

To raise awareness and generate support for the campaign, we need to partner with and influence all sorts of people and organizations to help achieve our goals. Securing coverage in the media will be important for raising the profile of the 15andCounting campaign, and it will also support your advocacy programme.

When undertaking any type of media relations activity, it's important to first decide whether the information is actually newsworthy. The first question a journalist will ask is, 'Why should anyone care?', so you must be confident that your story has relevance.

The following pointers can help you to decide when to use media relations:

- Milestones - such as 1,000 people having signed the Count Me In petition - present opportunities for you to promote your activity to the media
- Events that you have organized or are supporting are often newsworthy, particularly if they present good picture opportunities or involve a famous or prominent person
- Partnerships with leading experts or new organizations coming onboard provide a topical news angle as well as third party endorsement for 15andCounting
- Where you have a strong case study with a good story to tell
- Link into calendar dates such as International Youth Day on August 12 2009

Cultural and religious differences across the world mean the types of stories that media cover vary enormously from country to country, particularly when it comes to sexual and reproductive health and rights issues and young people. Adapt elements of this resource kit to your needs.

Identifying target media

Identify where you want to get coverage for your story and who you need to contact. You are probably aware of the daily and weekly newspapers in your region and the main TV and radio stations. Pull together a list of those that you know and ask colleagues and other contacts to add to the list.

Newspapers

You might have a story that would fit on the news pages – perhaps you're holding an event, a photocall or have something 'new' (and interesting!) to say.

Alternatively your story might fit better as a feature which goes into more detail about the issues and isn't quite as time sensitive.

If you want to send your story to regional or local media, then a local element will be needed – perhaps a local case study or some local facts and figures.

Radio

Radio news tends to be short, concise and very time sensitive. Content varies - some radio stations are music-based with short news bulletins every hour - others are completely news/ talk based, which give more opportunity for coverage.

Radio shows and programmes can be a great way of getting more time on the airwaves for your campaign. Identify a programme that might want to cover your story – maybe a talkshow with guests or a phone-in for members of the public to air their views. Speak to the producer and discuss various ideas you may have with them.

TV

TV is a very popular medium and there is a lot of competition to get coverage. However, with the right spokespeople it is a great opportunity to get your messages

across. Think about how you can provide them with some great images and who would be best to put forward for interview — it might be yourself or perhaps a health professional working in the field or members of the public.

Magazines

Magazines cater for more specific audiences and provide an opportunity for you to convey your key messages. For example, magazines for young women provide an ideal opportunity to talk about some of the issues facing young women in your country or region.

Online

Many newspapers and magazines have online versions so the story may be automatically uploaded onto their website.

However, it shouldn't stop there. Online media can also provide the following opportunities:

- Encourage people to discuss and debate issues on discussion boards and forums
- Encourage well-known bloggers to support the campaign and rally interest
- Encourage advocates to openly support the campaign through their own websites, blogs and articles
- Use social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Bebo, Tagged) to spread the word

All of these opportunities could significantly help drive traffic to the Count Me In petition by including a link to the website so that as many signatures as possible can be obtained.

Stakeholder media

Some of the organizations you are targeting for your advocacy programme may have their own newsletters, websites and internal publications – see if you can provide some information to be included in these.

How do you engage them?

The following media tools will help you to engage with the media and provide content for them to use:

Press releases

A press release is a standard way of informing the media of a news story or event. See *Templates* section for a *template of an example press release*

Please remember, editorial coverage is not guaranteed. Even if you draft a press release and send it to the relevant journalist, the newspaper will not necessarily cover the item – depending on what else is happening, how much editorial space is available, and the strength of the stories you are competing with. However, issuing regular press releases will encourage your local journalists to take an interest, which means you will never have 'wasted' your time or efforts.



Photocalls

A strong photograph is a great way to secure coverage in print and online media. A picture speaks a thousand words... and can be a powerful way of capturing the attention of readers, and therefore increasing the impact of your coverage and key messages.

Consider how to make your story visual to support your press release. Sometimes a visual can work on its own where the picture and an accompanying caption tells the story.

Even if a photographer has agreed to attend your event, it is always advisable to take your own photographs as well or, if the budget will allow it, book a professional photographer.

See Templates section for a template of an example photocall notice to send to the media to inform them of a photocall

Case studies

Case studies bring messages to life with real life experience and give the media a human interest element to the story.

See Supporting Materials section for an example of a campaign case study

Events

Inviting media to events can give them a great opportunity to engage with your organization and provide photo opportunities. Local events provide an important opportunity for maximising awareness of the campaign in your local area and nationally.

NB. Not every event is newsworthy and has to be considered on its own merit.

See Templates section for a template of an event itinerary and a photocall template

Letter to editor

A letter published in a newspaper or magazine by a representative from an organization can be an effective way of putting across a point of view and rallying support for your cause.

Comment piece/ Editorial

Approach one of your advocates to provide some comment about issues for a newspaper column – this might be a political figure or an expert within a particular field.

Identifying the right journalists

Once you have a list of media organizations you need to identify the key contacts at each. Think about whom your story is most relevant to before you pick up the phone.

This could be:

- News desk
- Features desk
- Social affairs correspondents
- Health correspondents
- Education correspondents
- Youth/ young people correspondents

Where health and education correspondents exist they will be an important contact but you may also want to gather contacts for the news and features departments as who you speak to will depend on the individual story.

Set up a table of all key journalists where you can record their contact details, how they like to receive information, and notes of past contact and stories they have covered.

How to contact them

If you're not sure who to contact, telephone the switchboard and ask for the news desk. Most newspapers have a team of reporters so you may not speak to the same person twice – don't panic, but expect to have to explain your issues a number of times.

Find out how the journalist prefers to receive information – by post, email or fax. Please note, journalists are bombarded with many potential stories each day so often it is not enough to simply send your press release and then hope that the story appears. Pick up the phone as well!

'Selling a story' is a phrase often used to describe the process of approaching a journalist with information that they may be interested in using for a news story or feature article.

To sell your story effectively you must:

- Look carefully at the information that you want the media to cover and make sure you are clear about what the story is. You may only have a couple of minutes to get a journalist interested, so it helps to try and summarise the story in a single sentence.
- Anticipate questions that the journalist may ask – when is the event happening, will it be a good photo opportunity, how many people are taking part, when will the relevant spokesperson be available for interview, are there statistics to support the story etc. Make sure you are ready with answers.
- It is a good idea to follow up with another phone call after sending the information through to see if it is of interest and if you can provide them with anything else. This is where you will get important feedback – perhaps they weren't the right person and they've passed it on, perhaps there are constraints on what they can write about, perhaps what you've sent them is perfect and they're going to cover it, perhaps they didn't have enough room this time but are

interested in hearing from you again. Take the feedback and let it inform your next piece of activity.

Top tip: when emailing, send the press release as text within the email and not as an attachment.

When to contact:

Deadlines

Always be aware of the media's deadlines so you can avoid them. A journalist on a deadline will not be able to speak to you, don't worry – ask when would be a good time to call and call back then.

- Daily newspapers usually have editorial meetings around 10.30am to decide on the content for the next day so either telephone early or the afternoon before.
- Check the 'press day' (the day the paper goes to print) of weekly newspapers and ensure they have the information as far in advance as possible, particularly if you are hoping to get a photographer along.
- If you are promoting a forthcoming event to a local television or radio station, ask for the 'forward planners', who will keep a diary of relevant dates.
- Don't call a local or regional radio station 10 minutes before or after the hour as they will be preparing or reading a news bulletin.