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Training guide in communication with the media towards public opinion

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Foreword

Anybody who is familiar with the world of the social street worker is likely to ask himself if a guidebook of this type is really needed by him. Indeed, if one takes into account the numerous characteristics of the social groups aimed at regarding the daily activities of the street worker, the eclectic nature pertaining to the wide fields of knowledge and action in which he operates, the diversity of the strategic partners he is currently in need of in his social environment, the street worker – who is making a career and not just doing “a job” – is, in principle and by necessity, a committed, versatile and experienced professional. For he cannot obtain satisfactory and constant results from his work, - i.e. *the successful reinsertion on regular periods of a satisfactory number of children and youngsters forced through social exclusion to live in more or less permanent dependence of the street* –if he does not possess and constantly invest his experience, although often empirical, in his daily work. It cannot be otherwise because the vital needs of the excluded children and youngsters are more numerous, and the ways to deal with them are more complex as compared with the needs of “normal children”.

Let's take as example one of the fundamental needs, i.e. education and tuition which are the only ones capable of turning a “small biped and thinking animal” into a human being. If it needs only one teacher to educate about thirty “normal” children” in a class room, at least three times more and a lot more time are necessary to first prepare and then teach efficiently the same number of children in the street within a structure of accommodation and social rehabilitation which should normally provide more ramifications in order to be functional. In this unequal importance of the needs, the same goes for all the means and methods of action demanded by the profession of street worker, including of course the financial resources.

By professional necessity, the street worker who takes his work to heart and seriously, borrows know-how, at more or less high levels, from the professions of health agent, of nutritionist, of psychologist, of sociologist, of legal expert, of barrister, of criminologist, of politician, of manager of a humanitarian association, of mobilizing agent in human, material and especially financial resources. He borrows from the profession of writer, organizer of various meetings for the exchange of experience and professional information, etc. And here we are, forced to borrow from the profession of *communicator* for, one of the realities from which he suffers most of all in his human environment is the indifference due to the others' ignorance of what he is and what he does. Now, apart from a few century old and proven specialised institutions but linked to a small number of religious congregations, no great number of old institutions, comparable to public schools and specially conceived to train future street workers in their profession exist to date in the world.

Everywhere in most cases, one becomes a social street worker by putting into practice the saying “*c'est en forgeant qu'on devient forgeron*” (it's by forging that one becomes a blacksmith) .

But then, if the definitely committed and in principle professionally versatile street worker is widely experienced, he is also most often *overburdened* with work. He seldom has the time to do other things than looking after the children and youngsters he is taking care of and, in any case, he has to avoid to disappoint them regarding the fulfilment of his responsibilities towards them since, to have them paying attention, he has promised them they would soon have access to a better future.

Under the constraints and urgencies generated by the necessity to satisfy the multiple needs of the children and the youngsters whose sufferings he shares, the street worker defies his own physical and nervous exhaustion. He ranks the urgencies according to their nature, he acts night and day. He hurries where time is short and where the situation is most serious. He carries out in priority what seems to him immediately and directly useful for the child in social distress.

In these exceptional work conditions, the result is that, without wanting to, the street worker leaves out of his priorities certain fields of activity, yet even important and useful than the others for his targets. It is the case concerning the media which singularity and complexity as profession are briefly, but very clearly laid out in the present guide book, to the attention of those who would wish to learn about them or find new avenues to exploit in order to improve their professional quality.

What we wish to enhance here is that *social street work*, is neither ordinary nor easy. This is not a profession one can undertake because one finds nothing else to do or because one is not capable of doing something else. It is a real and important profession that relieves the States, the communes and the families from serious consequences owing to dysfunctions in human societies. Street children, children exploited in all kinds of labour, are nowadays worldwide reaching a figure of over five million. The majority of these children and youngsters only find shelter, comfort and relief for their sufferings in company of the street worker. If social **street** work is dedicated to lift up those who have been trampled down by society, it is in no way lowness. It is a noble profession in the real sense of the word. It deserves to be recognised as such in public opinions throughout the world.

It is hoped that this guidebook will contribute to that end, and that other similar works on the various fields of activity of the street worker will, likewise, enrich the bibliography of the profession thanks to the intuition and the recklessness of the Dynamo International Network.

Alphonse Tay
Former civil servant of UNESCO.

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We want to thank all those who took part in the conception and the writing of the guide, in particular the members of the network of street workers, the various national workshops, the journalists and the experts in communication, but also all the young people (and sometimes less young) who are the final beneficiaries of this project.

Their good advices and their field testimonies have permitted to improve the book's contents and they have also ensured a good balance between practical and theoretical approach.

We thank also the DAPHNE programme of the European Commission, whose financial support was essential.

1. Introduction

“As a matter of fact, who are you and what do you actually do ?” This is a typical question which recurrence finally annoys. No one would think of asking this kind of question to a baker or a butcher.

Having said that, one must admit that if the question is raised, it is due to a patent lack of clarity, inherent in the profession.

No street worker escapes the challenge regarding expression through communication and the difficult exercise of having to reply to this haunting question.

If nowadays social street work holds an important symbolic asset, it is still unrecognised in its distinctive features and its essence, a handicap that it generally has in common with its public. Incomprehension and misunderstandings become therefore their daily lot.

And yet, social street work is a topic often mentioned...

The different local and international meetings that deal with the question of social street work highlight certain findings relating to the profession and to the contacted public, to their sufferings and their life conditions. More particularly, it is in the follow-up of the international forum for stakeholders on street children and street work, “Words from the Street”, organised by Dynamo international in November 2002 in Brussels, that the need to endow the street workers with more adequate communication tools has been established.

As a reminder, more than 750 people from 50 different countries took part in the event. Lectures, workshops and artistic productions were in turn ensured by the youngsters and the street workers, resulting in a certain number of recommendations (see enclosure) to the attention of the local and international political authorities. The forum “Words from the Street” enjoyed the patronage of UNESCO, the support of many political personalities and the sponsorship of the Senegalese artist Youssou N’Dour.

An international network of street work

This forum was not one amongst many. It was the result of several years of reflection and actions achieved by means of a research-action, co-ordinated by Dynamo international, an international solidarity network consisting of several hundreds of social street workers throughout the world.

In drawing up the present guidebook, this network carries on with its reflections and its mobilisation.

Above its objective to raise the awareness of both the public and the political opinion, the creation of such a network also has a training target by means of an exchange of practices at international level.

This is how, to draw up this guidebook, eight countries took a more active part : Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Martinique (French province), Germany, Senegal and Nepal.

Other member countries of the network, such as Vietnam, Quebec, Haiti, Mexico, the Philippines, etc. also brought their contributions.

The guidebook, a collective process

What is at stake through this mobilisation is to create a training guide for street workers on communication towards the media and public opinion.

Several stages were necessary in each participating workshop :

1st stage :

The street workers from different countries drew up an inventory of the situation regarding information and communication of their respective associations.

2nd stage :

A question list was submitted to journalists, political mandate holders and youngsters in contact with the street workers.

3rd stage :

Each workshop carried out a communication action, in order to test it and draw from the concrete reality the lessons that are needed for the contents of the guidebook. This was especially the case in Martinique (February 2004) and at Lille (France – June 2004) where two international conferences were held assembling several hundreds of participants.

4th stage :

Collective writing and reading of the guidebook.

5th stage :

Spreading and promotion of the guidebook.

Europe in the street

This process was enabled thanks to the financing of the General Direction of Justice and Home affairs of the European Commission, within the frame of the DAPHNE 2003 programme.

If the European dimension is here predominant owing to the number of participating European countries, let us right away pick out the implication of extra European countries such as Senegal and Nepal. They did not hesitate to bring their contribution to the project with a concern for international solidarity and coherence.

In this trend of thought, at the forum “Words from the street”, Jean Blairon indicated : *“It seems to me that we have succeeded in detecting that this production mechanism of the “street child” social statute, apart from huge and cruel particularities, is no doubt the same in the North and in the South. The life street children or children in the street have to endure, be it North or South, constitutes no doubt the two faces of one and the same medal : there is certainly a unity in the issue, notwithstanding the differences which are sometimes enormous.”*¹

To fight efficiently against this international calamity by means of the same profession is undoubtedly the main motivation and the strongest cement for the street workers who have to act in such distant fields as well as with very different publics and moreover not only young publics.

A practical tool

Do not be mistaken, this guidebook was not only written by street workers for street workers. It will also be a source of inspiration for many other actors such as teachers, students and other social workers when conceiving communication towards the media.

¹ In “Proceedings of the International Forum for Stakeholders on Street Children and Street Work ” November 2002.

But a warning is nevertheless essential as to the limits of said exercise.

Indeed, this guide is first of all a practical tool. It is not meant to be an exhaustive and scientific treaty on communication. Moreover, it is not predominantly concerned with lobbying methods towards public authorities. Lobbying is a fully-fledged profession, even if some connections exist in the field of communication.

Neither does the guidebook treat communication of the street worker towards his public and his daily environment in detail; a wider subject which could be the subject of a later publication regarding street work methodology.

The guide is first and foremost the result of experiences in a very distinctive sector.

Many studies exist treating communication pertinently in general : they can eventually constitute a further source of information for all those who wish to go deeper into the matter.

Nevertheless, if you wish to improve your knowledge of the subject, rely on facts. Trials and mistakes in your daily practice remain an excellent source of improvement.

2. A guide book for social street workers

A training guide...

Training policies have spread themselves in nearly all the professional fields. And a majority of organisations have adequate programmes at their disposal. And yet, social street work, owing to its precariousness, still has very little means to develop training methods adapted to its practice.

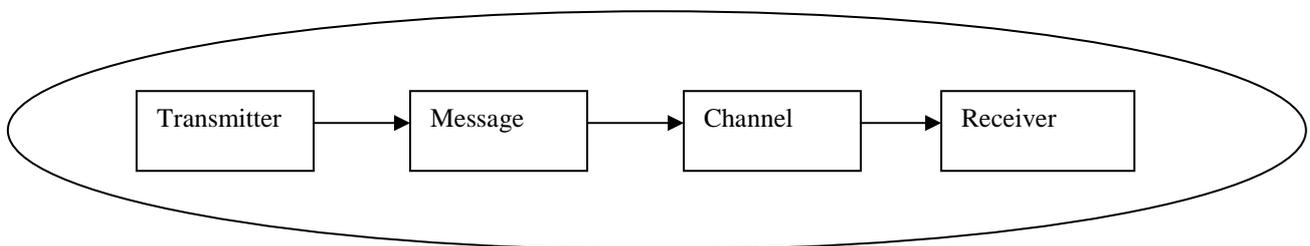
This guidebook has as purpose to give street workers a maximum of practical tips in order to improve their communication towards the media. In fact, a self-training guide which will hopefully entice the urge to take a step further.

... to communication

The dictionary states that “to communicate” means : to be in contact with somebody, make something known to somebody, transmit, supply, reveal, exchange, correspond.

Here we shall focus our words on the following aspects :

- **strategies** of communication
- **relational** assets, one needs to know one’s target and to be in close connection with it in order to communicate better
- **techniques**, relating to the transmission of information.



Any communication demands:

A transmitter: some one who is at the origin of the communication.

A receiver: some one who is the target of the communication.

A message: what the transmitter wishes to say to the receiver.

A channel: the means to reach the receiver (a paper, television, radio, telephone, direct contact, et.)

More complex schemes are often proposed. They include elements of context, of sound, of signal, of code, of perception, etc. Those interested can refer amongst others to the *Shannon-Weaver*, *Harold D. Lasswell* or *Roman Jakobson* models. On Internet, via Google for instance, type their name and you will find everything you want to know.

... towards the media and public opinion

It is generally admitted that street workers suffer from a lack of recognition. Public opinion is not sufficiently informed. But how is it possible to move public opinion ? It can certainly be reached at district or commune level. For instance : through exhibitions, meetings, posters, happenings, festivities, etc. But to move this opinion

at a wider level than the immediate environment is very difficult. In that case it is necessary to resort to intermediaries, multipliers who will act as loudspeakers, as relays, with a large number of persons. This is the traditional part played by the media.

This is why present guidebook will mainly stick to the media's part in a communication strategy.

... for street workers

One does not communicate in the same manner if one talks about a football club, a brand of fizzy water or what social street work is about.

As the street worker often lacks preparation to communicate in public, it appeared to us useful to conceive this guide as help to go about it in a professional manner, but also in a manner that is coherent with the specificity of his work.

Of course, the idea is not to propose a speech ready for use by every street worker wishing to express himself via the media.

Each context, each reality, each situation demands an appropriate language, the exercise would therefore be as vain as useless, if not dangerous.

It is therefore necessary for each street worker to adapt his speech to the reality and to the reality of the media present in his country and to remain conscious of the educational part he has to hold.

For there lays the essence of the message or messages to be communicated "Will the information contribute to a better knowledge of the reality, is it truthful ?" So many questions, which cannot permit touting, canvassing or simplistic speeches.

Which leads to the finding that both the press and the public at large recurrently have very strange ways of broaching certain subjects concerning social street work. Labels such as "delinquents", "brawlers", "junkies" are often used. A street worker will instead prefer to talk about behaviour – symptom – indicating a difficult situation needing to be improved in order to get rid of the symptom. Delinquency or drug addictions are never identities.

The street worker will often have a tendency to describe the situation positively and will prefer to base his arguments on the potential and interesting aspects present, rather than fall into the pervading pessimism.

Street children: a showy topic.

The media (newspapers, radio and television), when they speak about the problems street children face, present the situation as one which never ceases to worsen, which makes people think that there is a continuous increase in drug consumption, violence, prostitution and child pornography. Most media, when they take on these issues, do it in a showy way. We really lack newspapers providing faithful information and news stories likely to inform accurately and raise awareness among the public.

Humberto Duran Campoamor, Coordinador del Proyecto Niños de la Calle y Farmacodependencia, Facultad de Psicología UAEM. Cuernavaca, México.

Objective: convincing the government first

It is essential to have a communication strategy so that the government should provide budget for social work at all levels (from local to central).

Vietnam is a developing country, so experiences and lessons drawn from developed countries may not be put into practice in Vietnam.

Workshop from Vietnam.

3. Social street work, a fully-fledged profession

It first of all, let's mark out the field of social street work, in order to get a better grasp of its particularities a international level. Admittedly, a really theoretical and universal frame in the matter does not exist. However, it can be confirmed that, here and there and at some given moments, social stakeholders have privileged an extra muros approach based on a strong ethic made of respect and tolerance for the benefit of the most excluded populations.

3.1. The last link

For these stakeholders, it is essential to be as easily and simply accessible by a public consisting of children, youngsters and adults knowing difficult life conditions and multiple forms of exclusion.

These stakeholders are therefore particularly well placed to observe the secondary effects of a certain type of globalisation in which the "non producers" are often left in the lurch.

Through his proximity and his integration in the most excluded social backgrounds, the street worker remains **the last link** of the educational chain and social assistance, when all the other relevant authorities have failed.

Social street work gives privilege to an innovating proximity approach where the public plays a predominant part in the action, both at the start (the demand) and during its unfolding (the accompaniment).

Priority is given to prevention in general, to the reducing of risks and to remedying with a care for social well being.

Of course, social street work is marked by the diversity and the creativity of its approaches. It is therefore not always easy to describe this profession in a couple of sentences. And, above all, a too simplistic definition would leave us unsatisfied.

We shall try nevertheless to have a clearer insight.

In fact, there are everywhere in the world adults, professionals or not, who daily involve themselves in the street, the districts and the suburbs. And this, in order to bring to the excluded a perspective of social emancipation : assistance, accompaniment, education, support, lend a sympathetic ear, give information, comfort with a view towards social emancipation.

Whether one calls them **social street workers, educators** and/or **street entertainers, proximity workers, workers in open environment, detached workers** or **street workers**, all of them regularly and resolutely commit themselves on the field in order to bring to youngsters and adults suffering from social discrimination, services of quality in which the **human dimension, respect** of the other person and **confidence** serve as cornerstone to the action.

Three types of action

Social street work exists more or less everywhere in the world, but often in small proportions. This work is multi-faceted. So that is definition would demand a separate publication of its own. Let's however pick out several constants in the practices.

Informal education, **action centred on the life environment of the child, the youngster or the adult** is essentially privileged through three types of action :

- individual help
- communal action
- collective action

Individual help

To reply to the demands expressed by the target public, an accompaniment can be initiated. The latter has to be light, free of condemnation. It can only be conceived through a global approach and has to remain close to daily realities.

This accompaniment is considered as a participating process with an educational character, aiming the emancipation and the autonomy of the public concerned.

This participating process has for purpose to give or give back a position of a subject-actor in the full meaning of the term. The intervention is often of a general and multifaceted nature. It varies from lending a sympathetic ear to mediation, from survival to blossoming. Both possibilities and situations are immense.

Consequently, the street worker has to be regularly, easily and without difficulty accessible by the public in its life environment. So is it that one talks about “district rounds”, of “district presence”, of “hanging about the zone”, etc.

Communal action

The street worker cannot separate his interventions from the contexts in which he acts. For that reason he takes into account all the potential local actors liable to inter-act. In this way he takes part in the various dynamics created by – and with – the local community, whilst at the same time keeping his own specificity as full actor.

The street worker will especially see to it that existing social networks of solidarity be maintained and/or new ones emerge.

Through his action, the street worker becomes integrated in an environment in which he moves about. This way, all the actors get to know him as a reliable and trustworthy person, liable to give the community the necessary and useful tools for its good functioning.

Thanks to the individual help given, the street worker comes up against many problems belonging to the private and individual life. Communal work strives precisely to re-translate this data into a public issue.

In fact, the question is to transform certain recurrent problems experienced individually into collective problems, which will have to become real society preoccupations, and therefore will be introduced in the political agenda.

Example of public question

During two to three years, several street workers and social workers in open environment became aware of an abnormal number of demands for accompaniment from youngsters, end of August, beginning of September. These demands exclusively concerned refusals of inscriptions by the schools. After a press campaign and further to several questions with the Minister of Education, the latter finally sent a circular letter to the school heads clearly stating the conditions of inscriptions or refusal. The following year, the situation had considerably improved and refusals of inscription became scarce².

Edwin de Boevé, Dynamo International, Brussels

² Several testimonies from journalists, youngsters, field actors mentioned in this guide book are the responsibility of their authors. As it happens, they will sometimes be contradictory, but we thought it interesting to compare ideas.

Within the framework of street work, various observations emerged with the time. Indoor Girls were often confronted with precarious working conditions: limited room, damp problems, violation of minimal safety standards, excessive rents... Street girls, on their part, were sometimes faced with abusive repression.

On the basis of these observations, NGOs working on the field asked local authorities to set up a 'think tank' on the future of prostitutes. These meetings gathered representatives from local authorities, police forces, local NGO's and prostitutes. They already led to a municipal ordinance providing a legal framework for indoor prostitution. Discussions about street prostitution have not yet taken place.

Michèle Villain, ICAR Project, Liège, Belgium.

Collective action

Collective action can constitute a front door, a passage, continuity or a result of global action. Be it for instance sport practice or cultural and artistic activities, these various supports permit to achieve the social-educational objectives aimed at.

Concretely, street work leans on all sorts of activities, which are so many opportunities to build a common experience with as result an increase in confidence.

The general public is sometimes surprised at this playful dimension. In fact, this type of action contributes to the implementation of one of the subtlest aspects of the methodology of street social work, which we call the "double bait".

To begin with, the intervention by means of activities and meetings in the street seems without great contents and unimportant. However, after some time, when the problematic situation becomes apparent, the quality of the first contact will prove decisive to overcome the difficulty. This approach demands a real anticipation : everything is prepared beforehand so as to be efficient at the right moment.

These different dimensions are not automatically present in all the practices of social street work. But very often, one way or the other, these three dimensions penetrate into each other, whilst prioritising one or the other aspect.

3.2. Street worker, a privileged witness...

The street worker is a privileged witness of how an increasing number of outcasts are living. Therefore his mission is multipurpose :

- mention the problems experienced
- make public opinion and authorities aware
- contribute to a better perception of the phenomena
- and in so doing contribute to the creation of possible solutions to the causes of social delinquency.

To be efficient, it is necessary for the street worker to be considered as a trustworthy reference, be it with his direct public, public opinion or the public authorities. To achieve this, he gains by getting to be identified clearly and by proving his social usefulness.

Chose the right persons to communicate

Street workers must sell their know-how, prove they have an important social part to play. They themselves are convinced they do the right thing. But it remains to convince the citizens and the mandate holders, since they are the ones who pay. What is social produces nothing material. It only lives, even survives with the help of supports, subsidiaries, etc... To obtain money, it is essential to convince those who have funds to grant them. That is where resides the whole problem. Therefore, to be recognised is

ensuring the means to put on "top of the bill" the right persons, those who are capable of explaining, convince, reassure... And from this point of view, the game is far from being won.

A movement, a political party must have a leader and significant representative. Charisma is of great importance, especially today when communication is omnipresent. At periods of election, people vote preferably for man than for the political party he represents. What is social obeys to this rule. When the time comes for this sector to be "unanimously" represented by persons who know how to communicate and "sell" their ideals, an important leap forwards will have been achieved.

Vincent Landat – Social Annonces, Portugal

Until one year ago our policy was: stay away from the media... We wanted to work efficiently while remaining discrete. However, when we realized that we were rather perceived as a shelter for robbers, and possibly even as accomplices, we thought that changing our external image could be a good idea. Following an expansion of our activities (emergency line, anti-drug program, mobile school, participation in networks of NGOs, etc) we decided to change our strategy and started to collaborate with the media. Two of our employees were given the task to visit every editorial office. Bonds were created.

Since then, we have invited journalists to brainstorming sessions, events, festivals, etc. Foreign media are very responsive as well as local ones, though the latter tend to be less attracted by visits in slums or in the street... But they remain important because only through them will we be able to change the perception local people have of our work and of the reality of the street.

Yesterday for instance, we gathered the press and police officials to mark the beginning of a national campaign of clothes collection. This was actually first and foremost a good opportunity for us to raise awareness about the reality of the street.

A few months ago, we had problems with local gangs. We decided to contact the press and journalists understood that many young people were used by the gangs, that they were victims rather than offenders. An article on this topic was published and, since then, we have become a group of reference for the press in this field.

We also have regular collaboration links with local radio stations, TV channels and newspapers and we receive a good coverage from international media (from Belgium, Italy, Japan and The Netherlands). It goes without saying that this international coverage also facilitates our research for funds, which can not be overlooked.

We are thus really satisfied with our media strategy. At our last festival, for example, we mobilized four TV channels and 15 journalists working for newspapers. All this does not prevent us however from remaining vigilant on the ethics of our initiatives. We often reconsider the following question: to which extent can one use young people to make our cause advance?

Jean-Christophe Ryckmans, Chandrodaya, Nepal

3.3. ... but which is difficult to explain

Right away, let's admit the nearly pathological difficulty for street workers to define themselves.

In fact, an important understatement³ between street workers' practices often considered remarkable and the way in which they account for them is noted. Above this discrepancy in the reporting on the nature of street work, two usual manners in which to describe the profession should be conceived anew.

1° The negative definition : one presents its specificity by denying to belong to the present majority currents, consisting in security, sanitary or technocratic policies; if this mode of definition has the merit to voice a more than ever necessary resistance, it asserts itself in a much too dependant manner with regard to what it aims to fight and falls down on contents.

This is furthermore a specific particularity of the social field to define itself by what one is not, one talks indeed of **non-merchant** sector, of association **without** lucrative purpose, etc.

³ In *La prévention, un concept en déperdition*- publisher Luc Pire – jacqueline Fastrès and Jean Blairon.

2° *The thematic definition* : one meets the difficulty of clarifying the concept by substituting to it priorities one knows are not sufficiently justified but which “have the merit of existing”; this is the case, apparently, of “themes” such as drug addiction, delinquency, school truancy, etc. which do not respect the diversity of actual situations and which are often “one war late” as compared to the real needs and urgencies. If the themes enjoy the advantage of being more visible and easy to grasp, one should nevertheless fear that their relative maladjustment to the necessities of the field will lead to a weakening or a loss of legitimacy of the actions which would not be an integral part of it; one also should fear the establishment of a too large gap between the official projects and the actions effectively undertaken⁴.

The street worker is a general practitioner who stays tuned to all the problems of a population and an environment, whereas subsidies and programmes by themes are often very simplistic and uncomfortable.

We must therefore try to improve these definitions by trying to find a wording

- which does not takes the form of a continuous justification;
- characteristic to the social street work sector, but stated in an affirmative manner;
- allowing to make real choices;
- referring to the “public mission” filled by the street workers;
- consequently constructed in connection with the users.

When we meet children in the street, people’s reactions goes from indifference to hostility... Street children are perceived as a source of problem and any organization protecting them can also sometimes be taken to task for supposed or proven bad deeds committed by the children. The problem is not especially related to street workers but more generally to a lack of understanding, of knowledge of the street and of the children who live and work there.

Jean-Christophe Ryckmans, Chandrodaya Shelter, Katmandu, Nepal.

Communication problems come with the non-existing visibility of street workers’ work. They should write more about their role in society, and they obviously should be in the Internet

I think all street workers should have some guidelines regarding how to behave with the press. Maybe they could ask for workshops in that area to qualify the workers who will have to deal with that kind of questions. It is very important to have a consistent image, which transmits credit and professional work.

My suggestion is to have a member of each team of street workers specially trained for dealing with the media.

Also the Internet should be more used. Most street teams in Portugal don’t even use email, and do not know what colleagues abroad are doing, and most times don’t even care.

Marta Borges, Social Worker and “communication expert”, Portugal

“Street workers forget that they in live in a “meditated” world and that it demands communication skills.”

Bernardo Ramirez, Communication Expert, Portugal

⁴ Prevention in Youth Assistance. Results of the research by the “ Conseil communautaire de l’aide à la jeunesse ”.

3.4. Should one communicate ? To what extent ?

One does not communicate towards public opinion and the press without reason. To communicate is not an end in itself, but a means to reach one's aim. Several reasons, which may very well combine, incline to turn to the media :

- make the specificity and usefulness of street work known and recognised by public opinion, but also by the target public of the street workers;
- look for the assistance and the support of public authorities, sponsors, and private citizens, etc. by making oneself better known;
- bring to the attention of public opinion and political authorities the specific problems encountered by the street workers to obtain their reaction (legal support, with regard to a project, ...)
- act directly on public opinion : for instance, a local press campaign can have as direct effect to improve the image of the youngsters among the inhabitants;
- summon up public opinion in support of social links favouring communication and citizenship.

"Granted that it is difficult to bring individuals to exteriorise, to free themselves from their immediate preoccupations and to reflect on the present and the future of the world. Collective incentives are lacking to reach this end. Now, most of the former communication, reflecting and consultation proceedings have vanished in favour of an individualism and a solitude often synonymous with anguish and neurosis⁵"

This goes to say communication becomes consequently a priority for the street worker.

Street workers are misjudged and, above all, not well accepted. People know what they do but do not accept them because a number of taboos and considerations of our own make it difficult for people to understand how we can devote ourselves to mentally retarded people or to dropouts. We should really make people more aware of the fact that street workers are as essential as food, water and electric power.

Mr Samba N-Ba, journalist at the 'Sud Quotidien', M'Bour, Senegal.

Visibility and discretion.

Of course, street work cannot systematically and continuously be carried out under the eyes of public opinion and under focus of the news.

As a rule, this profession is only efficient because it is exercised in privacy, at the interfaces and at the margin of what can easily be visualised. Trust, confidence and professional secrecy are the essential ingredients of any field practice. In fact, the public one is in touch with would hardly appreciate it if the street worker were not discreet enough, versus media star.

It is necessary therefore to exercise a just proportioning between what is visible and what is not, between what is kept in confidence and what is called out, between isolation and the involvement of all in what all of us are concerned by.

Remain true and sincere

The instrumentation of the street worker and/or his public for media purposes is another big trap into which it is difficult not to fall. The media logic of absolute visibility, rapidity, sensationalism and victimisation is very remote from the logic of street work. A communication strategy, let's be aware of it, is also and foremost a

⁵ GUATTARI Félix, "Pour une refondation des pratiques sociales ", in Le Monde Diplomatique, Paris octobre 1992

negotiation strategy. The actors of this negotiation must be conscious that everything is not acceptable and that it is sometimes necessary to stay in the shadow, rather than enter into a “media hit” which is counter productive with the objectives of social street work.

This is the case, notably, when a journalist asks you if he can accompany you in your district rounds. There is a risk your public will feel put in an unwanted limelight and therefore will not appreciate this media intrusion.

Therefore, a preliminary consists in warning your public, in explaining the meaning and the usefulness of the initiative and in asking for the agreement of the persons concerned. If you are interviewed, your public will only appreciate your intervention if you speak in its interest and remain true to your daily way of acting.

Exaggerate, embellish, divulge confidences, even denigrate your target public, may have as a result to lose all at once the trust you had gained and which it took you such a long time to secure.

For us, communication with some media and with public authorities is really important. It makes it possible for us to show them that we do exist, to present them a new project, to have some doors opened, to create a good atmosphere and to say unambiguously what we think in front of everybody.

Zaki, Khalid and Mickaël, young people from Dynamo, Brussels, Belgium.

To communicate : this is not part of my profession !

It is also not advisable to centre the success and efficiency of social street work on its visibility. Certainly, it is in each street worker’s interest to explain his action clearly. But he does not necessarily have to undertake this fastidious and difficult exercise of calling out and arouse public testimony. In a team, the capabilities of a colleague may be put to use. In certain countries, groupings (federations, collectives, ...) take this type of action in hand with a more striking effect owing to their important number of representatives.

Social street work is a difficult, exhausting and underpaid profession. Those with a long experience are few in the profession. And since the capacities to communicate increase with the time, it is not without advantage to share work and experience between colleagues.

Street workers do not communicate enough with the media. When a problem arises, they immediately remember the press, but once the problem is solved, they never come to give us any feedback while we, as journalists, must ensure a follow-up of such issues. They also consider sometimes that some issues are taboo.

Madame Issa Dior Sall, journalist & Head of station at Radio Sud FM in M’Bour, Sénégal.

What would persuade you, as a journalist, to write an article or draw up a file about the issue of young people and about the work that is being achieved by social street workers?

New situations, new solutions, something that would stand in the headlines.

To give you a clear example, we can not write an article every Monday on the « botellón » (young people drinking alcohol in the street in order to limit the price they would have to pay if they drank the same drinks in pubs), as this phenomenon is already well known to the public.

Ok, we can speak about it from time to time. However, in any case, we always write an article when teachers propose new solutions (for example, offering condoms, rewards or anything, to young people who do not drink when they have to drive afterwards, like what has been recently started by “Junta de Andalucía”) or if we observe any new trend among young people. What matters is that the issue can be published in the headlines.

Don Fernando Del Valle, chief-editor of ABC CORDOBA, Espagne

Communicate or act : must one chose ?

To communicate is to act and every action sends information. It is therefore impossible “not to communicate”, this is a well-known fact. Remains this essential question : what space and what time will one dedicate to communication strategies and actions ?

The street worker’s reflex will be to give privilege to his daily field action. This action is as a rule so time-consuming that there is no other availability left. Before one makes choices, it is necessary to define which are the priorities.

In passing, let us regret the situation in which a large number of street workers find themselves all the same compelled to dedicate a much too important time to make themselves known with the only purpose to survive. This reveals a blatant incoherence in certain society choices.

3.5. Political authority : only at short term ?

Can one, without hesitation, oppose the temporal logic of the political world and that of the street workers ? No. For whereas the street worker inscribes his action within the long term with finalities which gain sense with time, this does not prevent him from pursuing aims at short term, by means of certain very specific projects. The political profession aims also, in its essence, long term finalities. The programme and the values of one or the other party are so many projects which will only be achieved in a more or less long period of time.

The difficulty lies in the confusion made by some political authorities between the end and the means. Unfortunately, certain political representatives tend to privilege more and more their (re)elections through all sorts of self promoting tactics giving as argument the fact that “the end justifies the means”, but at the same time forgetting that these means stray sometimes far away from their actual finalities.

The cohabitation of politicians and street workers is therefore only possible on condition they are all respectful and conscience of each other’s finalities. Even if these finalities do not always tally.

In order to gain in efficiency and really fight against the causes of social sufferings, the street worker needs to have as first partner the political officials. Together they will be able, within the limits of their means, to influence the train of events. This collaboration may take a much more institutional and well-targeted shape, notably through lobbying. Lobbying is a practice for the defence of corporate interests, very widespread in the commercial sector. Each sector, even each enterprise, has its own lobbying service in contact with the competent authorities. It is a fully-fledged profession but we are not taking it specifically in consideration here. This admitted, an efficient lobbying in the street work sector could be useful and is not necessarily incompatible with the non-commercial aspect of the sector.

It is in the interest of politicians and street workers to stay in a kind of conflicting collaboration, where each one keeps to one’s place and function for the benefit of noble finalities, which is, let’s also admit it, more frequent than suspected.

Combine short and long term

The street worker’s action is of course based on the long term, but also by means of short-term projects. And from a political point of view, if one does not bet on the short term, one will wear oneself out and lose one’s credibility. What is required, I state it otherwise, is to act on the short term but within a long-term strategy.

Every politician is aware that nothing goes fast. The least communal project, in the field of public works for instance, may take two or three years between the moment the decision is taken and the time project is actually finalised. We know that projects of social cohesion are realised in the long term.

Pierre Lardot, deputy mayor of the social integration, Brussels

As a group, we wanted to do up a place we call *the little park*. The municipal authorities did not want to, because they wanted to turn the place into a parking or to build a house on it. We decided to put pressure on them. We organized several meetings everyday with the deputy mayor in charge, street workers and a number of young people from the area. The deputy mayor was quite impressed to see such motivated and serious young people attending those meetings.

Fouad et Rami, young people from Dynamo, Brussels, Belgium.

4. The media today : immediate and sensational

The media do not always enjoy a good reputation among the street workers. First of all, the media seem to be more interested nowadays in what is sensational and immediate rather than by fundamental actions, often based on the long term, such as street work.

The media are more and more commercial. Journalists have less and less time to investigate and prepare their articles or broadcasts as, competition is very strong. Urgency is becoming the rule.

Fears felt by the street workers of risking to be manipulated are therefore well founded. But it is possible to bypass the problem, at least partly.

To begin with, avoid the media especially interested by news items, preferably with blood shed, by gossips, scandals of all kinds that tend to flatter our lower instincts. One should avoid those like the pest.

But many other, more “serious” media exist which try to understand, to inform their public and which can dedicate more deep going reports on a theme such as street work. One has to identify them, same as the various journalists who belong to these media. This particular weekly regularly opens its columns to social themes, this particular journalist has already covered a subject on street children.

First of all it will be a question of spending a certain time to discover your potential targets in your local environment. Which dailies, which televisions and radio broadcasts, etc. ?

But it will be necessary to take into account at least one **imperative** : the journalists need a hook, a story worth telling, an event on which to comment which will serve as starter to a paper or a broadcast.

To convince a journalist to write a paper on street work will be more easy if you announce, for instance, that the park in the centre of the city will be transformed, during a week-end, in a vast public library in open air for the children and that this will give him the opportunity to meet youngsters and street workers. Even if a journalist finds your action interesting, it will be difficult for him to write a report on the matter if you don't give him some interesting information for this readers, things to film, people to interview.

Distinguish the media

It is essential to be able to tell the “media” apart : what possible analogy is there between the popular M6 channel and Lien Social ? Between Paris Match and the committed periodical Politis ? Between Les dernières nouvelles d'Alsace and France Inter ? Between the satirical weekly Charly Hebdo and Travail Social actualités ?

How does one go about to make the big media understand that certain subjects cannot be treated the way they do it? How can one explain to the managers of television channels that A. Kechiche, author of the social film on life in the districts L'Esquive, was nearly prevented from filming in the chosen district, since the population had such a bad image of cameras, and to what point and obstinacy the inhabitants felt themselves betrayed by the journalists ?

Even if all the media do not deserve to be put in the same basket, we have to fight head-on the fact that, much too often, they satisfy themselves to exhibit what is spectacular, what is dramatic, the search of a culprit and of a farfetched simplification.

Consequently, I think social workers should know how to refuse certain media coverage, far more destructive than beneficial. Remind once more that this action's parameter is the long term... However and all the same, social work unrecognised and threatened as it is, should very obviously turn more resolutely towards press coverage of its action... Not so easy ...

Joel Plantet – Lien Social, France

Watch out where the media are concerned ?

Certain distrust is due to the stereotypes inflicted on the media (they are all corrupt, middle class conventional, etc). It took me six months before certain associations working with homeless people opened their door for me, but I understand their reluctance, for certain mass media got in touch with them before I did and caused a lot of damage with their sensationalist view.

But, please, let's not throw away what is worthwhile with what is bad. Curiously, this negative attitude towards journalists proceeds more from street workers than from the youngsters.

Pierre Schonbrodt, Télé Brussels, Belgium

Also show what is successful

The press could come in the districts to film or write about examples or things, that work, know success. One has to show them they can film other things than cars on fire!

Vincent Landat - former street worker and journalist in Social annonces, France

Street workers are afraid of us

Educators are afraid of journalists because they think they are going to misrepresent the information given or retain only what is sensational, leaving out what is important for the street worker. But we have succeeded in creating a climate of confidence between us and the social associations, so that we often speak to each other, they explain their situation, the problems they have to face and we do our best to relay them in order to urge the government authorities to take some adequate measures.

Issa Dior Sall, station head of SUDFM, Mbour, Senegal

In our work, we meet people who are faced with extremely precarious living conditions (prostitution, drug addiction...). These unusual people do sometimes attract greedy journalists looking for showy topics to present in an article or in a TV program. It is thus sometimes necessary to ask for a right of inspection on the report before it is published. It often makes it possible for us to prevent distortions or overstatements that have a commercial scope.

Michèle Villain, ICAR Project, Liège, Belgium

5. The journalist's profession

If you have to contact journalists, it is best to know how they work and how, where they are concerned, they see things. To be sure your information will have a good feedback, it is necessary to understand their realities and to take their needs into account.

Hereafter, therefore a few succinct notions of journalism.

5.1. The star questions : who, what , where, when, why, how, how much ?

Every lesson on journalism begins with this reference on the seven fundamental questions that see to it that a information is complete. In English it is easier to remember them because the first five questions begin with W : who, what, where, when, why.

In principle therefore, a journalist will seek information until he has a reply to all these questions.

If you want to communicate information to a journalist, it will therefore be necessary to ask yourself the same questions before you meet him. A kind of rehearsal before coming on stage. You will then realise perhaps that certain important information are lacking. (When did the project start ? How many youngsters have taken part ? etc.)

The answers cannot be vague either. Here a few examples :

Too vague	Let's be precise
There was quite a crowd	We gathered 500 people
We organised various activities for the young	We organised a rap concert, a karate show, a football match youths-educators
<i>A long time ago</i>	Two years ago
<i>We need funds to finance the premises</i>	We need 300 Euros to adjust the premises
The project has well progressed	The project is half finished, we still have to paint the walls and the window frames

Social journalism... the poor relation?

Though the object of this guide is to motivate social street workers to communicate with the media, one has to bear in mind that the social agenda is not always well thought of among journalists. Considered as hardly marketable by salesmen, it does not (or seldom) belong to the topics that are viewed as « eye-catching » by journalists themselves.

The social agenda is indeed not the favourite topic of ambitious journalists. You may probably meet journalists having a passion for social issues, some of them do. Such journalists are however often marginalized within their own editorial office and must really struggle to have their articles published. And above all, you will meet journalists covering the field until they find something better. The fact is that (unfortunately) it is more prestigious in this profession, as for public opinion, to be the one who socializes with politicians, heads of companies, movie stars or famous sportsmen than to be seen as the street workers` friend. It is more rewarding to have an article about the war in Iraq published on the front page than one on page twelve about the opening of a new youth centre in the suburbs. You may thus well

be faced with a rapid rotation of your contact persons, which will not make it easier for you to create, and above all maintain, your media contacts network.

Having said that, brought back into fashion by the alterglobalist movement, social issues, and especially street issues enjoy renewed popularity among the media everywhere in the world. This new trend is a real source of hope....

5.2. The law of proximity

The law of mileage dead end

It is perhaps a pity, but each human being has its weaknesses. What is nearby arouses his concern more than what happens further away from him.

A car injury in his street will concern the citizen more than an accident at the other end of the city. A fire killing five people will have more impact if it occurs in his district, rather than a fire killing 50 people on the other side of the world.

The feelings

This geographical law also applies at affective level : the citizen will feel more concerned if he knows the people, if the event is related to themes near and dear to him.

Knowing this, the journalist will analyse the information using the filter : is this going to interest my readers ? Is it not too remote from their interests ?

If you speak to a journalist from a local paper, he will be interested by the local dynamic of your project. A journalist from a national media will probably have more interest for the theme, the example value, the global political impact of the event. A European media will be more attracted by the international appreciation of your action.

5.3. Trains which arrive on time interest nobody

A train which arrives in due time, does not make news.

One will more easily talk of **what goes wrong** : accidents, attacks, riots, crashes, natural catastrophes, etc.

From this perspective, social street work will interest the media because it attacks real social problems. This is good news but is also a trap since the media risk neglecting the positive and optimistic message of street work to focus only on the sensational aspect of the problems it intends to fight.

5.4. Man bites dog

Another saying goes “dog bites man” is not news but “man bites dog” is news. What is out of the ordinary, the normal course of events arouses people’s interest.

Records of all kinds belong to this category. Same as surprising, previously unreleased or original information that can constitute a hook to talk about social street work.

5.5. The inevitable quartet of information

Next time you read a paper or look at the news on television, observe carefully who are the actors of the interviews. You will probably recognise the following quartet :

- the witness or the victim (of a fire, of an attack, of an accident)
- the representative of the official authorities (the minister, the lord mayor of the town, ...)
- the field expert (fireman, police officer, doctor, ...)
- and of course (but one does not always see him) the journalist who more often contents himself with letting the various actors of the event speak out.

As social worker, you will more often play the part of field expert, the one who will explain the behaviour, the problems, the hopes of the youngsters, the homeless, etc. You will more seldom be asked to play the part of the witness requested to simply relate the facts.

5.6. The sources of the journalist

The information sources of the journalist are very variable. By nature, the journalist is inquisitive. He reads a lot, is always tending an ear, on the look out.

His inspiration and his information will come out of books, news letters, press releases, television broadcasts, reports from competitors (journalists sometimes copy one another) but also, and this is important for you, through direct contacts.

The journalist privileges direct information via another human being... He prefers to find out by meeting the people on the field who will trigger for him the idea of an article, the building up of a file, an interview.

Therefore, it is not incongruous to contact a journalist directly and suggest a subject. This does not mean he will accept it. But if you chose carefully your journalist and suggest an interesting feature, anything is possible.

And even if he does not make use of the subject, you will have had the opportunity of meeting him (at least by phone). On the other hand, journalists scrupulously keep their address book up to date and if you are in it, perhaps he will get in touch with you one day as field expert. Everything is consequently not lost. And nothing prevents you from returning to the attack some time later with another subject. Whilst being careful not to insist too heavily.

From one interview to another

Interviews carried out to write this guide have enabled us to meet several journalists at leisure and outside any topical question of the moment.

A few days later, one of them contacted us to take part in a direct radio broadcast, on the very theme of our work, which is youth protection, theme that was at the very moment in discussion at government level.

What we had previously discussed about, has allowed to rapidly mark out the message of the interview and to arrive fast at the essential part.

Edwin de Boevé, Dynamo International, Brussels

Following the unexpected death of a person treated in our services, a TV report was shot. The methodology used during the shooting was negotiated between street workers and journalists (coming first without any TV camera, for an initial contact, getting to know the young people ...). One week after the report was broadcasted the NGO was given its first grant.

Michèle Villain, ICAR Project, Liège, Belgium.

A touch of hope in a country at war

A number of journalists often come to the Democratic Republic of Congo. They are interested in war and coups, but they are not insensitive to « what is still standing ». This positive element is a touch of hope, even in a country facing a catastrophic situation.

During my work as a guide for foreign journalists, I met a significant number of them. It enabled me to inform them and to keep them posted on a regular basis about our association's activities.

The principle behind our association is a simple one: underprivileged young girls who wish to do so join our group and become cheerleaders. They are given a uniform and sent to school.

It all began ten years ago, thanks to the support of the then Coca Cola Congo's managing director, who found that my initiative was a nice one. He provided T-shirts to the first cheerleaders as uniforms and a small financial support.

Today, we have 425 cheerleaders and a school to educate them. The various cheerleaders' groups take part to openings of shops, football matches, etc. We charge representations to the customers, which at least makes up for the cost of uniforms and transport.

We have received more support since then and the media who have followed us since the very beginning have played a determining role in mobilizing support abroad. A movie about "Multicarte"'s ten years of work has recently been produced.

Our impact has been so big that the initiative is currently being reproduced in several other African states.

Bernadette Moukendy, director of Multicarte, Kinshasa, Republic of Congo.

5.7. Expectations – Replies in short

The journalist's expectations facing any person wishing to transmit information, such as the street workers or press attachés should not condition or distort the behaviours or the speeches.

To communicate is not just an exercise of excessive seduction. If some expectations are not satisfied, so be it/ or so much the better.

In the following table, you will find a brief survey of said expectations and the replies that the press attaché tries to give .

RELATIONSHIP

JOURNALIST	PRESS OFFICER
Put new into perspective	Promote information
Get a good story	Provide quotes, create images
Get links	Provide other sources
Appropriate the info	Coach the contact

THE TIME !

10 expectations from a journalist :

- Quickly find an angle
- Work timely
- Find good quotes
- Put news into perspective
- Need good (useful) sources
- Get data from computer
- Get quick answers to phone calls
- Don't travel for nothing
- Need tails-maid information
- Need illustration

10 answers from a press officer :

- Never disappoint them
- Never lie
- Don't be scared
- Don't be naïve
- Adapt to their constraints
- Respect their work
- Well know the issues
- Give before asking
- Don't disclose internal issues
- Put yourself in their shoes

Since the re-unification, unemployment rates have remained particularly high in the eastern part of Germany. Unemployment hits a significant number of young people, which leads to violence, racism and political extremism. This has been a source of concern for journalists.

Many of us decided to direct TV reports on the issue.

For my part, I got in touch with street workers working with hooligans, which made it possible for me to demonstrate in a TV program called « Plein cadre » that a solution can be found through hard educational work. This point is essential and is actually supported by many people in Germany.

Sabine Rau, Journalist at the WDR – German TV channel.

6. Street work and communication : methodology and communication plan

If you have decided to embark on communication, it will be necessary to conceive a communication plan. This is the battle plan, the dashboard that will enable you to know permanently where you stand and where you are going.

It consists of **several points** to be studied :

- the **field inventory** which purpose it is to look into the evaluation at starting point and into the situation of the moment
- the **general strategy** which will identify your objective, your targets, your messages
- the **analysis and choice of tools** which will lead you to select the best channels of communication to reach your target
- the **operational plan** which will allow you to put your strategy into practice.

6.1. Draw up the field inventory

It is good during a lifetime to look back from time to time and examine the way already covered, the successes and failures met, before looking towards the future and embark on new actions.

Where communication is concerned, the same approach is essential. It is an exercise one has to carry out oneself internally, but which it is also useful to complete by a small exterior task by questioning your communication targets.

Seen from inside

It is the time one will question oneself about

- the past communication actions : what kind of actions, with what result ?
- the present and future needs in communication : in function of your objectives as association ?
- who was in charge of same: will be in charge inside your organisation ?
- who were and will be your possible partners and sponsors ?
- what means were implemented, what means are available for the future ?

You can also find out (and why not get your inspiration from it) how similar associations go about it, how it is done in other countries.

Seen from outside

In order to get a more objective view of the situation, it is in your interest also to contact your targets (the journalists) and public opinion, asking them what they think about your communication actions.

In fact, discrepancies are liable to emerge between what you have perceived as result and the perception your targets will have gained from it.

In order to take a better measure of the impact from your communication actions, you could suggest to certain of your targets to grant you a little time, submit to them a succinct question list which you would let them have a few days in advance.

This is how we have processed to prepare this guidebook. We have interviewed about sixty journalists, youngsters, political authorities and other actors concerned in different countries and they have opened their doors wide for us. Their remarks and advices have helped us to better understand their way of thinking, of making enquiries, of exercising their profession. It also gave us the opportunity to get to know them personally. You will moreover find their testimonies as you go through the pages of this guide...

From these interviews one main conclusion becomes apparent : many journalists prefer direct and personal contact as a means of obtaining information, especially where social topics are concerned. This pro-active approach of the journalists can therefore turn out to be productive. For them same as for us.

Thanks to these personal contacts, you can enlarge (or initiate) your network of press contacts. It is indeed useful to constitute beforehand, and apart from urgent media coverage, an address book of journalists with whom it is possible to remain on good and regular terms.

6.2. To define a communication strategy

6.2.1. Communication isn't something you can do just like that.

Because “*He who does not know which course to take will always have the winds blowing from the wrong quarters*”, you should not set about it blindfold. To communicate takes time and energy, demands a lucid strategy and the results will not be there if you are not well prepared. Your communication efforts could come out as a failure – the journalists will have misunderstood you, did not turn up, wrote nothing – or even produce undesirable effects – the paper will not be favourable, the youngsters will feel betrayed, etc.

To communicate is therefore not without risk.

But first of all you have to clearly identify your objectives. It is all right to communicate, but to what purpose, to say what, to whom ?

This chapter goes through a few key points you will have to keep in mind before embarking on a communication action. More often, these questions belong to common sense. But too often, one prefers to throw oneself immediately in the action, without having previously asked the fundamental questions.

Besides, one must always be “more or less” ready to reply to the questions of a journalist, since the chosen moment is not always your responsibility. So is it that a journalist has the possibility to call you without warning and to ask you to react on the spur of the moment about a topical question in the news.

6.2.2. Define the aims of communication

If you are convinced of the usefulness of communication towards the media, it remains to define which are the precise objectives.

Each one will have to put the question and find the appropriate answers. These answers will sometimes be either very general or more specific. They may possibly answer to a precise need of the moment. They will develop as time goes by. They combine between each other.

At this stage one should ask oneself the following questions :

- What are our problems which could find a solution (at least partly) if the information was covered in the media ?
 - o Example 1 : our youngsters have a bad reputation, which they do not deserve. Can we not use the media to change this situation, so that the population gets to know them otherwise than through negative prejudiced images ?
 - o Example 2 : the city promised a shelter for the homeless but after two years nothing has come of it. Should one alert the local press and get them to put pressure on the public authorities ?
 - o Example 3 : Open house day in Antwerp's brothels, to debate about the realities of prostitution.

- Do you have projects that cannot be realised unless you obtain outside private support, from the city, the commune, the inhabitants, the schools ? The press could present your project and in this way help you to find some sponsors.

- In another trend of thought, which are the projects you are about to launch with your target public and which could offer a "communication towards the media" aspect, the latter being therefore integral part of the project right at the start.
 - o Example 1 : propose to a local television team to keep up with the various steps you are taking in order to create a mini-foot field in the district (consultation of the youngsters, architect plan, estimate of expenses, contacts with the city, etc.).
 - o Example 2 : promote a play created by the youngsters about racism.

A few examples of objectives offering opportunity to get in touch with the media

General objectives

Change the image of the youngsters among the public at large, find financial support, a public support for your association, integrate the youngsters in the district, to restore confidence among the youngsters of your association, improve the status of the street workers,...

To make sure prostitutes' stories do not remain in the obscurity and vouch for an underestimated kind of prostitution: street and male prostitution.

Specific objectives

Raise funds to create a play ground, promote a show organised by the youngsters, organise a street workers' national day, react to an event, come up against a problematical bill of law, etc.

Promote our the activities of our organization among the public.

The opportunity to judge what stage one has reached

To communicate is also useful for he who communicates. It is an opportunity to stand still, to judge what one has achieved.

Pierre Schonbrodt, Tele Brussels

6.2.3. Communicate towards whom ?

Your final target is public opinion, be it local, national or international. And the privileged means to reach it, are the media. Direct contact is also possible but this is more often only possible at local level.

This is why the media constitutes your operational target.

But which media ? The daily papers, the weekly papers, television, radio, Internet ? Inside these different media, who are the journalists who cover your social sector ?

A choice will have to be made.

And to choose, it is necessary to be a minimum aware of your media environment. Certain papers, magazines, web sites, certain radio or television programs will after inquest turn out to be possible partners : either because they have already treated themes directly linked to your activity in the past, or because the social profile of the media appears to correspond to what you seek.

You can also start by contacting the journalist. Spot in your familiar media the journalists who have covered social subjects close to your own or who seem to you open to a social approach. One is sometimes surprised : a journalist of a sports magazine could turn out to be your best ally for your project to create a football team in your district

You can after that draw up a list of media and journalists constituting a working basis. According to a precise question justifying recourse to the media, you will go through your list and will decide on the priority targets.

At first, it will probably be difficult because you know nobody. But very quickly, the journalists will have identified you. And, on condition your not too much of “a bore”, you will find it easier to convince them to cooperate with your association. It will be up to you to suggest interesting projects.

Among the potential targets you have identified, some will appear more adequate to the action you wish to highlight.

For instance:

- the journalists of the main dailies treating social themes will be a good target to cover a conference attended by numerous political and social personalities;
- on the contrary, the main television channels are not very keen to cover conferences that are not very visual. And the minutes are scarce. They will certainly do it for the big meetings of political parties, but very seldom for a conference of an association;
- the local television will probably be more interested;
- the national and local radios if you know a programme which covers this type of theme;
- Internet : place on other sites a link referring to your event.

With experience, you will acquire certain reflexes and ask yourself right away, for instance : “*who, among the journalists I know, would accept to cover our event ? So and sot will find the subject super, another one will not find it sufficiently visual, a third one has already treated a subject for us last week, a further one had expressed definite interest for a next occasion.*” You start with a kind of checklist of the existing contacts. After that you update with new contacts.

It goes without saying that every medium has a different approach according to its power and its geographic coverage.

International news agencies such as Reuter, Agence France Presse or Associated Press are interested in an issue only insofar as it can also be interesting for their subscribers (who are media themselves). Except for significant events (preferably international ones), you can forget about them.

National media are more open to issues relating to social work. However, don't get it wrong and miss your target. Top newsreaders appearing in the evening news will probably not easily interview you about the quintessence of social street work. On the other hand, a journalist in charge of the "society" section of a daily newspaper might well carefully listen to you if you have something important to communicate about.

At local level, it is even easier. By definition, those media are interested in what happens in their neighbourhood. Why not begin there ?

Move public opinion straight away

Nothing is better than experience and direct contact to convey a message, build conviviality or restore an image. A district activity will have much more impact on the inhabitants than an important paper in the press.

We had for instance, in a district, a very bad relationship between the shopkeepers and the youngsters, and frequent disputes occurred.

The street worker therefore gave preference to activities with a greater visibility by organising, for instance, circus or dance performances on the occasion of district festivities. And, to progress even further, the youngsters and the shopkeepers agreed to create a district committee which, very quickly, turned out to be an excellent space of dialogue allowing to realise in common constructive and useful projects for the district (development, fairs,...).

What is true for a district is also true for a school or any other place where various populations come into contact.

Edwin de Boevé, Dynamo International, Brussels

6.2.4. With what message?

Now that you have chosen your targets, it remains to know what you are going to tell them. Which information is it you wish to transmit? What is the news? Is it liable to be taken up in a media?

For each one of your media actions, you must clearly identify the message that is meant to reach the final reader/audience. The message should consist in only a few words.

Example of message:

- "The homeless are not asking for pity but for respect";
- "It is not because the youngsters are in the street that they are "scoundrels"";
- "The street worker is the last resort when everything else has failed";
- "You don't always have to take youngsters at their word, but you should take them seriously"

The object of your media action will then be to get your message through.

How do you get your message through?

To achieve this, it is not necessary either for the journalist or you to deliver the message flat out. It would not be very convincing. It is the report as a whole that has to demonstrate your message. It is the conclusion that the

reader/audience has to draw by himself after having read the article or seen the programme on television that is important.

And to be convincing, it will be necessary to prepare the field for the journalist. Make him meet the youngsters, the witnesses (street workers, youth services, eventually neighbours) who will bring public opinion to reconsider their prejudices: *“No, indeed, they are not all of them scoundrels. They are even rather nice. It is true they have no other place to meet apart from the street.”*

Tell a story

People like to hear a story. If you can propose a story that will illustrate the idea you want to put forward, you are well started.

It is often by means of a story, the portrait of a person, that the journalist will introduce his subject:

- The theme of the homeless will be approached via the extraordinary life of a doctor who has become vagrant in two years time.
- The opening of a new theatre in a former jail, will be treated by describing how and with what difficulties this transformation of a jail into a theatre has been achieved.
- A film on forest fires retracing the day of young fireman X for whom it was his first mission or of the old fireman for whom it was his last mission.

To resort to a story makes a statement more human, adds emotion that the bare facts would fail to obtain. Also it happens that a story will bring a little suspense (are they going to succeed?) that makes the reader/audience pay more attention.

The story should, nevertheless, remain a pretext or the opportunity to convey a larger message, otherwise one risks to fall into a simple news item without any great interest for you.

On the other hand, certain tools can be very useful in your work, notably the one concerning the process and neurological connections stating that every person gives privilege to one or the other connection to understand and to communicate. This is how certain persons are more Visual, others more Auditory or Physical (the senses and the body). One speaks generally of the Olfactory connection for anything related to taste or smell. A visual person will mainly use expressions such as “I see”, “it is clear”, in his vocabulary; an auditory, expressions such as “I say to myself”, “I hear that”, “this talk makes sense to me”; the physical will rather say, “I feel that”, “I am in contact with”.

Other elements should be borne in mind to improve communication.

1. Although the world is real, we do not act directly on this reality. Each one of us builds his own vision of the world, and this image varies from one individual to another.
2. One cannot not communicate, according to Paul Watzlawick. One can talk or say nothing, whether one wants it or not, any behaviour is communication.
3. Meet the other person in his vision of the world.
To establish and maintain the relation with the person one is speaking to, begin by meeting him on his own field.
4. Where efficient communication is concerned, the result is more important than the intention. It is the reaction of the person you are talking to which will tell you what real impact you have on him.

6.2.5. Who is going to communicate?

Is every one inside your association capable to communicate towards the media? Should it be the task of a small team? A single spokesperson such as a press attaché? Entrust communication to an association specialised in communication?

So many questions to answer.

It is important to find out who in your association would be capable and interested to carry out this mission. Certain persons have ideas, others are smooth talkers, others yet are very good writers. Why not form a small communication cell for your association or your collective of associations with a co-ordinator appointed by the team?

If many streetworkers are replying that their job is not appropriately recognised, my advice would support them with a good organization. Have always someone such a press advisor working side by side, knowing what they are doing with the children, in order too select the most information's to public it in the media. The press advisor must have a good contacts list of the journalists in the area.

Alexandre Barata, Politique Journaliste, Portugal.

6.2.6. When should one communicate?

The advice is to communicate regularly.

If you wait until a crisis occurs, you will have to improvise, face persons you never met before. It is a bad way of starting.

Example: all of a sudden there is a riot in your district, the press hastens on the spot, you have to answer questions put by journalists absolutely unknown to you and who know nothing about either the district, or the youngsters or your work. They give you generously three minutes to explain what you think of the situation, between the police and the lord mayor. Be not surprised if you cannot find any of your views in the report covering the event.

But if you had met the journalist previously, at the time of an action led by your association for instance, if he had from time to time received your news bulletin, the situation would be quite different:

- The problem would already be familiar to the journalist, thanks to your communication actions;
- He would already have got in touch with you by phone as soon as he heard about the riot to ask you what was going on;
- He would have retrieved from his archives the documentation you would have forwarded to him previously on the subject.

In so doing, you would have more chance to see your point of view presented more objectively, better supported than if you had not taken the initiative to communicate.

Avoid the overdose

The opposite excess is also counter productive. To communicate too often tires the target. One ends by throwing everything directly in the wastebasket without even looking at it.

When should one refrain from communicating ?

If you are not yet ready, if you have nothing special to announce, if your ideas are not sufficiently clear, if you wish above all not to have the press meddle, it is of course essential not to communicate.

6.2.7. Communicate at local, national, European, international level?

Each media has a rather definite geographical coverage. One should therefore not mistake the target:

- An action towards the shop keepers of your district will obviously be suitable for a local media;
- But if you come out with a completely new idea in your district, something never heard of in your country (the super market puts free of charge at your disposal a warehouse to serve as rehearsal space for the rap groups of your district), then you will also interest the national press;
- If your warehouse gives shelter every month to the hottest foreign rap groups of the moment, you will interest the international media.

It is a question of adapting one's target to the contents of your communication.

The impact also depends on your position or on what you represent. An international collective of street workers has more weight than a local association, and this gives even greater credibility to the contents of your communication. What is important is that these contents have a wider dimension than a mere district incident.

Let's speak to each other

I think public opinion is not informed because journalists are not informed...It is not easy to deal with street workers' job as it cannot be explained in a short term, and it does not contain snapshots. Locally the situation could be improved if street workers and journalists started to speak to each other, because now they don't know each other.

Interview of Francesco Fabriani, Il resto del Carlino, Italy

6.2.8. Integrate communication into the action

A communication action, be it meant for the press, the public authorities or the inhabitants of the district, will often be about an action, a problem or an event to be created.

Consequently, why not think also in terms of communication at the moment one conceives a project:

- Is it adaptable for communication, a minimum visual?
- Is the time well chosen to communicate?
- To what extent will this communication initiative be useful for the association, the public reached?
- Towards whom does one wish to communicate?
- Chose the right tool: Press release? Visit on the field and invite a journalist? Press file? Direct contacts?
- What will be the budget?
- Who will be in charge?
- In other words, all the above strategic questions already mentioned in the present chapter.

In itself, this communication stage could also serve as an object of activity by your usual public. In that case you kill two birds with one stone.

Example:

Ask your public to take an active part in the realisation of the information letter of the association (writing, lay-out, distribution), in a press documentation, in the organisation of a press conference, etc;

Initiation in computer science: the youngsters create a press file (they search for the relevant data, encode it).

Creation of a new association by the youngsters or the inhabitants of the district who will themselves explain how it works and what are the stakes.

A film festival on street children will certainly mobilise the press to cover the event (types of films, number of participants, themes of the films, etc.) but it will at the same time be an opportunity to convey the message of what part is played by the street worker (during an interview, via a press file, or whilst having a drink between two films)? And this will be the time to broaden the debate.

Once again, what is required is that the event which will attract the journalist (and the reader) be an excuse to speak more at large, with deeper and “long term” views.

6.2.9. Communicate on what is immediate and/or on the fundamental work: two different approaches?

The street worker tends to think that his action is slow, aims the long term and therefore does not interest the press on the look out for immediate viewpoints.

This is true and at the same time not.

What is true is that the journalist needs a hook, a fact, and a story that will entice him to write a paper or produce a programme. He will look for something to report on.

What is false is that he is only looking for that. A good journalist will base his work on a fact or on a specific personality, but he will enlarge the framework to take into account the theme and this is where your speech on the long term will find a space.

It is up to you not to limit yourself to what is sensational or to slogans. Push on doors already open, declare what is obvious or howl with the wolves never has made things progress. The street worker must be conscious of his position that has to do both with solidarity and his difference with regard to his public. Indeed, if it is only to say what so many others repeat so often plaintively, one wonders what your contribution could be. It is by using this little distance, this wise and different speech that you will be pertinent and useful for the situation.

Communicate, yes but how none the less retain one’s personality?

To work on the basics and on the numerous facets of daily life is not always very spectacular and the wish, if not the need, for the street worker to make his profession better known, can sometimes bring about risky situations.

It is the case when a journalist asks to accompany you on the field, or on your district rounds. There is a great risk your public will feel forced to be on stage and will not appreciate this media intrusion.

It is therefore necessary to warn your public in advance and explain the meaning and the usefulness of the initiative. It all depends of course on the state of the situation; it happens quite often that in order to preserve certain discretion and keep his efficiency, the street worker turns down this type of media coverage.

In any case, your public will only appreciate your comments if you speak in their interest and by remaining true to how you act on a daily basis.

To lie, to exaggerate, to disclose confidences and to speak to the detriment of one's public must be absolutely banned. It is a slow process to gain someone's confidence but it doesn't take long to lose it.

The journalist is not your spokesperson

I got treated of "corrupted middle-class chap" by an association campaigning for lodgings. The report was about a squatted hotel and I have given a portrait of the association that organised the squat. They claimed I had done them a disservice. Of course, I had not merely been their spokesperson, their loud-speaker, I had analysed the situation in, I believe, an objective manner, but they did not like it, since their objectives did not meet mine.

This is why the rules of the game should be set down right at the start. And if one does not succeed in reaching an agreement, I prefer to give up the idea.

Pierre Schonbrodt, télé Bruxelles

Short term – long term: the one can go with the other

The problem is the same between the notions of "development" (long term) and "humanitarian" (urgent reaction) in the world of development cooperation.

One has to fuel the journalist on the long term, but through concrete, through short term. For instance, an exhibition of drawings exchanged between European and African children will not directly solve the problem of the Africans' integration in Europe, but will permit to mobilise the youngsters, to make the public and the political world aware with regard to a concrete project, which comes within the framework of a long-term strategy.

André Zaleski, RTBF radio, Belgium

People are not given enough information about the reality of street children. We know that it is an « underground » secret world where teenage boys and girls and even children have to work, that they often suffer from mistreatment, violence and exploitation from their parents or their substitutes, or are even forced to work as prostitutes.

The lack of a real home is part of normality for these children who will never enjoy the rights and protection they need. The paradoxical consequence of this ignorance among the public is that every one believes he has the right solution for them. But in the same time, everyone prefers to complain about these children and to reject them.

Humberto Duran Campoamor, Coordinador del Proyecto Niños de la Calle y Farmacodependencia, Facultad de Psicología UAEM. Cuernavaca, México

6.2.10. Involve your target public? How? Up to what point?

The users concerned constitute of course the reason street worker exist. And the journalists are more than often the ones who seek to meet them directly.

But be careful not to use them as instrument, make use of them without their knowledge.

A preparation must be planned before meeting a journalist. Generally it is always more interesting and efficient to let one's public speak.

Help users to communicate on their own? Train them?

This guidebook is first of all meant for the street workers, but its contents could also be transmitted to their public, no matter if it consists of young people or less young people. Besides, every citizen should master a minimum of basic concepts regarding communication. In order to understand the rules of the game and escape from being a passive communication target but also, for the more active ones, in order to be able to communicate.

For a street worker, it is also probably the opportunity to create activities relating to communication. Not necessarily towards the press, but towards the inhabitants of the district, the police, the commune, the schools...

The few advices given in this guide can easily be extrapolated for other persons close to the target publics and the street workers.

Moreover, to set up communication actions is rather interesting and amusing.

"In our street work, we prefer to let the youngsters speak, as in fact they are best placed to speak about what concerns them directly. It was the case when they created their own youth house and obtained the development of a sports space in the very centre of the district. As street worker, one remains vigilant, so that they don't find themselves trapped in a fool's game. This is how we refused with them to take part in a direct television programme on the subject of youth delinquency presented in a spectacular manner. This broadcast went quite wrong moreover given the high tension, and it has finally been to the detriment of the youngsters' cause in general."

de Boevé Edwin, Dynamo International, Brussels

The media see us in a negative way; they are focused on a few attitudes (violence, theft, misdemeanours). They present a subjective coverage, show only the bad side of things and belittle young people. Policemen are presented as superior to them and only their opinion counts. Sometimes, there is a real lack of respect.

Zaki, Khalid et Michaël, young people from Dynamo, Brussels, Belgium.

Of course we must involve our audience, the children of the street. We need them in order to clearly explain the background. We might be their ambassadors, but above all we talk on their behalf. It is thus important to give them the opportunity to directly express themselves as often as possible. Acting, singing, dancing and circus activities all make it possible to pass a number of messages about the street and, consequently, to justify the action of the street workers who work there... Moreover, an interview has a more significant impact when a child can express himself with his simple but convincing words. Participants to any of our meetings do understand any group or committee of children who have something to say and are given the floor. In general, these children use such opportunities and take the floor to explain the work of Chandrodaya.

Jean-Christophe Ryckmans, Chandrodaya Shelter, Katmandu, Népal.

6.2.11. Get the journalist interested.

One should also consider the media value of the information. Can this interest the public? One has to make the effort of taking a step backwards and put oneself in the place of the journalist or the man in the street. Your action must be attractive, out of the ordinary, astonish, shake, and marvel...

Example 1: the announcement of the opening of a new youth house is perhaps important for the youngsters concerned, but as mere information, it is a bit meagre. If on the other hand one hears this youth house has been created in a former police station, one begins to arouse the journalist's interest. If

one says, moreover, that the educator of this youth house is a former police officer and amateur boxer, that he has put in a boxing ring and that a boxer school has been created on the premises, the journalist will be all ears.

Example 2: an association campaigning against racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia had invited a television journalist to come along to a dancing where a youth of foreign origin was forbidden to enter. Altercation, usher intervention, etc. all was filmed.

You will of course have to be careful (but this will depend on the journalist – one cannot control everything) that the message you are keen on and which is the reason of your communication action, is duly conveyed: *“the youngsters need a meeting space ad a place where they can have interesting activities: sport for instance. Let’s therefore multiply this experience”, “Racism is present in every day life, what is one waiting for to respect the law”.*

There is nothing to prevent you from warning the journalist about your objectives, from briefing him on the fundamentals of your action in order to give a maximum of chances to get your message over. But be aware that it is never a 100% guarantee. The journalist remains master of his work. Hence the interest to know the journalists sufficiently well: you will then be able to establish a relationship based on mutual confidence and co-operate with them on the long term.

Give strength

See to it that you give us contents, figures, above all visual stuff, especially for a long report (for 30 seconds during the news on television, it is not necessary).

Marc Preyat, RTBF television, Belgium.

In schools and in the sheepfold too

I'm sure everyone would be interested to know more about a project in Tuscany where education was not only offered to young people in schools but also in the mountains – were some teenagers living, working as shepherds – and where a teacher organized lessons in the sheepfold.

L. Russon Councelor for social policies at the Municipality of Sasso Marconi, Bologna, Italy

6.3.1 . The tools to reach one’s target

A whole set of tools is available for everyone wishing to reach the media.

A choice will have to be made:

- According to the **objective:** the telephone will be suitable if you wish to invite two or three journalists to your evening solidarity performance. But to use the telephone will not be possible if you intend to announce to the world at large the tenth anniversary of the international network of street workers. The mail or the post will be more realistic.
- According to the **capability** of your team and notably according to the **time** available: a press conference will perhaps be more efficient, but will take a lot of time and energy. If you cannot dedicate sufficient time, you are headed for a catastrophe. It is more advisable in that case to

limit oneself to direct contacts, to a mail and to the production of an additional press document placed on your Internet site for instance.

- According to your **budget** : a folder, posters, a press conference, an Internet site, ... and all this costs money. Analyse carefully the amounts available before starting. Estimate the relation cost/efficiency : folder in colours or black and white photo copies ? Sending of a press folder of 50 pages by post or by mail ? Direct contacts or by mail ?

Spread the tools...

It will moreover be necessary to spread out the effort on **several tools**. Do not stake everything on the radio or on Internet or on the printed press. Do not content yourself with e-mails as tools. One is never 100% sure of the result. It is wiser to put more than one iron in the fire.

...over the time

To announce an event one can count on the radio for instance, but to cover same it will be preferable to turn to the papers or the local television. Begin with a press release, then follow with direct telephone contacts, and finish with an e-mail referring to the Internet site of the event.

6.3.2. The press card index: the basis

If you want to manage your contacts efficiently, a computer data bank is the handiest. But this supposes to possess a computer, with the appropriate programme (Access for instance), to get to know the programme and how to enter the data.

This means of course an investment. If you don't intend to organise more than one event a year, needless to chose this method. If you have only 10 journalists in your file, it is not useful either.

But if you plan to contact the media more at large, send press releases and mails on a regular basis, invite a maximum of journalists to attend your concerts, parties, exhibitions, send them your information letter, then a computer data bank is a good tool. You can send grouped e-mails, print labels, find easily their addresses, etc.

For each contact (media or journalist) you will have to encode several useful informations: Complete addresses, language, type of media (television, daily paper, weekly paper, radio, Internet), type of coverage (national, local, specialised), themes treated (general, social, cultural, ...), and events organised by yourself that they have attended, etc. In short, any information which could prove useful to obtain a well-targeted communication.

Beware of danger !

A data bank on journalists gets rapidly out of date. The journalists often change column, responsibility, if not change to another media. It will therefore be necessary to update your data bank regularly. It will more often be during a new action that you will realise that so and so no longer works for this paper or that a certain radio programme has been replaced by another. Take the opportunity to correct your file.

How does one start ?

Professional directories exist for the media in each country. This can serve as a good starting point. But you will not find in it the name of the journalist who takes an interest in social workers. This being said, at least through this means you will already have the addresses of the media at your disposal.

For instance, at international level the Benn's media : <http://www.cempdata.co.uk/benns/>

However, it is rather expensive, today the European edition costs 188 £.

You can also begin by simply identifying the media, the articles, the programmes that interest you by making a note of the names of the journalists who seem to you to make a good job of it. By giving a ring to their media, you can either obtain directly their telephone number and mail, or have them on the phone to speak with them directly.

And since journalists are always interested to receive well-targeted information with regard to their work, they generally act in a friendly manner even if they are under pressure.

If you don't have time and you wish all the same to contact a maximum of media rapidly, you can always send your mail, invitations, press files to "the chief editor" or to "the editorial staff" who will generally pass on the information to the right journalist. It is less efficient, but sometimes useful to cover a vast range of media without spending too much time on it.

To use sparingly

Two principles :

- Well-targeted information : do not send information on the status of the social workers to a sports reporter who covered the official opening of your new football ground. Even if he is in favour of your cause, he will not be able to cover the matter in his sports paper.
- Do not inundate the journalist : contact him only when you feel the information will really interest him. It is useless to send him mails every two days, to telephone each week to keep him informed on the development of your association. He will end by getting tired and pretend to be on sick leave. You can however send him your annual report, your information letter as a pure information gesture (you don't ask anything from him).

6.3.3. Personal contacts

Experience shows that personal contacts are the key to success. Especially in social matters.

Nothing is better than an interview, a phone contact with a journalist to explain your actions and your projects. However, here again, you should not exaggerate for the journalist's time is limited (same as yours besides).

Little time is sufficient eventually. Example : if you wish to invite a journalist you have not yet met to attend the official opening of the new youth house in the former police station of the district, phone first to announce that you intend sending him a file on the opening of the youth house (you explain rapidly by stressing certain more attractive points) and to ask him where you can send him the document.

You will have already more chances that he will read the file than if you had sent it without warning. If you ring back a few days later to know if he will attend the opening, he will in principle not have forgotten you. It is not a guarantee that he will come, but you will have put a maximum of chances on your side.

Regular meetings are best

In my opinion a regular meeting between the related reporter and the street worker is still the best appropriate tool.

Nabin Khatiwada, journaliste à Kantipur FM, Népal

If you are on the same wavelength ...

Never forget the human incontrollable aspect with journalists (either you get on the same wavelength or you don't). We are not machines. And when you get onto the same wavelength don't forget to remain on good terms.

Pierre Schonbrodt, Tele Brussels.

There is nothing like direct contact

I believe you take a step forward by meeting people. A mail, a fax, a phone call, that's all right. But there is nothing like direct contact and better still a permanent contact. The importance is the human relation, independently from the thing to be proposed, discussed or negotiated, when there is a good contact, things move, each side makes progress and each party gains from it. One has to interest people in what one is doing. Someone who is convinced of the good reason of your action will always go along with you.

Create the meeting

Why not organize sport or cultural events between the press, the youngsters and the field professionals ? Encourage as much as possible exchanges, communication, meetings. It is often said that anything can be a media support, I think it is true, everything considered the support or the activity doesn't matter, what is essential is that people meet each other, exchange together.

The youngsters in the press room

On the opposite, why not suggest to the youngsters of these districts to take their turn and visit the editorial offices. In this way, the youngsters would meet those who write so often on their subject. For some of them it will be an opportunity to discover another universe. For others, it will be an opportunity to find out that very often these youngsters are nothing else but just ordinary kids, sometimes more violent and more aggressive than the average kid, but only due to despair or boredom...

Vincent Landat – former street worker and journalist at "Social annonces", France.

6.3.4. The press conference

The principle of a press conference is to invite several media at the same time and give them some information considered to be interesting.

The purpose is to increase their awareness with regard to a theme, a given problem. The conference can be organised to partake some important news, to present a project or results.

Let us however keep in mind that the press conference is a heavy means of communication. It implies heavy costs (hiring of a room, possible translation, drink, sound equipment) without forgetting the time necessary to organise the logistics, to contact the journalists and ensure the follow up, to prepare the press files and organise the conference on the D-day.

Obviously, this tool will be kept for important occasions.

Press conference :

No thank you

The journalists don't like press conferences, for it is "digested" information. On the other hand, they sometimes act as trigger for a report and from there comes the question : What on the field can illustrate it?

Pierre Schonbrodt, Télé Bruxelles, Belgium

Yes but...

It is a good tool, but it should not be the peak of the action. The press conference announces the event. The information should be kept for the event itself; otherwise the journalists risk contenting themselves with the press conference.

André Zaleski, RTBF radio, Belgium

Good tool

I think that press conference should always be considered a very good tool as it touches several newspapers at the same time.

Francesco Fabiani, Il resto del carlino, Italy

If you have fantastic results...

Interesting to present an unrecognised aspect of your action, fantastic results for instance. But not on the theme : "we are going to explain what the profession of street worker means". It would be too vast. I say it again, there should be ONE subject, ONE statement.

Marc Preyat, RTBF télé, Belgium.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, as in other countries, journalists are not always paid by their newspaper. When we organize a conference, we must absolutely not forget small envelopes with 5 or 10 dollars inside for each journalist, according to the size and importance of the article.

Bernadette Moukendy, director of Multicarte, Kinshasa, Republic of Congo.

6.3.5. The press release

The press release is a short text having as purpose :
either to attract the journalist's attention on a fact he could relate in his media using your press release as basis (announcement of the birth of a new association for instance, your opposition to a bill of law, etc.). It is also a means to inform the journalist, even if he doesn't publish the information;

- or to invite him to attend an event you are organising.

And since the journalist receives a great number of press releases, it is important to take care over the writing of it :

- first of all the journalists should be well targeted (the subject will interest them for sure)
- act at the right moment : send the press release neither too early nor too late. Take into account the type of media, even if it means organising several mailings. A daily paper does not have the same time allowances as a monthly magazine or the radio;

- write a short, precise and succinct text. The title should be informative, the first paragraph should contain all the main information : event, place, date, participants;
- give the possibility to know more about it : telephone number, Internet site, complete file on request, etc.

Illegible

The profession of street worker is badly known, it is true. But it is sometimes their own fault : we receive illegible press releases, or else bundles of 300 pages we don't have time to read.

Pierre Schonbrodt, Télé Brussels

6.3.6. The press file

Journalists adore press files. They enable them to constitute a stock of usable information, either right away or later on.

A good press file should contain at least :

- a press release
- a longer text giving in detail the purpose of the file
- enclosures giving additional more or less loose information : figures, testimonies, complete descriptions, Internet sites to be visited, names of contacts,...

In some cases one could add a copy of publications produced by one's association, the "power point" presentation file (or a paper copy), a few photos or illustrations.

The file must not necessarily have 100 pages, but should offer a solid basis for a journalist wishing to write a paper or a report. One will usually distribute it during a press conference or an event. Seen it's cost, one will avoid sending it all out.

A thorough job towards the journalist

A thorough job towards the journalist is essential. Press files, e-mails, press conferences, personal contacts will permit to create progressively a press network. The day a crisis arises, you will already have done half of the job, since your contact journalist will already be familiar with the subject.

All what will be left for you will be to complete the information regarding the event itself.

Sometimes you will be disappointed, best to know this right away. Indeed, it happens that another subject absorbs the journalist who knows you, and you will be faced with some one you never met before. Then you will have to improvise.

Marc Preyat, RTBF, Belgium

6.3.7 Visits on the field

To invite a journalist to come and see for himself how things stand on the field, can be very productive, on condition to make sure :

- there is indeed something to be seen
- that it doesn't take up too much time

- that the presence of the journalist does not alter what he is supposed to verify : it could be that the youngsters will not behave themselves as usual knowing that a journalist is present; for instance. Inconvenience : to have a journalist as guest demands a lot of work. To organise a group visit usually interests the media less, for the journalist likes to distinguish himself from his colleagues. To get hold of a little scoop so to say.

"I don't believe in visits on the daily field"

In itself, a visit on the field doesn't seem to me to be very efficient. It takes too much time. Moreover, it is very often not very natural either. The very fact of our presence throws a false light on reality. Maybe for magazines, but in any case a subject, a statement, a story is necessary.

Marc Preyat, RTBF télé, Brussels

6.3.8 A regular bulletin

The advantage of the bulletin is to inform the journalist on your activities on a regular basis. You don't ask him to relate in his media the information it contains, but you keep him informed. If your bulletin is well conceived and well written, he will read or at least take a look at it. Maybe he will find inspiration through it and he will contact you himself. To put it more simply; you make yourself present from time to time and when you will really need him, he will know who you are and will be the more ready to co-operate.

On the other hand, a regular bulletin will also be useful to your members and sponsors.

6.3.9. An Internet site

More and more often, each association has its own Internet site. This allows making a large number of information available.

The journalist will probably not take himself the initiative to check your site, even if he knows you. But he will visit this site as additional source of information to a press release, to a phone call from you, to a press conference. This is where the site is useful.

If you produce a e-newsletter, the journalists will be able to subscribe to it on a permanent basis on condition the information it contains correspond to their favourite subjects.

6.3.10. Videos, SDVD, CD-ROM

Unlike a publication on paper or an Internet site, the swift consultation of a video is more difficult. One has to be really very interested to take the time to watch a video.

A cassette, which lands on the desk of a journalist will in all likelihood end its career on the shelf if not in the waste-basket.

To be used preferable only as support of a presentation or on the occasion of a direct meeting with one journalist. It is therefore advisable to supervise the video projection.

Better not to exceed 10 to 15 minutes.

6.3.11. Annual reports

An annual report is very often a good source of general information on an association and the themes it works on. In itself, it will never be the subject of a paper, yet the journalists are fond of annual reports. It is indeed a good basis to start a report, a means to get up to date before going further.

If in any case you have to produce an annual report, send it also to a selection of journalists, it is another means of maintaining contact.

6.4. Conceive an operational plan

When you will have defined your strategy, you still need to **put it into practice**. This is the purpose of the operational plan that will concretely define the tasks to be accomplished, the planning, the allocation of responsibilities, etc...

6.4.1. Do it all on one's own ?

If one is a “jack of all trades” why not ensure the whole of the tasks on one's own internally : writing of the press release, the files, translations, telephone contacts, spokesperson, lay-out of documents, photocopies, etc.

If your team is gifted, no problem. Congratulations.

If on the other hand you have no special competence where communication is concerned (or you don't have the time), you will have to :

- either learn by yourself (after reading this guide things should be a little easier);
- or count on a partnership with some person or association having more experience;
- or have recourse to subcontracting : outside copywriters, translators, graphic designer, printer, etc. In that case, you will content yourself, but this will already not be very relaxing, to give the strategic line, to coordinate and control the whole show.

A partnership ?

To find a partner with experience in communication offers a lot of advantages : you can rely on him, but above all you will learn by being in contact with him.

The inconvenience is that you will not necessarily always agree with him and that you will sometimes have to negotiate or tone it down a bit.

Subcontracting ,

Subcontracting offers a lot of advantages : especially that of being able to count on professionals who will get the job done in your place, in principle better and more quickly. The inconvenience is that one has to pay them and that the results are not always guaranteed.

You will have to supervise them carefully, especially if you work with a subcontractor for the first time, which demands a lot of time and energy :

- **define** carefully the work to be done (what the subcontractors should do, should not do), explain carefully your project, its environment, its history, etc. This will make the task of the subcontractor all the more easy;

- give precise deadlines, ask for an accurate planning;
- agree on the **financial** aspect before starting and study carefully what the agreement involves. Reflect on what would be lacking and ask if necessary what eventually the cost estimate does not include (one is sometimes surprised to verify that the estimate of a press conference does not include the hiring of the room, the interpreters, the production of a press file):
- avoid the items **price “per hour”** or “per day” which do not indicate how many hours, how many days. Subcontracted work opens the door to all kinds of abuse;
- also avoid **fixed price work** without details and make sure you know what the fixed price includes, how it has been calculated. The “black boxes” are very handy for the subcontractors but dangerous for the client. You will also be more able to control if your subcontractor has properly understood what you are after. Example : a press action of 2000 Euro will be expensive or not and will correspond or not with what you had in mind according to the number of contacted journalists, the number of targeted participants, the type of follow up of the responses (individually by phone is more efficient than by grouped fax ?), the variety of the media (television, newspapers, radio, Internet or only the printed press). Do not hesitate to ask for particulars. Don’t buy a cat in a bag;
- ask to be kept regularly informed on the **evolution** of the work (every Monday for instance);
- plan **stages** you wish to control in the contract : agreement on the list of the media to be contacted, on the text of the press release, on the press file, etc. It is up to you to see how far you want to delegate;
- don’t not pay in advance if possible, or then only a small amount. Prefer **spread payments** in function of the work’s progress (for instance : first instalment of 30% on receipt of the data bank of journalists, second instalment of 30% on receipt of the list of journalists having confirmed their participation at the press conference, the balance after receipt of the press articles). You have a better control over your subcontractors and hold a means of eventual pressure in case a problem should arise. It is also a sound financial management : you pay when you have the delivery and are satisfied.

This being said, a relation based on **trustfulness** is also necessary for a co-operation to be efficient. You cannot permanently keep a watch on your subcontractor. In that case it is better to do the job oneself. But all the same best to trust “under control”.

6.4.2 Should you wish to do the writing yourself ?

So many people feel panic when faced with a blank sheet. Yet, if words vanish with time, once they are written down, they still remain.

As compared with an interview or a press article written by a journalist, an article written directly by your own hand remains sometimes the best way to communicate the essence and the subtleties of your messages. Messages that will quite often, years later, remain a topical question for, same as for a library, the sum of your written texts constitutes a data bank offering a source of references that can regularly be of use.

Certainly, the exercise is a difficult one and, as a first piece of advice, don’t try to write directly on paper a finalised product. Same as for many other activities, writing needs to be achieved in stages and some careful reflection before committing words to paper is also necessary. What is at stake in writing is complex. The object is to give an account of a live reality, whereas written words freeze for a time said reality. Without fail, through a game of structures, the text will reveal sense, propositions, convergences, divergences, not always visible in reality.

“L’art de bien parler, bien écrire n’est rien sans l’art d’utiliser à propos cet art (...) Pour trouver la cible, pour que les mots fassent mouche, pour que les mots paient, produisent leur effet, il faut non seulement les mots grammaticalement corrects mais les mot socialement acceptable »⁶

⁶ P. Bourdieu, *Question de sociologie*, p. 122, Paris, Editions de Minuit, 1980.

The art of talking well, of writing well means nothing without the art of using this art at the right time (...)

To find the target, in order that the words reach their aim, in order that the words pay; produce their effect, it is not only necessary to have grammatically correct words, the words should also be socially acceptable)

It is difficult for the street worker to write on his practice, he either tends to depreciate it, or he doesn't find the adequate words.

Yet, to write on one's practice permits to master it and to take a certain distance from it, to produce one's own conception. Writing then becomes a means of action. To be able to write, a few advices will certainly be helpful.

And, first of all, get your ideas together without worrying in what order and without really developing the different points. You can afterwards construct a logical order between these ideas and in so doing constitute the structure of your text. The title is important, it must be true to what is to follow. The introduction also, for it is important to find in it a succinct presentation of the subject you are about to treat. The introduction will serve as unifying thread of the article and introduce the main developments that are to follow.

For the rest, to each one his own style, but be careful nevertheless to write so that it reads agreeably, by punctuating your text with subtitles and by preferring sentences which are neither too long nor too complicated; Put yourself in the place of your reader. Don't hesitate to be revived through other references, there is so much existing wealth in literature, it would be stupid not to make use of it. And finally, take care of the conclusions since they too are important, if not more than the introduction.

To finalise, several re-readings are often necessary and why not by a third person.

6.5.1. To prepare a planning : who does what when ?

There is no good organisation without a good planning. Who does what when ?

On the time schedule the different tasks have to be placed, as well as the names responsible for each task.

Starting from the date of the event, to go back in the time schedule indicating each task is a good method (retro-planning).

To computerize ?

To prepare a planning holding the calendar in one hand and the pencil in the other hand is possible and fairly easy. For simple projects that don't imply too many persons and not too many different stages, why not ? It will turn out less funny when the planning will need to be adapted to the hazards of the life of a project. If you prepare your planning in Word or Excell, it will already be a little easier to adapt, but the top is the management programme of the project.

Good specialised computer programmes exist, but they are not free of charge. Some exist freeware (free of charge software) such as Project Planner-PE-2.0. Ask your computer scientist.

If your organisation has the financial means, you can use a Microsoft Project but it is rather expensive (between 400 € and 800 € for the professional version).

The **basic principles** of these programmes :

- your project has to be sliced in different tasks taking each a certain time (conceive a strategy, write a press release, have it read over, send it by e-mail, manage the replies, collect the press articles, etc.)
- All these tasks are linked to each other :
 - the writing of the press release will only start after the strategic meeting
 - the press release will only be sent after the winding up of the press list
- except for the first date in our example, the date of the strategic meeting, which will take place on the 1st of April 2005 (at a date set by yourself consequently) and the date of the press conference which you set at the time of your strategic meeting (on 9/6/2005). All the other dates are linked, either to one or the other of these dates, either to another existing task.

The advantage of such programmes is that you can **easily adapt** the shot in function of the inevitable changes. The programme will automatically adapt all the dates:

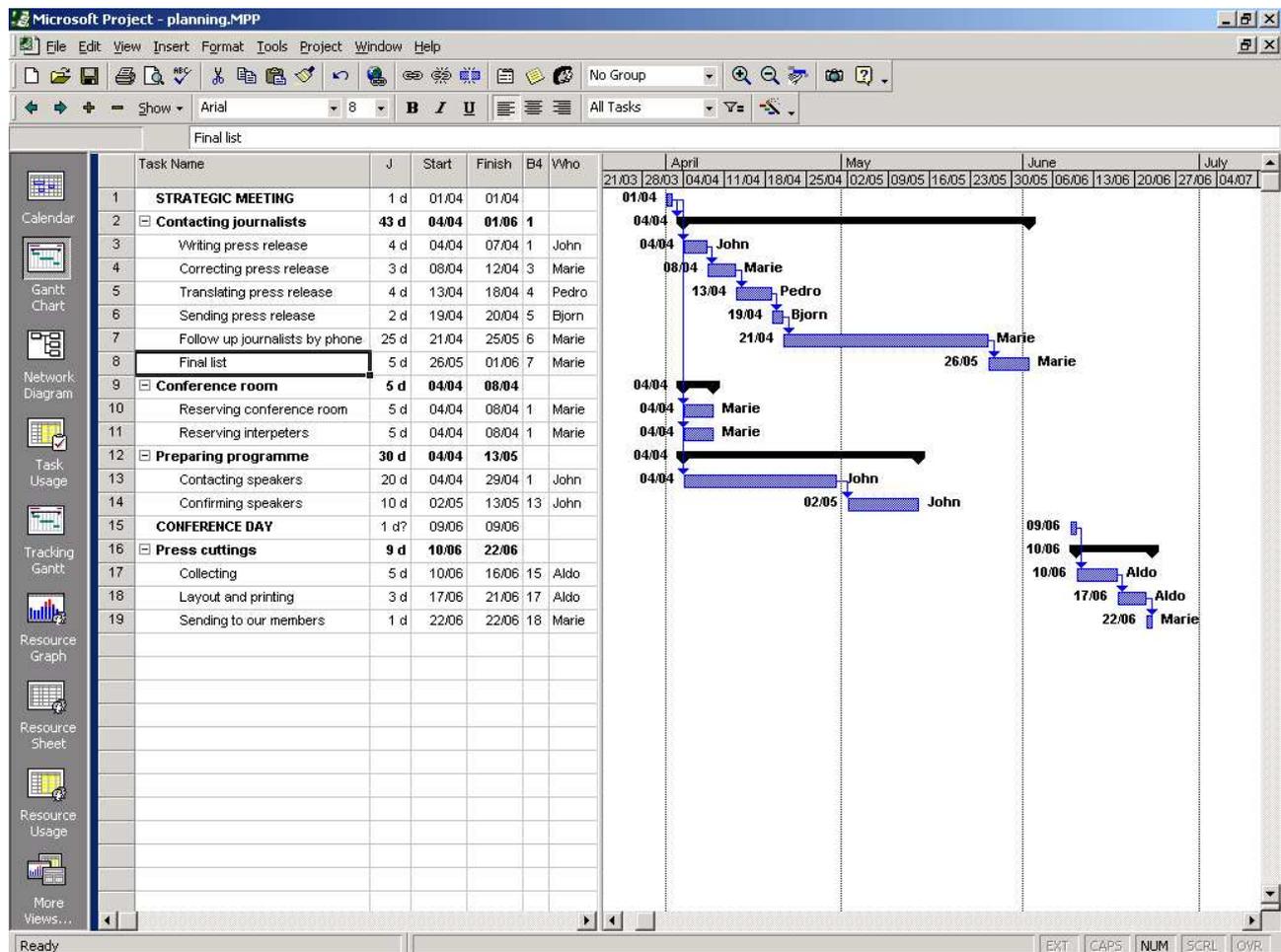
- If your strategic meeting is postponed from 1st April to the 20th April, you change this initial date and all the other dates will follow as all the tasks are linked to each other.
- If, having postponed your meeting date you realise your planning foresees to send your invitations to the press 2 days **AFTER** the press conference, you have a problem. You then have to withdraw days from this or that task to make up for the delay caused by the postponement of the initial meeting. Thereafter the programme will automatically readapt your planning in function of the integrated changes. To do this by hand takes hours.

To prepare the planning, is to make sure **not one stage is forgotten**. You can also take the opportunity to indicate who will be **responsible** for each stage.

In fact, the planning often plays the part of “action plan”. It is a good management tool.

It is important to **submit** this planning to **all** the actors before finalising it for you will then learn that John is on holiday when he is supposed to write out the press release and that Marie will be on training the week during which she is supposed to contact the journalists by phone.

Example of planning



6.5.2. With what budget ?

To ring up a journalist, to spend a few hours with him, is not very expensive. A phone call and your time.

For the rest, to print a letter of information, to organise a press conference, to create an Internet site, to prepare a press folder, to keep up to date a press index, implies costs in proportion of your ambitions.

The first question to be asked is : how much time are you prepared to dedicate to the organization of communication towards the media ? If you know you won't have a minute to spare during the coming six months, it is better to postpone this project to a later date. For without time investment, nothing can be achieved.

The second question will be : do you have the budget to communicate at your disposal ?

If so, how much ?

If not, can one get hold of a budget ? If the answer is no to this second question, communication actions will have to be limited without outside costs, counting only on the proper forces of the association, which is perfectly feasible.

The third question will be : knowing the reply to questions 1 and 2, what kind of communication action can you launch ?

If no budget is available but if your association organises a lot of actions for and with youngsters, bet on the quality of the projects. More than often, it will be enough for these actions to get media interest. The communication job will then be limited to contact the journalists and to explain on the telephone in what aspect the event you organise could fascinate their readers.

In that case, you content yourself to graft a communication action on your own projects, which is moreover much more attractive to a journalist than an artificial action specially conceived, such as press conferences, visits on the field etc.

And this only costs time.

7. Printed press, radio television, Internet : specificities

7.1. Press : write to be read

Taking into account the general abundance of information, each reader is on the lookout for the least error committed by the editor to give up reading and pass onto something else :

- too long and too vague introduction
- too long sentences preventing a rapid reading
- news drowned in generalities, commonplace.

To be read, the journalist will have to :

- find an attractive title, urging one to read the paper. It can be informative, humorous, mysterious, challenging;
- propose a clear and concise message at least at the beginning of the text;
- enter rapidly into the heart of the matter : useless to go around the bush;
- create a solid structure : the paragraphs follow each other naturally, each sentence has its place, its utility. Nothing is superfluous;
- reply to seven basic questions (see page ?) in the first paragraphs so as to increase chances to get the information passed on to the reader, before he quits;
- give privilege to the human interest of the information : the reader will feel more easily concerned than if confronted only with technical aspects;
- write briefly : a sentence, an idea (but without turning it into a diktat);
- use concrete words rather than abstract ones, short words preferably to long ones;
- avoid jargon, neologisms, scientific unexplained terms, unexplained acronyms, redundancies, hollow formulas.
- **But above all ... have something to say and consequently to write !**

Make it shorter	
Don't write	Write
You are not without knowing	You know
It happens we were present	We were present
It is not without interest that	It is interesting that
<i>It was midnight. The night had started and it was dark</i>	It was midnight
When reading your text over, cut out lengths, redundancies, sentences which add nothing more. And if I leave out this word, this sentence, what would I lose as information?	

7.2. Radio : speak to be heard (and understood ?)⁷

In emergency, and more generally in the strict frame of what is news, information on the radio very often is limited to a simple interview, short, generally “hectic” and therefore incomplete as compared to the message you had the intention of getting over.

Where the written press opens up, two to three columns, the radio limits you, except in a report version, to one minute “on air”, corresponding merely to two written paragraphs...

The way to communicate via an audio-visual channel is therefore quite different from what the written press allows. And it will also depend from the time your discussion partner is ready to dedicate to this information

1) You are contacted in connection with a news topic.

This being the case, you have to reply to a precise demand of a journalist wishing to be enlightened by you concerning some hot news, or to have your reaction about an event that took place in your area of activity.

At best, he will suggest a meeting on the premises of your work or at the studio, at worst, he will be content with a reaction registered over the telephone : the mobile phone has considerably changed the contact between the radio press and the resource persons. Although the quality of transmissions by phone can be most variable, they offer a rapid and (sometimes) easy solution, more and more appreciated these present days !

But whatever the mode of registration of your replies, here are a few basic rules that will save you from being disappointed on hearing your interview :

- sense of synthesis : agree with the journalist on the length of time made available for you, discuss with him the field of the interview, you will reduce the risks of a “patchwork” reassembly that would no longer have much in common with the ideas you wanted to convey;
- sense of expression : the language is a fearful weapon in radio broadcasting : a shock expression, an image in the figurative sense will have more impact on the audience than a long speech;
- clearness of the message : what is on air is fleeting. Where a reader has the possibility to read a second time a complex paragraph, the listener gets only a one-time hearing. If he doesn’t understand, he quits...;
- do not hesitate if your interview has been lengthened, to agree with the journalist what part will throw more light on the subject treated : don’t be afraid to suggest a remake of the registration if you feel you have been obscure, too long, not sufficiently aggressive. Politicians, union representatives, company managers used to express themselves in the media, do the same thing !
- avoid reading a press release, a text prepared in advance : the lack of naturalness is soon perceived and even soon becomes boring !

⁷ Chapter written by André Zaleski, journalist RTBF, Belgium.

- don't think yourself irreplaceable : the importance is to get the message over. According to the nature of the information to be given, examine who, between the educator, the civil servant, the local youngster..., is best able to reply to the enquiries of the press, with respect to the preceding rules.
- 2) If you are the initiator of information you want to broadcast.

If above advices remain of course valid, they apply also to a wider scope, since the thing is not only to give an answer to a demand, but to arouse the journalists' interest with a piece of information they have not requested.

In this context other recommendations may be of application :

- In the choice of the media you will contact, do not neglect local radios and televisions, the regional centres of national channels : besides their proximity and therefore their better acquaintance with the field, the journalists belonging to these centres will give more attention to the situation you want to describe, and in many case will be able to grant you more time than the national antenna. And their audience is not to be underestimated.
- The audio-visual media often ask to have precedence over the written press : information has to arrive as quickly as possible on air, whereas the papers finish off in the evening to be on sale on the following morning. Without granting them exclusivity that would irk the written press, you can propose to radios and/or televisions to anticipate a press conference and meet them before the starting time...this will enable them not to have to queue after the common presentation.
- As has been reminded in the preceding chapters, the press does not know everything. It's you who are the specialist ! You know the district, the youngsters, the inhabitants, the social and economical environment, the nature of the social relations... Show imagination and creativity when you approach the media, especially the audio-visual press for which sound and image constitute additional values in a news report, and even more so in a magazine.
- And since we mention the "magazine" format, let's stand by it for a moment : no matter if it takes up 3 or 26 minutes, it outstrips what is described in the professional jargon as "hot news". Same as the report in the written press, it gives the opportunity to go deeper in the development of a topical subject. In radio, the report implies a variety of sounds and speakers. It creates a favourable atmosphere for the listener interested to hear a real life story.

In the frame of your profession, these stories are entirely a part of the social life of the moment, with their small and great misunderstandings : co-habitation, integration, emigration, racism, delinquency ...

You have there an essential part to play towards the press : your experience of the field, your daily contacts with the youngsters enable you to stimulate press reports liable to modify the caricatured images, the preconceived ideas, put events back in perspective : not to be neglected !

Prepare oneself to an interview

Apart from the incredible stress preceding an interview on air, my main worry is to remain sincere, faithful to the reality and efficient in what there is to communicate. The most difficult is to give up as lost complete and global information. Only one or two ideas will get passed on, not more.

To prepare myself I start by asking the question :What is essential to be communicated ? I write out a reminder (on a card) containing the few messages I hope to pass on in the form of key words, written in large letters and underlined, and adding other key words possibly useful.

Next, I note, without literary care, concrete examples that will help me illustrate the leading ideas. I always leave space between these notes to allow last minute additions.

But what is essential lays, in the spontaneity of the speech, which is rendered easier if one has the ideas well in mind and ... on the reminder card.

Edwin de Boevé, Dynamo International, Brussels.

7.3. TV : it's all about images ...and sound !⁸

Roughly, the advices given for your contacts with the radio press remain valid for television: the delays for topical events are shorter than with the written press, the time imparted to these questions on the antenna are just as short.

The illustrations the journalist is looking for will be limited : what interests him foremost is to have a person facing him. But, contrarily to the radio interview, the mobile phone will be of no use to him ...

In the treatment of topical news questions, the “power of the image” is not the dominant element : on the contrary even, too much attention given to the illustration of a comment or an interview risks to perturb the general meaning, because in the mind of the viewer it is hard to be simultaneously conscience of what he sees and what he hears.

This notwithstanding, it is seldom that an interview be integrally broadcasted “facing the camera”, without being from time to time covered by images. This way of proceeding is also rendered necessary because these images, known as “cutting plans” allow the rearrangement of the sound track of the interview, without having the head of the interviewed person give disagreeable jerks...

However, if you are brought to answer questions in front of a camera, here are a few useful tips :

- try to fix the eyes of the interviewer which are also, theoretically, those of the viewer; do not look from left to right or up and down, the result on the screen will be disastrous;
- be relaxed, but not too much ! Same as for your eyes, avoid to move from one foot to the other, to change the position of your legs or your arms...
- avoid to refer to something you said before the camera was filming (“ ... as I told you a couple of minutes ago ...”)
- one idea per sentence : lengthy sentences, where ideas are buzzing, with backward recalls, or involving persons having nothing to do with the subject, have difficulty of getting over on television;
- suggest to the journalist a significant place to do the interview, nothing looks sadder than a press conference room or a forum hall... If necessary, there they will find circumstances offering additional images that can serve if needed as cutting plans or illustrations on the comment, but with the advantage of maintaining a background unity. This being said, this background should not be noisy, as this would risk causing a disagreeable sound mix at the moment of your replies.

... And if the eye of the camera makes you shy, keep in mind that you are not the only one to be uneasy.

Interview on television remains a difficult exercise, the image does not forgive lack of naturalness, and there are many journalists who feel the same anxiety at the moment they get filmed.

Be therefore as much as possible yourself, either on the field of your activity or in a studio.

⁸ Chapter written by André Zaleski, journalist RTBF, Belgium.

You will the more be able to be so that you are in “your” element : if the press wants your opinion, it is because of your status of “expert”, your acquaintance with the field, your capability of giving testimony on a situation.

And if you feel that one tries to make you talk on a subject you don’t master, or to steer you onto unfamiliar grounds , stop machines and get things straight with your interviewer...

A few tips for a good interview

- Remain always calm when you are being questioned, even if it is to take stock of things or related to an irritating subject.
- In the frame of a simple testimony, relate simply the facts.
- Go from the principle that the journalist and the viewers know nothing of the reality, therefore remain clear, educational, using words of every day life, avoid absolutely the use of acronyms or jargon.
- For an interview of a fundamental character or for an analysis, take time to prepare carefully your information and your speech. Anticipate the questions.
- In your comments, do not hesitate to start from your own experience, be concrete before going over to your analysis.
- During an interview, don’t forget that your target is the reader, the listener or the viewer, not the journalist.
- Adapt your speech to the length of time available. Everything is often won within the first few minutes, therefore start from what is essential and develop afterwards.
- Prepare carefully your message before the interview on a framework that, for instance, contains clearly the key words of the subject.
- Speak in a concise manner, clearly, thanks to concrete words, short sentences and uttered calmly.
- If you have nothing particular to communicate, please give up.
- If you are filmed, do not let the surroundings or the technical equipment impress you, remain concentrated. Chose well your premises, they should be as eloquent as your speech.

A conversation with a journalist will be the more interesting that you will have had the time to create a climate of trust by means of one or two previous contacts, same as with your public.

7.4. Internet : a constantly evolving media

As a new media, Internet has its own specificities :

- a system of **hypertext links** (when one clicks on a word one opens a new window), which usefully complete the information, but entice the reader to quit the text he is in the process of reading to venture elsewhere. Will he come back ?
- An information in **real time** (one has the possibility of updating the information but beware of the outdated information left on the site).
- A host of available information on a same subject, identified by more and more performing **search engines** (google, altavista, yahoo...). With a few key words in any language, these search engines will

gather for you the supposed most interesting pages (it doesn't work every time, but with a bit of habit and a bit of luck one quickly lands on what one is looking for).

Where writing is concerned, one will therefore have to be very catchy :

- Write even shorter;
- Do not compel the Internet surfer to make the text appear on more than two or three screens. Above that, there is a lot of chance he will zap;
- Be conscious that every page must be self sufficient : it is better to adopt the "file" approach containing different independent texts treating one aspect of the subject rather than embark on a long article. Useless to want to create an ending to your article at the bottom of the fourth screen, the reader will probably never get so far.
- Integrate the hypertext link system at the time of conception and structuring of the information.

For the rest, the writing requirements are the same as for the other media.

With the constant improvement of the technical capacities, it will be necessary to anticipate that Internet will become more and more multi-media and that the integration text-sound-images will bring about major changes in the production of Internet sites. To be kept in mind.

8. A few suggestions to take off ?

Here is a concrete suggestion to start communication. It is certainly not the only one but it can give you ideas.

The basic situation is supposed to be as follows : you are at present convinced your association should from now on communicate towards the media...

A team work : if not motivated abstain

Begin by gathering all the persons potentially concerned.

Explain the idea of including a “communication” dimension in the action, discuss it.

If the motivation of the troops is sufficient, go ahead (otherwise you will still have to work first on their motivation) and make a first assessment of how things stand :

- identify each one’s eventual capabilities (one likes writing, the other is good at photography, a good talker, ...)
- identify each one’s contact network (one will sometimes be surprised) : who knows a journalist, an expert in communication, a sister association having experience in communication;
- identify potential sub-contractors : photographers, film makers, writers who might one day be mobilized;
- identify the actions, the present and future themes of your association that could interest the press, public opinion and seem to you as useful to be better known.

A communication cell for your association

Next, seeing it is not necessary to mobilize everybody each time you need a mainspring for every action, organize a communication cell. A team of three persons for instance, one of whom is in charge, who will conceive, coordinate, report and more often carry out by themselves communication actions.

A person in charge, only one

Whereas a cell of several persons allows for good group work, it is all the same necessary to appoint one single person as being the responsible coordinator, if one wishes to have thing progress in due time. Otherwise, the responsibility is too diluted and experience shows (with only a few exceptions) that the vagueness resulting from a co-responsibility lessens the efficiency. This does not prevent from consulting together and from co-operating closely.

Start at a small scale

Through a communication action on the action of the association. Give privilege to personal contact and in this way start to build a network of contacts.

Example : start with a journalist belonging to a local media

Method : ask a journalist from a local television, specialised in social matters (you only have to telephone and to ask who is responsible for social information if you don’t know the person) if he could see you for an hour, not longer, to give you some advice in communication. You tell him you think the action of street workers (namely in your association) is interesting, useful, important and that you would like to make it better known at local level. And that he, as journalist, could give you some useful tips. Try, the response is nearly always positive. You can get a lot of benefit from his advice, he will take the opportunity to

find out more about a subject he is interested in and you will have a first name on your address book of press contacts.

And maybe a first sketch of action to be carried out, which would bring this particular journalist to cover the event.

The secret of success : a network of contacts

There is nothing like direct and personal contact. All the journalists say so. Resulting from a regular work of contact, a good network will enable you to mobilize persons already acquainted with your activities when you need them. In this way you will harvest what you have sown.

This network will probably correspond to your personality. You will hit it off more with one particular journalist, newspaper or radio. Certain persons will perhaps become friends but with others you will sometimes not get on the same wavelength.

Concerning the choice of your “responsible media contact”, it is recommended that this person is fond of social contacts and feels at ease “in society”. It is useless to send to the front the shyest person of your association. A minimum of diplomacy is also recommended.

The impression of co-operation and common interest must prevail in the relation with the media. Certainly you are the seekers, but the media need information. Somewhere you are on equal footing. Therefore avoid acting as if you had to make use of the journalist, to manipulate him for your profit. Put yourself in his place, put your trumps objectively in evidence and create a healthy relation between the two of you.

Learn thanks to the others

Why not co-operate with a sister association that already has more experience ? Suggest a common action and learn from this contact.

To accumulate experience, is also to accumulate support

Bit by bit, you will find out which are your strong points, you will learn from your successes and your failures, you will reinforce your internal capabilities, your exterior relations.

To communicate will progressively become a reflex inside your action, inside your association.

But at the same time a source of ideas and support. The more you will know people, the more you will be known and recognised, and it will be easier for you to obtain help and support.

Inasmuch, of course, that the quality of your work follows.

Don't build on sand or on bluff if you want to last in time.

Next, look for something bigger : the communication plan

With some experience, you will be able to imagine more ambitious plans, better structures, with different actions completing each other, in short create a communication plan.

Head for communication on a regular basis: get into the swing of things

Once the “communication vessel” is launched, you can progressively count on the speed acquired to go further :

- new actions
- new tools and new targets
- enlarge the network of contacts
- enlarge the partnerships

Promoting a conference: make yourself heard and you'll be visible

In the framework of the international conference on social street work organized at the Martinique in February 2004, each medium has had a role to play with the various targeted audiences.

First, we took part in a radio program broadcasted by *RFO Martinique*. The audience of this program was mainly made of elderly people, but also of a lot of younger adults. There, we used to talk about today's social problems and to follow with a debate on the street “of the old days”, the street of their youth.

Then we participated in a TV program on a local channel called *Antilles Television*, on a Saturday during lunch time, a moment in which television becomes the centre of indirect communication in most homes...

Finally, in order to reach a national audience, the public TV channel *RFO Martinique* broadcasted news about the conference during the 7 PM news bulletin, which is watched by a large majority of the population.

Our strategy has been successful, we benefited from quality media coverage and from a large participation of public authorities.

After our conference, IFMES (« Institute of training to educational, health and medical professions ») has become a reference for media in the field of social and health issues.

Marie-Claire Lavater, IFMES, Martinique

9. And once you have communicated ?

9.1. A continuous process

There is never an end to communication, especially if the ship is already sailing at full speed. You will then observe with pleasure that it is sometimes the journalists themselves who get in touch with you, that your partners themselves suggest joining them for new communication actions.

But most of all, you will have acquired the reflex of integrating a communication stage in all your actions.

9.2. Keep some traces

Press articles, radio or television reports must be **collected along** with your actions and assembled in a **book** which will be the record of your communication actions.

You will be able to use these results to communicate towards other targets : your sponsors, your members, public authorities, etc.

The press articles can be reproduced in you newsletters, distributed during meetings, sent to the members who will be pleased to learn that the action of their association is widely reported in the media.

Television programmes will serve as introduction for an internal meeting, a debate, a conference but also to convince sponsors, brief new recruits in your association, to introduce yourself with other associations, etc.

It is also a **source of inspiration** to create other promotion tools/documents about your action. The journalists sometimes write things you had never thought about and which appear to you well seen and can inspire you to explain your work. More concretely, you can copy-stick a paragraph or an interesting testimony (please mention the reference) in a more important press file you are preparing for a new action.

The book will also serve to write the chapter “communication” of your eventual annual report.

9.3. Take stock of the situation

It is wise from time to time to take stock of the situation, to stand still for a moment and look at the past and draw the lessons from it.

And same of as for the state of affairs go about it in two stages :

- internal evaluation by the team
- external evaluation by the targets.

It is the opportunity, but use moderation, to contact anew the media you have previously been in contact with and to ask their opinion on your way of communicating with them :

- What do they think of your tools: did they read your press releases, your press files ...?
- What image do they have of your association, your action, the youngsters ...? Has it changed further to the communication efforts of your association?

- Have they been well informed about your actions ? Did they get enough useful information?
- Did they cover one or the other event (in principle you should already been aware of it)
 - ° if yes, how did it draw their attention ?
 - ° if not, why ?
- What do they suggest to be better informed ?

You can question them during a telephone appointment or a meeting. By phone it is quicker but direct contact is friendlier.

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Also a quantitative assessment

By enquiring as to the number of articles published and cutting them out (even those coming from Internet), by making a list and obtain a copy of radio and television broadcasts you will be able to quantify the results of your action.

This is the least you can do.

It will be more difficult to quantify the number of persons who will effectively have been reached by these media. Here you can have recourse to samples by establishing a list of the representative persons of your targets (public authorities, neighbourhood, teachers, youngsters, etc.) and contact them to find out if they have read, heard or seen something of your actions and what they have remembered. This is no doubt a heavy and demanding task but it is useful, from time to time, to check if the work put into communication has been worthwhile. To appear in the media, let's keep it in mind, is only a tool to reach one's public, not an end in itself.

Last but not least, it is also useful to assess the final impact of your media communication, has your relationship with the public authorities improved, is it easier to obtain financings, have you enlarged your network of contacts, is the street reality better understood by the neighbourhood, by the public in general, etc. It is not easy to quantify but to identify trends theme by theme can be useful.

10. Conclusion

After having read the numerous examples and testimonies received to draw up this guidebook (not all of them have been used and we hope the authors will excuse us), one gets an idea of the extraordinary richness and diversity, which characterizes our society. A society, which at present has become global, for better or for worse.

Actually, it is essentially the economics and the military forces that are global but, here and there, solidarity strategies are getting organised. Whatever their position or profession, women, men and children have been ready to help us to write this modest document.

Faced with so much suffering endured by children, youngsters and adults who live in the street, various politicians, journalists and street workers don't hesitate to come out with answers come hell or high water. To swim against the current of a dominant public opinion, seems to be the fate of the street workers and they do it without bitterness or discouragement.

What is at stake makes it worthwhile for, as justly underlined by one of the youngsters questioned in the frame of this research, the importance is to respect them.

With this conviction and in accordance with the collective writing of this guide, the network of social street workers will continue to mobilize and to develop new projects. The next theme to be studied will more specifically and more exhaustively concern the methodology of social street work.

And since it is by joining forces that results are obtained, we hope to have the benefit of your participation, in whatever way you chose.

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