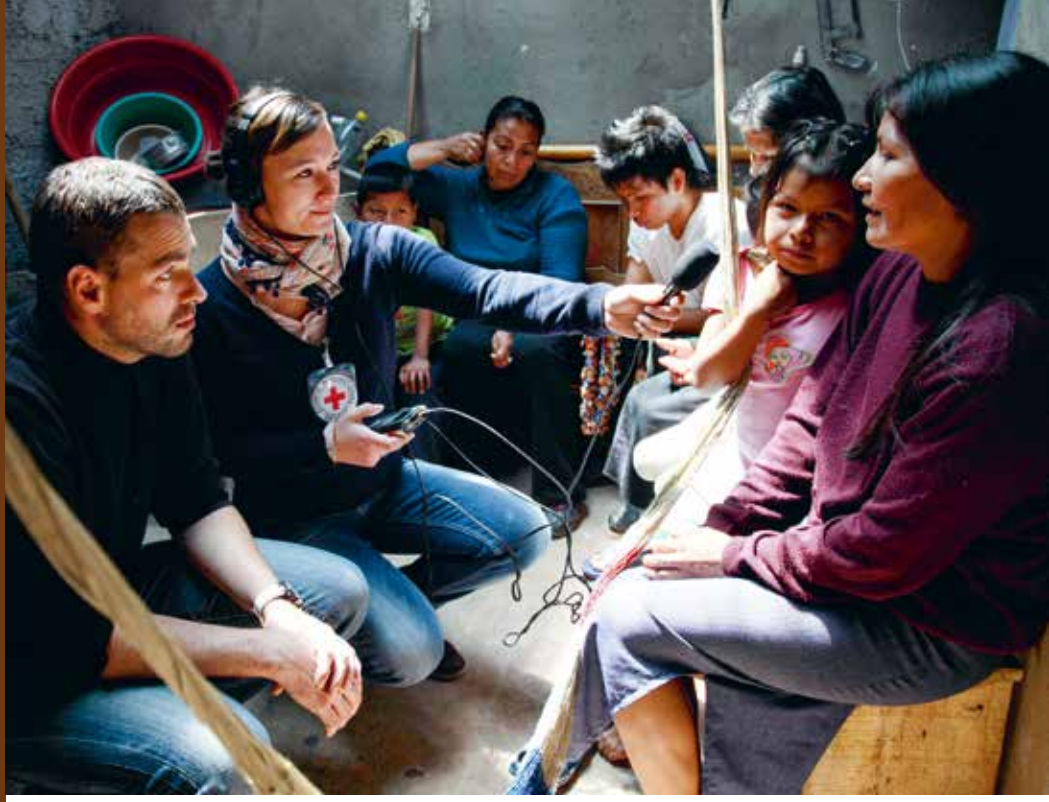

HOW-TO GUIDE SERIES

USING RADIO AS A MEANS OF OPERATIONAL COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH

FONDATION HIRONDELLE
media for peace & human dignity

COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL GENÈVE
ICRC

IN BRIEF

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INTRODUCTION

Although communication today is going increasingly digital, with great potential for direct community engagement, radio remains a hugely important means of communication in many parts of the world. Broadcast radio does not require much infrastructure, its signal can be picked up in the remotest of areas and, depending on the type of programme, listeners can actively take part. Studies have also found that people consider radio to be among the most reliable and credible sources of information.

From 21 to 23 November 2018, eight communication officers working in French-speaking Africa for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) met in Dakar, Senegal, to talk about how they have used radio as a tool for humanitarian communication. They also learned how to evaluate their programmes' impact with the help of Adrien Zerbini from Fondation Hirondelle, a Swiss non-governmental organization that provides information to communities in crisis so that they can take personal and political action. The ICRC and Fondation Hirondelle signed a memorandum of understanding in December 2017 on working together in the field.

This guide serves as a written record of the best practices discussed at the Dakar workshop and provides simple, helpful, easy-to-use guidelines. The guide is divided into two sections: part one contains ten golden rules and some tips for producing a good radio broadcast; part two outlines the different types of broadcast and how to evaluate a programme's impact.

We hope this guide will inspire exciting projects and be helpful to anyone who wishes to use radio for humanitarian action.

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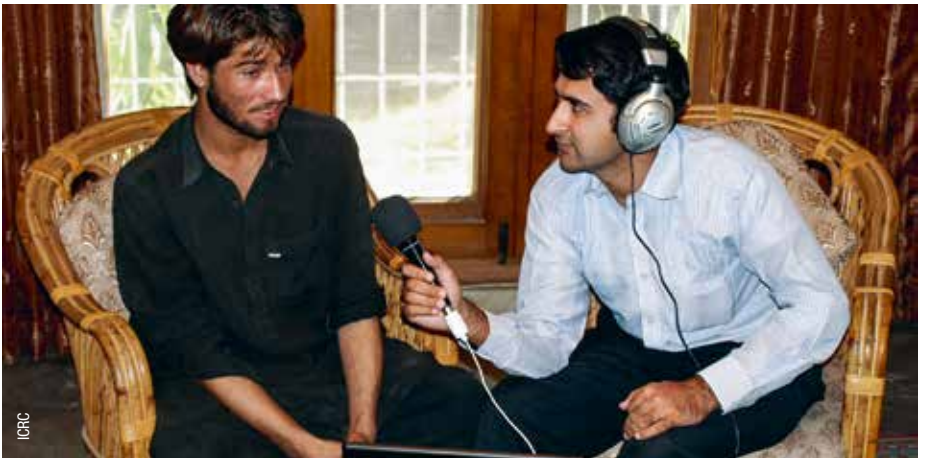

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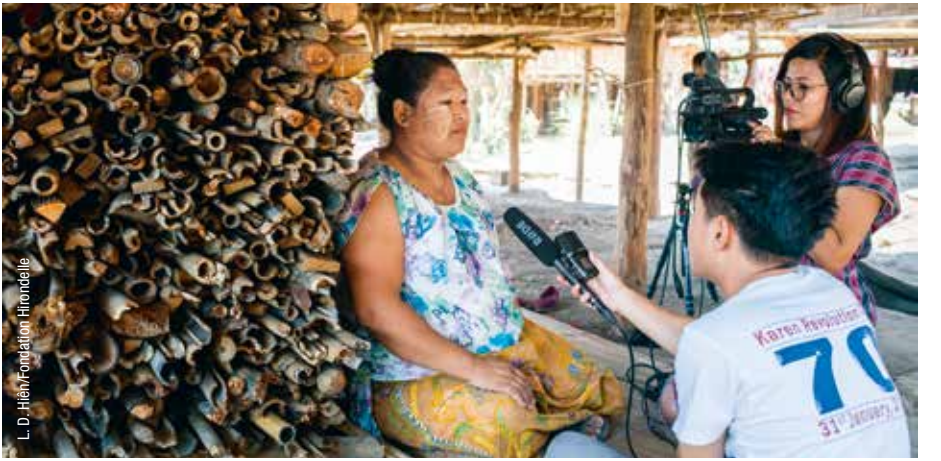

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THE GOLDEN RULES OF HUMANITARIAN RADIO

These ten rules apply to almost any programme format. In the case of radio spots or vignettes (max. five minutes in length), all ten rules should be met. For longer, more open formats (forums, game shows, etc.), most of the rules still hold but can be applied less strictly.

1. One broadcast = one message

It is always tempting to incorporate several ideas into a radio broadcast, be it a spot, vignette or game show. But if you cover too many different points, listeners might not retain any of them. It is always better to create several separate broadcasts instead of including several points in a single broadcast. For example: produce three 30-second spots with one message each, instead of one 90-second spot that includes three different messages.

Try to think of it like writing an email: if you include two unrelated points in one email, the recipient will probably only respond to one of them.

2. Zoom out, don't zoom in

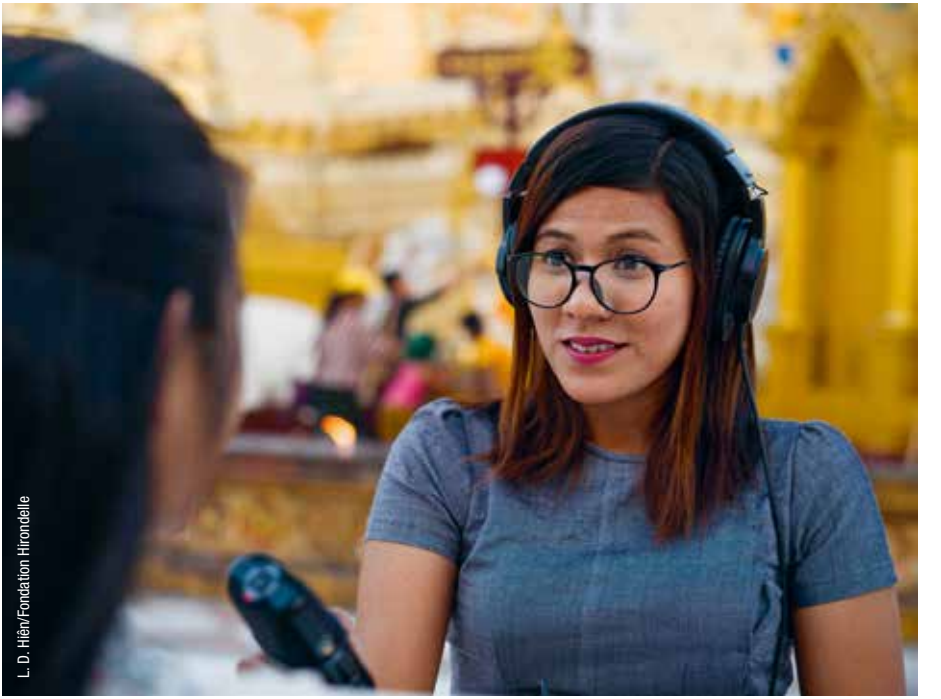
Many of our radio productions start by introducing the ICRC and naming one of our units (such as Water and Habitat or Restoring Family Links) before moving on to the specific service being provided or the point they wish to communicate. But it is better to start with whatever has a direct impact on the listener and end with information about the ICRC in general. For example, start with a quote or a story before explaining the idea that it illustrates. Start with the core message and then "zoom out" to the organization as a whole, not the other way around.

3. Don't use too much music

Music is often used in radio to make a message more interesting or familiar for the target audience. But keep in mind that people listen to radio under less-than-perfect conditions. If there is background noise or poor reception, music can make it hard to understand what is being said. A short burst of music can be used to punctuate the beginning and end of a message, but it shouldn't be played throughout.

4. Quote a local

Always remember that a quote from a local community member (even as short as ten seconds) will make your message much more impactful. A quote is like the photo above a press article: it's what makes someone decide whether or not they want to hear the rest.



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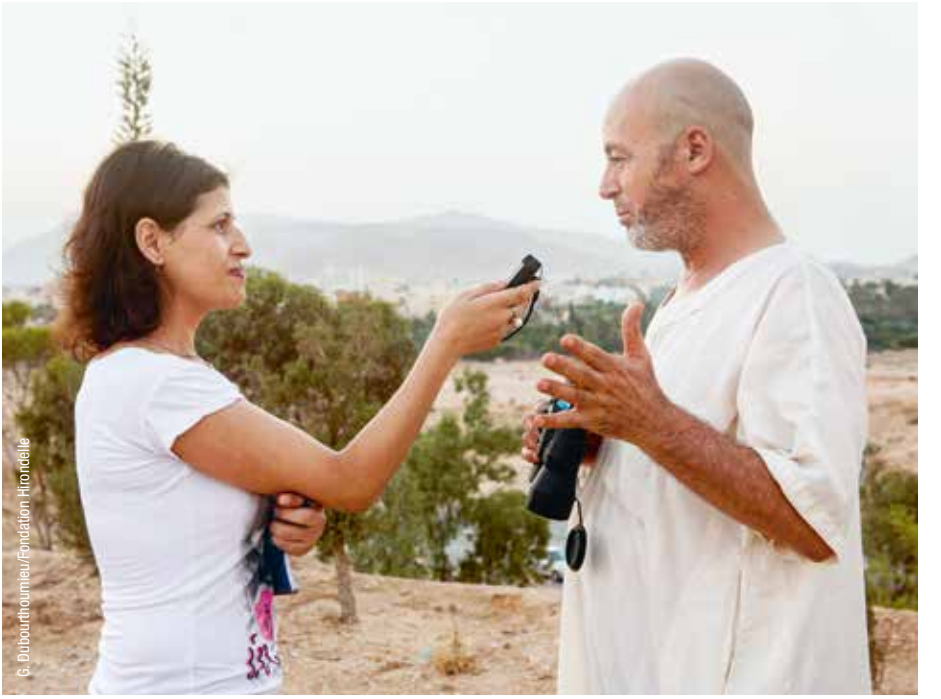

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5. Tell a story

If you decide not to use a quote, you can still tell a story. Your message will be much more impactful if you use the specific example of a named person and explain what happened to them, instead of talking about abstract ideas. Every civilization is founded on stories – from creation myths to religious texts – because people love to hear a good tale.

6. Get to the tipping point

Whether you decide to use a quote or tell a story, it is always important to determine at what point the listener comes to understand the situation. This is known as the "tipping point". Once you have determined the tipping point, you can reduce all other information to a minimum and get to the point as simply as possible.

7. Avoid jargon

You live immersed in humanitarian work and use a considerable number of abbreviations (i.e. acronyms and initialisms) on a daily basis – but your listeners do not. Be careful not to over-use these abbreviations in your radio broadcasts – or try to avoid them altogether. Some technical terms, too, are widely used in the humanitarian sector but are not easily understood by most people, especially if English is not their first language. Terms like "civil infrastructure", "stigmatization", "strengthening civil society", "participatory approach", "gender-based violence" and "capacity-building" are all too technical. Jargon makes listeners feel excluded.

8. Answer the five W's

If you are producing a radio broadcast that is not purely theoretical, make sure that you answer what journalists call "the five W's": who, what, where, when and why. Following this rule ensures that listeners know what you are talking about and that the message is not too vague.

9. Less is more

In a pre-recorded message (or one that is read on air), be sure not to include any unnecessary information. For spots, in particular, every word counts. Weigh each piece of information carefully and decide whether or not it is essential. For listeners, too much information can mean no information.

10. Hammer home the main idea

If there is a short catchphrase or main idea to your message ("Don't let hate spread", for example), you can repeat it at both the beginning and the end of your broadcast. That way, the listener will be sure to remember it.

PRODUCTION TIPS

The aim of this guide is not to turn you into a professional radio journalist or reporter, but you may need to make audio recordings as part of your work in the field. For example, a short quote or interview can be very useful in creating a quality radio broadcast. Here are a few simple tips to help you make the best possible recordings with the materials available to you.

Mobile phones vs digital voice recorders

Today's smartphones are often able to record reasonably well, but they have their limits. Digital voice recorders are a better option in many ways. One important difference (until things change) is that a phone cannot play back audio via your headphones while you are recording. Digital recorders have become very affordable in recent years: some models cost less than $100.

Microphone covers

In the world of audio recording, wind is public enemy number one. Microphones pick up the sound of the wind, which can make the recording unclear. The human voice itself produces wind, especially the letters "p" and "b". So you should always use a microphone cover (also known as a muff), even indoors. When recording outdoors, fluffy "dead cat" covers are recommended. You can even combine a foam cover with a dead cat cover – a lot of covering will only reduce the high pitches somewhat, but too much wind can make a recording useless. A microphone cover should be used even when recording on a mobile phone. (A simple cover costs less than $10.)

Headphones

Radio reporters always wear headphones while they work. That is so they can hear the sound coming in through the microphone, which can be affected by audio interference such as telephone carrier signals. Such interference can't be heard without headphones. You should always carry headphones with you, ideally the closed-back type with a solid exterior casing. The most convenient are in-ear headphones (the kind that look like ear plugs and are often used with phones).

Distance from the microphone

There is no strict rule about how far the speaker should be from the microphone. That said, leaving a distance of roughly 10–15 cm (the size of a fist) is a good idea. If the microphone is too far away from the speaker's mouth, his or her voice risks getting lost in the background noise.

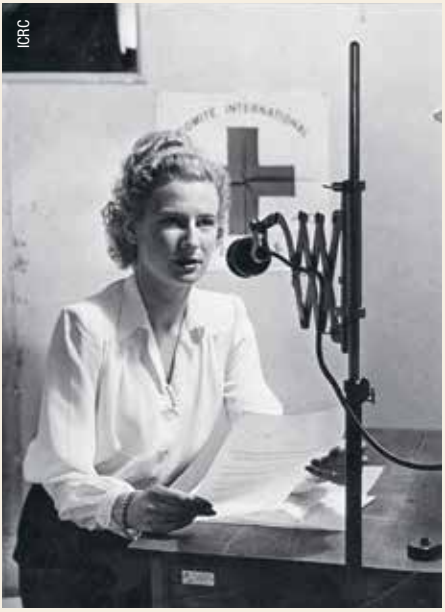
Don't talk down

When you interview someone, don't talk down to them... literally! If the person is sitting down, don't stay standing. If they are lying down, kneel or crouch next to them. Most important of all, take some time to talk with the person. You cannot get a good quote by showing up in headphones and thrusting a microphone at someone who does not know you.

Editing

There are many open source audio editing applications available if you have to edit the audio yourself and don't have access to professional software or haven't been trained to use it. It is a good idea to start by learning about the structure of a radio programme. You can consult websites such as the one run by National Public Radio.

RADIO AND THE ICRC: A LONG HISTORY



The International Committee of the Red Cross – whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other violence – has long made use of radio broadcasts. In 1948 the ICRC received authorization to broadcast for free on its own exclusive radio frequency. Originally called Radio-Intercroixrouge, and later the Red Cross Broadcasting Service, the frequency was active for over half a century, until 1990.

In 1978 three delegates were killed while in a vehicle clearly displaying the red cross emblem in Nyamaropa, Rhodesia (current-day Zimbabwe). The three deaths had a profound effect on the organization, which responded by developing its communications in the country. In consultation with sociologists, professors, journalists and other members of civil society, the organization decided to use radio to convey a clear message to government authorities, the leaders of armed groups, displaced people and the general public. It was what Marion Harroff-Tavel describes as a strengthening of "operational communications": communications aimed at increasing public acceptance of an organization and, in so doing, ensuring the safety and security of ICRC staff.* From that point on, delegates specializing in communications were sent where the ICRC had major operations, often using radio to convey information.

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* Marion Harroff-Tavel, "The International Committee of the Red Cross and the promotion of international humanitarian law: Looking back, looking forward", International Review of the Red Cross (2014), 96 (895/896), pp. 817–857.

CHOOSING AND EVALUATING RADIO BROADCASTS

It is very important to choose the right type of broadcast to meet your goals. Radio spots, for example, are useful for hammering home a specific message but do not allow for much listener engagement. The main types of broadcast you might choose to produce are described in detail below.

Spot: Typically 30 seconds in length, but can range from 20 to 60 seconds. Spots are used to convey a clear, precise message. Advantages: because they are so short, spots are often heard from start to finish, can be broadcast multiple times and can reach a large number of listeners at different times of day. When repeated, they can reinforce the message you want to get across. Disadvantages: a spot can only include a short statement and has less impact than a vignette.

- Languages: can easily be translated into local languages
- Skill level required: basic (writing the text)
- Cost: you will have to buy airtime from a radio station

Vignette: Short programme, 3–5 minutes in length. Like spots, vignettes are completely pre-recorded. Advantages: vignettes give you more freedom than spots and can include both quotes and narrated text. They allow you to add context and present the full complexity of an issue. (But remember Golden Rule Number One: a vignette should not include more than one main message.)

- Languages: can easily be translated into various local languages
- Skill level required: intermediate (writing, recording and editing)
- Cost: you will have to buy airtime from a radio station

Radio play: Fictional story or audio theatre performance. This can be a difficult type of broadcast to master, because writing dialogue and performing it on air requires professional know-how. Make sure you have qualified people available to produce this type of programme. You should also find out if theatre is acceptable in the local culture (by organizing a focus group, for example). Advantage: listeners identify with the characters' point of view, allowing them to understand the


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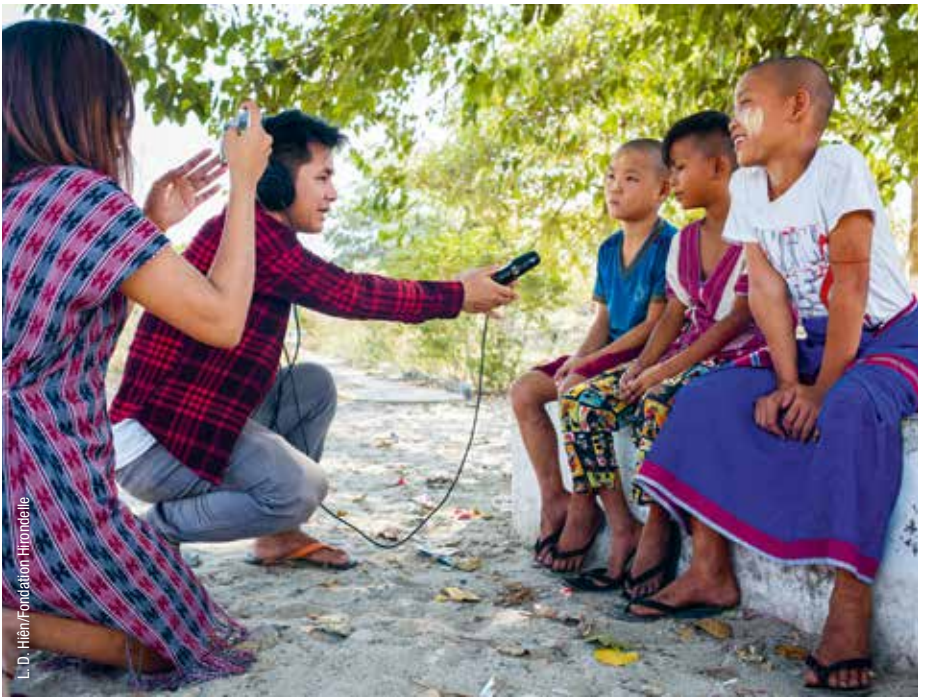
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message from their own point of view. You can use a short fictional scene at the beginning of a vignette or even a spot.

- Languages: use a single language for the entire programme or series; translation is possible but can be expensive
- Skill level required: intermediate/varied (journalists to write the story and actors to perform it)
- Cost: you will have to buy airtime from a radio station

Vox pop: Recording of ordinary people's answers to a question (just one question!). This technique can be used in various formats such as spots, vignettes and forums. Advantage: in theory, listeners will identify with the answers given by the people interviewed. But to be effective, the answers should cover a range of different opinions. Make sure you interview a diverse sample of people. For example, if the radio station is in the city, you should also interview people in the countryside.

- Languages: interviewees may speak different languages; translation might be required
- Skill level required: intermediate (choosing a question, editing)
- Cost: you will have to buy airtime from a radio station

Forum: Broadcast in which a group of people debate a particular issue. The programme may or may not include questions from listeners (by telephone or in a vox pop, for example). This is an open format, which means that you cannot control everything that is said. However, it allows you to present an issue in all its complexity and raise listeners' awareness. Don't make the common mistake of inviting guests who all hold more or less the same opinion: if the listener does not share that opinion, he or she will feel excluded, and the programme will not fulfil its purpose. On the other hand, it is pointless to invite guests whose views are so opposed that they are not open to debate. Choosing the right guests is the key to a successful radio forum.

- Languages: use only one language per forum; you can hold separate forums in different languages, but be sure your guests all speak the language in question
- Skill level required: intermediate/high (it takes training to moderate a debate in a fair, professional way, and managing listener interaction – such as call-ins – can be challenging)
- Cost: none if the forum is included in a radio station's regular programming, or as part of a partnership/sponsor agreement

Game show: Broadcast in which listeners can win a prize if they answer a simple question correctly ("What is the origin of the red cross emblem?", for example). Advantages: game shows can draw listeners' attention to an issue and make a spot campaign more interactive. Disadvantage: unlike a forum, games usually cannot convey the full complexity of an issue.

- Languages: listeners who speak different languages might call in; the game show host must be able to speak multiple languages
- Skill level required: basic (hosting), but choose the sponsor of the gift or prize carefully (Who does it come from? On what conditions? Is it transparent and traceable?)
- Cost: none if the game is included in a radio station's regular programming, or as part of a partnership/sponsor agreement

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EVALUATION PHASE

Organizations often produce a radio programme, then broadcast and re-broadcast it, skipping the essential step of evaluating the programme. Did listeners fully understand the message? Did they talk about it and ask questions? How do they view the humanitarian organization that produced it? To answer those questions, we suggest using a qualitative evaluation method: a focus group.

Focus group basics

What is a focus group?

A focus group is a meeting of ten or so people from the target audience in which they discuss what they think of the broadcast. It is a qualitative evaluation method that gauges the receptiveness, opinions, attitudes and beliefs of the target audience and whether or not they received and understood the message.

Focus groups vs surveys

Focus groups are qualitative, not quantitative. An example of a quantitative approach is a survey. Surveys are usually carried out by external partners, because humanitarian organizations do not have the time or expertise to conduct surveys with large enough sample sizes to be representative. For example, to learn which radio station is the most popular in a given region, you would have to ask a much larger number of people than a focus group.

Focus groups do not produce scientific data. The sample size is much too small. Instead, they allow you to gather personal reactions at a particular time and place.


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Timeframe

The method you use determines when you need to hold your focus group. In the "before/after" method, the same group of people should be brought together before and after a radio campaign in order to accurately determine the campaign's impact. Another option is to use the "control" method, after the campaign is finished: bring together one group of people who listened to the radio programme and one control group who did not or who live outside the broadcast area.

Asking the right questions

You should not hold a focus group with a particular result in mind. Instead, keep an open attitude and ask open questions. That means thinking hard about what you want to know before writing your questions. The main questions should be as simple as possible. For example: "What is a detainee?" or "What do you think of when you hear the word 'detainee'?". Be sure to avoid asking leading questions, such as "Do you think it's acceptable to mistreat detainees?": not only is that a leading question, it is also a closed question.

The order in which you ask the questions is also important. You should start with the most general and end with the most specific, because by the end of the session participants will be more aware of an issue than at the beginning.

Choosing the participants

Form groups of 6–12 people from your target audience. Depending on the method you choose, that may include non-listeners. Within the target audience, try to choose as diverse a group as possible in terms of age, sex and profession. There may be other important criteria to take into account depending on the country: urban/rural, native language, ethnic group, etc.

Make sure the conditions for participating in the focus group are clear and understood. Experts recommend not paying people to take part, but you can refund their travel costs and offer them refreshments after the session. Participants must agree to the conditions. Make sure everyone has space and time to talk. Each session should last between an hour and an hour-and-a-half. If you record the session, be sure to notify the group beforehand and ask for their consent.

During the session

Choose a neutral setting. Start by briefing the group for at least five minutes: this time is for building trust and explaining why you have organized the focus group. Explain that you want to hear different opinions, not a consensus, and that everyone's point of view is important. During the first ten minutes, tell everyone to introduce themselves and ask very general questions to break the ice. This gives the moderator time to understand the group dynamic. Then ask the most important open questions for the next 30 minutes.

A focus group is also an excellent opportunity to test out new radio programmes or projects in progress. At the end, don't forget to thank participants and give the group time to wind down.

Role of the moderator/discussion leader

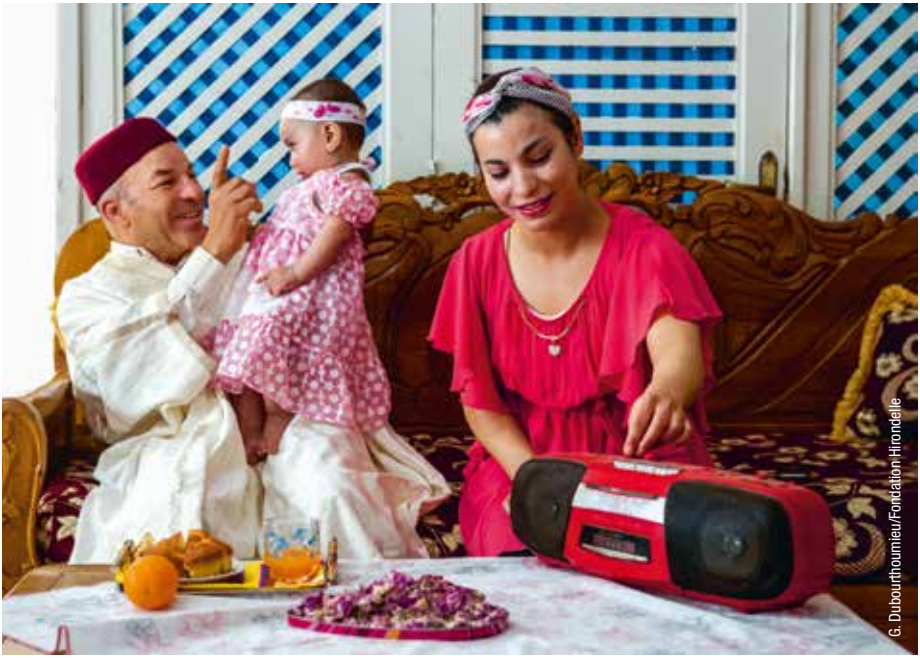
The moderator should be friendly, make people feel comfortable and valued, and give everyone the chance to talk. He or she must keep on top of the discussion and put participants back on track if they get distracted. Before the session, decide with the moderator which language(s) he or she will use and which language(s) the participants might speak. The moderator must be as neutral as possible and never try to influence what participants say.

Tips for moderators: be aware of participants who might try to take control of the group. Give clear directions, and be kind but firm. One way to avoid someone taking over the discussion is to hold a one-on-one ice-breaker activity before the focus group begins. Remain neutral about the topics under discussion, be a good listener, show empathy and repeat back what participants say.

Results to record

- Information about the participants: name, age, profession, family situation.
- List of questions and summary of participants' responses.
- More detailed notes about the most useful responses.

For more information, see the How to Run Focus Groups booklet from Citizens Advice.



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