

FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Bridging the Gap for Enhanced News Coverage of Reproductive Health

*Engagement Training for Media and
Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)*

OVERVIEW

Purpose of the Media-CSO Engagement Training

Journalists and civil society organizations (CSOs) often struggle to work together effectively, despite their many mutual interests. This rift is especially apparent when it comes to topics such as abortion, which can be complicated by stigma, secrecy, and strong personal beliefs. CSOs may avoid reaching out to journalists because they fear that journalists will misrepresent their work or motivations, and journalists may feel sidelined or belittled by CSOs. Both sides stand to benefit from bridging this divide: Civil society has expertise and connections that can help journalists define priorities in news coverage and identify evidence and expert sources for stories, and journalists can offer civil society professionals a connection to the public to deliver accurate information about hidden realities.

This training was designed to bring civil society professionals working on sexual and reproductive health and rights together with journalists to learn from each other and to consider how they might build (or rebuild) productive partnerships and communicate more clearly on abortion and related issues.

Workshop Description

PARTICIPANTS: CSO PROFESSIONALS AND THE NEWS MEDIA

Ideally, half of all training participants will be journalists and half will be from CSOs. Organizers should consider inviting journalists with a record of high-quality reporting on health topics when possible. CSO participants should work for organizations with a record of consistent and respected engagement, advocacy, and/or information around reproductive health and rights, including abortion. All participants must be willing to talk—and hear from others—about abortion.

Organizers should consider diversity when selecting participants. Both journalist and CSO groups should include participants representing different genders and age groups who fill various roles at their organizations. In the journalist group, individuals should come from a variety of media (radio, print, online, television) and news outlets. Journalists should be advised that discussions held during the training are confidential and they should not plan to report on the training itself as a news event.

VENUE

Sessions should take place in a safe, convenient, and neutral location that is equipped with presentation/projection capabilities and where privacy can be ensured. The venue should be spacious enough to accommodate whole-group and multiple small-group activities.

FACILITATOR(S)

Facilitator(s) must have expertise in working with the media and experience teaching or training. Familiarity with journalists' needs and interests is essential for a balanced and effective workshop that equally supports both media and CSO participants. They should also have good time management and interpersonal conflict mediation skills.

Facilitator(s) should also be well-versed in the content and format of the workshop curriculum and be comfortable discussing abortion and other topics related to sexual and reproductive health. Importantly, they must be able to speak about abortion and the CSO partners' work in clear, nontechnical, and nonjudgmental terms.

Note: Participants may hold differing views on abortion. Facilitator(s) should stay neutral and prioritize creating a safe and open environment for sharing and discussion, steering clear of advocating behavior change or promoting activism.

One person does not have to facilitate all parts of the workshop; organizers may choose to select different facilitators for different sections of the curriculum, or a team or pair of facilitators who bring different experiences to the training. For example, a pair of trainers might include one media expert or journalist trainer and one CSO professional or subject-matter expert.

Companion Materials

In addition to this facilitator's guide, the following resources are designed to be used during this training:

- **PowerPoint slides.** These slides are the primary resource that will guide all presentations and activities during the media-CSO engagement training. They contain information to share with training participants, facilitator's notes, and prompts for interactive exercises.
- **Agenda.** This draft agenda is based on the PowerPoint slides and includes the estimated amounts of time required to effectively present each part of the training, as well as breaks for lunch and refreshments.
- **Participant needs assessment surveys.** These needs assessment survey templates are designed to be administered, collected, and reviewed by the facilitator(s) and training organizer(s) prior to the delivery of training. One survey is designed for CSO participants, and the other survey is designed for journalist participants. Results from these surveys are meant to be used to inform and adapt the training content. For example, if the survey reveals that CSO participants frequently write press releases, the press release exercise could be shortened or replaced by a more useful activity.

Workshop Structure

This training is divided into four parts designed to be delivered over the course of one day, but organizers may wish to extend the time another half or full day to allow for more discussion or presentation of additional training content. Pages 4-9 of this guide provide a description of each part, as well as introduction and closing ideas. The parts are guided by the PowerPoint slides and include a mix of presentations and interactive activities. Very few materials are needed aside from the PowerPoint slides, pencils and paper, and printed handouts for specific activities.

The PowerPoint slides include facilitator notes throughout. Facilitator(s) should feel free to modify the language used in the slides as needed to be most effective and accessible to the participants in their training.

Adaptations for Context, Audience, and Session Format

The curriculum for this training is meant to be flexible and adaptable. Facilitators do not need to go through each slide in order if that is not their preference, and they are encouraged to skip over or modify portions of the training that are more or less relevant to their particular context or audience as needed. Adaptation is especially recommended for Part Four, which facilitators can augment to include examples from their personal experiences and country context to make the training material relatable and relevant to participants.

While in-person implementation of the training is preferable, it is possible to deliver it virtually using interactive tools to ensure participants' attention and engagement (examples include Zoom's whiteboard, a digital workspace like Miro or Mural, breakout group features in conferencing software, or anonymous polling tools). Some interactive tools to enhance virtual training are free or have free trial options; others must be purchased.

The following pages provide a general structure for each of the training modules based on the PowerPoint slides and list the approximate time and materials needed to complete the training as described. Keep in mind that these details may change as adaptations are made to session content and format.

MEDIA/CSO ENGAGEMENT TRAINING

TIME REQUIRED: 1 hour.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

Whiteboard or flip chart and markers, pens or pencils and paper for participants, PowerPoint slides, computer, and monitor or screen and projector for displaying presentation.

KEY LEARNING CONCEPTS:

- Workshop content.
- Workshop values and rules.
- Outcome of needs assessment.

FORMAT: Presentation and group discussion.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

The introduction begins with welcome remarks and a brief overview of objectives for the workshop, followed by a review of the workshop agenda divided into parts. Next the facilitator will moderate an interactive icebreaker exercise titled “Hopes and Hesitations,” during which participants will be asked to share their feelings and expectations around the workshop. Finally, the facilitator will share the results of the needs assessment that was conducted ahead of the workshop.

MEDIA/CSO ENGAGEMENT TRAINING

Fostering Understanding: How Journalists and Civil Society Organizations Are Unique

TIME REQUIRED: 45 minutes.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

PowerPoint slides, computer, and monitor or screen and projector for displaying presentation.

KEY LEARNING CONCEPTS:

- News media roles and responsibilities.
- CSO roles and responsibilities.
- How the media and CSOs can benefit each other through collaboration.

FORMAT: Presentation and group discussion.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

This module provides an overview of what the news media do, how news stories are prioritized and produced, and how the media can contribute to social change. Later, it describes the role of CSOs and advocates in society and how their issue expertise can help journalists gain access to information, sources, and support that may be useful to their work. The session ends with a question-and-answer period for journalists and CSO representatives to promote information exchange, idea generation, and relationship building.

MEDIA/CSO ENGAGEMENT TRAINING

Respecting Our Differences: Forming a Productive Partnership

TIME REQUIRED: 45 minutes.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

PowerPoint slides, computer, and monitor or screen and projector for displaying presentation.

KEY LEARNING CONCEPTS:

Tips and best practices for media-CSO collaboration.

FORMAT: Presentation.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

This module is focused on best practices to help CSOs and journalists work together effectively. CSO representatives will learn about the media landscape, how to evaluate news sources, and how to decide whether a specific activity or element of their work is newsworthy. Journalists will learn how to navigate the CSO landscape and how CSOs can help them find and interpret relevant data and evidence for their stories.

ADAPTATION/CUSTOMIZATION SUGGESTIONS:

The slides on “navigating the [media/CSO] landscape” (slides 29 and 34) may be modified to include points specific to the context and/or participants.

MEDIA/CSO ENGAGEMENT TRAINING

Speaking of Health: Providing Fact-Based Coverage of Abortion and the Women* Who Experience It

TIME REQUIRED: 1 hour and 30 minutes.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

Printed handouts for VCAT activity (see slide presentation), pens or pencils, PowerPoint slides, computer, and monitor or screen and projector for displaying presentation.

KEY LEARNING CONCEPTS:

- Examine personal biases and values related to abortion.
- Safe versus unsafe abortion.
- Abortion stigma, why it is harmful, and how to combat it through reporting.

FORMAT: Group activity/discussion and presentation.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

The first part of this module is a values clarification and attitude transformation (VCAT) exercise, meant to help training participants understand the importance of safe abortion care and become more comfortable and confident discussing abortion and related topics. It is imperative to ensure ground rules are enforced here and that all participants feel that they are in a safe and confidential space for sharing and learning. It is important to not force participants to speak if they aren’t comfortable doing so, and to allow them to “pass” if a certain topic is uncomfortable for them. If the facilitator notices that a participant is not abiding by the ground rules, they should stop the discussion or activity, ask participants to review the ground rules, and remind them that they all agreed to abide by these norms; the goal is to respect opinions that differ from their own and to give other participants the space to speak freely. Instructions for this activity are included in the PowerPoint speaker notes.

After the VCAT exercise, the facilitator will present slides on why reporting on abortion can lead to positive change, and how journalists can report on abortion responsibly without perpetuating stigma.

ADAPTATION/CUSTOMIZATION SUGGESTIONS:

- There are many VCAT exercises [available from Ipas](#), and the facilitator should feel free to review all of them and to choose the exercise that is most appropriate for their audience and context. Others we recommend for this training are:
 - o *Thinking About My Values*
 - o *Gender, Sexuality, and Abortion*
 - o *Four Corners*
- The facilitator may consider lengthening this section and including multiple VCAT exercises, based on the needs and attitudes of their group.
- The facilitator may want to provide participants a link to the [How To Talk About Abortion Messaging Guide](#) from International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) as a helpful resource to consider harmful versus helpful language for abortion stories.
- The organizer may want to find a facilitator familiar with VCAT or someone who is especially well-informed about the cultural and social aspects of abortion to lead the VCAT exercise or all of Part Three.

*The SAFE ENGAGE Project recognizes that access to safe abortion is critical for all individuals regardless of gender identity. The use of woman/women throughout this guide should be interpreted to be inclusive of all identities.

MEDIA/CSO ENGAGEMENT TRAINING

Learning from Each Other: Interactive Exercises

TIME REQUIRED: 1 hour.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

Pens or pencils and paper for participants (alternatively, whiteboard or flip charts and markers), PowerPoint slides, computer, and monitor or screen and projector for displaying presentation.

KEY LEARNING CONCEPTS:

- Purpose of a story pitch and news release.
- Why and how to write a story pitch and news release.

FORMAT: Presentation, group activity.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

This module provides an overview of story pitches (for journalists) and news releases (for CSOs) and how to create them. As a final activity, CSO trainees are invited to draft a sample news release while journalist trainees draft story pitches. The interactive exercises conclude with groups presenting their final work to each other for feedback. Facilitator instructions for this portion are in the PowerPoint notes. Trainees can work on their pitches/news releases in groups or as individuals, depending on what works best.

ADAPTATION/CUSTOMIZATION SUGGESTIONS:

- The facilitator can decide whether to separate participants into individuals, small groups, or two large groups (for part one of the interactive exercise, journalists will work with other journalists and CSO professionals will work with their colleagues). This decision might depend on the size of the total group, on group dynamics, or on what the facilitator thinks would fit within their time limit.
- Include an additional interactive exercise or leave more time for group work and sharing.

MEDIA/CSO ENGAGEMENT TRAINING

TIME REQUIRED: 45 minutes.

MATERIALS REQUIRED:

Whiteboard or flip chart and markers (alternatively, pens or pencils and paper for participants), PowerPoint slides, computer, and monitor or screen and projector for displaying presentation.

KEY LEARNING CONCEPTS:

- Lessons learned and action plan.
- Hopes and Hesitations, revisited.

FORMAT: Group discussion.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:

The closing portion of the training is focused on next steps, including how participants plan to use workshop lessons going forward. First, the facilitator divides participants into groups and instructs them to reflect on two questions: their top lessons learned during the workshop, and the actions and commitments they will make to work consistently with their journalist and CSO colleagues post workshop. Next, the facilitator asks participants to share the outcomes of their discussion with the whole group. After, the facilitator reviews the “Hopes and Hesitations” interactive icebreaker exercise from the workshop introduction and guides the group in a discussion of whether—and why—participants feel differently about their “Hopes and Hesitations” responses. After a final opportunity for input and questions from participants, the facilitator concludes the workshop.

