency including frequently stolen phones. Please Call Me allows a sex worker to access services through a borrowed phone. Sex workers began to see their phones as a resource for safety. In the province of Limpopo, shortly after a sex worker had been murdered and her body found in a police van, another sex worker was taken into custody by the police. Fearing for her life, she managed to hide her phone and contact SWEAT from the back of the police van. SWEAT was thus able to track her safety and ensure that she was eventually released.*

*The Please Call Me service allows sex workers to feel safer, supported and more able to rely on SWEAT and on one another through using mobile phones where they do not have to always have to pay for the calls. It is an extremely effective and useful tool for sex workers to use.*

*Nowadays smartphones carry a lot of information. It's a good idea to keep mobile phones and their information safe.<sup>29</sup>*



## Chapter 5: Tools Messaging Applications (page 152)



### **Ask yourself**

- *How did SWEAT review/adapt its strategy?*
- *What contextual factors were into account?*
- *Who did they see as a core base and why?*
- *What lessons were learnt?*
- *What are the implications on staff and organisation e.g. bills, time?*
- *How did/Did this strengthen the network?*
- *How did this contribute to the safety of sex workers?*
- *Why did they use the tools?*
- *What else could they have used?*
- *What risks are there in using this tool?*

29. Tactical Tech's Guide to digital security for activists has two sections on mobile phones and smart phones <https://securityinabox.org/en>



## **APC and multiple ICTs**

*The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) is a global network and organisation where staff and members work in different parts of mostly the global south. They work out of organisations or from home in what is called a virtual office. This means people communicate using the internet and different ICTs on a daily basis.*

*The ICT tool that is most used is email. Mailing lists are set up for different topics and for different purposes. So for example there is a dedicated mailing list for all staff and there are mailing lists for different programme areas (like the Women's Rights Programme) and for issues and projects (such as on the subject of digital security or the sexual rights project) and for workshops. Mailing lists are the main source of keeping networks informed and updated and for requesting assistance.*

*APC uses Jit.si and Skype for voice and video calls between individuals and sometimes for meetings. Jit.si is free and open source software (FOSS)<sup>30</sup> whereas Skype is proprietary. APC chooses Jit.si over Skype for that reason but sometimes they have to use Skype depending on who they have to communicate with (APC is constantly encouraging people to explore and experiment with FOSS tools).*




*For more information on FOSS see Chapter 4 The internet and ICTs as political spaces and tools*

*Jit.si allows you to set up text chat rooms so that team can type collective messages and receive an immediate response from colleagues (Google Hangouts does a similar job). Sometimes during the chat, staff will share an online document (using a tool like Google Docs or Etherpad) and work on it together in real-time. Messages can be archived and read later if colleagues are not online at the time the chats take place.*

*Meeting platforms are used when there are lots of people attending an online meeting. These platforms allow participants to use voice, video and text as well as a whiteboard where the agenda is pasted so everyone can*





*see it. There are options for voting on a topic and icons for “putting your hand up” if you want to make a point.*

*Working in a global organisation means that there are always people online working. This can make collaboration quite difficult if most of one person’s working day takes place during another colleague’s bedtime. Sometimes staff have to start their day very early or end very late when time zones are so different. For their well-being, staff have to set boundaries regarding the online work-day.*

*Because APC is a global network with the need to be transparent to its members, they need to store documents where everyone can access them. APC uses OwnCloud for storing documents on the internet, which is FOSS and a more secure option than, for example, Dropbox (although recently Dropbox has increased its security). OwnCloud has additional functions such as a calendar which staff use to share events, leave-days, etc.*

*Because they are not always in their offices at a laptop, APC staff also use mobile phone applications to keep in touch and to send urgent messages. They use applications called Telegram and Text Secure which are similar to Whatsapp but have more safety features.*

*Sometimes there is quite a bit of “noise” at the virtual office with people on Skype, emails coming in and messages coming through mobile phone. Sometimes, staff have to switch some tools off in order to focus and to not be distracted by too many things happening at once. Health and well-being needs to be taken into account when working with so many tools and with so many different demands.*

*Another consideration for well-being is digital security. APC tries to make choices of tools that are more secure so that their communication is safe and people’s information will not be compromised.*

*For political and security reasons, APC tries as far as possible to use free and open source software rather than proprietary software.*

*If APC is doing research and wants to do a survey to find out what people think, they will use the FOSS internet survey form Limesurvey. If they want*



to find out when people can have a meeting, they use a free service called Doodle Poll where people put their preference for a meeting. If they want to send out a bulletin, they use CiviCRM<sup>30</sup>, which is a FOSS contacts database that also allows for email bulletins, similar to Mailchimp, and even event registration.

The choices APC makes in the tools they use always focus first on making sure that the person with the least access can be included, that the tools are FOSS and that they are as secure as possible.



### **Ask yourself**

- *What technology is used and why does APC make these choices?*
- *Why does APC use multiple platforms of communication – what are the implications of that?*
- *What is the impact of using so many tools to facilitate work? What are the benefits and pitfalls? How do you address/manage all the noise? How do you set boundaries?*
- *How does this facilitate movement building?*
- *What other tools could they have used?*
- *What risks are there in using these tools?*

30. <https://civicrm.org/>





## URGENT ACTION

When activists confront power, we often face backlash or risks to ourselves, our communities and our organisations. This backlash can look different depending on the context and nature of the work. To respond to violent push-back, activists mobilise **urgent action** strategies or strategies that respond quickly to a given situation in order to “make noise”, draw attention to the struggle and push for change. In Zimbabwe, the police have raided the offices of the Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) multiple times. In 2014, the chair of GALZ’ board was charged with running an illegal organisation, a charge for which she appeared in court. She felt unsafe and that she was under surveillance. To support her, GALZ mobilised funding to ensure that she could move to a safe house and also support her legal battle.

When one person, group or organisation are attacked or hindered in doing their activist work, it can have a chilling effect on other organisations. This is why solidarity, locally and globally, is important. If we find ways to connect and share our struggles, we can strategise against backlash and be stronger as a result. Sometimes we need to focus our solidarity work locally and other times, it is critical to use communications to raise the profile of our struggles beyond our communities and countries to the world. This allows us to make our issues a global agenda.

Undertaking this kind of communication requires resources and strategies that respond to our context and urgent needs while also thinking ahead. For this reason, it is important that the people closest to the situation shape and define the kind of response that is needed. At times, visibility is just what an activist needs to stay safe and keep actions against them in check. But sometimes more visible forms of urgent action can put activists in even more danger. Other times, the messages that we send out as part of our urgent action and solidarity work may not be appropriate or useful.



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## **The Egypt Seven**

*In June 2014, seven women human rights defenders were arrested for protesting peacefully against Egypt's Protest and Publicity Assembly Law. They were held in prison for months before their trial in October that same year.*

*The arrests shocked the world. Led by local organisations, thousands of activists from across the globe signed petitions to free "the seven" immediately and drop the charges in accordance with human rights laws of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. An international campaign led by human rights actors including the Women Human Rights Defenders Coalition, the International Service for Human Rights and Nazra shared critical information and mobilised online actions on Twitter and Facebook, in order to raise the visibility of the violations of the rights of Egyptian defenders.*

*In October, the seven women along with other protesters were sentenced to three years' imprisonment, followed by three years' conditional release and a fine. While the efforts of activists did not push Egyptian authorities to drop the charges, it is still a powerful case of how local efforts can be amplified and bolstered internationally through communication strategies.*

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*Chapter 5: Social media tools   Microblogging   Twitter (page 138)*

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## **Ask yourself**

- *Why did they use these tools?*
  - *What else could they have used?*
  - *Who decided which actions to take?*
  - *What risks are there in using these tool?*
- 





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## **Phone recordings – using technology to turn the tables on power**

*In November 2013, a young transgender sex worker had made a transaction with a client on the streets of Cape Town. As they were walking towards the client's car, a police van stopped and they were both arrested.*

*One policeman took the sex worker in his car and another police man took the client in yet another police car. The sex worker knew that when this happens it is usually to bribe both the client and the sex worker. Before they were taken away in separate cars, the sex worker whispered to her client to accept the call she was going to make to him and then leave his phone on but hidden from the police.*

*The sex worker then switched on a mobile phone app which recorded the conversation between the policeman trying to bribe the sex workers' client rather than charging him at the police station. In the meantime, the police-officer she was with, was recorded saying he would not charge her if she would give him sexual pleasure. The sex worker then played back the recording of the conversation between the client and the policeman in the other car and said they now had evidence of police bribery so they both better be let go.*

*It was a brave thing for her to do as the police could have turned violent and tried to take the mobile phone. She had no other tools but the mobile phone application to use. This time however, the sex worker was the winner.*

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*Sonke Gender Justice, Digital Stories/ with Male and Transgender sex workers*  
<http://www.genderjustice.org.za/digital-stories/bring-call-recorder-mya/>

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### 3.3 Developing your communication strategy

In this section, we have identified eight key steps to get you started on designing or reviewing your communication strategy. These are not linear so we are presenting them in a circular way to demonstrate how they relate to each other. In the next section we will take you through each step. They appear in an order that will make sense if you are starting from scratch (first make sure everyone is clear on what the problem you are trying to address is) but you can start anywhere and work your way around the circle. Each step has a number of sub-steps with questions that will help you think through your strategy and make decisions. After each key step, you will find an applied case study of an organisation who used this process to create a communication strategy.



A communication strategy is made up of many different tactics and you may use (many) different tools at different times. We assume in this section that you belong to an organisation or that you are a group of people coming together to decide how best to communicate on a particular issue. These steps will take you through the process and challenge you to be more strategic about who you communicate to, how you do it, what tools you use, and what messages/content you develop. We will call the group of people that comes together to decide on and implement a communication strategy – the communications team.





***These are non-linear and you can start anywhere unless you are at the stage of reviewing your communication strategy / intervention in which case you should start with the review step.***

## THINKING ABOUT CONTENT

What is your purpose?  
What are the key  
messages?

**Step 1: *What is your purpose? What change in the world do you want to bring about?***

It is important to start by reviewing/discussing what the purpose of your organisation is. This helps to create a shared starting point and a basis to reflect back on whether your communication strategy will help you achieve your purpose.

**Step 2: *What is the problem you want to address?***

In discussing your purpose, you have probably identified a number of problems that you will need to address in order to achieve your purpose. You now need to decide which problem you want to focus on in this communication strategy. Discuss the problem fully. Make sure everyone in the team participates and understands by ensuring that everyone speaks and is able to ask questions.

**Step 3: *What are the key issues relating to this problem?***

List all the key issues that arise from the problem that may need to be addressed.


**Step 4: *Which one will you focus on?***

As a group decide which issue you will focus on for this communication output / task / product. It is important to be specific so that your communication strategy is more targeted and as a result more successful.

**Step 5: *Why is this the most important issue to focus on now?***

There may be an event or an incident that has just happened that means it is critical to act. It may be an issue that gets no media





coverage but it is important to your constituency/community – we call this the **political moment**. We need to ensure that our messages are responsive to the political moment. Make sure everyone agrees that this is the issue that is most important to focus on right now.

**Step 6: Are there other critical issues?**

Do any of these need communication strategies? If so, make a list of them and decide on a timeline for when you will go back to the list, who will be responsible for ensuring you do this?

This will allow you to arrive at the critical **issue** on which this communication strategy will focus on.

**Step 7: If you communicate on this issue will it contribute to what you want to achieve?**

If not, you may need to revise what you want to achieve or the issue you chose to communicate on. In which case, start the steps again. This is *never a waste of time*, as the more clear you are as a communications team, the better your communications product will be.

**Step 8: What do you want to say – what is key message?**

Now you have your critical message you need to decide what you want to say–this is not about deciding on the exact words–, we will get to that later–but about what your message is. There are probably many messages in the media on the issue you have chosen – some you may agree with, others not. What do you want to say about the issue?



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**Content** is what you are expressing. There are many different types of 'content' that we can produce. For example, produce, for example, information provision about an issue, evidence, women's stories, or analysis. Your content is decided on depending on your message, your audience and your medium (in this case the ICT tool).

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**Table 3.1: CONTENT – APPLIED CASE STUDY**  
***Young Women Arise* design a communication strategy**

<i>What change do you want to bring about?</i>	We want to change attitudes in regard to young women’s access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.
<i>What is the problem you want to address?</i>	Young women’s access to services, in particular contraception.
<i>List all the key issues as they relate to the problem</i>	Availability of services The law Attitudes of health clinic staff Families not supportive Distance/transport to clinics.
<i>What is the critical issue?</i>	The nurses’ attitudes.
<i>Why is it critical to address this right now?</i>	Many young women we work with are reporting this as a critical thing that stops them from accessing contraceptives. It makes them start to question whether they have any right to contraceptives, as a result some of them are engaging in risky sexual practices rather than accessing contraception.
<i>What issue will you address next?</i>	The group decided that the next issue that they will focus on is safe abortion access since over half of the group felt this was critical.
<i>Is this in line with our purpose?</i>	Yes, we are focusing on changing the nurses’ attitudes. This relates to our purpose because this will aid changing attitudes towards young women’s access to sexual and reproductive health rights.
<i>What is the key message?</i>	Young women have the right to access contraceptives.





## PROCESS

Who decides?  
Do you have  
consent?

We want our production to be democratic. We must ensure that everyone's voices are heard and that those who are most affected by an issue are taking the lead.

Often powerful member/s of a group will decide on the messages that an organisation puts out. They may be powerful because they have particular skills or hold a leadership position. This can result in less powerful members, who might be most affected and are often women, being silenced. If we want our activism and communications to be different, we need to do things differently. This means that how we create content, deciding on how we communicate and to whom, should be different. We call this the **production process**.

**Step 1: *Who will be involved in deciding on the content? Who will make the final decisions – an individual or a group/committee?***

It is important to be clear on this. In your communications team you may have different skills and/or roles but the decision-making should be clear and agreed to by the whole team.

**Step 2: *What will your process be for writing the content – who will draft, who will edit? And are those affected by the issue taking a lead?***

In this step you should think about all the different stages in developing the content. For example, you will probably generate a first draft which captures the key ideas or gives a few options. This can then be discussed and editing feedback given before a good second draft is done. Sometimes you will produce many drafts, so you need to be clear on what the process is and who will be involved in the different steps. Ideally your full communications team–led by

those most affected—should be in agreement on a final draft which can then be copy-edited by someone with the skill.



**Editing** involves changing the content. Copy-editing is checking for accuracy and fixing any spelling or grammar mistakes.



Chapter 5: Tools Print: How to make a magazine or newsletter

### **Step 3: Do you have consent to use quotes or women's stories?**

A key part of your process is taking responsibility to ensure that you have accurately captured any quotes, stories or statistics you are using. In regard to quotes and stories you need to make sure you have informed consent. This means making sure that everyone involved understands how their story or quote will be shared and that they agreed to use their full name or their first name or a pseudonym. If it is an individual women's story being shared, it is important that you share a final draft with her before publishing.

### **Step 4: Who controls the technology?**

If you are going to draw on the skills of someone outside your organisation e.g. a radio producer, or a photographer, or an organisation that is letting you use their office or equipment, you need to have an agreement with them about who the final product will belong to and who gets the final say in the message. You may want to collaborate or it may be important that the communications product is owned by you. This is important in order to ensure your message is not distorted by someone who may not agree with your message.





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## **Process is important**

*When one person or a group of people ‘take charge’ in an organising process and make all the decisions in the production process, things can move very quickly. But this quick pace comes at a loss. Often it is those who already have skills, privilege and a degree of power that take on the task to communicate for an organisation or group. This gives them even more power to decide for the organisation what the message should be and how it should be given and to whom.*

*It can mean that some of the people who are most affected by the issue, and know the most about it, do not get their voices reflected in the message.*

*It is also a missed learning opportunity – when we discuss and decide together we learn more about the issue and about the people we are working with and we build our knowledge base and our community.*

*Importantly, in feminist movement building, we must be careful not to speak for others or extract stories from a community and then go and speak on their behalf! We all have a story to tell, and we should own our stories and respect the right of others to own theirs.*

*It is important to ensure we have consent to use stories/quotes/images/photographs. As feminists we talk about **continuous informed consent** – this means making sure the person whose information we use understands the purpose for which it will be used, how and where it will be used and continuing to check with them if they consent. The political context could change and it may be risky for the story to be published on a website or the person’s views or sense of identity may have shifted. We must recognise these possibilities and plan accordingly. It is important to remember that once something is put online, it is ‘permanent’ and may continue to be available online – even after it has been deleted elsewhere.*



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Chapter 5: Tools Images

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*“We need to think about the ethics when we write and work with women. Media can be quite extractive. What does the process about generating feminist content look like? And how can we be supportive of women telling their own stories?” – Anna Davies-van Es, Just Associates, South Africa*

***There are many different ways to produce content – we must ask ourselves:***

- *Is the process democratic (or ‘horizontal’, as opposed to top-down and where people are being told what to think or do)?*
  - *What are the ways we can decentralise it so as many people are involved as possible?*
  - *Can we use this opportunity for a skills exchange where we share our skills and experience about for example using an ICT tool?*
- 





Table 3.2: PROCESS – APPLIED CASE STUDY  
**Young Women Arise design a communication strategy**

<i>Step 1: Who will be involved in deciding on the content? Who will make the final decisions – an individual or a group/committee?</i>	We are a group of four on the team. We will decide together but we need to share the final draft with the steering committee of our group – they will make the final decision based on our recommendations.
<i>Step 2: What will your process be for writing the content – who will draft, who will edit? And are those most affected taking the lead?</i>	We are going to discuss the content together and brainstorm it. Two people will then do the actual writing, then the other two will review and re-write. We may need an editor. Everyone in our group has been affected by this issue.
<i>Step 3: Do you have consent to use quotes or stories?</i>	We did a storytelling workshop a few weeks ago and there was a really powerful story shared by one of the group members. We are going to ask her permission to use it and get her to sign a consent form. We will discuss with her whether to use her name or not.
<i>Step 4: Who controls the technology? Will they distort our message?</i>	Our sister organisation has offered to let us use their printer. One staff member offered to help us with editing. They have the same values as us so it should not be a problem. But one person on our communications team is going to check it to make sure the message has not changed. We talked to the coordinator and agreed that the content and final product will belong to us, with only our logo – but they may help us distribute it.

## AUDIENCE

What is the context?  
Who holds the  
power?

### **Step 1: What is the context?**

Break into small groups and discuss the main messages that already exist on this issue – in the newspaper, on radio, etc. What do people say? You want your communications product to turn these messages into your message.

### **Step 2: Who are the people, organisations and institutions that influence how people think about this issue?**

Make a list of all the people who have influence (positive or negative) on the issue.

### **Step 3: Whose beliefs / views do you want to change?**


List them.

### **Step 4: Choose ONE.**

This is going to help you focus in on an audience and design a message that specifically speaks to them.

### **Step 5: What kind of power do they have to influence the issue?**

They may have decision-making power (*visible*) or power to influence in more subtle ways (e.g. setting the agenda) (*hidden power*) or they may contribute to the ways in which your community/society thinks about the issues (e.g. traditional leaders) (*invisible power*). Our communication strategy could target all three faces of power or only one or two – but remember that unless we challenge all three faces of power, our movement building may bring about short-term gains but will not be successful in the long-term.



It may be useful to make a list of all the different actors under visible, hidden and invisible – noting that some may appear on more than one list. Over time you will need to communicate with everyone that has power over the issue you are organising on, in order to be successful.



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*Chapter 2.4: Who's got the power?*

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**Step 6: What are their beliefs?**

In order to frame your message so that they will actually read/engage with it, you need to understand what they currently believe/think.

**Step 6: What do we want them to believe?**

Think back to your content, or main message – how will it change the way they think? And what do we want them to think after reading/engaging with it?

**Step 7: What are their needs and expectations?**

What do they believe or value? Do they share anything in common with you? If you can connect your message to a value you both share then it will be more powerful.

**Step 8: Is this the right group to communicate to?**

Go back to your purpose, will communicating to this group on the issue you have agreed on bring about the change (in full or in some way) that you want to see? If not, you need to reassess – should the purpose or the content or the group be different?





**Table 3.3: AUDIENCE– APPLIED CASE STUDY**  
***Young Women Arise design a communication strategy***

<i>Context</i>	<p>Unmarried women should not have sex.  Sex is only for reproduction.  Women should not have sex for pleasure.  Women should have lots of babies.  Contraception is western.  Making contraception available encourages promiscuity.</p>
<i>Who?</i>	<p>The church  The government  Traditional leaders  Hospital personnel  Parents  Aunts  Teachers</p>
<i>Whose beliefs do you want to change?</i>	Nurses, hospital staff, parents
<i>Choose one</i>	Nurses
<i>Power?</i>	<p>They have visible power to decide who gets the contraception or not.  They have invisible power because they shame women trying to access contraception.</p>
<i>Beliefs</i>	<p>'Good' women should not use contraception.  Women who do are sexually promiscuous/sex workers.  They think because we live in a poorer area, we should just be grateful to have a clinic and should not 'make a fuss'.</p>
<i>What should they believe?</i>	<p>That all women have the right to access contraception (regardless of class or location).  That it is women's choice to decide for themselves.  That women have better reproductive outcomes when they have access to contraception.</p>
<i>Common ground</i>	<p>They may have concerns about women dying from unsafe abortion.  We all want to ensure women's health.  They may believe that population growth rates are a concern for sustainable development.</p>
<i>Does it match our purpose?</i>	Yes, we want to shift attitudes and this is one of the group's whose attitudes we want to shift.



## FRAMING

Will your message  
be understood?  
Does it challenge  
sexist thinking?

The way an issue is framed is the way it is seen or viewed (usually from outside). The frame changes the way we view the problem.

### FRAMING

#### Quick Tips

- *The longer your sentence, the harder it will be for your reader to understand.*
- *We can easily fall in the trap of ‘talking to ourselves.’ Make use of a second-reader – ask someone who might be removed from your activist work to read an article or a poster message, and if they cannot understand it, you may need to revise the language so it is easier to understand. Ask them questions – sometimes people who are not advocates can shed new light on the way that we frame and communicate our messages.*
- *Be conscious. If we want to write differently about women, we must question ourselves and the way we think! If you would feel disempowered or silenced or misrepresented by the way a certain story or article is written, then there’s a good chance that there is something wrong and you need to address it.*

You can think of ‘framing’ as the angle from which you approach a problem, with the following as examples:

- Activists might want to avoid framing their message as “violence against women” or by talking about “gender” because they may face backlash or it may stop their intended audience from even listening to them/taking them seriously. Instead (like Raising Voices, an organisation in Uganda

working to prevent violence against women and children) you could invite communities to discuss power and to work to build better relationships.

- To mobilise around sexual and reproductive health, activists might frame their message as “safe motherhood” rather than “the right to choose”. For organisations of workers, framing their communications around “a liveable wage” may be more strategic than the headline “the right to organise”.
- These framings may be less controversial and allow for activists and their intended audience to find common ground and it could serve to keep you safe from potential backlash. At other times, you may choose use more controversial language in order to provoke debate or to reclaim language like ‘gender’ or ‘feminist’ as a way of articulating a need for radical change and a conversation about power.

**Step 1: *How will it be best to frame your message for your chosen audience?***

In the ‘audience’ section, we asked you to think about what kind of power the audience you are targeting has in regard to the issue you are raising. This will help you figure out how to frame your message. For example, there is no point framing your message to take an action that is not in their remit e.g. asking priests to change the law. You need to frame what is their responsibility and what you want them to do e.g. lobby the Vatican to support a particular position.

It is also smart to frame your message using the common values you have identified above. So instead of the audience feeling accused or berated, they feel like they want the same change as you.

**Step 2: *Is your message simple and brief? Can you delete any words without changing the meaning?***

Sometimes the more words you use, the less powerful your message. Try and delete some words, without changing the meaning and see if it is more powerful.

**Step 3: *Can you include a story or quote to bring your message to life?***

When we hear a story it can evoke emotions and make the issues real to us. It makes it stop being a ‘policy issue’ and makes it about people, their lives and hopes.



**Step 4: Are you providing solutions and encouraging your audience to take action?**

Unless your communication is a slogan, you should ensure that your content includes both your analysis of the problem/issues and what possible solutions could be. Alongside this, you can ask your audience to take specific actions in order to address the issue. This is not so much about telling people what to think or do, but providing them with possibilities and/or inspiration.

**Step 5: Test your message**

If at all possible, test your message on your target audience. Ask someone from your target audience or someone unfamiliar with the issues to review your message and give you feedback.



Table 3.4: FRAMING– APPLIED CASE STUDY

**Young Women Arise design a communications strategy**

<i>Step 1: How will it be best to frame your message for your chosen audience?</i>	We are going to use the frame of “women’s health”.
<i>Step 2: Is your message simple and brief? Can you delete any words without changing the meaning?</i>	Yes. We are going to use a poster so the message needs to be short and snappy. In our second edit we made sure to take out any repeated words.
<i>Step 3: Can you include a story or quote to bring your message to life?</i>	Yes, we are using quotes and will develop slogans.
<i>Step 4: Are you encouraging your audience to take action and providing solutions?</i>	Yes. We are asking the nurses to think about how they are treating young women.
<i>Step 5: Test your message</i>	We asked some nurse friends and they said the messages were clear.



## Successful messaging checklist<sup>31</sup>

These are some of the key elements of constructing a successful message:

### 1. Know your political environment and moment

Your context will shape your message. Are there any issues that you are not allowed to talk about? Often it helps to link your message to another issue that has public attention. Comparisons with other well-known problems help audiences understand the seriousness of your issue.

### 2. Use clear, simple language

When we communicate for radical change, it is important that people are able to understand us. Using “jargon” or words that are specific to our organisation or political background can make it difficult to inform, educate and reach people who may be outside of our movements. Even common terms like ‘sustainable development’ and ‘civil society’ are not understood by most people. Find creative ways to **explain** what you mean in simple language.

### 3. Speak in shared values

Values are more powerful than facts. Work out what you and your audience both care about, and communicate based on these shared values.

### 4. Use real life stories and quotes


Political debates are often reduced to facts and broad social analysis that may not reach most audiences, even policymakers. One of the best ways to get people to pay attention is if we start with people’s experiences. The human element is what makes a problem real. When we amplify people’s voices and real life experiences through our communications, people will listen.

### 5. Use creative, precise and powerful language

Use words that paint pictures your audience can relate to, with local examples that speak to your audience. Clear facts and numbers are also

31. Adapted from “Messages and Media: Educating and Persuading in – HYPERLINK “<https://pra.presswarehouse.com/Books/BookDetail.aspx?productID=138926>” A New Weave of Power, People, and Politics: The Action Guide for Advocacy and Citizen Participation by HYPERLINK “<https://styluspub.presswarehouse.com/Books/AuthorDetail.aspx?id=11063>” Lisa VeneKlase , HYPERLINK “<https://styluspub.presswarehouse.com/Books/AuthorDetail.aspx?id=11043>” Valerie Miller edited by Cindy Clark and Debbie Budlender, Just Associates, 2007.





*a powerful way to present information and share knowledge. Your tool and your message will inform the kinds of information you can share, for instance, a poster may not be the best tool to use if you want to share the results of a research project. However, you can summarise those results and use precise and powerful language to get people to pay attention and understand the key facts.*

## **6. Adapt the message to the medium**

*Each medium has its own possibilities and limitations. For example, radio is made up of sound. So you should use different voices, background sounds and music to add to make your message compelling. For television, make full use of the visual element and reduce written and spoken information. For street theatre, engage the audience by asking questions, inviting responses, speaking to individuals and making people laugh.*

## **7. Encourage the audience to take action**

*Your audience—whether policymakers or citizens—need to know what they can do to support your cause. Offer simple suggestions, like “visit your local councillor” or “discuss this matter in your Parent Teacher Association” or “vote ‘yes’” or “call the Campaign for a Living Wage to register support”.*

## **8. Present a possible solution**

*Activists sometimes spend too much time talking about problems. Instead, make sure your message clearly communicates actions that your audience can take part in. Tell your audience what you propose to solve the problem. Keep the solution simple, such as the government needs to show its commitment by providing adequate funding” or “new laws are needed to keep people safe”.*

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## Feminist messaging

We want our messages to be successful but we also want them to be feminist. Feminist messaging seeks to change the way in which women are portrayed and communicate stories from women's perspectives.



### **Feminist messaging**

*Messages that challenge sexist thinking and challenge the reader/viewer to think differently.*

Women have the right to information. Women are often excluded from receiving information due to lack of money, access to computers and the internet, specialised knowledge and other resources. A lot of online content about or for women is trivial (beauty tips, how to catch your man) or about sex. If you do a search for 'women' on the internet you will also find a difference in what comes to the top of the search for different women. For example, after searching on "Zambian women" the top ten results on Google included: how to attract a Zambian woman, dating sites, the most beautiful Zambian women, articles about Zambian women drinking and one more 'serious' link about Zambian culture. If you conduct a search on "English women" the top 10 results are similar but also include a page on women writers, philosophers and comedians! Feminist activists need to take the lead on creating content that women need to know and want to share.

#### **Step 6: Do your messages amplify women's voices?**

How are women's voices present in your content/message? It's best if the message amplifies the experiences of the whole group/constituency even if individual stories are used to represent that experience.

#### **Step 7: Do they challenge gender stereotypes?**

Are we analysing and assessing the root causes of women's experiences and lived realities? Go back to your discussion of the issue – is your communication sharing this analysis? Are you presenting women as victims or as agents of change?



**Step 8: Are we meeting women's real needs and addressing their problems?**

Are we providing information to support women to make decisions for their own transformation? Again, this is not about telling people what to think but helping them question the *status quo* and start to think about things differently.

**Step 9: Are we showing solidarity to other struggles?**

If we can, we should in our communications show our solidarity with other struggles – whether it be on housing, health services or labour issues. This is not always possible, but when it is it helps to break down the “issue silos” we tend to work in and show how the issues are connected. For example, the fact that people do not earn decent wages impacts on the standard of health care services.



Table 3.4 (Continued):

FRAMING– APPLIED CASE STUDY

**Young Women Arise design a communication strategy**

<i>Step 6: Do your messages amplify women's voices?</i>	Yes, we are going to use stories and quotes to make the posters more powerful.
<i>Step 7: Do they challenge gender stereotypes?</i>	We are not sure about this. We need to be careful not to present the women in the stories as victims – and to share how they have taken action for change in their own lives.
<i>Step 3: Can you include a story or quote to bring your message to life?</i>	Yes, we are using quotes and will develop slogans.
<i>Step 8: Are we meeting women's real needs and addressing their problems? Are we providing information to support women to make decisions for their own transformation?</i>	Yes, this is the issue facing the women we work with. We are not going to tell the nurses what to think, we are going to ask them questions.
<i>Step 9: Are we showing solidarity to other struggles?</i>	No, we want to – but the text on posters needs to be quite short. We have an idea though that if this strategy works, we can take the posters to other clinics/ communities.





### **Using feminist content and messages<sup>32</sup>:**

- *reclaim women's power and voice*
- *tell 'herstories' and reclaim women's history of struggles*
- *raise consciousness and awareness about women's stories and struggles*
- *address regressive (cultural and traditional) beliefs*
- *analyse and assess the root causes of women's experiences and lived realities*
- *based on principles of women's rights, inclusion and equality*
- *produce content in democratic ways, giving space to all voices and allowing women to tell their own stories*

*To achieve this, aim to design content that will:*

- *amplify women's voices and experiences*
- *represent women as actors, change agents and survivors, not as objects, constant victims or mere recipients*
- *challenge the harmful, degrading stereotypes of women in mainstream media (highly sexualised, 'emotional' in a derogatory sense, powerless, weak, incompetent, confined only to acceptable societal roles such as mother, good women, caregivers, victims or negative societal archetypes such as the witch or 'loose' woman)*
- *expose how 'power over' women is operating in regard to the problem (provides an analysis of inequality and discrimination)*
- *promote respect for diversity and sexual rights*
- *make the connection between the main problem and broader social issues*

32. Source: Adapted and added to the ideas from [http://modemmujer.org/odm3/docs/tecnicas\\_reflexiones\\_feministas.pdf](http://modemmujer.org/odm3/docs/tecnicas_reflexiones_feministas.pdf)





## TOOLS

What is the best tool?  
Context + audience  
+ message = tool!

### Quick Tips

#### TOOLS

- *Take the time to get to “know” your tools. Most people are afraid to make mistakes or fear that they may break something. But whether you’re working with a camera or an online programme, the best way to get proficient is to experiment, play and practice so that you get **used** to using the tool.*
- *Sometimes “less is more”. We can get excited or carried away with the sheer number of possibilities. But sometimes it’s strategic to focus on one or two tools so you can refine and use them effectively.*

### Choosing the right technology

The most effective use of technology happens when the most suitable devices and media are used to do the chosen task or activity. Just like you wouldn’t drive a tractor to get to your next-door neighbour 50 metres away, you wouldn’t make a professional video to send a message to one or two people. For example:

- For a large campaign it would be expensive and time-consuming to communicate by landline, rather than by using the internet or radio.
- If you wanted to find out people’s ideas and have a debate around issues, it would be better to have a community meeting than to ask people to SMS their views. Sending a message out electronically might not reach the people its intended for, especially if electricity is not easily available in the area.
- Presenting information as a video can have a big impact, but is a waste of money if most of the audience doesn’t have screens or monitors to view the video easily.

- Older and rural audiences might feel more comfortable with and trust messages over the radio, even if they have access to the internet.

Ideally an organisation should have multiple strategies for different kinds of communication and different campaigns. That way it is more likely the best tool will be used, and the strategy will be successful.

**Step 1: *What are the most effective tools to get your message across?***

List the tools that will most easily carry your message.

**Step 2: *What tools does your audience have access to?***

Make a list. Identify the one they most commonly use to get information.

**Step 3: *Do we have access to this tool?***

If we do not and there is no way that we can get access (e.g. through a sister organisation) then we need reassess and chose another tool that both our audience and we have access to.

**Step 4: *Will it cost anything?***

Some tools are more expensive to use than others. The 'cost' might not only be financial; some may take more time or required a specific set of skills.

**Step 5: *Draft your content and see if it works on this tool***

You might want to show it to a colleague, your mother, or a sub-set of your constituents.

**Step 6: *What do you need to do or think about to adapt your message to the tool?***

Some tools like pamphlets might let us say (almost) everything we want, others like posters or stickers mean we need to *adapt* the message in particular ways so it fits.





### **Step 7: How will you maximise using this tool?**

By now you have chosen a tool and should have a clear idea about your message/content. Now you need to think about how to make your message have the most impact and how you will make sure as many of your chosen audience members will get to see/read/hear the message. What visuals do you need? What font will be easily read? What will the design be? Where should you put up the poster to avoid it being hidden or taken down? Which radio station will broadcast for you? Where should you stand to distribute pamphlets? Who can help you get into the venue where your audience members are meeting?



### **Design**

*Design or graphic design is the how the content you have developed will look on the printed medium (page/t-shirt) or screen (email or webpage). The design determines where the text and visuals will go. There may be other design elements – like formatting or logos and watermarks.*

#### **Quick Tips**

#### **TIPS ON WHICH TOOLS TO CHOOSE**

- *Twitter is good if your audience uses it as you can reach a wide audience and get a lot of visibility if you plan well and ask others to retweet and add appropriate hashtags. A tweet can include links to further information, images and videos. It is a short message like SMS so people get the message without having to read a lot.*
- *Petitions are good if you want to raise people's awareness around an issue or event and get them to commit to supporting the issue in order to make a demand of a company or government. Online petitions do not take long to sign and can circulate widely and quickly in combination with social media and email, and you can get a lot of people signing on in a short space of time from diverse geographic places.*
- *T-shirts are good if you are going on a march and you want your message to be visible or if your community does not have easy*

access to radio, TV and the internet. The message is also always visible when people wear the t-shirts.

- Facebook is good if the people you want to reach and involve use Facebook. You can use a good image or photograph to catch attention and a few words of text. You can also link it to a longer article on the issue, include a Twitter hashtag and ask people to repost the Facebook link.



**Table 3.5: TOOLS– APPLIED CASE STUDY**

**Young Women Arise design a communication strategy**

<i>Step 1: What are the most effective tools to get your message across?</i>	Pamphlets, posters, t-shirts, radio.
<i>Step 2: What tools does your audience have access to?</i>	All of the above. They most commonly get information from radio but then the messages would not be targeted at them specifically as nurses. We are going to try pamphlets.
<i>Step 3: Do we have access to this tool?</i>	Yes, our sister organisation has offered to help us layout the pamphlet and print.
<i>Step 4: Will it cost anything?</i>	Yes, we have to buy the paper to put in their printer. It will take our group a lot of time to cut up the pamphlets as we do not have a guillotine.
<i>Step 5: Choose one tool to try out. Draft your content and see if it works on this tool</i>	It was really tricky to come up with the content, then one of the communication team members said they did not think the nurses would read such a long thing. So we decided to go for posters instead. Luckily our sister organisation has a printer that you can feed poster-sized paper into.
<i>Step 6: What do you need to do or think about to adapt your message to the tool?</i>	We want our poster to be dynamic and interesting and for the busy nurses to be able to read quickly and understand our message.
<i>Step 7: How will you maximise using this tool?</i>	Posters means we can use a combination of text and visuals. We want to find a photograph that is very powerful.



## RISK

What are the risks?  
How can we mitigate them?

### Quick Tips

#### **RISK**

*Use a strong password on all of your equipment and online tools – make sure that it incorporates symbols, numbers, upper and lower case letters.*

*Make sure you log out of your personal accounts and machines after use, particularly if you are using a computer at work or at an internet café. Don't just close the browser window!*

*Make use of antivirus software, keep it up-to-date and ensure you download updates only from the antivirus website.*

*Back up your files regularly using a USB memory stick or an external hard drive. If you work for an organisation with enough resources, try to set up a server system to make sure that you can back up your files.*

### **Step 1: Think about what the potential risks are**

Your team should reflect on the context – is what you are advocating for in your country, city or region illegal or if it is highly discriminated against or seen as taboo by some people? Identify the types of risks e.g. can the organisation be attacked in the press, lose funds, have its physical installations damaged? Will workers be physically harassed? Will individuals and their families be at risk from neighbours? Identify how likely it is that this could happen. It is also useful to identify who has the power to attack or cause harm and how this potentially could happen.

## **Step 2. Who will face these risks?**

You should list all the people and/or organisations that may face risk and then discuss each case in detail. Sometimes we need to take some risks in order to bring about change but we cannot put others at risk without consulting with them and taking steps towards safety.

## **Step 3: What can be done to mitigate risk?**

This requires more discussion—weighing up the pros and cons—and thinking about your context (e.g. what your legal framework is or how the police respond to activists). There are many different ways to mitigate risk – including protecting individuals involved and framing the message in less antagonistic ways. Yours will depend on your context and the risk or set of risks you will face. You can speak to other organisations to find out how they have mitigated risk and use risk analysis tools.



*Protect your Information from physical threats,*

<https://securityinabox.org/en/guide/physical>

*Workbook on security: practical steps for human rights defenders at risk,*

[https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/files/workbook\\_eng.pdf](https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/files/workbook_eng.pdf)

*Take back the tech,*

<https://www.takebackthetech.net/know-more>

## **Step 4: Are there any other risks in this communication strategy? What will you do to mitigate them?**

Apart from safety concerns for the individuals and organisation/s involved, there may be other risks you face that could lead your communication strategy to fail. For example, if your chosen audience does not receive your message or if the tool you choose does not function as expected or if your message is misinterpreted.





Table 3.6: RISK– APPLIED CASE STUDY

**Young Women Arise design a communications strategy**

<p><i>Step 1: Think about what the potential risks are.</i></p>	<p>Access to contraception is legal, but termination is only legal under certain conditions. Some community members will be angry if they know about what we are going to do – they will say we are advocating for young women to have sex before marriage. They may tell our parents if they know who we are.</p>
<p><i>Step 2: Who will face these risks?</i></p>	<p>We are going to use one of our members’ stories and those of us who are putting up the posters.</p>
<p><i>Step 3: What can be done to eliminate / mitigate risk?</i></p>	<p>We are going to use a pseudonym. Someone pointed out that even using a pseudonym would not work if someone was familiar with her situation – so we also decided to change the location of the clinic and describe her differently. We are going to get consent from the clinics, and use our nurse-friends to support us.</p>
<p><i>Step 4: Are there any other risks in this communication strategy? And how will you mitigate the risks?</i></p>	<p>The clinics might not let us put the posters up – we will have to talk to the management staff and build relationships with key people there. We wanted to include a phone number so people could contact us, but that might put our coordinator at risk of harassment. So we are going to put an email address and the landline number of our sister organisation who can then point people towards the resources they need.</p>



## MONITORING

How will you monitor your impact?

### Quick Tips

#### MONITORING

- *Develop your monitoring and evaluation process as a team – that way everyone understands their roles and responsibilities and you can identify resource people to support.*
- *Think of creative ways to share the impact of your work. Good quotations and pictures are a great way to bring other people into your activism and get them interested.*


#### **Step 1: What kind of possibilities for monitoring does your tool have?**

Website statistics (showing how many people visit a page or site), the use of Twitter hashtags and the distribution of newsletters or t-shirts can be recorded. This will tell us about numbers distributed and reach but not impact. There are online tools that can help us monitor e.g. Google Analytics.

What resources will you need?

#### **Step 2: How will you know that your communication has had an impact?**

This you could find out from your target audience (or a sample of your target audience) by asking them a simple set of questions (a survey). For example, how did you understand the message? Did it shift how you think about the issue? What do you think needs to happen now? There are online tools that can help us do this e.g. SurveyMonkey.



**Step 3: Do you want to track big shifts (the policy changed or did not) or individual change (a policy-maker made a statement in support of our issue) or both?**

This means monitoring media outlets and other forums in which your issue is being discussed. If you want to do a more rigorous analysis of the impact then you may need to design a research process and bring researcher skills onto your team.

**Step 4: Will you monitor negative shifts?**

Sometimes we can prove we made an impact because those with power tried to block us in some way (e.g. policy-maker made a statement against our issue as a way to influence the debate).

**Step 5: What resources will you need?**

Will you need more staff, more skills or to pay for a tracking programme?

**Step 6: How will you collate the information collected?**

Once you have the information what will you do with it? How will you collate it? And where will you publish and who will you share it with?

Part of follow-up may include updating your audience and there are online tools to support this e.g. many petition websites let you give your audience updates about the success of a campaign or share next steps.




**Table 3.7: MONITORING– APPLIED CASE STUDY**  
**Young Women Arise design a communication strategy**

<p><i>Step 1: What kind of possibilities for monitoring does your tool have?</i></p>	<p>Posters are tricky to monitor. We can count how many we distribute and how many are put up in the clinic/surrounds. We can also check after a week to see if they are still there.</p>
<p><i>Step 2: How will you know that your communication has had an impact?</i></p>	<p>We are going to interview the clinic coordinator before we put up the posters and a month later. We want to know whether the nurses are talking about the posters and what they are saying. We will also talk to our constituency to see if they notice any difference.</p>
<p><i>Step 3: Do you want to track big shifts (the policy changed or did not) or individual change (a policy-maker made a statement in support of our issue) or both?</i></p>	<p>Individual, but also the group of clinic sisters who are specifically being nasty to the younger women.</p>
<p><i>Step 4: Will you monitor negative shifts?</i></p>	<p>We are going to make sure we ask questions in our review about attitudes not just positive shifts.</p>
<p><i>Step 5: What resources will you need?</i></p>	<p>We will need transport and we may want to take the clinic coordinator to somewhere away from the clinic so she can talk freely – this may have cost implications. We have never done monitoring before, but we are going to ask for help from our sister organisation to come up with the questions and access to their computers to type up the responses.</p>
<p><i>Step 6: How will you collate the information collected?</i></p>	<p>We want to use this information to develop an advocacy tool. We are also building a relationship with a local journalist who may be interested in doing a story.</p>




## REVIEW



How effective was  
your message?



### Quick Tips

#### **REVIEW**

*Don't forget to use the reflections and analysis that comes out of your review process the next time you implement a communication strategy so that you and your team are always learning and improving!*

This section provides a guideline for reflecting on your activism, especially your communication strategy. Reflecting and reviewing is important because:

- You can develop a balanced understanding of the activity or strategy by identifying the successes, failures, strengths and weaknesses
- You can then take decisions or actions to build on the strengths and remedy the weaknesses.

As the communications team, work through the following questions:

#### **Pre-discussion**

Prepare a few simple and broad questions that you would like everyone to respond to in their own time. This will allow them the opportunity to reflect by themselves.

#### **Open discussion**

- As a group allow everyone to express their feelings or opinions about the strategy or activity. Limit individual discussion to a few comments.
- Remind the group of the overall strategy; the communication strategy and what was done.
- Then discuss these questions as a group. One person should take notes. For each question try not to limit discussion to a yes/ no response but draw out answers in greater detail.



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### ***Did your communication help you achieve your goal?***

1. *Did we identify the problems and what we wanted to change clearly and concretely?*
  2. *Did we identify our audience accurately?*
  3. *Did we analyse the faces of power accurately?*
  4. *Did our message convey what we wanted to say?*
  5. *Did we choose the most effective medium?*
  6. *Did we choose best tool?*
  7. *What was the impact?*
  8. *What was effective in our communication:*
    - 8.1. *Internally? Why?*
    - 8.2. *Externally? Why?*
  9. *What was ineffective in our communication:*
    - 9.1. *Internally? Why?*
    - 9.2. *Externally? Why?*
  10. *How could we have improved communication?*
  11. *How could we have improved the technology tools we used?*
  12. *Did we improve our skills?*
  13. *Did we identify risk?*
  14. *Was there anything we could have done to mitigate the risk?*
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## NOTES

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