

Advocacy and Campaigning

8 Engaging the media

Keywords: Media, global media, national media, news, top line, spokesperson

Duration: 2 hours



Introduction

In this session you will gain a better understanding of what is ‘news’, how Save the Children defines a ‘global media moment’, some of the key factors to consider when developing a national or regional media strategy, the differences and synergies between media and advocacy work, and top tips for being a spokesperson.

Learning Outcomes for this session

Knowledge and understanding

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

1. Understand what is ‘news’/a newsworthy story.
2. Understand why Save the Children does global media outreach.
3. Understand the differences and synergies between media and advocacy

Practical and professional skills

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

4. Identify and write a news top line for a press release.
5. Develop practical ways to prepare for an interview as a Save the Children spokesperson

Duration 2 hours

1 Save the Children and media outreach

Visibility of the issues affecting children is an essential part of driving effective advocacy and campaigns. And Save the Children’s ability to effectively advocate and mobilise can depend on strong media and social media presence on the part of our coalitions, partners and ambassadors, and own organisation.

A highly visible campaign creates opportunities for the organisation to open the doors of power and influence key stakeholders on issues affecting children.

It is vital to cut through the crowded media space by creating high impact news stories and multimedia that can influence and drive the agenda forward on important child rights issues.

Ensuring appropriate and effective spokespeople are present and available is integrated into this approach (e.g. in affected countries, member countries or headquarters, to provide first-hand or expert testimonies).

Media messages need coherence and sustainability. They need to be consistent, with everyone reinforcing one version of a message, in order to build memory and ensure a shared understanding and objective. They also need focus; for example, not always responding reactively to all issues affecting children, but collaborating proactively around a few strategic ‘spotlight’ issues that we have identified as priorities.

Communication is complicated by the fact that it must face north, south, east and west, which means messages delivered to one audience are often received by another in a totally different and sometimes hostile way. Added to this is the disparate and distinct nature of sub-regions, cultures and the economic, social and political environments, and you will see the difficulties a global organisation like Save the Children can have trying to communicate on a global scale.

What is news?

- It's got to be **NEW**. Broadcast news can be what's happening right now. That's one of broadcast and online news' greatest strengths – its speed and immediacy – which print newspapers cannot match.
- It's new because it's a new event... or an idea... or an opinion... or a statistic.
- It's new because it hasn't been reported before. It's fresh... or it's 'the latest development' in a rolling, ongoing story.

Working definition of news:

'News is a piece of information about a recent and significant event that is of interest to listeners and readers, is relevant to them, and may affect them.'

Five factors editors consider when deciding if a story is newsworthy

There are five factors which editors consider when deciding if a story is newsworthy. Normally, a story should perform well in at least two areas:

1. **Something new.** News is something new! It could be a new statistic, a new piece of research, a new survey, a new point of view.
2. **Proximity.** Stories which happen near to us have more relevance. Use your knowledge of local issues and culture to make sure your story is relevant in the market you are pitching to. The story must have an impact on a viewer's life.

3. **Significance.** The number of people affected by the story is important. It could be directly (e.g. the tsunami in December 2004 directly affected lots of people in lots of countries), or indirectly, where an incident happens to one person but affects a lot of people's lives (e.g. the death of Nelson Mandela).
4. **Prominence.** Famous people get more coverage just because they are known by many people. If you break both your legs it won't make the news, but if footballing star Ronaldo breaks his toe it's big news. This is often why campaigners try to have a well-known person take up their campaign cause.
5. **Human interest.** Journalists need to put a human face to the facts and figures as it makes people identify with the situation. People can be motivated by the story of a single child more than hearing overwhelming statistics about millions of children. It brings the audience much closer emotionally to the story.

Activity 1 (SAQ)

Check your understanding of what news is.

1. Summarise 'What is news?' in one sentence.
2. Identify two factors an editor considers when deciding whether a story is newsworthy and explain why you think they matter.

A media tip

One trick you might keep in mind is the 'st' rule often used by journalists. Thinking of words ending in 'st' will help you decide whether a story is newsworthy. For example, the **first** person to land on the moon is the most newsworthy, the 17th person is less newsworthy. The **last** journey made by a historic steamship is more newsworthy than the penultimate journey. The **fastest** runner is news, second place is less interesting. The **slowest** person to finish a marathon is news.

For Save the Children we can tell journalists about our biggest ever campaign in our 90-year history, that we are first to visit a community in an emergency response – not 3rd or 4th, that our campaign stunt includes the biggest ever child participation event, and so on.

I hope this handy tip helps you make your events and activity more newsworthy!

2 Identifying the top line for a press release

What is a top line?

The top line is the foundation on which we build our story; think of it as the ‘heartbeat’ of the story. A correct top line ensures your story is new, direct and informative. It needs to be **clear, informative and easy to understand**. Top lines are commonly identified for press releases, but they can also be used in other media and communication products.

Newsworthy top line example:

‘Two million Syrian children caught in crossfire of conflict entering its third year, Save the Children warns’

Less effective top line example:

‘Major new study from a London-based NGO on the scale and nature of child casualties in Syria’

How to get the top line

- Ask yourself why this is interesting and important.
- Ask key questions about the story until you understand it.
 - WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHY, WHEN, HOW?
 - What is new? What did you not know before?
- Decide which of these answers your audience needs to know first.
 - Usually the best way is to describe what’s happening now.

Avoid complicating the story. Think about the **key messages**:

- What is the key message?
 - What’s the story?
 - Why should I care?
 - What can I do about it?
- Typically, you do not want to have more than three key messages, and ensure that you retain only the strongest examples and facts and figures to illustrate these.

Jargon is excluding language

It is important not to use jargon words. These words are often used by certain groups to share information exclusive to their use and by definition excludes others from that information. **Just say what it is in normal, everyday language.**

Words we don't like...	Why not try...
Capacity building	Training, educating, etc.
Case load	People
Civil society	Local organisations and activists
Food insecurity	At risk of food shortages
Non-food items	'Other essentials, such as...'
Sudden-onset emergency	Disaster, conflict, etc.
Beneficiaries	Affected communities, people...
Service users	People we work with
Children-friendly spaces	Safe areas for children where...
Stakeholders	Governments, communities, etc.

Activity 2 (SAQ)

Now it is time to check what you have learnt. This activity asks you to imagine there is a new report coming out, 'Superfood for Babies' (executive summary provided below), and we want to get this story reported in the mainstream media.

In no more than 20 words, identify and write the news top line for the Superfood for Babies report, as if you were targeting a global media outlet such as the *New York Times*.

Superfood for Babies: Executive summary

The four barriers to breastfeeding

This report examines the reasons behind the lack of progress in improving breastfeeding rates and especially the four major barriers that prevent mothers from breastfeeding their babies.

1. Community and cultural pressures

Despite clear evidence that early and exclusive breastfeeding is the best way to care for newborns, many mothers in poor countries are given bad advice or are pressurised into harmful alternatives. Common practices include denying the newborn colostrum and giving other foods or liquids before starting breastfeeding.

Many women are not free to make their own decisions about whether they will breastfeed, or for how long. In Pakistan, a Save the Children survey revealed that only 44% of mothers considered themselves the prime decision-maker over how their children were fed. Instead it is often husbands or mothers-in-law who decide.

It is important to recognise the contribution a woman is making to the future of her child, her family, her village and her country's economy by breastfeeding. Projects that seek to address community power dynamics while promoting more helpful behaviours, through a variety of efforts, including mass media campaigns, support groups and interpersonal communication, can be useful – especially if they empower young women by changing communities' views of breastfeeding and also target fathers and grandmothers and other influential community members.

2. *The health worker shortage*

Owing to a chronic shortage of health workers, one-third of infants are born without a skilled birth attendant present. As a result, the opportunity for new mothers to be supported to breastfeed in the first few hours is lost. Our analysis of data from 44 countries found that women who had a skilled attendant present at birth were twice as likely to initiate breastfeeding within the first hour.

Human and financial resources are needed to scale up the support mothers get from health workers. Countries that support infant feeding practices have shown that it is possible to rapidly increase the rates of early initiation and exclusive practice of breastfeeding. The Baby-Friendly Hospital and Community Initiative, launched in 1991 by WHO and UNICEF, is among the most successful of these programmes.

3. *Lack of maternity legislation*

Returning to work after the birth of a child is difficult for any mother and may mean that continuing to breastfeed is very challenging. Three areas of national policy play a key role in a woman's ability to breastfeed: maternity leave, financial protection to help maintain the family's income while the mother is not working, and workplace provisions to allow breastfeeding to continue once a mother returns to work. To promote exclusive breastfeeding, women must be provided with sufficient paid maternity leave – in line with the international minimum of 14 weeks and working towards 18 weeks' leave with at least two-thirds pay – but the majority of poor countries do not meet this standard. Once a mother returns to work, there must be policies in place that require employers to provide paid breaks and private places where women can breastfeed or express milk so that they are able to continue breastfeeding.

Women in informal employment also face problems in continuing to breastfeed when they return to work, as they are often unable to take their children with them to the fields to farm or to do household chores such as collecting firewood and water. For these women, state grants and social protection (in the form of social security payments or cash benefits) that are not dependent on formal maternity leave arrangements are even more important.

4. *The Big Business barrier*

While there is a recognised need for certain infants to be formula-fed, there has long been concern that the marketing activities of some manufacturers has led to infant formula being used unnecessarily and improperly, ultimately putting children at risk. In 1981, the World Health Assembly adopted a set of standards known as The International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, and has since adopted a number of subsequent resolutions that have developed and updated the original provisions. 'The Code' regulates marketing tactics that can undermine breastfeeding, including advertising, free samples, targeting mothers and health claims on packaging. While some companies have created global monitoring and reporting systems, in many cases they are not being implemented in practice and there continue to be too many

examples of violations of the Code by some breast-milk substitute companies. Among the most worrying violations is the alleged targeting of health workers with encouragement to promote the companies' products to mothers of young infants.

Growth in the baby food market is increasingly dependent on emerging economies. The shift in the economic centre of gravity has created new lucrative markets in countries with a growing middle class. Meanwhile, sales are stagnating in Europe and North America, as a result of declining birth rates and increased interest in breastfeeding.

Strong legislation can restrict the marketing activities of breast-milk substitute (BMS) companies. During research for this report we found evidence of lobbying by the industry that we believe could serve to weaken legislation on the Code in a number of countries. It is our understanding that BMS companies have put corporate competition aside to form groups to influence national governments. We question the true intention of these groups, some of which have pseudo-scientific titles that could be misleading and are presented as nutrition associations.

Recommendations

This report is a call to action for the world to rediscover the importance of breastfeeding and for a commitment to support mothers to breastfeed their babies, especially in the poorest communities in the poorest countries. It calls for world leaders, international institutions and multinational companies to take action to ensure that every infant is given the life-saving protection that breastfeeding can offer.

All countries should put breastfeeding at the centre of efforts to improve infant and child nutrition, and should develop specific breastfeeding strategies as well as including breastfeeding in their nutrition strategies. Countries that are developing plans as part of the SUN movement should ensure that they address all of the obstacles identified in this report that deter optimal breastfeeding practices.

To overcome harmful practices and tackle breastfeeding taboos, developing country governments must fund projects that focus on changing the power and gender dynamics in the community to empower young women to make their own decisions. They need to include fathers and husbands, grandmothers and local leaders in their work. Governments should invest in programmes to address breastfeeding that include high-quality, professional national communications and media campaigns to spread messages about the benefits of breastfeeding, well-targeted support for communities, and measures for tackling the obstacles to good practice.

To achieve the goal of every birth being attended by a skilled health worker, governments must work to **make the health system stronger to protect, promote and support breastfeeding**. This should include allocating adequate resources to long-term health worker training, recruitment, support and retention and ensuring that all healthcare providers have strong policies in place that protect breastfeeding. International donors should support these efforts by increasing funding for projects that support breastfeeding. The UK prime minister's 'hunger summit' ahead of the G8

leaders meeting in the UK provides the ideal opportunity for leaders to put nutrition, including breastfeeding, at the top of the agenda and to fill the funding gap.

Source: Save the Children (2013) Superfood for Babies: How overcoming barriers to breastfeeding will save children's lives, pp. vii–x.

3 Media: global and national

The key difference between international and national or local media markets has to do with the levels of proximity to an audience (though there will at times be crossover, with local stories spilling over into international markets, and more commonly vice versa). For national or local media the message will be more relevant to a particular market than for global use.

Global media

Save the Children defines a global media moment as:

When the organisation, speaking as one, has something new and significant to say about what may or will affect children, women, and vulnerable communities, and that we can anticipate will cut through the crowded global news media space in order to provide high impact visibility for the Save the Children brand.

While the Global Media Unit (GMU) leads on global media outreach, country offices should consider how to adapt global products in their own markets.

Developing national and local media strategies

Country offices (COs) are responsible for developing their national media strategies, in coordination with regional offices where relevant. These strategies will be developed in close consultation with CO management and, aside from helping to build the reputation, 'brand' and voice of Save the Children in-country, will reflect/align with national advocacy priorities and other institutional considerations (e.g. agreed organisational strategies and policies).

COs can and are encouraged to reach out to correspondents based in their national contexts. The GMU can, depending on its capacity, provide guidance on developing national media strategies, as well as review them and provide ongoing coaching to country media teams on how to implement them.

Five steps to follow when developing a national media strategy

- Identify problems, key issues, priorities (why and what do we need to communicate via media platforms?).
- Define your overall objective (how to address a problem or reach your objective through media work).
- Identify key audiences (people or groups you want to target) and which media platforms are most suited to reach this key audience. (You may want to distinguish between direct target audiences, e.g. political decision makers, and indirect target audiences who can help reach your goal, e.g. those with the power to influence decision makers, or those you will want to mobilise for your campaigns.)

- Identify stories/issues you want to speak about and your CO's key media moments for the year (apart from global campaign moments such as the Everyone Campaign or SOWM, an example could be the Day of the African Child on 16 June to highlight the importance of education). Be realistic about what you want to achieve.
- Develop your plan of action – what you are going to do, when, and how.

Try and ensure that you regularly monitor the media landscape, to ensure the platforms you choose are as strategic as possible, and don't forget to try and monitor and evaluate your media activities.

Other things to consider when developing a national media strategy

- National media moments are rarely global media moments, but may have value in the region or in a country with a large expatriate community from that country (e.g. Papua New Guinea being last in an EVERY ONE campaign report may not be of significant relevance in all markets around the world but may interest the Australian market). Try and capitalise on these synergies and liaise with appropriate CO and RO.
- It may be that an international media platform will be considered of greater or equal relevance to a national market (e.g. BBC World Service radio and RFI broadcasts in some remote areas of Northern DRC where few or no community or national radio stations can reach).

Media and advocacy

Media work is one tool in the advocacy toolkit. It is part of the mix of communication activities. Such activities also include private advocacy, mass mobilisation activities and public awareness raising, and may involve, at different moments and to varying degrees, individual members, country offices and the GMU. Key messages are not usually newsworthy.

Effective media outreach can move up the public policy agenda, for example with a child rights-related issue that has not been a priority for decision makers. It will do this by bringing to mass/public attention an issue that *affects the lives of children*. It should be evidence-based. It is one of a range of tactics that can be a catalyst for decision makers to act.

An important point for media and advocacy work is knowing how to identify and segment your audience, as highlighted in Session 7 'Developing and Communicating Your Message'. Your targeted media platform will differ according to the audience you are trying to reach and what their interests are.

Activity3 (SAQ)

This activity requires you to put what they have learnt into action. Choose a topical issue and write down the key steps you would take to develop a national media strategy. Your answer should reflect each of the five steps you should follow when developing a national media strategy and be no longer than 500 words.

4 Being a spokesperson

Broadcast and webcast media platforms require audio and video, which includes interviews with experts or witnesses to stories. Audiences want to hear from those who are experts on specific issues or saw what happened during a major event.

This provides a great opportunity for Save the Children – as the voices of credible organisations and witnesses are primary aspects of content for news providers; this includes print and text platforms too. The rules of engagement before conducting an interview with a journalist are an important part of ensuring a successful interview.

Top tips on preparing for a broadcast news interview

Discuss with your colleagues/communications officer/media manager

- Why am I doing this interview?
- What is the aim? Where do I want to go?
- What is the top line?
- What is the message I want to get across?
- How shall I make those points?
- What have you or your colleagues said before on this subject?
(Journalists like to remind you of something you or the organisation promised to do three months ago.)
- Guess 10 questions and prepare 10 answers. It is important to relate these to the key messages you have already decided on.
- Make sure you have the facts and can back them up.

Rules for messages and clips

- Be aware of your audience – who they are, their current level of knowledge and what you need them to know. Devise your message so that it takes them from their starting point to the current situation or threat.
- Be aware of the journalist. They have has their own news agenda and will be looking at the story from a different perspective.

- The soundbite may well be different from your message, as it will usually be a bit shorter, summed up in about 15–20 seconds. That's 60 words, maximum.
- For your message to get through, it has to be simple as well as short.
- Don't be afraid to repeat it. Use different forms of words if you like.
- No jargon!

Do proper research – ask the journalist:

- What is the programme outlet/publication/website?
- Who are the audience/readers?
- Live or pre-recorded?
- How long will the final report/news item be? And therefore how long will your final interview clip be?
- Will the final broadcast/story be in a different language? If so, make sure you have a good translator if necessary. The journalist will probably provide one.
- What angle is the journalist taking?
- Where will the interview be done:
 - In your office?
 - Down the line?
 - Over the phone?
 - In their studio?
 - Do you need a taxi?
- If it's for broadcast: what type of interview:
 - Standalone interview, maybe three minutes?
 - Discussion?
 - Sequence?
 - Is it the last interview in a sequence?
 - Will another interviewee follow you? Or appear with you? Who? An opposing view?
 - Is it the only clip or interview in a packaged report?
 - Is your contribution to be used to explain a point or to give perspective?
 - Will it go up on the net?

Question areas

- Don't ask exactly what the questions will be. It will throw you if the interview proceeds in such a way that they don't need to ask you all of them.
- However, it is acceptable to ask what the first question will be. It will put you at your ease and establish trust between you and the interviewer. This is particularly useful if you are going live.
- What is the journalist's knowledge? Unless they work for a specialist organisation, they probably won't know much at all, but neither will their audience so you need to keep it simple.
- Remember – you are the expert!

When you are on air

- Turn off your mobile phone – don't just put it on silent.
- Make sure you are in a quiet environment.
- If you have a minute or so to chat to the interviewer before the recording starts, use this time to talk. Every moment of conversation can help ensure the interview goes smoothly and the dialogue is natural and flowing. It also helps you gather more information about what is required from you.
- Don't get emotional or angry.
- If the interviewer challenges you, don't take it personally. Keep going and keep calm.
- Make sure you are comfortable.
- Try to ignore the microphone. Speak as you would do normally

Interview content

- Get your facts right.
- Give yourself time to think about your answer.
- Be careful not to interrupt. They'll have to edit or ask you the same thing again.
- Listen to the question – refer to it and use it to enable you to move on to your message.
- Speak in complete sentences in order to provide the best clip. The journalist will tell you if you are talking for too long, or if it's too complicated. Be prepared for them to ask the same question several times. Just keep answering.
- If it's a pre-recorded interview and you want to rephrase an answer, stop and request you do it again. That's quite acceptable.
- Keep it simple

- Be prepared to be able to cite genuine reports, dates, people to back up your answers.
- A good reporter should cite genuine reports, dates and people. Don't be afraid to ask for clarification if they make a sweeping statement. Ask for evidence.
- Think ahead if you can – where am I being taken here?
- Don't answer from notes or a script.
- Keep to the point.
- Don't write out answers – make brief notes.
- Don't be long-winded- keep your answers brief *but not monosyllabic*.
- If you don't want something to appear in the report or the headline *don't say it!*

If it's TV

- Check your appearance.
- No distracting jewellery, hair, patterned clothes.
- Lights will make you shiny so take along some powder.
- No stripes, checks, sunglasses, bright blue or green tops (if you are in a studio, their backdrop may be one of those colours and you will disappear). A red jacket for women and a red tie for men is good.
- If the reporter is very tall, or short, think about the eye line between you. The crew should be aware of this and position you both accordingly.
- Keep eye contact.
- Body language is vital.

Activity 4 (SAQ)

This activity requires you to think about how you would prepare for an interview, and how you would get your key messages across. Choose a relevant topic and in the interview preparation grid provided write two examples following the example format.

Key messages	How will you get them across?	Obvious questions	Difficult questions
Example: On top of the physical dangers of war, up to two million children in Syria face a growing risk of disease, malnutrition and severe trauma.	Save the Children staff met Abdul, a small boy who crossed the border alone after his father was killed. He told us that...	What is the situation for children and their families inside Syria?	Should Assad and Syrian leaders on both sides be referred to the International Criminal Court?

5 The Global Media Unit

Save the Children's Global Media Unit (GMU) works to develop a stronger voice for Save the Children in members' media markets, in target advocacy countries' media and in the international media. The GMU reaches out to the global media during **global moments** and during emergencies, producing first-class multimedia attracting public and decision makers' attention.

The GMU produces quality global media products in multiple languages, including tailored press materials, films, photos and b-roll (video content) for country offices, regional offices and members to use in their markets and for key global media outlets, **during key global media moments and emergencies.**

The GMU is responsible for leading on global media planning, sign-off for global media materials, leads on media roster development during emergencies and the development of the crisis communication framework. We work with members and country and regional offices to increase our voice and representation externally and continue to build partnerships and relationships across Save the Children.

For more information about the GMU please visit our [OneNet page](#).

Summary

Through this session, you should have developed an understanding of what is news/what makes a newsworthy story, why Save the Children does global media outreach and the differences and synergies between media and advocacy work. You should also have learnt how to identify and write a news top line for a press release, and how to develop practical ways to prepare for an interview as a Save the Children spokesperson.

Answers to SAQs

Activity 1

1. There is no one correct answer. The definition should include the words ‘new’ and ‘significant’.
2. Check you have two of the factors from the list above the activity.

Activity 2

Original ‘Superfood for Babies’ global press release top line:

95 babies could be saved every hour if mothers breastfed in ‘power hour’ after birth –
Save the Children

Activity 3

There is no one definitive answer, but important that each case is tailored to the local context.

Activity 4

You will have tailored your answer to the subject you chose. Some examples are given below.

Key messages	How will you get them across?	Obvious questions	Difficult questions
On top of the physical dangers of war, up to two million children in Syria face a growing risk of disease, malnutrition and severe trauma	Save the Children staff met Abdul, a small boy who crossed the border alone after his father was killed. He told us that...	What is the situation for children and their families inside Syria?	Should Assad and Syrian leaders on both sides be referred to the International Criminal Court?
Save the Children is on the ground helping but we call for all parties to end the conflict and allow humanitarian access	A million people have fled in terror from Syria, that's a city the size of Birmingham. And half of them are children	What are you doing to help the children of Syria?	Shouldn't we be arming the rebels if it means a faster end to the war?
We are doing what we can – but we need your help. Please donate	Save the Children staff are on the ground providing medical assistance and providing schools for the refugee children	How many children have died?	Why should the public donate to Save the Children when it is clear that you do not have full access to those who need help inside Syria?

Acknowledgements

This session was authored by Jessica Bryant, with input from Sofia Diarra, Silvia Oñate, Krista Armstrong and Mervyn Fletcher.