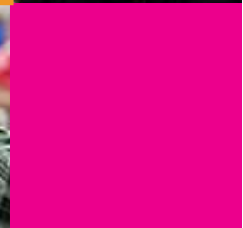
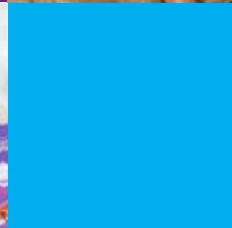
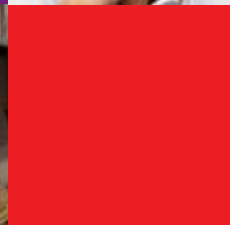
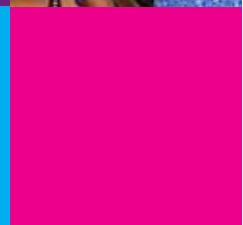


# Communications HANDBOOK

Developing Good Practice for Women's Rights Organisations

**NANA DARKOA SEKYIAMAH**







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Developing Good Practice for  
Women's Rights Organisations

**Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah**

A Handbook for Women's Rights Organisations  
by the African Women's Development Fund



Development Cooperation  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

**PHOTOGRAPHY:** Nana Kofi Acquah, Nana Darkoa Sekyiamah, Nyani Quarmyne,  
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# Foreword

A few years ago the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) commissioned a series of "Good Practice Guidelines" for women's rights organisations. These "Good Practice Guidelines" included a handbook on Communications. That handbook was compiled before the fast moving world of social media took over – blogs, Facebook and Twitter to name a few. This new and updated Communications handbook brings together in one publication key aspects of old media as well as new media. It is an essential aide-memoire for both the experienced and novice communicator.

This "Communications Handbook" is part of a series of "Good Practice Guidelines" designed to support the capacity of women's rights organisations, in particular, grantees of AWDF. It is our sincere hope that the women responsible for communicating the very crucial messages of women's rights will find this handbook a useful resource in their day to day business.

Our sincere thanks go to our donors who have supported our work and as a result reinforced in diverse ways the capacity building of AWDF's grantees.

**Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi**  
Executive Director



# Acronyms and Abbreviations

AWDF – African Women's Development Fund  
RSS – Real Simple Syndication  
PDF - Portable Document Format  
ICT – Information Communication Technology  
UAF (Africa) – Urgent Action Fund (Africa)

## Glossary of Terms

Embargoed for Release – Do not make public until specified date  
Software – Computer programmes and related data that provide instructions to computers  
Traffic - The amount of data sent and received by visitors to a web site

# About the African Women's Development Fund (AWDF)

**T**he African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) is a grant making foundation, which aims to support the work of the African women's movement. The vision of the AWDF is for African women to live in a world in which there is social justice, equality and respect for women's human rights. To this end, our mission is to mobilise financial resources to support local, national and international initiatives led by women, which will lead to the achievement of this vision. The Fund has been set up by three African Women who have been active in various institutions within and outside Africa, and who have a track record of successful empowerment interventions, which have helped strengthen the African women's movement.

## AWDF'S OBJECTIVES

AWDF's objective is to raise money and make grants for the support of non-profit African women's organisations working for social justice, equality and peace. AWDF therefore has four key roles:

- Fundraising within and outside Africa
- Grant-making on an Africa-wide basis
- Communication, focusing on the work and achievements of African women's organisations.
- Providing technical assistance to strengthen grantee organisations

## FUNDING PRIORITIES

AWDF awards grants to African women's organisations working in the following thematic areas:

- Women's Human Rights
- Economic Empowerment
- Political Participation
- Peace-Building
- Health and Reproductive Rights
- HIV/AIDS

These thematic areas have been chosen because they feature very highly on the agenda of the African women's movement. The themes are specific enough to be able to focus on work that is being prioritised by many women's organisations, and they are also flexible enough to enable potentially good projects to qualify for support. AWDF also funds programmes that develop and promote women's leadership across all these themes.



# Introduction

**A** critical part of the work of women's rights organisations in Africa is to amplify the autonomous voices of African women, their experiences and aspirations, as well as their achievements and challenges. Given the historical context in which African women have been negatively portrayed and stereotyped in the media, popular culture and so on, the imperative to provide this alternative counter balance becomes even greater.

Whilst more women's rights organisations recognise the need to strengthen their communications capacities, it is still a relatively low priority for most. The inability to prioritise communications has ramifications for the portrayal of women's rights organisations, their constituents and ultimately the agenda of the women's movement.

The evolution of communication methodologies especially the increasing use of non-traditional media forms such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs<sup>1</sup> present an opportunity for women's rights organisations to communicate effectively with relatively small budgets.

This handbook aims to be a useful reference guide for women's rights organisations in Africa and will explore several forms of new media communications as well as the more traditional communications methods. In simple concise language explains the 'Why', 'How' and 'What' of many key communication tools.

It is outside the scope of this handbook to provide details of ALL the communications tools that exist and are constantly being developed in this fast-moving communications era. For this reason a list of useful communications tools that have not been covered in this handbook is included as a reference guide for further research and reading.

<sup>1</sup> AWDF has shared her experiences on blogging in the publication, "Experiences in the Blogsphere: April 2008-March 2009" which can be downloaded at [www.awdf.org](http://www.awdf.org)

# Communications for Women's Rights Organisations

## A BASIC COMMUNICATION MODEL

Communication refers to the various activities through which one sends and receives messages. A simple communication model is illustrated below:

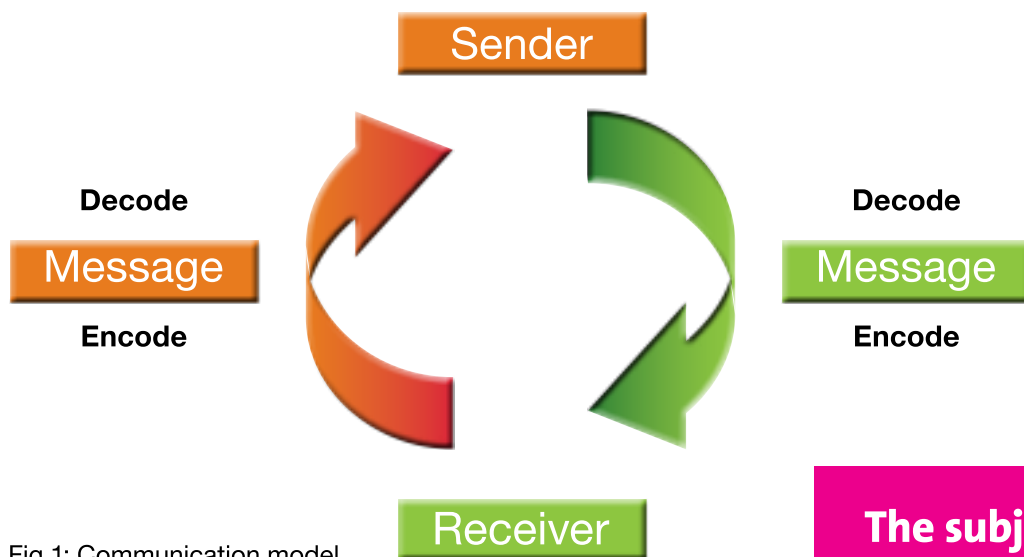


Fig 1: Communication model

Figure 1 illustrates communication at its most basic. Whenever one is communicating, there is a sender, a receiver and a message. Messages sent are always encoded. This code could be the language the message is sent in, the accent of the person speaking or an acronym used in a book. Your ability to receive this message is dependent on being able to decode this message. A lot of “noise”<sup>1</sup> can get in the way of receiving a message. It is always important to ensure that you minimise “noise” to increase the chances of you communicating effectively. Imagine that you are giving a presentation to a group of donors, think about how you will reduce noise, how you encode your message; are all the acronyms you are using familiar to your audience? Are you speaking too quickly for your audience? An effective communicator considers all of these factors when transmitting their messages.

**The subject of communications is critical to the success of women's rights organisations. Who will know about the impact of your work if you do not find creative ways to “show and tell”?**

Depending upon the size and function of the organisation one can communicate through a variety of methods including reports, publications, internal memos, press releases, emails, a website, and social media. The method of communication one chooses will depend on a variety of factors including your target audience, one's budget, and one's experience of a particular communication method.

## Different forms of Communication





## INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

Women's Rights organisations communicate both internally and externally. Internal communications is crucial in fostering good staff relations and promotes an effective working environment. Examples of internal communications include:

- Internal Memos
- Staff Meetings
- Emails
- Telephone conversations
- Intranet
- Staff blogs
- Notice boards

Think about the type of internal communications used in your organisation. What are its advantages and disadvantages? Many individuals/organisations for example now find that staff over-rely on email communications when in some instances face to face meetings would be a better communication method. Let's examine the pros and cons of the various types of internal communication methods cited here.



## Internal Memos

### ADVANTAGES

A formal and professional method of communicating messages, requests and directives	Memos (as in all other communication methods) can be used inappropriately for e.g. to express grievances
Easy to document when filed properly	Sometimes perceived as an archaic and impersonal method of communication
Can be copied to relevant persons	Can be a 'slow' method of disseminating information as opposed to emails for e.g.
Memos can be a source of reference for previous directives and messages	Memos typically do not present an opportunity for instant and dynamic feedback

### DISADVANTAGES

## Email Communication

### ADVANTAGES

Communication can be easily tracked	Reduces face to face contact <sup>2</sup>
You can take time to carefully craft a message	Can result in email ping pong – a scenario where emails bounce back and forth unnecessarily
The receiver can check the email at her convenience	Frequent checking and reading of emails can reduce productivity. Also cause delays in responding to urgent matters for those who do not check frequently
A message can be sent to multiple receivers at the same time	People may be unnecessarily copied to emails

### DISADVANTAGES



## Staff Meetings

### ADVANTAGES

Presents an opportunity for individuals and departments to give updates to the collective	Meetings have a tendency to run over time
Can be used as occasions to foster team spirit and bonding	Meetings can be held for the sake of holding a meeting and not because there is a need to meet
An opportunity to make key announcements to entire staff body	Staff meetings can become overly formal and lack creativity
Chairing staff meetings, recording minutes and facilitating discussions amongst staff can be used as an opportunity for leadership development amongst staff	Some staff members may feel uncomfortable expressing their opinions in a meeting of the larger staff body

### DISADVANTAGES

## Telephone Conversations

### ADVANTAGES

A quick and easy communication method	Can be a relatively expensive method of communicating especially when communication is not local or brief
A more informal communication tool with opportunities for personal interaction	Poor network connectivity can affect the quality of telephone calls
Allows easy and widespread communication especially with the advent of mobile telephony	Limited availability of fixed telephone lines in some urban African cities
Can be used for telephone conferences when some staff members are located remotely	Important messages may be 'lost' if notes are not taken during important phone calls

### DISADVANTAGES

## Intranet

### ADVANTAGES

Useful for archiving and documenting	Needs to be updated regularly in order to remain relevant
Acts as an easy point of reference for staff	Requires dedicated staff to update
Can be updated easily by trained staff	Site design/interface may need to be refreshed from time to time
May foster feedback and dynamic interaction	Can contribute towards an over reliance on technology for communication

### DISADVANTAGES





Women's Rights  
organisations communicate  
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Internal communications  
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## Staff Blogs

### ADVANTAGES

- Can be a rich source of information especially when staff blog about experiences, lessons learnt, site visits, etc.
- Improves writing skills and fosters staff creativity
- Informal style of blog writing makes blogs easier to write for many people
- Encourages people to tell personal stories which are often more engaging than reports for e.g.

### DISADVANTAGES

- Blogs need to be updated regularly
- Blogging guidelines/policies need to be made clear to staff whilst maintaining the informal ethos of blogging
- Staff who are new to blogging may need technical assistance
- Blogs can be time consuming. The 'best' bloggers do not only blog but also scan the blogosphere

## Notice Boards

### ADVANTAGES

- Appeals to the visual senses
- Presents an opportunity to 'show off' publicity generated through news articles for e.g.
- Can be a way of recognizing staff achievements. Congratulatory letters for e.g. can be placed on the notice board
- Can encourage staff creativity. Staff can be asked to put new ideas on staff notice boards for e.g.

### DISADVANTAGES

- Inappropriate newspaper clippings can often end up staff notice boards
- Notice boards in public places need to be monitored for the appropriateness of material
- Information on notice boards need to be read whilst standing so ideally need to be brief and concise
- Messages can be easily taken down by a member of staff or covered by another notice deemed to be more important



Can you add anything to the lists above? Can you think of a scenario where you chose email for internal communications when a face to face meeting, memo or a formal letter may have been more appropriate? It is important when communicating internally to consider carefully the most appropriate method to use. The environment in which you work also affects your chosen communication method. In an open plan office for example it may not always be easy to have an impromptu face to face meeting with a colleague seated within the same space.

It is important that women's rights organisations have communication policies/guidelines, which details how staff should use the various communication methods including telephones, email and the Internet for example. This communication guide can include information on the appropriate use of technology, email etiquette and include a range of guidelines on social media, as well as simple how to guides for tools such as Twitter, Facebook and blogs.

## EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

External communications is and should be a priority for women's rights organisations. Effective external communications can result in the improved status of women's rights organisations, successful fund-raising campaigns and contribute towards the creation of a strong brand. Effective external communications is also about the positioning and packaging of issues that women's rights organisations are advocating on. Typically most women's rights organisations will need to communicate to a variety of stakeholders, which can include:

- Beneficiaries
- Donors
- Governments
- Civil Society Groups
- Other Women's Rights organisations

Some of the more popular communication methods for external communications include:

- Reports
- Websites
- E-Newsletters
- Blogs
- Social media sites
- Press conferences
- Proposals
- Brochures
- Campaign related materials such as Flyers, T-shirts and banners



The section below highlights the advantages and disadvantages of various communication methods.



## Reports

### ADVANTAGES

- A well written report depicts your organisation as professional
- Regular reports on your activities to stakeholders increases credibility
- Reports present an opportunity to show what your achievements are
- Reports are an important part of ensuring institutional memory

### DISADVANTAGES

- A badly written report discredits your organisation
- Writing reports can be time consuming
- Some achievements can be hard to capture within a particular report format
- Reports can be perceived as an overly formal process

## Websites

### ADVANTAGES

- Accessible by a global audience
- Allows for easy updates and rapid communication
- Can be easily integrated with popular social media tools such as blogs and photo sharing websites
- Allows for a multiplicity of sensory applications including the use of audio, text and pictures

### DISADVANTAGES

- Needs to be updated regularly by a dedicated member of staff
- Staff may need a minimum amount of technical knowledge to run websites
- The look and feel of websites need to be refreshed intermittently by a professional
- Old information deleted from one website may still be available on other websites that may have linked to the information

## E-Newsletters

### ADVANTAGES

Enables organisations to communicate with subscribers on a regular basis	Care must be taken to ensure that e-newsletters are only sent to people who subscribe
E-newsletters can be archived on websites and be a useful repository of knowledge	Databases must be cultivated, monitored and inactive email accounts deleted
E-newsletters can be used to support fundraising campaigns	A dedicated staff member or team must commit to compiling information for the newsletter on a regular basis
E-newsletters can be virally disseminated through forwarding and incorporating social media functionalities	E-newsletters can result in a higher volume of emails being sent to the individual who sends out the e-newsletter.

### DISADVANTAGES

## Blogs

### ADVANTAGES

Easily accessed by a global audience	Staff buy in needs to be encouraged
Can be linked to organisation's main website and used as a way of driving additional traffic to site	Blogs must be regularly updated, preferably at least once a week
Can present a more human face to the organisation with informal blogs penned by staff	Staff may inadvertently leak confidential information on blogs
Comparatively easy to write. Blogs can consist of videos, audio, pictures as well as text and do not need to be a fixed number of words	Information disseminated in cyberspace cannot be easily retrieved even when deleted off the original sites

### DISADVANTAGES



## Social Media Sites

### ADVANTAGES

A wide variety of social media sites are in existence and suit various needs. Popular ones include Facebook and Twitter
Social media sites are interactive and encourage multi-way conversations
An opportunity to reach non-traditional and global audiences
Can be easily integrated into existing websites

### DISADVANTAGES

Engagement in social media is time consuming and time spent may not reflect results reaped
Social media sites need to be updated regularly
Social Media policies need to be drawn up to meet organisational needs
Dynamic nature of sites means standard quality control measures are impractical e.g. having a manager approve tweets

## Press Conferences

### ADVANTAGES

An opportunity to present your organisation's achievements to a selection of invited media at the same time
Creates opportunities for (additional) press coverage
Networking opportunity with members of the press
Press conferences can be used as opportunities to drum up publicity for future events

### DISADVANTAGES

Press may attend event and not cover in their media outlets
Stories may be inaccurately reported
Some members of the press may expect to be reimbursed financially for attending press conferences
Attendance of invited press is not a guarantee

## Proposals

### ADVANTAGES

Many organisations have set proposal formats which make it easier to request for funding by following the correct format
Proposals can usually be sent via email which allows for global/regional interactions
Writing a proposal enables you to 'think' through your request and specify what you will do with funds received
Proposals can be easily archived

### DISADVANTAGES

Filling proposals can be time consuming
Many funding agencies present their proposal formats in English which is not always the first language in many African countries
The proposal format may not allow you to give as much detail as you would like (e.g a limited number of pages)
Proposals are inanimate – its difficult to capture the dynamism of an organisation for e.g. on paper



## Brochures

### ADVANTAGES

A well designed brochure <sup>1</sup> can be a compelling tool for communications	Good quality brochures require the expertise of a graphic designer
Brochures can be used for online ( PDF documents for e.g.) and offline (as hard copies) communication	Badly designed brochures can perpetuate stereotypes e.g. in the representation of African women as beasts of burden
Brochures are usually light and easy to transport	Printing high quality brochures can be costly
Brochures can be designed to meet special needs e.g. produced in Braille	Producing a professional brochure takes time. Content may be written in-house for e.g. but graphic design and printing has to be outsourced

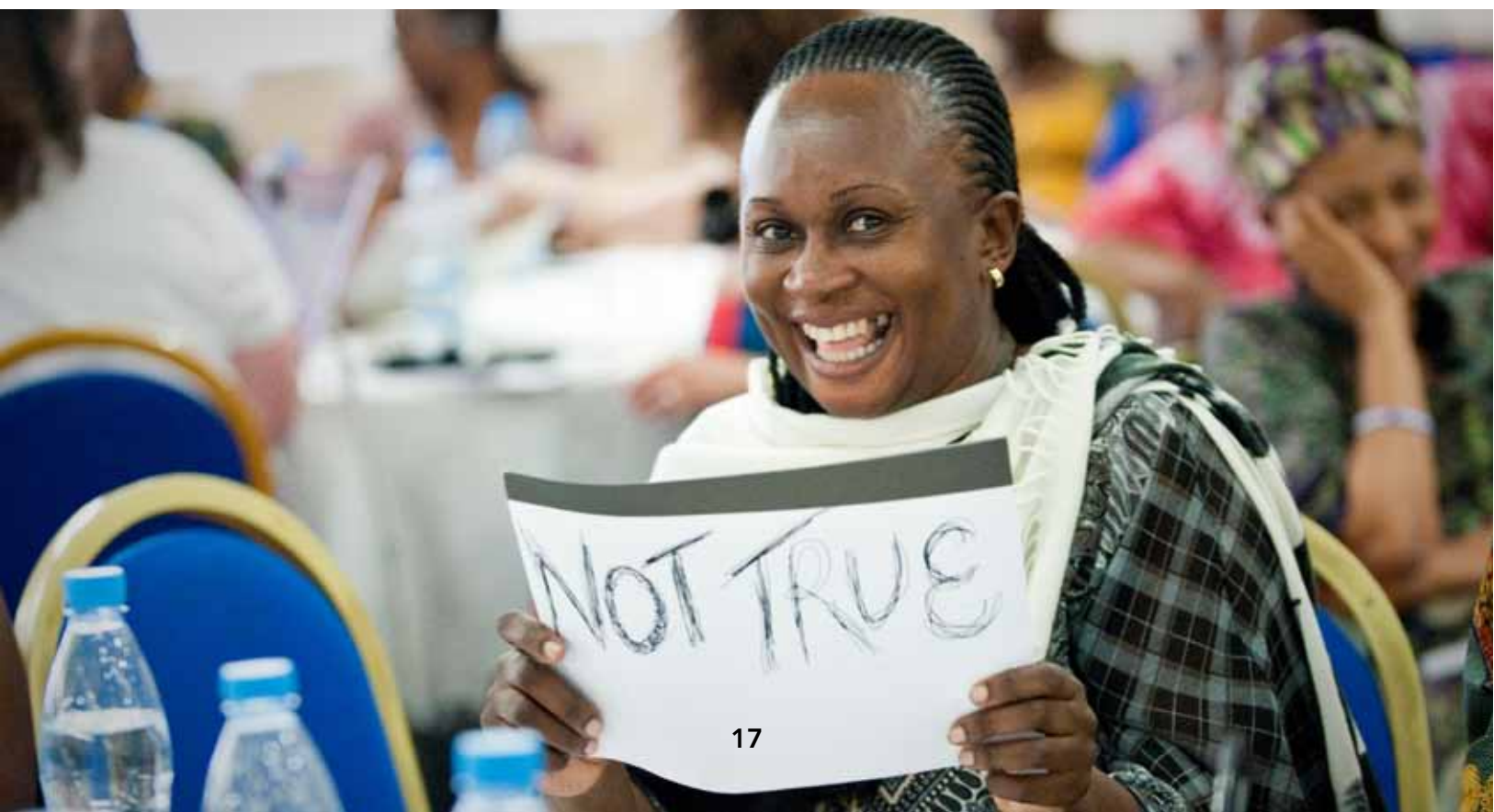
### DISADVANTAGES

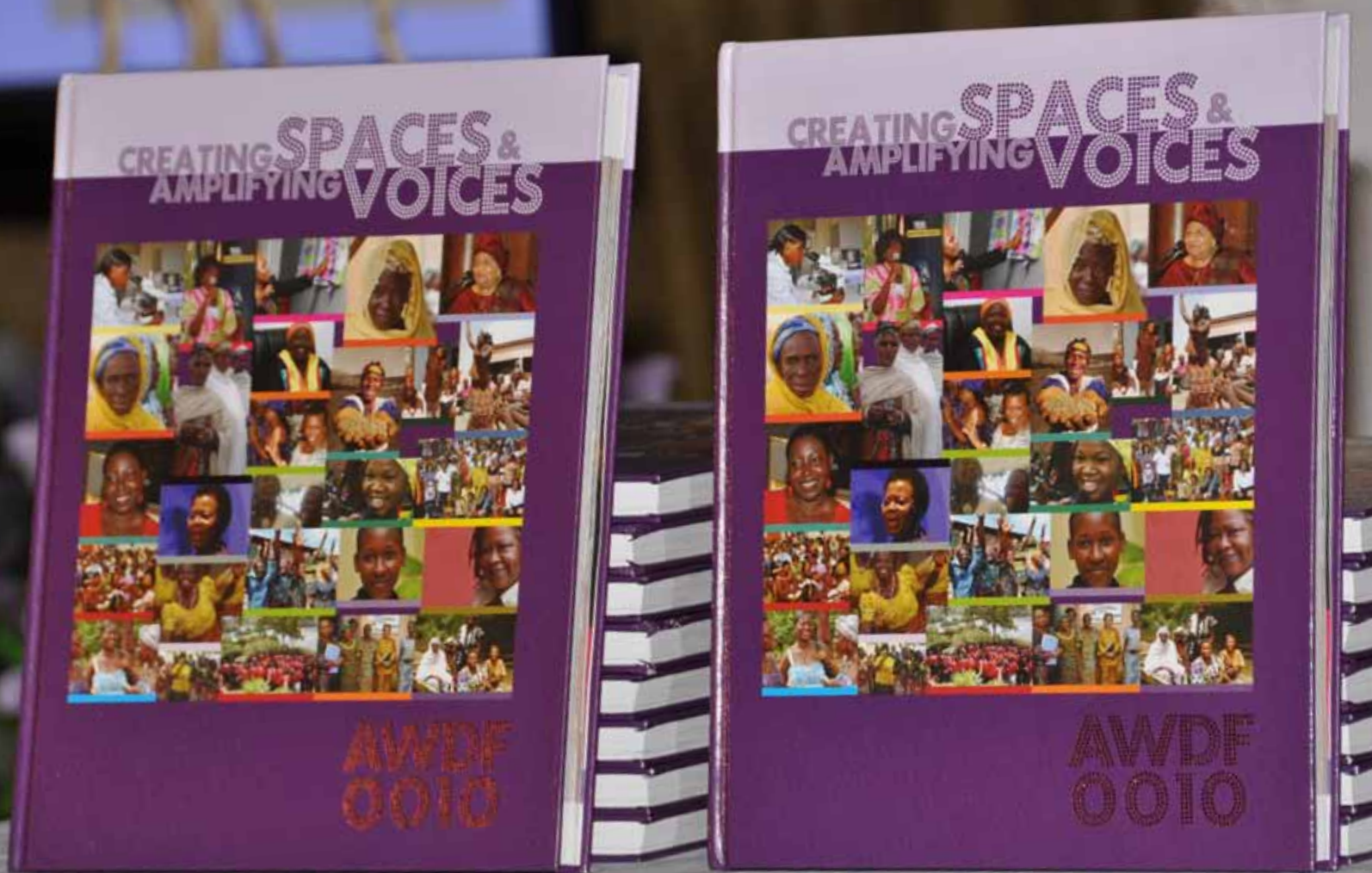
## Campaign Materials

### ADVANTAGES

Campaign materials are versatile and can include posters, flyers and t shirts	Professional production of campaign materials can be costly
Costs can be kept low by encouraging supporters to create their own campaign materials e.g. posters and banners	Producing campaign materials in house may not be the most effective use of staff time
Eye catching campaign materials such as catchy slogans can catch the imagination of the public	Producing campaign materials may not always be the best advocacy method
Effective campaign materials may have a lifespan beyond the campaign e.g. iconic T-shirts	Campaign messages become ineffectual if they do not resonate with the target audience

### DISADVANTAGES





## Communicating with “Old” Media

“Old” Media refers to traditional methods of communication, which often involve the written word and static images on printed paper. These often require that the communicator outsource any technological requirements. Examples of old media are the production of written communication including Annual Reports, Leaflets, Brochures, and Press Releases.

## ANNUAL REPORTS

Although the style and format of an Annual Report may differ from organisation to organisation there are some common elements and good practices that one can adhere to. Producing an Annual Report provides women's rights organisations with an important tool to demonstrate accountability to stakeholders, highlight accomplishments, and to recognise partners.

An Annual Report should include the following:

1. Your organisation's name, legal status, aims, objectives and contact details.
2. Consider a theme for the year in question. This theme should be stated on the cover of the Annual Report and reflected throughout the report. Choose visuals to reflect this theme for the cover and inside pages of the report.
3. A message from the leadership of the organisation. This message can come from the Board Chair and Executive Director. The Message sets the tone for the rest of the Annual Report and summarises the key highlights for the organisation for the year in question. The message can also include a call for action in the forthcoming year.
4. Highlights of your accomplishments, activities and the resulting impact. It is important to show how these accomplishments and achievements are linked to meeting the organisation's stated mission.
5. Personal stories, original pictures and quotes. As a women's rights organisation this is your opportunity to focus on your beneficiaries. Allow your beneficiaries to say in their own words the benefits gained from the work you do.
6. The organisation's financial information for the year in question. Include a brief narrative explaining the financial information. This can include how you raised funds, how the money was spent and what your fund-raising strategy is for the forthcoming year.
7. List all your donors. This is an opportunity to recognise the individuals, corporate bodies, governments, institutions and any other organisations that have supported your work.
8. List the members of the board, staff and any advisory groups. Where possible include recent pictures of board, staff and advisory groups.
9. Tell your supporters how they can help you. State the various ways in which your organisation can be supported. Your Annual Report is another opportunity to mobilise resources and build a brand.

## WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

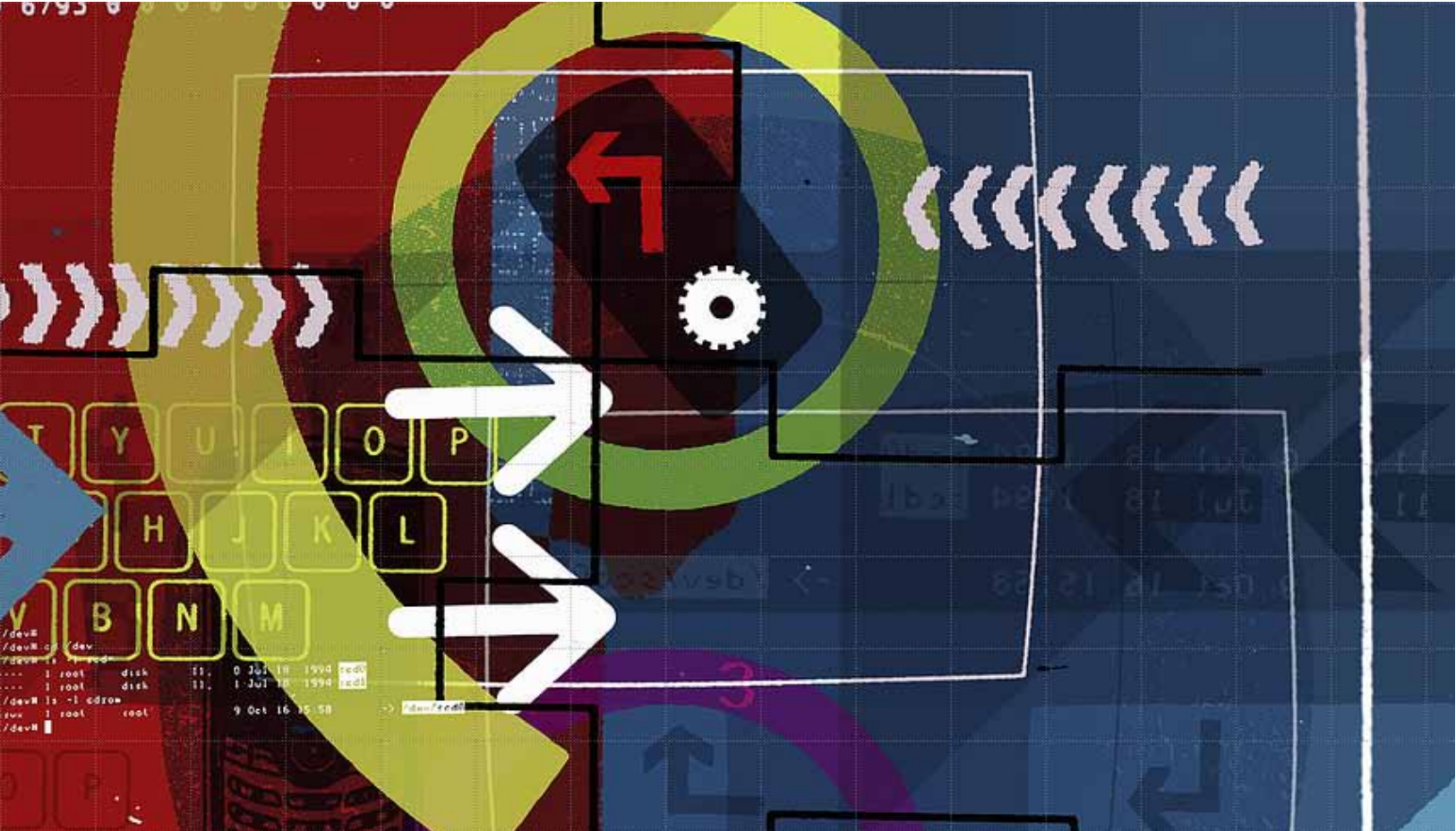
It is important that women's rights organisations develop good working relations with the media. In the absence of a dedicated Communications Officer it is crucial that a member of staff is designated to deal with media queries and build media relations. For the sake of consistency in external communications all media queries should be funnelled through dedicated staff. It is recommended that women's rights organisations have a media relations policy to guide staff responsible for media liaison.

Building good media relations involves cultivating members of the media, which can be done in a variety of ways including:

- Inviting media to attend events
- Sending stories to selected members of the media
- Honouring invitations by the media to speak on radio and television programmes

It is important to recognise that in many parts of the continent some members of the press will expect to be reimbursed financially for attending/covering events and to determine organisational policy around this. Overall a good working relationship with the media is an important part of good communications and helps women's rights organisations disseminate information, highlight achievements and may even be an avenue for resource mobilisation.





## PRESS RELEASES

Press releases are one of the most common and effective ways to alert the media of a story. A well-written release will specify who, what, where, when, why and how.

A Press Release should:

- Be written on A4 size paper, preferably on a letterhead
- Have Press Release/Media Release/News Release written boldly at the top of the page
- Below Press Release/Media Release/News Release, specify whether release is “For Immediate Release” or “Embargoed For Release”. If the latter specify the date/time the embargo ends
- Include organisation’s logo and contact details to obtain further information
- Be succinct. It is ideal to keep your Press Release to a page. If you need to go beyond a page put “more” at the centre of the bottom of the page
- Start a second page with the title of the release and the number of the page – this is a precaution in case the second sheet becomes detached from the first sheet

- At the end of the release type “END” in the centre of the page
- Put some brief information about your organisation at the bottom of the page. See Appendix 1 for a sample Press Release

### Drafting your Press Release

- It is important to have a catchy heading – if your headline is good enough the media will use it directly
- Keep the most important points at the beginning of your Press Release. In the first paragraph answer who, when, where and what
- In the second paragraph answer why and how
- Where possible have someone interesting quoted in the third paragraph
- Include the contact details of your media representative
- Circulate your Press Release to all relevant media houses, list serves and networks. Don’t forget to upload a copy to your website if you have one
- Follow up with a phone call to Media Houses once a Press Releases has been emailed/ faxed

## PRODUCTION OF LEAFLETS/ BROCHURES AND OTHER PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

Where possible work with good graphic designers and print houses to ensure quality production of leaflets, brochures and other promotional materials. When hiring a designer/print house for an initial job it is important to see samples of previous work produced. This will give you an idea of the standard and quality of work produced by the individual or design/print outfit.

As women's rights organisations it is important to be involved in every step of the content and design process. If your content is being written by a copywriter you need to check that the language used is consistent with the empowering language being used

by the global women's movement so terms such as "Sex Worker" as opposed to "Prostitute" or "Chair Person" instead of "Chairman". You also need to consider whether the images used are the stock images, which portray African women as 'work horses' perennially lugging firewood and water. Yes this is a reality, but one reality – It is important that our images show a diversity of realities, pictures of young women at a study group, women working on farms, women leading workshops...in short African women in all their diversities.

### Compiling a Brochure

Be clear about what you want the brochure to do. Do you want the brochure to highlight the achievements of your beneficiaries? Inform people about your organisation? Highlight some success stories? Bear your focus in mind as you write the text for the brochure.

Think carefully about what photographs/ images will work best with the text in your brochure. Where possible use original photographs commissioned by your organisation. For this reason it is a good idea when taking organisational photographs consent is sought for the images to be used in brochures and other promotional materials.

Where possible produce your brochures and printed materials in full colour, "... colour increases retention rate by 57 percent and proclivity to buy by 41 percent..."<sup>3</sup>



The cover of your brochure should include your organisation's name and a brochure title. A compelling brochure will encourage people to read the whole brochure. You can create a more compelling brochure with the use of mixed paper stocks, embossing and even the use of hand stitching, belly wraps and glue ons. Is your brochure on your HIV/AIDS fund for example? Do you have a HIV/AIDS red ribbon that you can have glued to each brochure?

The back cover of the brochure should include details of your organisation and various contact details. Do a thorough edit for grammar, typos and inaccuracies in your brochure. It is essential to have your brochure proof read and edited by another individual.

### **Producing a Brochure**

It is advisable to have a graphic designer produce the artwork for a leaflet/brochure/promotional material in a "print ready" format and have the final design concept printed by your chosen print house. This may be advantageous when you want to work with small graphic designers who produce great design concepts, have reasonable rates but lack print facilities. On the other hand it can often be more economical to have your artwork produced by the same outfit that does printing. Explore various options to identify which graphic designers/print houses best meets the needs and ethos of your organisation.

Once the final artwork of your brochure has been produced ask the designer to send you a PDF version which you can upload to your website and share via email/social network sites/list serves, etc.

### **WORKING WITH PRINTERS**

Working with printers can be challenging, especially if you have no prior experience in this field. It is always a good idea to see samples of work that the print house has produced and to obtain references from their existing clients. When contracting a printer prepare a detailed brief specifying your requirements and obtain estimates from at least three print houses. This will enable you to compare their rates. Your final decision on a print house should be based not just on costs but also the quality, customer service and timeliness that your organisation can be provided.







## Working effectively with Graphic Designers & Printers

Provide the Graphic Designer/Printer with a brief detailing your requirements for the job. Seek estimates from three Graphic Designers/Printers where possible. Increasingly donors who fund women's rights organisations wish to see how procurement decisions are taken. If you have a Procurement Committee for example, ensure your Committee sees all the estimates provided and has all the information required in order to enable members make the best decision for the organisation in regards to procuring the services of a print house.

Specify the design concepts, type of paper and typeface to be used. If your organisation has a brand book or visual identity manual ensure the graphic designer/printers have a copy to refer to.

Start the process as early as possible. Depending on the complexity of the job and the schedule of the graphic designer, artwork for a publication can be produced in 24 hours, 2 weeks or 2 months. It is in your interest to provide the graphic designer with sufficient time to complete your artwork to your satisfaction.

It is also in your best interest to give your printers sufficient time to ensure delivery of your product. Most print houses guarantee delivery 2 weeks after the final artwork has been signed off.

Remember that you need to build into your printing schedule time to review artwork and time for colleagues/stakeholders to provide feedback.

## COMMUNICATING WITH “NEW” MEDIA

The concept “New Media” is a generic term and refers to a variety of communication methods that are based on the Internet. This includes: blogs, e-newsletters and a variety of social and business networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr and YouTube to name a few. Using New Media is advantageous for a variety of reasons:

- Most of the New Media Tools can be used for free or at a minimal cost
- Using New Media may enable your organisation to reach out to a diverse audience which is often younger
- It is easier to disseminate information with New Media – why?
- Familiarity with New Media also enables your organisation to stay current and in touch with key trends. Twitter for example is fast becoming the place to go to for breaking news.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Twitter and other forms of new media are covered in later chapters of this book



## E-NEWSLETTERS

E-newsletters are periodic publications disseminated via the internet. Many women's rights organisations now find sending e-newsletters a more effective, economical, and eco-friendly way of updating the outside world on their activities and the impact of their work.

However, some organisations still produce the occasional newsletter as a hard copy, especially when some of their constituencies may not have easy access to the Internet.

- E-Newsletters can serve the following purpose:
- Promote the work of your organisation
- Communicate your mission and raison d'être
- Profile your grantees and partners
- Enable you to communicate quickly with target groups
- Support fund-raising efforts

### Key Issues to Consider When Launching an E-Newsletter

- Regularity of e-newsletter – It is important to determine how often you want to send out your e-newsletter. Is your e-newsletter monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly or even yearly? Consistency is important in keeping and attracting readers
- Encourage all members of staff to send useful information for the e-newsletter to the member of staff responsible for compiling the e-newsletter. Designate staff members to contribute information for the e-newsletter and consider drawing up a calendar of when contributions are due.
- Style, look and feel of your e-newsletters – Is your newsletter a casual, informal communiqué from your organisation? Is it a formal report? Decide what the style, look and feel of your e-newsletter is?
- Consider using email marketing software that enables individuals with low technology skills to produce high quality and professional looking e-newsletters.

### Building Your E-Newsletter Database

The best list is one that consists of individuals who want to be on your database and wish to receive your e-newsletter. It is not advantageous to have a long list of subscribers if these individuals do not read or appreciate your newsletter.

As much as possible confirm with individuals whether they wish to be on your database and wish to receive your e-communications. Building your list is also easier when you use good email marketing software which provides you with the facility to ask subscribers to your e-newsletter to select what type of communications they wish to receive, how often they wish to receive it and allows subscribers to opt in or out of communications.

It is advisable to include sign-up boxes on your website if you use email marketing software. This will enable individuals to easily subscribe to your newsletter. Include links to your e-newsletter in your email signature, and where possible showcase your e-newsletter on your website.

Use all available opportunities (conferences, workshops, and events for example) to build your list. Ensure you seek the approval of the person you wish to subscribe to your e-newsletter beforehand.

## BLOGS

*"...a blog is a Web site in which items are posted on a regular basis and displayed in reverse chronological order"*<sup>4</sup>.

In today's digital world blogs have becoming increasingly popular as a source of news, entertainment and education. Blogs enable individuals, groups and organisations to publish easily and quickly to the World Wide Web via blogging software. Some of the most popular and *free* blogging software includes Blogger, WordPress and Live Journal to name a few.



Popular blogging platforms and their respective website addresses include:

Blogger	- <a href="http://www.blogger.com">www.blogger.com</a>
WordPress	- <a href="http://www.wordpress.com">www.wordpress.com</a>
Live Journal	- <a href="http://www.livejournal.com">www.livejournal.com</a>
Movable Type	- <a href="http://www.movabletype.org">www.movabletype.org</a>
Expression Engine	- <a href="http://www.expressionengine.com">www.expressionengine.com</a>
Posterous	- <a href="http://www.posterous.com">www.posterous.com</a>

Although it is extremely easy to set up an organisational blog using any of the free blogging software, it is worthwhile to buy a domain name for your organisation and engage the services of a web developer to create a professional blog for your women's rights organisation.

### Key issues to consider when starting an organisational blog

- What will you blog about? Will you blog on a niche subject, or have a general blog. The best blogs are either entertaining or are used to share useful information.
- Who will write for your blog? Will the blog be authored by the team or by an individual?
- Who will manage the blog? The person in charge of managing the blog will ensure that the blog is updated regularly (at a minimum once a week)
- How will you publicise the blog?

### Some Blogging Tips

- Be active in the blogosphere. Read other people's blogs and comment on posts that you find interesting or useful.
- Submit your blog to blog directories such as Technorati<sup>3</sup> ([www.technorati.com](http://www.technorati.com)) and Afrigator ([www.afrigator.com](http://www.afrigator.com))<sup>4</sup>
- Write your blog in a casual, informal style and encourage comments by posing questions to your readers
- Tag your posts. Tags are key words in your post and help to drive traffic to your posts
- Choose the titles of your posts carefully. Well chosen titles also help direct meaningful traffic to your posts
- Make your blogs interesting by including visual images, audio and podcasts where relevant
- Check your blogs for typos and grammar before publishing
- Adopt blogging guidelines<sup>5</sup> to guide respectful conduct and commentary on the site. See AWDF's guidelines in the appendix.

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3 "Technorati was founded to help bloggers succeed by collecting, highlighting, and distributing the global online conversation. Founded as the first blog search engine, Technorati has expanded to a full service media company ... The leading blog search engine, Technorati.com indexes millions of blog posts in real time and surfaces them in seconds. The site has become the definitive source for the top stories, opinions, photos and videos emerging across news, entertainment, technology, lifestyle, sports, politics and business. Technorati.com tracks not only the authority and influence of blogs, but also the most comprehensive and current index of who and what is most popular in the Blogosphere". <http://technorati.com/about-technorati/>

4 "Afrigator is a social media aggregator and directory built especially for African digital citizens who publish and consume content on the Web. You can use Afrigator to index your blog, podcast, videocast or news site (i.e. any site that publishes an RSS feed) and market it to the rest of Africa and the world. You can also use it to discover new sites in the Afrosphere." <http://afrigator.biz/category/products/afrigator>

5 You can also check out the guidelines of the following organisations which provide guidance on both personal and organisation use of social media:  
IBM <http://www.ibm.com/blogs/zz/en/guidelines.html>  
Accessed: 19th August 2010  
BBC <http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/advice/personalweb/index.shtml> Accessed: 19th August 2010

## Typical Blog Formats

A typical blog entry would consist of:

- Title - main title of the post
- Body - main content of the post
- Permalink - the unique reference link (url) of the article
- Post date - date and time published

## Some of AWDF's favourite blogs (apart from our own J )

Blog Title	URL	Tags: what the blog is about
Adventures from the Bedrooms of African Women	<a href="http://www.adventuresfrom.com">www.adventuresfrom.com</a>	African women, sexuality, relationships
Black Looks	<a href="http://www.blacklooks.org">www.blacklooks.org</a>	Race, social justice activism, LGBTIQ, the ARTS
Boakyewaa Glover	<a href="http://www.boakyewaaglover.com">www.boakyewaaglover.com</a>	Short Stories, Circles relationships, Ghana
Kobby Graham	<a href="http://www.kobigraham.wordpress.com">www.kobigraham.wordpress.com</a>	Music, musicians, Africa, Afropolitan
Maize Break	<a href="http://www.maizebreak.com">www.maizebreak.com</a>	Satire, humour, Africa, sarcasm
Nana Kofi Acquah	<a href="http://www.nanakofiacquah.blogspot.com">www.nanakofiacquah.blogspot.com</a>	Photographs, Africa, Ghana, Liberia, love
Oluniyi David Ajao	<a href="http://www.davidajao.com">www.davidajao.com</a>	Technology, Africa, Nigeria, Ghana
SheGottaHavelt	<a href="http://www.shegottahaveit.wordpress.com">www.shegottahaveit.wordpress.com</a>	HIV/AIDS, sex, relationships,
Timbuktu Chronicles	<a href="http://www.timbuktuchronicles.blogspot.com">www.timbuktuchronicles.blogspot.com</a>	Technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, Africa
Web Strategy by Jeremiah Owyang	<a href="http://www.web-strategist.com/blog/">www.web-strategist.com/blog/</a>	Web strategy, social media, research, technology

## SOCIAL AND BUSINESS NETWORKING SITES

The Internet is abuzz with Facebook and Twitter. Twitter is credited with first spreading news of the post election demonstrations in Iran whereas Facebook is currently the most popular social networking site, which in a relatively short period of time has eclipsed the popularity of previously popular social networks such as Hi56 and MySpace7

### Facebook

Facebook is a social networking website which enables users to connect with “friends”. Users can also join networks organized by city, workplace, school, and region to connect and interact with other people. People can also add friends and send them messages, and update their personal profile to notify friends about themselves.



### Using Facebook for your organisation

Facebook is primarily a network that people use to stay in touch with friends; however, there are some ways in which organisations can benefit from social network sites including Facebook.

- 6 Hi5 describes itself as “Social entertainment for the youth market worldwide” <http://www.hi5networks.com/>  
Accessed: 19th August 2010
- 7 MySpace describes itself as “...a technology company connecting people through personal expression, content, and culture.”  
<http://www.myspace.com/pressroom>  
Accessed: 19th August 2010





However, users are not simply updating others on what they are doing. Several users are adapting twitter in various ways. Twitter is currently being used to:

Meet a variety of business needs including building online relationships with customers  
 Spread current and topical news  
 Share useful information  
 Drive traffic to other websites

Women's rights organisations may find it useful to include Twitter as a component of their overall communications package. A wide range of funders, women's rights organisations and NGO's are already active on Twitter. Like many of the social media tools, twitter can be helpful in reaching new audience and is another tool that can be useful in disseminating your organisations achievements. It is advisable to include guidance on Twitter in your communications policy.

Some of the people and organisations we follow on Twitter

Individual/Organisation	User Name	Who they are
BBC News	@bbcworld	British Broadcasting Corporation
Betty Murungi	@bettymurungi	Co-founder of Urgent Action Fund Africa (UAF-A)
Forbes Woman	@ForbesWoman	A magazine and website for career minded women
Global Fund for Women	@GlobalFundWomen	A global women's fund
Human Rights Watch	@hrw	An international human rights organisation
Jack	@Jack	One of Twitter's co-founders
Ms Foundation	@MsFoundation	A US based women's fund
Oreoluwa Somolu	@oreoluwa	An ICT professional
The East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative (EASHRI)	@UhaiEashri	A grant making initiative for sexual minorities in East Africa
Women's Funding Network	@womensfunding	A network of women's funds

## ADDITIONAL SOCIAL/BUSINESS MEDIA SITES

There are a range of other social/business media sites that may be useful to women's rights organisations and it is impossible to highlight all of them here in this handbook. Below is a list of additional websites that the author finds useful and relevant to women rights organisations.

Flickr, a photo-sharing website at [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com)

LinkedIn, a business networking platform at [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)

Afrigator, a social media and blogging aggregator targeted at Africans and accessible at [www.afrigator.com](http://www.afrigator.com)

YouTube – An online video streaming service at [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

## WEBSITES

In today's Internet based age, a website is a key marketing tool for any organisation. A good website should be able to provide key information about the organisation including what you do, who you do it with, where you do it, and how you do it, when you do it and what to do if one needs further information.

- At a minimum your website should include:
- A home page
- An About Us page
- Services provided
- A contact page
- A frequently asked questions page

Most websites will however contain more than this depending upon the requirements of the organisation.

### Website Design


Although it is possible for an individual with some technical skills to build an organisational website using software/templates, it is advisable to invest in a professional website developer to design and build your organisation's website. Provide your website designer with a detailed brief which should include:

- The aim of building your website
- Your corporate colours and logo – include a link to your brand book if you have one
- Details of any functionality required such as the integration of social media including twitter, a blog and Facebook for example.
- Accurate, grammatically correct content

It is important to ensure that your website is:

- User friendly and easily navigated
- Has a lot of white space which allows for easy reading
- Uses compelling pictures and visual/static representations





Ensure you ask your web developer to provide you with a content management system so you can easily and regularly update your website. On the other hand you can come to a maintenance agreement with your developer so updates are made regularly to the website upon your request.

### **Additional Useful Communication Tools**

Digital Stories – An innovative way of “telling and showing” stories created with still visuals, audio (if you wish) and a movie maker.

Podcasts – an audio or video file distributed online which can be listened to with mobile devices or computers.

Webinars – A seminar conducted over the World Wide Web

Real Simple Syndication (RSS) – A way of handling recent updates on a website. “Syndicates” content by allowing other websites to reproduce all or part of a site’s content

RSS Aggregator – An online service which allows a user to read an RSS feed

RSS Feed – A file containing the latest post from a blog/website

## Conclusion

This handbook has been compiled with the communication needs of AWDF’s grantees in mind. Many women’s rights organisations on the continent do not have the resources to hire professional Communications staff that work solely on the communication needs of the organisation. In most cases the Executive Director, Managers and programme staff are the same people dealing with the media, editing publications and writing website content. This book is a guide to all those hardworking women and aims to be a one-stop reference for women rights activists working on the communication needs of feminist organisations.

Communications and in particular innovations around new media technologies is ever evolving. This handbook needs to be taken as a snap shot of the current communications landscape in 2010. It is the hope of the author that this handbook is updated periodically to take account of the evolving communication needs of women’s rights organisations. Your feedback on this handbook and your communication needs, as a women’s rights organisation will be an important step in this process. Please email your comments to [awdf@awdf.org](mailto:awdf@awdf.org) and state ‘Feedback on Communications Handbook’ in the subject field of the email.

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## APPENDIX 1

### PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

#### **AWDF SECURES 'MDG 3 FUND: INVESTING IN EQUALITY'**

The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) is pleased to announce that it has been successful in securing a grant from the 'MDG 3 Fund', an initiative spearheaded by the Dutch Government. Receipt of this new funding stream will enable AWDF to accelerate its efforts in supporting African Women's organisations to work towards 'Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women', the third Millennium Development Goal.

*Under the theme 'Leadership, Innovation and Scaling Up: Strengthening the Capacity of African Women's Organisations and Movements', AWDF will utilize the MDG3 Fund to increase cooperation between women's organisations in Sub-Saharan Africa, enhance African women's political participation and work to reduce violence against women on the continent.*

Ms Bisi-Adeleye Fayemi, Executive Director of AWDF states 'MDG 3 Funding will enable AWDF to accelerate critical work being done by African women's organisations on political participation, violence against women and movement building. The MDG 3 Fund has put its money where it counts and we at AWDF look forward to working with our partner organisations and supporters on achieving Gender Equality and the Empowerment of African Women.'

END

The African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) is a grant-making foundation which supports local, national and regional organisations in Africa working towards women's empowerment. AWDF through institutional capacity building and program development seeks to build a culture of learning and partnerships within the African women's movement.

The vision of AWDF is for African women to live in a world in which there is social justice, equality

and respect for women's human rights. To this end, our mission is to mobilise financial resources to support local, national and regional initiatives led by women, which will lead to the achievement of this vision.

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## APPENDIX 2

### Guidelines for posting on the AWDF blog

The purpose of this guidance document is to protect AWDF and AWDF's staff as AWDF formally enters the blogosphere

1. Know and follow AWDF's policies as detailed in the personnel policies and administrative manual.
2. Blogs and other forms of online discourse are individual interactions. AWDF staff are personally responsible for their blogs.
3. Be mindful that what you blog will be public for a long time.
4. If you publish a blog or post to a blog outside AWDF and it has something to do with work you do or subjects associated with AWDF use a disclaimer such as this: 'The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent AWDF's positions, strategies or opinions.'
5. Respect copyright and fair use laws.
6. Seek permission from SMT to publish conversations that are meant to be private or internal to AWDF.
7. Respect your audience and do not use offensive or rude language.
8. Show diplomacy in blogging on topics that may be considered sensitive such as politics and religion.
9. Provide useful information and perspectives.
10. Include your name and role on blogs you publish.
11. Speak in the first person and bring your own personality to the blog.



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