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Getting out the HR Story: Media Needs and Challenges of Rights Practitioners

Tuesday, January 25, 2011, 3:30 – 5:00 pm

Facilitator:

Dimple Abichandani, Program Office, Security & Rights Collaborative/Proteus Fund
Julie Broome, Programme Director, Civil and Political Rights, Sigrid Rausing Trust

Panelists:

Lynn Fahselt, Co-Director, ReThink Media
Oren Yakobovich, CEO, Videre Est Credere

Sponsor: Four Freedoms Fund/Public Interest Projects

Dimple introduced the session by sharing with the audience a needs assessment findings:

Grantees did not have communications staff person, no professional database of media contacts (shows issue of capacity). They have big groups like ACLU, Human Rights First, etc., Needs of grassroots communities; Media Audit learning: connecting many different issues, even though grantees were getting coverage, there was no shared messaging. Absence of echo chamber on funding side. Looked at models across other fields → how have other sectors looked at this issue and what was relevant

Challenge: wanted to fund what would increase capacity for grantees that would have a range of needs → Developed project that is called “Communications Hub” of shared communication resources, doing capacity building work (training and daily tools) and also work in building opportunities for collaboration

Shared communication resources can serve as a national conveyor even though you don’t have a national conveyor. There were so many divisions amongst issue areas (racial profiling, torture, etc.). There was no organisation that could emerge as the one that could bring everyone together. Organically groups have come together because of shared resources. Funding through donor collaborative and managing donor collaborative. From the beginning of campaign, they were very intentional about field input → as they developed a model, they kept that at the center (this is part of what created the buy-in)

Lynn Fahselt: How does this actually work?

Collaborative efforts of 120 orgs that can access info through the hub and resources and tools that are

there

Objectives:

- 1) identify and address long and short term gaps
- 2) Minimize duplication and competition
- 3) Help identify opportunities and support collaborative work (120 orgs all have reports, studies, initiatives)
- 4) Create space for innovative and strategic Big Picture thinking
- 5) Help inform ongoing grantmaking strategies (allowing foundations to respond quickly to developments)

Goals for Years 1 and 2:

- 1) Individual org capacity (media tools and comm. Training)
- 2) Building rapid response media capacity
- 3) Developing and building buy-in for shared set of messages: informed by public opinion, media analysis, message testing

Database of media contacts, outlets, activities, distributions: trained over 250 staff to use this database instantly able to set up press room over any 1 initiative

Security and rights clips from over 90 NGOs (daily)

top 82 journalists and bloggers that have covered these issues are included on the list (there is a hard copy book)

Identify opportunities for collaborative efforts coming out: support for New START arms treaty, Rep Peter Kind's hearings on homegrown terrorism and radicalization in Islam, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

Julie Broome: Examples of where blogs have made a big difference (ex: Iran)

As funders, need to ensure safety of grantees (ex: Tactical Technology collective does training on mobile phone technology, etc.)

Issues that are important as grantmakers are: how can we contribute to environment that permits free flow of info and tools, and how to encourage grantees to use tools but remain safe while doing so

Oren Y:

Video: Palestinians that are killed by Israeli soldiers; 100 small cameras from Israeli HR org to Palestinians to document abuses by Israeli army

Putting power into the hands of oppressed by teaching them how to tell their story and publicly exposing their plight

Training on how to document HR violations

New Media and HR: Challenges and How to address them

Many orgs working with video and power of crowd sourcing

4 main issues: Reach, Security, Verification, Action (need to be strategic, send the right info out at the right time): how much has this work created change? Need to verify the information

Demonstration: small cameras (look like key chains) that are given to people so they can work in secure way

How Videre Works:

Research, supplying cameras, tech, training, processing and verification, strategic distribution

Southern Africa, Swaziland: violence has patterns, there are sources, need to identify symptoms. Use visuals as evidence of buy-in, support of people on the ground

Zimbabwe: Church → using Church gathering (and where people get food) for propaganda speech. Also building a new Constitution and people are contributing but Party is manipulating what they are doing

Impact: Empower oppressed, expose HR violations, enhance accountability and justice, deter violence and intimidation

How funders can help:

Ensure grantees are aware of and addressing challenges; be security aware; listen to local knowledge

Questions:

MJH: who is taking footage? Answer: activist in civil society from Zimbabwe (it is dangerous, but before they could not even take a pen and paper, so they use hidden camera) (must do verification, info gathering correctly)

Question for Julie from Media Democracy Fund: Acknowledgment for need to work with policies/systems: what are the rights she works on overseas?

Julie: Free expression sub-program has been with global organizations, supporting case law, and working international at making sure international standards are what we want them to be, and then implement international mechanisms. Have not funded specifically in countries, except through international organizations (have not prioritized geographically as free expression, but more big picture)

Question from FGHR for Oren: Reach and action → has he talked to groups and helped them assess and change their strategies whether their goal for using media etc. is for movement building in their own country or whether to shine a light outside their country?

Answer: feedback information into field, organizations working on grassroots level → find out what organizations wants, then make sure they go through training → really need to bring back footage to country itself

Question for Lyn: Challenges and lessons learned:

helping groups do better, easier, faster work, better campaigns (no one group can do it alone), coordination/collaboration/share resources

Question: security → has anyone from the other side broken into the password protected database?

Lyn: Not that she knows of. Password protected side and most info is what would help the groups. Need to build on broadcast strategies

Julie: Some countries where media does not permit debate, alternative source of info/news

Conrad Martin: (Knight and others have supported) → Investigative Journalism work extraordinary

How to apply the template Proteus created for other issues? Proteus is writing up the process/strategy

Are they planning on case studies? Yes, but security issues