



Creating high level visibility for humanitarian interventions in Nigeria.

Good practices in Communication

This document highlights the good practices of the UNFPA Nigeria Country office in creating visibility for the Fund in humanitarian context.





Visibility is a key concern to any institution and for the UNFPA Nigeria Country office, the baton was on us to demonstrate results in humanitarian settings to internal and external partners at both the national, regional and global level.

Strategic steps were taken to ensure high level visibility on our activities in the field and the outcome of this was that UNFPA was positioned as a credible and performing agency in the provision of humanitarian response.

This position was projected by both Government partners, the local and international media including CNN, BBC, UN

News, VBO, NTA, This Day, The Guardian and members of the development community who have used some of our interventions as models for theirs.

This documentation on our good practices highlights the steps taken by the country office in Nigeria to create this high profile visibility, communication approaches used to maintain it, the challenges faced and the lessons learnt.

Cordially,
Ratidzai Ndhlovu
UNFPA Country Representative, Nigeria

“...women and children held captive for an average period of 12 months. Upon their release, the country witnessed the deplorable physical and mental state of some of the survivors who were sexually abused or forcefully married to insurgents; while others were either traumatized, pregnant or had had childbirth experiences in the bush without medical aid”

Background

Six years have passed since the violent insurgent attacks of the Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (JAS), commonly known as Boko Haram, began in North East Nigeria. Till date, it remains the biggest human security threat in the country; with 14.8 million people affected by the crisis, over 2 million people internally displaced, 20, 000 civilians killed and 2,000-7,000 women and girls abducted. Significantly, amongst those displaced, 53% are women while 461,000 are of reproductive age and 73, 880 pregnancies expected.

In 2014, the insurgency escalated with an upsurge of violence against civilians, leaving hundreds of houses burnt down, towns deserted; infrastructure and means of livelihoods destroyed and mass abduction of women and children who have suffered sexually and gender based violence. In April 2015, remarkable progress was made in the fight against insurgency as the Government of Nigeria recaptured territories that were declared strongholds of the Boko Haram Group. One of such territories was the Sambisa Forest in Borno State. The victory led to the release of hundreds

of women and children held captive for an average period of 12 months. Upon their release, the country witnessed the deplorable physical and mental state of some of the survivors who were sexually abused or forcefully married to insurgents; while others were either traumatized, pregnant or had had childbirth experiences in the bush without medical aid. The urgent need for basic health services and psychosocial support was immerse.

It was to these survivors and a lot more affected by the insurgency, that UNFPA, had prepositioned Reproductive Health kits and dignity kits in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states to meet not only the sexual and reproductive health needs of the vulnerable women and girls but also to provide psychosocial support through counseling services as part of the humanitarian response to survivors.

It was therefore the prerogative of UNFPA Nigeria to communicate its interventions so it is known and acknowledged by all.

Here's Who's Helping Hundreds Of Pregnant Boko Haram Kidnapping Victims

05/05/2015 06:18 pm ET | Updated May 06, 2015

Eleanor Goldberg
Executive Director



Among the Boko Haram kidnapping victims recently rescued were at least 214 pregnant women and girls, according to the UNFPA.



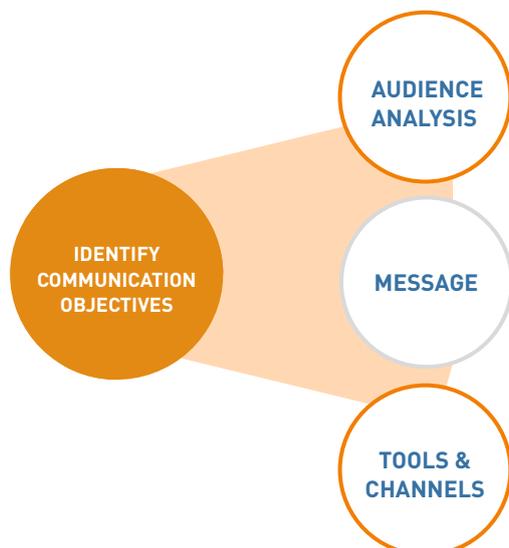


Communication approaches used to maintain a high profile visibility

To achieve our communication objectives, the CO demonstrated excellence in creating and executing a communication strategy and plan aimed at supporting the humanitarian programme. However, it was not sufficient to only have a strategy/plan, so we designed implementation steps and a modus operandi for the successful outcome of our strategy. The CO's communication approach will be discussed within these 2 sub themes.

The strategy

The CO adopted a proactive approach of first identifying its communication objectives within the humanitarian crisis in the country. The objective was 3-pronged; one, make survivors aware of the SRH services available to them; two, create visibility for the Fund by increasing the level of awareness on our activities and successes; three, media engagement with a purpose of building networks and strong alliances. With these objectives outlined, the next step was to identify and prioritize our audience; develop the right messages to attract and sustain their interest; and lastly to select the best channels/tools to get the messages across.



Steps to a successful implementation

Creating visibility for the CO was done in a systematic manner. It involved the use of all communication tactics, from digital communication, social media and media relations to writing publications/articles and fostering partnerships. However, the implementation process was ignited with a timely press conference that set the tone for all communication activities.

Step 1 – organized a Press Conference on the humanitarian situation ahead of any development partner in the field.

Once the Government of Nigeria had a breakthrough in combating the insurgency, UNFPA was prompt to organize a press conference with the Executive Director – Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, This press conference was done ahead of anyone in the development community. This action gave the CO a first mover advantage in the media space and irrefutably made the Fund the reference point for information on humanitarian response in Nigeria.

Step 2 – Wrote human angle stories/articles/ press releases integrating data as evidence

Human interest stories capturing the experiences of survivors, their present state, UNFPA interventions, the relevance of these interventions and the ensuing impact were written and disseminated to all partners – present and potential- and on all media platforms (Traditional, new media, digital). Write-ups were not limited to human interest stories alone, but we ensured that these stories were integrated in our press release, articles and project profiles.

Data is the evidence that crystalizes our impact in the field. It is the connecting dot between what was – the challenge, and what is – results of a changed situation. The magnitude of what was achieved was accurately seen through the lens of our data. The CO maximized this by integrating it within the human angle stories.

Step 3 – Documentation of successes (documentary & publications)

The CO produced a 6 minute documentary to showcase its interventions. This video was presented during conferences and donor meetings. It was shared and widely disseminated on social media platforms and served as an alternative to reading of CO publications. The video can be watched here:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llr6Q0BVM1A>

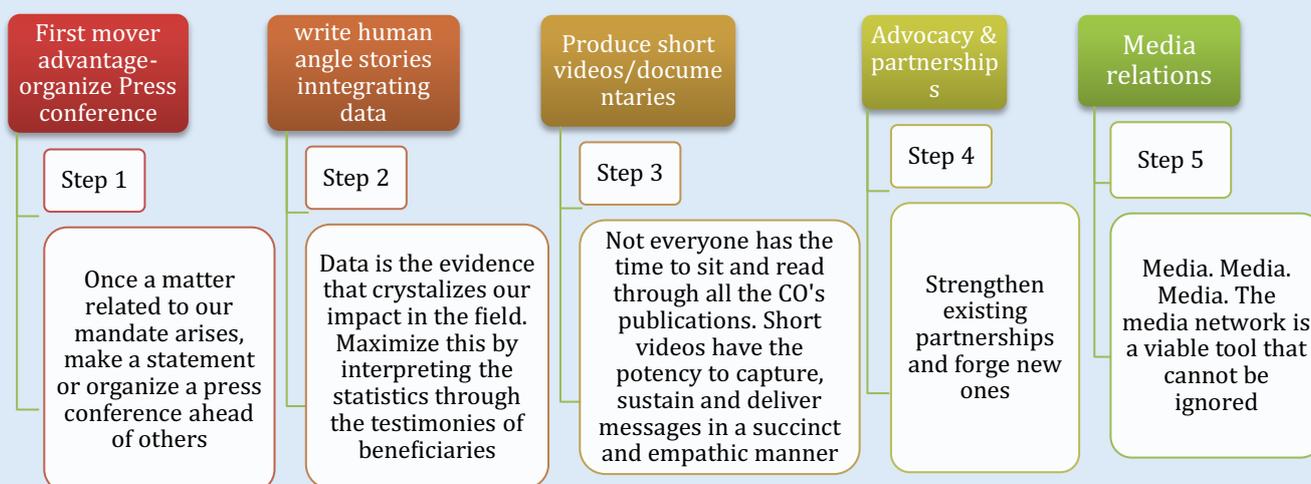
Step 4 – Continuous advocacy (this was streamlined in all the steps/activities)

Courtesy visits were made to the State governors in the North East, Government agencies and partners working within the humanitarian context and other stakeholders. These visits strengthened existing partnerships and increased our level of visibility and media mention. For example, if a government agency like SEMA, the State emergency management agency, had a press briefing, the synergy between the agency and UNFPA was highlighted. This also applies to the State governors and other partners.

Step 5 – Media relations

The media is a viable tool. In fostering media relations, the CO created media cells across the six (6) geo political zones of the country. These media cells are made up of seasoned journalists, trained by UNFPA to report on developmental news in an accurate and ethical manner. Members of the cell group periodically wrote articles and published news items on UNFPA and were instrumental to the enhanced awareness received on the CO's activities in the North East.

The cumulative effect of this was the significant increase in the Fund's visibility amongst national leaders, the media, development community, private sector and other stakeholders in the country.



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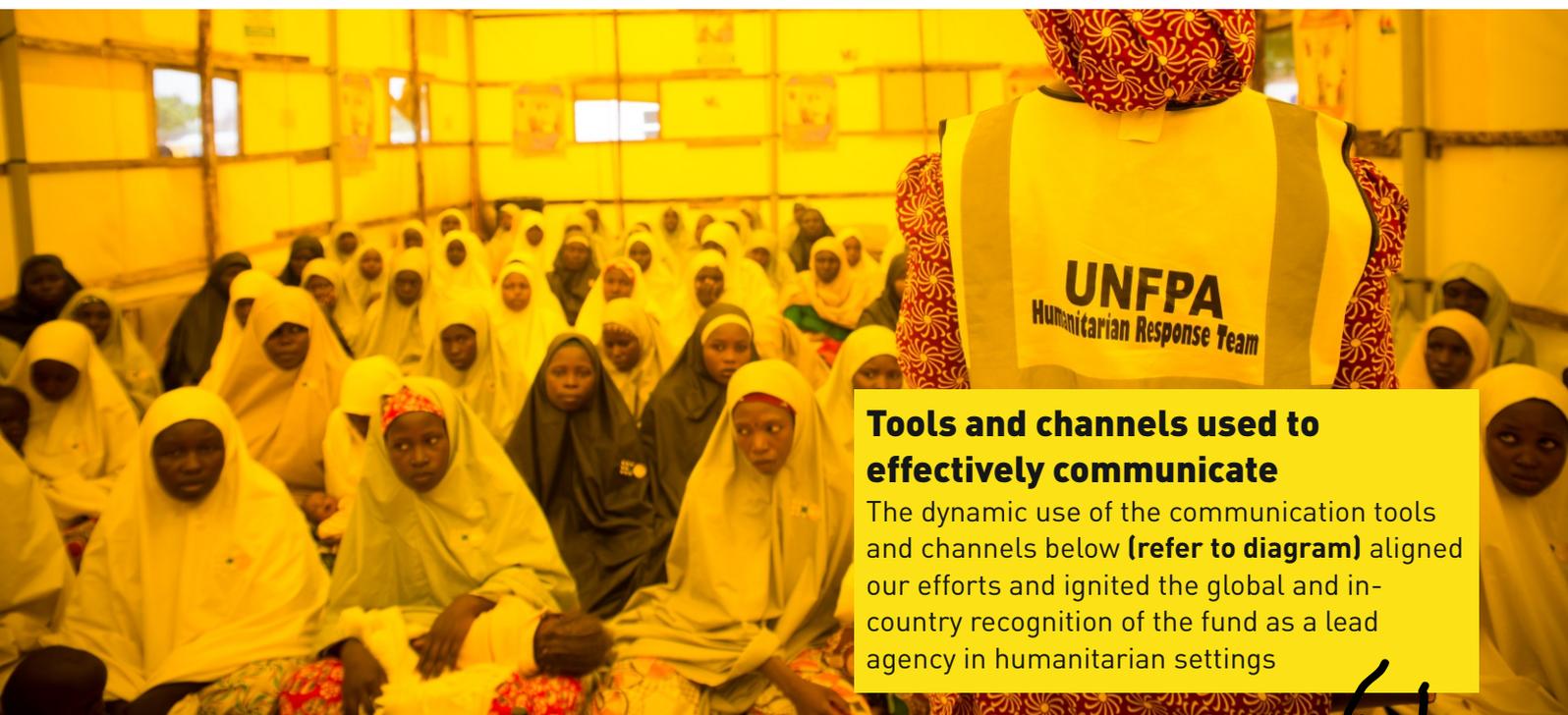
Role of the Senior Management that contributed to the success

The senior management provided leadership and an enabling environment to stimulate, develop and implement the communication strategy. Moreover, it is only when results are achieved that results can be communicated, the senior management were strategic in positioning UNFPA to respond immediately during a crisis. This was evident through the level of preparedness exhibited by the leadership in

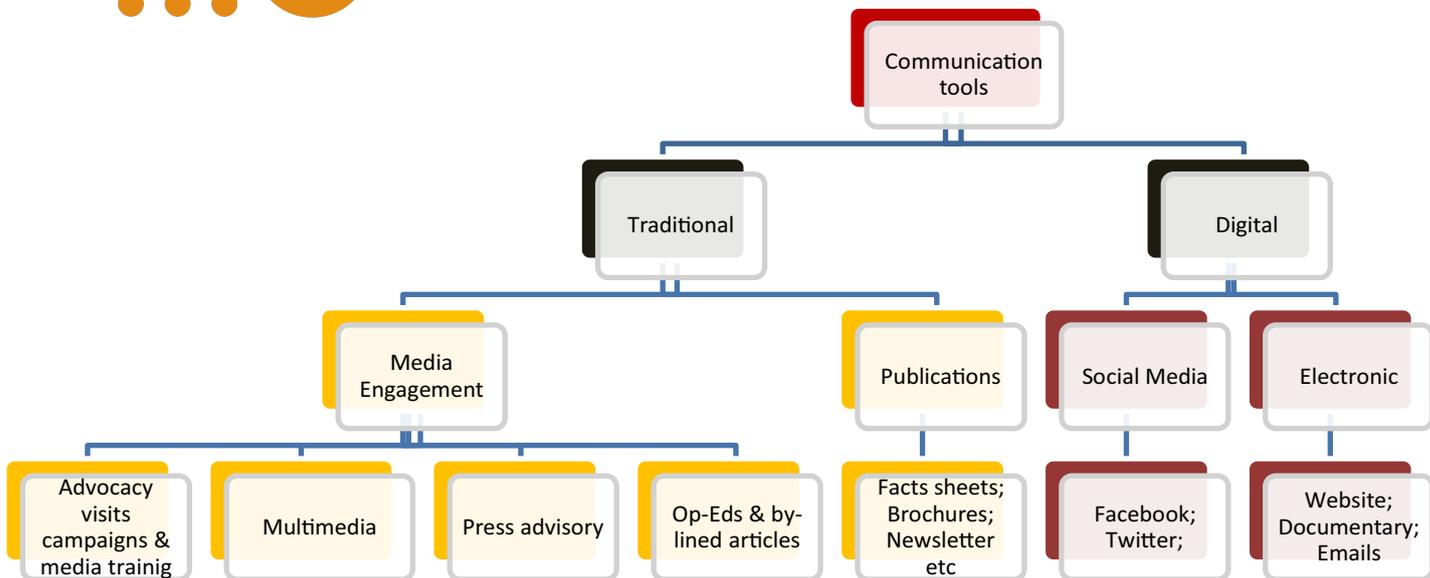
prepositioning Reproductive Health kits and dignity kits in anticipation of the return of the abducted women and girls.

Role of the programme and operation staff in this process

The success of the CO communication strategy was derived from the team spirit that was exhibited from the level of conceptualization to the level of implementation. We worked as a team and spoke with One Voice.



Tools and channels used to effectively communicate
 The dynamic use of the communication tools and channels below (refer to diagram) aligned our efforts and ignited the global and in-country recognition of the fund as a lead agency in humanitarian settings



Lessons learnt (tips, tricks, pitfalls to avoid)

Lesson 1: Do not be afraid of bad press. If you are in such a situation, do not be defensive, fight from a position of strength and let your partners speak up for you.

The growing interest and visibility on UNFPA interventions in the North East heralded allegations that the Fund was promoting abortion for pregnant survivors (most of whom were sexually abused). UNFPA was attacked on all frontiers and the temptation was to address every allegation as they arose, but we did not. A crisis management strategy was developed and 3 key elements that got us through it were:

- The truth. We do not promote abortion and giving survivors access to sexual and reproductive health is not something we are ashamed of.

- CO achievement. A 2 pager was released on the number of lives saved, deaths averted and dignity restored.
- Partners. Our strong partnership with the Government of Nigeria, the media and other allies was evident. The Federal Ministry of Health and the State Emergency agencies held a press conference together with UNFPA, to address the misconceptions and to show solidarity.

Lesson 2: Always educate the public on the meaning of SRH and inform them on the content of the kits

The misconception came when a group went to the press accusing UNFPA of distributing abortion related drugs as a key component of its reproductive kits. The misconception was addressed but the scenario could have been avoided if the public was well educated.

“Our commitment to make every child birth safe is unwavering. It is a mandate we live by, especially in crisis situations” – Koffi Kouame, Deputy Representative.





Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

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