



THE NBD MEDIA ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
WHO SPEAKS TO THE MEDIA AT NBD	5
Here is the list of the spokespersons of NBD	5
MEDIA TO TARGET	6
Mainstream Media Houses To Target	6
COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA	7
The tools	7
BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MEDIA.....	8
1. Identifying our media contacts	8
2. Do research on media organizations.....	8
3. Observe those media contacts.	8
4. NBD should introduce itself to the Media	9
5. Offer NBD training/Briefing.....	9
6. Keep track of media coverage	9
Targeting the Best Outlet.....	9
TEMPLATES AND CHARACTERISTICS.....	10
1) THE NBD PRESS RELEASE	10
2) THE NBD NEWS ADVISORY	10
3) NBD PRESS CONFERENCES	11
4) NBD PRESS BRIEFING	11
5) BROADCAST INTERVIEWS	12
6) LETTERS TO THE EDITOR	12
DRAMA AND REALITY SHOWS	12

INTRODUCTION

As indicated in NBD's Communication Strategy final draft, the Media is very important in putting out NBD's message to the Nile Basin peoples. As a result this document is being developed to basically guide the NBD in engaging the Media to cover and broadcast NBD activities. This document is a work in progress and can be edited at any time to suit new situations that may take place anytime.

The NBD Media engagement guide focuses on the Media relations component and the tools involved in order getting our message out to the public domain and among our members including the NDFs.

Media coverage offers the dual advantage of being cost-free and carrying more credibility than paid advertisements. The downside is that there are no guarantees as to when, how, or even if, the media will cover a story (this means that, we may not necessarily order the media to go and publish our story as news at any time unless it is an advert or a special supplement – for print or a paid for spot on Radio or TV.

The nature and extent of the media coverage that an NBD awareness campaign will attract depends largely on the relationship with the press; on targeting the message to the appropriate outlet; and on communicating effectively with the media. This mini guide provides basic notions for each of these elements with the aim of increasing media coverage.

Local news media outlets – print and broadcast – are always looking for good human-interest stories. As NBD, we will try our best to make it easy for them (media) to learn about what our coalition is doing in the community and how it might be good material for articles.

It is hoped that this guide will help streamline NBD's relationship and contact with the Media.

WHO SPEAKS TO THE MEDIA AT NBD

Practically everyone at NBD should be able to speak to the media. However, on issues to do with the NBD Programme, there must be some strategic persons in the organization to speak to the Media. These persons should be considered as the official and strategic spokespersons NBD.

Here is the list of the spokespersons of NBD

1. NBD Board Chairperson – chief spokesperson
2. The Regional Manager
3. The NDF heads are spokespersons at their respective duty stations
4. At the Secretariat, the Communications Officer

NBD could also use prominent speakers to speak about topical issues that the NBD programme is dealing with. This could be during any press conference or during any NBD networking function.

MEDIA TO TARGET

There are various types of Media to target in letting out the message of NBD.

Broken down, you can consider:

1. Electronic Media – which includes Radio, TV, and the Internet
2. Print Media – which includes Newspapers, Magazines, Newsletters, Brochures,
3. Non-traditional Mediums – including Bill-board ads, Drama, Events (special days, awards, exhibitions, seminars, road shows).

One must decide the extent to which he/she needs to spread the information, this is sometimes called the scope or intended reach of dissemination of a news item, it could be measured by distance/location or by class or level of education/literacy or even level of influence in relation to the NBD issue of concern/to be released at that particular moment.

Consider these questions: Do you want the information being released to be viewed by donors or by local partners, or by NDF members or you are targeting the local communities and local leaders concerned about it? Are you trying to catalyse or provoke action on a biting issue about the Nile Basin cooperation/development/investment? Well then there are several segments of the media that you could exploit by aligning them to specific NBD information target audience.

Also consider this, if the issue to be talked about concerns the local grassroots person, then call upon local/community radio station to give you coverage, you could also use local newspaper in local languages. It will not be bad to have local/community TV. But overriding them is the issue of popularity of a media outlet; look out for the most popular media outlet to use for delivering your information to a large audience.

However, should the issue be of the magnitude that warrants an audience as big as donors to take a look, it will be very important to include international and regional media and wires as these tend to make coverage that has a multiplier effect by reaching out to a wide range of audiences.

But the discretion is for the persons who meet to plan to release the information.

Mainstream Media Houses To Target

There are various types of media houses operating in our various countries. As for the NDFs, the discretion will be on them to select the most effective or the most suitable media house.

For starters, we shall target 3 types of Media Houses:

1. International Media – notably through the wires Media Agencies including Reuters, AFP, IPS, KYODONEWS, XHINUA, and others that may be operating in the Nile Basin countries.
2. Regional Media giants like the African Press Organization, Nation Media, SABC Africa, PANA, HANA, ARABIC news agencies, and others that may be operating in your country
3. National level Media Houses

COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA

The tools

Having established good relations with the media and determining which media to target, it is time to choose which tool to use to promote the campaign in the media.

The choice of tools will depend on the news/event to be promoted, as well as the time and other resources available.

- Press releases are the standard tool for releasing information about our campaign to the media.
- These are faxed, mailed, hand-delivered or e-mailed to a contact person at each media organization and preferably followed-up with a telephone call.
- When e-mailing press releases, keep in mind that many journalists prefer to have the text in the body of the e-mail, rather than as an attachment, in order to reduce the risk of computer virus transmission.
- Follow-up calls will ensure that the release is not lost among the hundreds of press releases received by the media every day.
- Many print newspapers are also using the Internet to post the latest news. It is important therefore to upload NBD press releases immediately to the NBD website section dedicated to media relations. This section should also provide visitors with the opportunity to subscribe to an e-mail list and thereafter receive press releases by e-mail as soon as they are issued. NBD staff will with time be equipped with lessons on how to upload press releases to the NBD website when content management system is upgraded for easy world-wide deployment of administering the website's back-end.
- Don't be intimidated in talking with reporters. They need stories; you need media coverage. It is a good and fair trade!

BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MEDIA

Establishing a good relationship with key media contacts is probably the most critical factor in obtaining media coverage. Below are some basic steps that NBD will employ towards developing media relationships:

1. Identifying our media contacts

- Check media sources to identify which journalists cover Nile Basin / Environmental issues. If NBD -specific coverage is scarce, expand the search to journalists covering related issues such as business news, new technologies, innovation, general news and features etc.
- Create and maintain a contact list of all such journalists and keep it updated. This list should include, at a minimum, the name, title, media organisation, and address (including phone, fax and e-mail) of each journalist.

2. Do research on media organizations.

Call each media organization/house on the above list to find out about:

- deadlines for stories,
- schedules for shows,
- specific guidelines for submitting press releases and advisories,
- schedules and deadlines for specialized supplements,
- acceptance criteria for public service announcements (PSAs),
- preferred format for the delivery of information and visuals (e-mail, fax, etc.), circulation,
- and audience profiles
- Beware that not all media houses will always be friends of NBD and its activities, so try to avoid playing into the hands of unfriendly media in order not to compromise the core values of NBD.

Keep this knowledge at the back of your mind while communicating news to the media with enough time for it to be broadcast or published.

Respecting media deadlines and format requirements can be a deciding factor on whether or not the information is broadcast and/or published.

In addition, the information on circulation and audience profile will help identify the best media organization with which to reach the target audience.

3. Observe those media contacts.

- Observe how the journalists on the list above cover their stories.
- What kind of visuals (photos, graphs, video footage etc.), if any, do they tend to use?
- What kinds of examples do they favor?
- Look out for points of view and biases.
- By understanding the styles used by different journalists, NBD will be able to pitch a story to them more effectively by matching the information to their needs and expectations.

4. *NBD should introduce itself to the Media*

- Even before NBD does any campaign or outreach program, it is important to provide journalists with basic information about the organisation.
- Also give them a list of Nile Basin issues on which NBD experts can provide comments and/or complementary information if and when the need arises. Do this whenever opportunity strikes. One other way is by inviting them to training sessions or planning media workshops about NBD and the Nile cooperation – more about this could be done as explained in number 5 below.
- Build the NBD reputation as a reliable source on Nile Basin issues by keeping your media contacts updated with solid and reliable facts.
- Media kits are a good way to contact the media for the first time. Such kits should include:
 - Fact sheets about NBD and its programs/services,
 - basic information about NBD, its success stories related to any campaign NBD will be promoting, statistics, visuals (photos/graphics/charts/video footage),
 - The Coordinator's and the communication officer's business cards.

5. *Offer NBD training/Briefing*

The complexity of NBD issues could discourage many journalists from writing about them. Providing basic NBD training or briefings to key journalists can help solve this problem. Such training/briefing can help clarify issues and controversies, and reveal the increasing importance of NBD in different sectors of society in the Nile Basin. In addition to lectures, field visits to the NBD headquarters and to innovative CSOs that are using NBD can serve as interesting examples that may lead to future stories.

6. *Keep track of media coverage*

This will assist in determining which sorts of stories are more likely to receive media coverage in future. It will also give help identify journalists who regularly publish Nile Basin and Environmental information, and give NBD a chance to address any issues that have been highlighted in the media coverage.

Targeting the Best Outlet

- After establishing a good rapport with key media contacts, identify which outlet would be the most effective in transmitting the message to the target audience.
- The two main factors to consider are the type of media through which the target audience receives information, and the type of media best suited for the intended message.

TEMPLATES AND CHARACTERISTICS

1) THE NBD PRESS RELEASE

Characteristics

- All NBD Press release will have short and eye-catching headlines. The headline should be at most 20 words. For example: "NBD gets new staff"
- The headline will contain the kicker of your message.
- The text will be short and simple (1-2 pages).
- The paragraphs should be short with the longest being just up to 50 words.
- The NBD press release will provide clear answers to the usual "who, what, when, where, why and how" questions.
- The NBD Press release will always ensure that the information provided is accurate and tied to the NBD message being communicated.
- The NBD Communicator will avoid legal and other technical jargon that may make it hard for the Journalists to accommodate in their article.
- In NBD Press releases, acronyms will be used sparingly and always provide the full name in parenthesis the first time an acronym is used in the text.
- The NBD Press releases should contain personalised message with real-life examples.
- The NBD press release will contain interesting facts and figures and will provide good quotes from well-known spokespersons
- The NBD Press release will include contact details of spokesperson(s) who can provide additional information
- Visual material attracts attention and will make NBD press release more lively and interesting. Consider using photographs, graphs, and other quality illustrations where possible.
- Always try to include a separate fact sheet about NBD basics relevant to the subject of the press release. Journalists can use such fact sheets for additional background information if needed.

2) THE NBD NEWS ADVISORY

Characteristics of the NBD News advisory template

- The NBD news advisories will provide advance information to the media about an event or press conference that will be held.
- The NBD news advisories are aimed at briefly informing what the event is about, where/when it will take place, and who will be speaking.
- The NBD News advisory will include the name and phone number of the contact person for the event. Use business cards extensively.
- While providing enough information to create interest, news advisories refrain from telling the whole story in order to ensure that the press will show up at the event and not simply write a story based on the advisory.

3) NBD PRESS CONFERENCES

Characteristics

NBD press conferences require careful planning and will usually be limited to big and important stories (not routine issues) that cannot be properly covered with a standard press release.

It also helps when conferences have some sort of visual appeal for cameras and photographers. Try to always have a display of NBD placards with NBD logos around the conference venue.

Examples of NBD events and stories worthy of press conferences could include:

- the launch of a new, high profile program,
- the release of major information,
- an awards ceremony or
- a highly visual event.

Press packets – At every Press Conference, NBD will distribute Press Packets or some form of printed information pack or digitally stored information on CDs/DVDs or branded flash disks. These packets will include a press release about the event (written in the past tense), important facts and figures, basic NBD information relevant to the event, and the NBD officials' business card - are handed out before the start of the conference event and sent to media contacts who could not attend the press conference.

At the beginning of the conference, a moderator will usually read an introductory statement before introducing other speakers or starting the special event. Once all the speakers have spoken and/or the special event is finished, the floor is opened to questions from members of the media. It is imperative that both the moderator and all speakers be prepared to respond confidently and accurately to these questions. In order to increase the chances of press conference attendance and coverage by the media, it is wise to try to schedule it in such a way that it will not conflict with other big news events.

4) NBD PRESS BRIEFING

Press briefings are informal meetings with individual or a small group of journalists. NBD will use such briefings to discuss complicated issues, providing background data, and improving communications with journalists who have previously misreported NBD issues. It is important that the person conducting the press briefing be thoroughly prepared with tangible facts, figures and reliable information.

NBD will keep in mind that different media have varying needs for details depending on the amount of time/space that they have to report on issues. NBD will strive to tailor the information to the needs of the journalists attending the briefing.

For example, provide enough information for a reporter writing an in-depth magazine/newspaper column article, or that boil down the issue into a few key facts and figures for radio journalists who only have a few seconds to tell the story.

5) BROADCAST INTERVIEWS

Broadcast interviews have the advantage of letting you transmit the message yourself. To arrange such interviews, first identify the broadcasters and shows that could be interested in your campaign.

Contact the producer and provide a briefing about the campaign. Keep in mind that radio and television interviews can become more lively and interesting when there is more than one guest present, so be ready to suggest another guest with an NBD success story relevant to the campaign who could also join you in the program.

Mention also your availability for telephone interviews, as this may be more practical for some broadcasters.

The day of the interview, ensure that the NBD guest speakers are properly prepared with the main points you want to make, background information, interesting facts and figures, and answers to a list of potential questions.

6) LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NBD will take advantage of writing letters to the editor to clarify issues, or to introduce a new dimension to an issue, presented in previously printed articles.

The key to such letters is to stick to the issue at hand and present new information in a clear and precise manner.

The letter should be signed with both the name of the concerned NBD spokesperson. Also include contact details in case the editor needs to make contact.

Finally, since letters to the editor respond to a specific article from a particular newspaper, magazine, or journal they should only be sent to the publication in question.

NBD staff could also write articles about specific issues and send them to the news outlets, but this should be done in consultation with the secretariat as the message being sent out must be deemed to be in conformity and alignment with the core values of NBD.

DRAMA AND REALITY SHOWS

Drama/reality shows can be very effective in providing a human context to complex issues thereby making them easier to understand.

They can also have a much bigger and more targeted impact than advertising or news stories.

The first step in this case is to identify a show that could easily incorporate NBD issues.

Meet with the producers and writers of that show to present ideas for different NBD-related story lines. It could help if such options could be (at least loosely) based on real-life examples.

The NBD story line may be so complete that it could end up as a completely new show.

PLANNING COVERAGE

Prepare the issue at hand for media coverage by having a planning meeting, it could be a very short meeting but key activities to ensure the issue gets covered must be agreed upon at this meeting. In some cases you might not need a meeting, meaning that you could as well always be prepared to have an issue covered in the media.

1. You will need to agree on which media types you will release your story to for example Print, TV, radio, internet news outlet or even a wire agency.
2. Know what else is happening in the world around you, either regionally or locally at National level.
3. Know what other like-organisations are doing especially those with whom we share similarity in names like NBI or NBO.
4. Know the events that could coincide with the date on which you want to release your news/information; you must also know the deadlines of various media houses. For dailies, the deadlines are normally 4:00pm and if you think you have a strong newsworthy issue, you must release your news/information by noon. This allows the journalists to return to their newsroom and prepare the article for publication early enough. Similarly for evening news on Radio and TV, although in some cases such media houses could publish shortly after the release or even do it live.
5. Beware of the time component. You are not the only person/organization/entity that or who wants to get into the media, so try to keep the event short to avoid delving into non-issues or tempting the media to raise non-relevant questions.