Developing a Communications Strategy

Defining Desired Outcomes, Outlining a Communications Plan, and Understanding the Local Environment
Define Desired Outcomes

DEMAND: What outcome will fix the problem you’ve identified? Does this outcome involve appropriate punishments for past or current perpetrators of corruption? Does it involve preventing future corruption?

DECISION MAKER: Who can deliver our demands? Who has the power or capabilities to formally prosecute corrupt officials? Who can enact legislation to prevent corruption?

DEADLINE: When should these outcomes be achieved? When should the decision makers be held accountable to deliver change by?
Outline a Communications Plan

1. Develop **goals** that consider your data and audience and select how, where, and when to publish your story.
2. Identify what **resources** are available.
3. Set a **message** that you would like to communicate.
4. Understand **local narratives** on corruption and recent investigations.
5. Collect info on domestic and international **outreach platforms** and groups.
6. Gather info on **major public events** with citizen participation or political coverage.
7. Engage **civil society organizations** and think tanks working on anti-corruption efforts.
8. Plan **your own events** to start publicizing your story and determine who to invite.
Make a Press List

Press lists can be stored as **computer files**, or as **physical cards** or records. Include name, job title, email, phone number, and place of work.
Key Roles

- Public speaking
- Written communication
- Media outlet networking
- Event planning
- Logistics and setup
Understanding the Local Environment

What potential **obstacles** to media work exist in the local jurisdiction? These may include country-wide limitations on freedom of expression, strong defamation laws, pressure from government figures, or operational obstacles.

What **strategies** can you implement to overcome these challenges?
Innovative Solutions to Local Challenges

1. **Self-publish** your story and materials
2. Outreach using **digital media** rather than print media
3. Identify and partner with publications that are the most independent from and **resilient** to political pressure
4. **Persist** in the face of local unwillingness or hesitance to provide coverage
5. Appeal to the sense of truth or morality of individuals in the media, especially key decision-makers such as editors, to gain support for publication
6. Forge **alliances** with non-traditional outreach networks such as artists or musicians
7. Engage **civil society organizations** and think tanks to align efforts including co-sponsoring events.
8. Plan your own **events** where you can start publicizing and determine who to invite to these events.
Media Options and Outreach

Local Media, International Media, and Social Media
Traditional Media

“Traditional” media companies or organizations include:

- Print Newspapers
- Online News Websites
- Blogs and Microblogs
- Social Media Platforms
- Private Messaging Applications
- Radio Stations
- Television Networks
- Investigative Journalist Publications
- Podcasts
Non-Traditional Media

- Public theater
- Village meetings
- Religious gatherings or groups
- Satirical cartoons
- Protest art

Are you trying to influence or reach non-elites and members of the public? If so, non-traditional creative and artistic communication methods of outreach may be more effective than traditional media.
Local Media

- Credibility
- Readership
- Popularity
- Partiality
- Political Bias
- Distribution
Key Point: Pay attention to ownership to mitigate risk. A media outlet that is loyal to the state or specific public officials may hinder your story by passing on information to other parties, causing backlash, intimidation, or other attempts to stop publication.

Press Ownership and Affiliations

Before reaching out to work with a media organization, ask the following questions to help determine if it its leadership with help or hinder your team in publishing corruption evidence:

- Is this outlet owned by the government?
- Is this outlet connected to any of the subjects of my team’s investigation?
- What other affiliations does the outlet have?
Is there a story that deserves international attention or that might be too sensitive for local media to cover/expose?

International journalistic networks often have the expertise and bandwidth to investigate local matters.
Social Media

Social media platforms can boost your communication strategy via various outreach tools that raise awareness and visibility of your findings and story. On social media you can publish information directly via written posts, videos, and photos, or share posts or published materials by other groups or individuals, or comment on posts to create public discussion.
Social Media Campaigns

There are three main types of social media campaigns.

1. **Detecting and understanding corruption**: use social media to crowdsource monitoring. **Example**: encourage citizens to use Twitter to collectively report and detail poor local government service delivery.

2. **Mobilizing people to respond to corruption**: social media can empower your team to aggregate and channel public discontent. **Example**: reshare old stories on corruption that were ignored previously via Facebook on a regular basis to reach rural citizens.

3. **Exposing people to the possibility of an alternative future**: social media can increase people’s expectations of their government. **Example**: highlight cases of higher transparency performance in a comparable country via your YouTube channel to break through public resignation.
Piggybacking on Social Media

What is piggybacking? It’s when a smaller activist organization works with well-established media outlets such as print newspapers, organizations such as the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), or higher-profile activists to publish their findings via their more popular social media pages.
Why Civic Activists?

When should you send out a press release?

- When you want a specific piece of news to appear as widely as possible.
- When you want all media contacts to get your story simultaneously.
- When your data and evidence on corruption is sufficient to interest reporters in your story.
- When you can ensure your written release is not misleading or leaves out key details.
- When you can write your story in a way that does not reveal sensitive information regarding your sources to keep them anonymous.
Press Conferences

Choose a press conference if:

• Your story is complex
• Reporters would benefit from seeing photographs or relevant expert or sources
• You want to tell all outlets simultaneously
• You expect reporter questions
• You wish to gain additional attention by dramatizing the story

If you can deliver the facts and evidence with a press release alone, then do not hold a press conference
Print Articles

Identify and contact an investigative reporter or traditional journalist that can write and publish your story. Investigative reporters are highly skilled in exposing information that the public is unaware of, and typically focus on groundbreaking news focused on topics like anti-corruption.

Having a reporter write your story allows for your team to utilize media outreach while maintaining anonymity. Your team will play the role of a source and not the communicator of the story.
Contacting a Reporter

• You can call or email a reporter even without personal connections or previous contact
• Be aware that reporters have limited time and have deadlines to write their stories
• Ensure you have condensed your story into a 5-minute pitch that you have practiced
• When calling, ask if the reporter has time. If they don’t, ask when you should call back.
• Prepare written materials and files beforehand you can deliver to the reporter as follows-up
• Communicate how your evidence is verified
• Don’t take it personally if a reporter is skeptical at first – that’s part of their job
The Op-ed

Op-eds enable your team to have direct control over the story that is published and rely on the writing skills of your team to sway public opinion. Op-eds link your organization’s name to the story but are often regarded as subjective.

Op-ed Rules:

• The final article should not exceed 750 words
• Write to the average newsreader who is not knowledgeable regarding your topic
• Avoid using technical language
• Keep sentences and paragraphs short
• Include sufficient evidence and facts to back up your claims
Is social media a useful tool for advocacy in your community?

Социалните медии полезен инструмент за застъпничество ли са във Вашата общност?
Framing messages about Corruption
Communicating Effectively for Transparency and Accountability
Advantages of the term "corruption"

1. **It is politically salient**: Most political figures publicly oppose corruption, and media are likely to cover corruption-related stories.

2. **It has strong negative connotations**: Negative emotions are often better for mobilization than positive emotions.

3. **It links up with national and global advocacy**: National organizations like Anti-Corruption Fund or global networks like Transparency International.
Disadvantages of the term "corruption"

1. **Hard to define:** Corruption may mean many things, some which are part of legal definitions and some which are not.

2. **Easily politicized:** Accusations of corruption can easily be seen as partisan attack or following from ulterior motives.

3. **Pushback:** Labeling people as "corrupt" is seen as a personal attack and puts people on the defensive.

4. **Leads to division:** Because of negative emotional and moral connotations, accusing someone of corruption paints them as unable or unwilling to reform, therefore undermining trust and prospects for collaboration.
Psychology of corruption

People who want to punish corrupt public officials will also accept corrupt behavior when contextualized as part of a morally desirable goal (such as helping an ill relative or providing for your community).

People may individually oppose corruption, but think that everyone does it, and therefore they would be stupid to be the only ones not engaging in corruption.

People who hear about anti-corruption initiatives become more distrustful of public governance.
Messages about causes or consequences?

The **Problem Tree** helps us identify causes and consequences of corruption as a problem. But we can also use it as a **Messaging Tree**, defining messages around each level.

- **Consequences**
  - Lacking public services
  - Inefficient use of community resources
  - Cynicism and disengagement

- **Main Problem**
  - Corruption

- **Causes**
  - Economic incentives / Social norms
  - Vulnerabilities in transparency, integrity mechanisms, participation
Should anti-corruption advocacy focus on causes or consequences?

Върху кое следва да се съсредоточи застъпничеството срещу корупцията - върху причините или върху последствията?
Reaching Decision-Makers

Writing about Policy and for a Policy Audience
Policy Writing

Policy writing is the process through which government employees and NGOs send proposals addressed to lawmakers.

A policy product addressed to a policy maker usually identifies a specific policy problem, suggests and assesses potential solutions to it, and makes a recommendation based on a persuasive argument.

Policy products should provide original and feasible arguments based on facts and evidence and be concise.

Key Point

Policy writing ≠ Academic writing ≠ Opinion writing
Policy Writing Tips

FRAMING: Issues should be relevant, precise, and clearly definable.

AUDIENCE: Identify target audience and try to understand the level of their knowledge of the issue and the degree of interest in it.

EVIDENCE: Search for solid, reliable data relevant and necessary to develop a specific argument.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Identify a solution with evidence for how your recommendation will address the problem.
Efficient persuasion

- Shorter > Longer
- Evidence > Opinion
- Compelling anecdote > Cold data
- Contextualized > Abstract
- Positive > Negative
GROUP EXERCISE

Outline a communications strategy for advocating a reform agenda item

What are some local communication challenges you are likely to encounter?
What kinds of media would you work with?
What kinds of framing and language would you use?
How would you plan to reach decision-makers?

Очертайте комуникационна стратегия за застъпваничество по една точка от програма от реформи

Какви са някои местни комуникационни предизвикателства, които вероятно ще срещнете?
С какви видове медии бихте работили?
Какви формулировки и език бихте използвали?
Как ще планирате, за да достигнете до лицата, вземащи решения?
THANK YOU!