



## **APC Capacity Building Workshop – Movement Building, Advocacy and Communication Strategies**

### **IMPACT Partners – Kuala Lumpur, 23-28 November 2016**

Association for Progressive Communications (APC) organised a five - day residential capacity building workshop for its IMPACT (India, Malaysia and Pakistan Advocacy for Change through Technology) project from 23- 28 November 2016 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The programme constituted workshops on movement building, UN advocacy and media and communication strategies, with the objective of planning and strategising advocacy initiatives, for the third and final year of the project. This capacity building workshop also gave an opportunity to the three partners to engage in stake taking as well as seeking collaborative approaches, for the programmes to be implemented in the next one year.

10 participants represented APC, Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), EMPOWER and Bytes for All. The five-day programme was divided in three major areas: movement building and the UN system, communications and strategies; and media and writing workshop. Together these sections unpacked strategies, techniques and challenges that we come across in our work, as independent organisations as well as the three partners together under the project.

The programme was designed to discuss and understand the work that is required to create movements and build momentum around them along with the national and international politics, even the inter-organisational politics. It was also worked out how our communication, social media engagement affects our work, the audience and organisational images. In addition to these major areas of work, we were given practical hands-on training on writing skills for our publications, press releases and urgent appeals etc. The major three sections will be discussed in details in the rest of the report.

### **Movement Building and the UN System**

The workshop had commenced with an exercise of expectation setting. This exercise dealt with questions like, who do we work with, and why do we choose to work with them; in addition to what we expect to achieve from the workshop. Mapping the organisations' objectives, stakeholders, allies, and UN processes. Surfacing strategic thinking around the choices on stakeholders, allies, and UN processes was also discussed in groups of organisations among the participants. The participants drew and wrote on chart papers to discuss later in the workshop.

This session then went on to discuss what stakeholders are still not part of our work and how to tap into those areas in a plenary discussion. Issues on further refining strategic thinking around alliance and movement building towards organisational or project objectives were unpacked.

Nuanced discussion on defining “movement” vs. “alliance” – and why HRDs need both was followed by consolidating strategic thinking on alliance and movement building. This was an important issue as we tend to neglect reflection in our hectic work environments and often face challenges when it comes to campaign outreach and movement building through our campaigns in the era of technology and online activism.

Strategies for movement building and sustaining alliances were unpacked through an exercise. Further discussion on the same included talking about prioritising target actors, i.e. identifying stakeholders and mapping out a meaningful and sustained collaboration with them, in addition to building strategies for movements and alliances toward short-term, medium-term, and long-term objectives.

We were then made to work on understanding the UN advocacy systems, its various avenues that are open to us and also, in general about what sources to tap into and how based upon the level of an international or a national organisation. Detailed discussion on UPR, treaty bodies, SDGs, Special procedures, other processes took place. Along with these, practical skills session on writing urgent appeals and petitions to the UN and National Human Rights Commissions was conducted. The participants were first made to prepare a draft urgent appeal beforehand as an assignment to discuss further on this.

We also brainstormed on bringing together strategies for movement/alliance building and strategies for UN processes. Later, these strategies were checked against the objectives and stakeholders that were discussed during the beginning.

### **Communications and strategies**

This section of the workshop also started in a similar manner, first by fact checking, the facilitator required to get a good understanding of the individual organisations’ online and social media presence. We were made to analyse how an organisation is perceived through our online and social media communications.

Following that, we were made to map out stakeholders and the various communication channels and materials we use to engage with them. This was to understand why certain strategies are chosen over others, reflecting on what worked and what didn’t in our past communication plans and campaigns.

We were then made to draft a communication plan for our individual organisations along with a separate communication plan as partners of IMPACT project for the third and final year of the project. Practical suggestions on learning how to create and execute a strategic communications plan for a campaign were delivered and shared among the participants. For example, how to effectively leverage on the conversations that are taking place in a comments section of a post, this

can either be on our own posts or on other organisations' posts, but only the ones most relevant to us, we can direct people from theirs to our campaign or direct them to similar interest campaigns that are being carried out by other organisations.

During this part of the session towards the end, videos were screened of successful social media campaigns on human rights issues to understand all the little things that contributed to their success, their reach and impact. It was also understood what took to produce the, and details like music, colour contrast and message, as well as the tone to deliver the message, if the video involves people then different impacts of the gender of the people delivering or conveying the message was also discussed, among other things for the content.

In addition to the above, the pros and cons of producing videos for campaigns or producing video campaigns alone was also unpacked. A huge part of coordinating successful campaigns depends on the availability of all sorts of resources, such as funds and manpower.

Before the session on communications and strategies ended, we had worked on identifying and mapping out key projects, programmes or campaigns we would want to work on, different issues the each organisation going to focus on and the timeline for the same. Following this, we drafted a tentative campaign for our organisation based on our most immediate project. After making the presentation about the same, we were provided real time feedback and encouragement on the drafts. At the same time, we also drafted a campaign towards mid-year 2017 as IMPACT team. We had decided on the various social media platforms that will be focused and the target groups for the same.

## **Media and Writing Workshop**

The section commenced by reviewing the past work done on expectation setting, media presence and strategies drafted during the last section, along with sharing challenges and analysing individual organisation's media outreach and again, what has worked and what has not worked so far. We were also made to analyse what needs to change and how to design specific to target groups and stakeholder, as well as donors.

We were also made to understand, how newsrooms are structured, how they function and what the routines they follow. In addition to understanding changes in the way media organisations and journalists operate now, in the digital communication era. We were also made to understand how to think from a journalist's perspective while we are drafting our publications and other media outreach tools.

Later during this section, we were asked to execute an exercise where we were supposed to draft our message in a very short and concrete manner, along with the stakeholder that we must have identified. We were then asked to pitch the idea and our message pretending as if we are delivering the message through our campaigns to the target audience, it helped us to understand and put ourselves in our audience's shoes, at the same time get more clarity while designing the message or the campaign. It was also helpful because real time feedback and comments were provided by the peers.

The exercise was conducted essentially to enhance skills in identifying key project messages.

After this, we were involved in another exercise to further put ourselves in the journalists' shoes. To anticipate media responses to NGO outreach, to understand the needs and challenges of journalists in processing NGO information, we were handed out press releases that have been published by other NGOs before. We were asked to analyse the press release as a journalists and asked one major question, that will we pick the press release to publish through our media outlet, do we find the information mentioned in the press release relevant, important and concrete enough to explain to our managers and editors on why we should publish it.

It was to also identify the key elements that we should keep in mind while drafting our own and also to identify key elements on relations with media and ways of improving take up of content. Essentially the exercise was to identify planning steps in preparing content for the media and key advocacy targets.

Towards the end of the workshop and the session on media writing skills, we were made to reflect a lot on our own reports and media outreach material. Reports and publications by each organisation were shared with the facilitator beforehand. Examples of some good written material, videos and campaigns were shared by the facilitator. Individual reports were reviewed by all the participants together.

We were then made to draft our own press release and get analysed on those in real time too. The writing style, grammar and restriction on using jargon were discussed. The usage of proper tense and importance of good headlines was also discussed along with how to make good headlines. This whole exercise was conducted to also share challenges and lesson learnt, to discuss how the organisations can use the press releases as an advocacy tool, to discuss writing and presentation techniques for blogs and website and to practice preparing blog posts.

