

Media & Monitoring Seminar

Concept Note

I.) Introduction and Objectives

The Health Media Initiative (HMI) and the Accountability and Monitoring in Health Initiative (AMHI) of the Open Society Foundations Public Health Program (PHP) seek to advance health and human rights through the social inclusion of marginalized groups and increased transparency, accountability and participation in health systems. HMI contributes to this mission by building the capacity of civil society leaders and organizations to communicate and use media¹ effectively and developing the field of communication and media for advocacy in the realm of health and human rights. AMHI contributes to this mission by supporting civil society groups to effectively and strategically use community monitoring and applied budget work² to push for greater accountability and transparency in the financing and delivery of health care at the local, national, regional and global levels.

In recent years, organizations supported by AMHI and practitioners in the field of monitoring for accountability in health have expressed increasing interest in expanding the reach of their monitoring work, improving the efficiency and accuracy of information collection, presenting monitoring results in compelling and persuasive ways and ensuring their advocacy messages and evidence reach the intended audience(s). A number of organizations supported by HMI and AMHI have begun to use various media tools (e.g.: community radio, mobile SMS platforms and storytelling methods) to strengthen these aspects of their monitoring work. We see the intersection of monitoring and advocacy with use of media in two ways:

- 1.) The application of technology to make the collection and presentation of information about the allocation and use of public resources and delivery of services more efficient, accessible and user-friendly.
- 2.) The use of strategic communication to portray monitoring results in persuasive ways, reach the intended audience(s) and influence them to take action.

To explore how media can enhance both monitoring and advocacy, AMHI and HMI are planning a seminar to bring together media experts with organizations using monitoring for accountability approaches. The joint seminar will have the following objectives:

- 1.) To investigate how use of media can improve the **interpretation and presentation of monitoring results** (including, but not limited to data visualization)

¹ The term media includes both traditional (i.e.: radio, television, print media) and digital (so-called new) media (i.e.: websites, blogs, social media, mobile communication platforms, etc.).

² **Community monitoring** is the systematic documentation of the quality and accessibility of health services, the review of findings against specific commitments or standards, and the use of this information for advocacy with providers and policy makers, for improved policies and services, by the beneficiaries of these services. **Applied budget work** is engagement with the budgetary process and independent, value-driven monitoring and analysis of budgets to influence the allocation and expenditure of public resources and to advocate for accountability in the planning and use of financial resources. Collectively are referred to as monitoring for accountability in health approaches.

- 2.) To identify how media can be used to **increase participation** in monitoring interventions and **ignite public interest** in accountability in health.
- 3.) To explore the art of crafting audience-appropriate advocacy messages and how media can be used to **get the message out**

A description and example of existing work within each objective is provided in Annex 1. It is important to note that these categories are not mutually exclusive. For example, a crowd-sourcing platform such as Ushahidi may increase participation/ignite public interest and advance the interpretation and presentation of monitoring results. Within these three categories, the seminar will profile the current experience of AMHI and/or HMI grantees and other monitoring practitioners with use of media, draw on media experts to determine the potential for use of media in monitoring efforts and create a platform for peer review and exchange amongst participants.

II.) Background and Context

Monitoring for accountability approaches enable the mobilization and empowerment of communities around common problems with health service delivery, monitor critical information related to government budgets and spending, advocate for policies and budgets that align with community needs and/or generate evidence about how/whether policy commitments are realized in marginalized communities. To do this, the ability to collect, interpret and present information in effective and persuasive ways that are tailored to different audiences is required. When these components are weak or absent, monitoring efforts cannot reach their full potential. HMI has identified particular strategies for increasing participation/igniting public interest, interpretation and presentation of monitoring results and getting the message out that can improve the process and quality of information collected, present results in ways that are easy to understand, persuasive and advance organization's efforts to reach their target audience(s).

AMHI and HMI currently support eight organizations in Zimbabwe, Uganda, Guatemala, South Africa and Macedonia to use media in their monitoring and advocacy work. Seven of these organizations are working to improve their interpretation and presentation of monitoring results and to get the message out, with activities such as use of community radio or television, development of a communications strategy, building storytelling skills, web development or technical support to present monitoring results in a more engaging way. One organization is working to improve the collection of information using a mobile SMS platform. Many of the organizations supported by AMHI and HMI work in countries with limited/fledging democratic practices and mainstream media under tight and opaque government control. In such environments, crafting advocacy messages and reaching the intended audience(s) require innovative and, in some cases, independent strategies such as the use of social media that are tailored to the context.

To date, AMHI and HMI have provided support to each organization in an individual and customized way. However, demand for technical support in use of media for monitoring is growing. To better meet these needs, AMHI and HMI would like to work with organizations using media and monitoring approaches and media experts to improve the capacity building support we can offer organizations and build the intersection of the accountability and media advocacy/strategic communication fields. In the area of field building, AMHI and HMI would like to identify the different media tools and approaches

that can contribute to monitoring work and better understand the expected outcomes from the use of particular media tools and approaches. In the area of capacity building, we would like to identify resources (both peer and expert) we can draw on to strengthen the capacity building support we provide and better understand the staff/human resources skills needed to use various media approaches in monitoring work. Through this process, we hope to catalyze interest and identify technical resources that would improve existing media and monitoring work and provide opportunities to expand the media tools/approaches used.

III.) Expected Outcomes

The overall purpose of this joint initiative is to explore the possibilities for creative use of media to advance monitoring and advocacy work. This will include identifying and documenting good practices, identifying technical resources and developing the broader accountability and media fields. As a first step in this direction, expected outcomes of this meeting include:

- 1.) Added exchange and strengthened knowledge of how media can be used to enhance monitoring work, including increasing participation/igniting public interest, interpretation and presentation of monitoring results and getting the message out.
- 2.) Information and skills gained on how to package monitoring results, including making them visual (i.e.: using information graphics, photography and video) and making them personal (i.e.: strategic use of story).
- 3.) New ideas generated for creative use of media tools in monitoring work and proposals for new collaborations between organizations and technical experts initiated.
- 4.) Participants will share their experiences related to media and monitoring and identify areas where they could be enhanced, improved or replicated.

Based on the media questionnaire responses received from the organizations that are to participate in the event, the organizers also intend to provide participants with hands-on exposure to the following:

- Technologies and methods for data visualization
- Mobile phones & crowd-sourcing platforms
- Media events, press conferences, using print media and media relations
- Documenting stories using audio, photos and/or video

IV.) Logistics

Location: Barcelona, Spain

Dates: October 29-31, 2013

V.) Participants

Participants in the seminar will include:

- 1.) Organizations supported by AMHI and/or HMI that currently use or are interested in using media approaches in their monitoring work.
- 2.) Media experts with relevant skills and interest in contributing to build the field of use of media in monitoring work.
- 3.) Relevant and interested OSF staff, including colleagues from other PHP projects or initiatives, other network programs or national/regional foundations.

Annex 1: Examples of media and monitoring work within each objective.

Interpretation and Presentation of Monitoring Results: Once information is collected, effective advocacy requires that evidence be presented in legible and engaging ways. Potential audiences for monitoring results include: policy-makers, program implementers (both in the public or private sectors), communities and other potentially allied organizations, among others. When presented in an accessible way, data has the potential to convey messages that translate into changes in policy or practice. Effective presentation of monitoring results can impact how decision-makers understand the impact of their actions on communities and enable them to play a more active oversight role.

An example from the field:

The International Budget Partnership (IBP) collaborates with a large and diverse network of civil society organizations around the world to fight poverty and improve governance by reforming government budget systems and influencing budget policies. At the heart of this work are efforts to make government budgeting more transparent and participatory, more responsive to national priorities, better able to resist corruption, and more efficient and effective.

In support of this collaboration, the IBP provides technical and financial assistance, comparative research opportunities, information exchange, and peer networking.

IBP developed a tool called *Open Budget Survey* to independently measure the state of transparency and oversight in national government budgets in 100 countries. The survey does not reflect opinions but measures facts that can be observed and documented. The following Open Budget Index (for 2012) is a relevant example of data visualization through infographics:

<http://internationalbudget.org/wp-content/uploads/OBS2012-infographic.png>

Increasing participation/igniting public interest: Monitoring approaches rely on the ability to galvanize public interest in how government resources are allocated and spent and services are delivered. Participation occurs in a variety of ways from communities' collection and aggregation of their experiences receiving health services to the creation of public pressure around the use of resources in a way that is not aligned with needs. Increased community interest and participation in monitoring processes can result in the collection of more representative information about the delivery of services and public campaigns and events that put pressure on governments to make change.

An example from the field...

Stop Stock-outs Campaign. Launched in February/March 2009, this campaign is a call to action for African governments to meet their obligations to provide essential medicines by increasing the national budgetary allocation for the purchase of these medicines and by ensuring efficiency and transparency in the procurement, supply, and distribution of medicines. The campaign is an initiative of Health Action International (HAI) Africa, Oxfam, and a number of African partners – with the support of the Open Society Institute (OSI).

Key Campaign Objectives: Access to essential medicines is a human right and a cornerstone of an effective primary health care system. Access to free essential medicines determines whether people live or die, suffer pain and discomfort, or have their ailments cured, recover from illness

or endure life-long disease. At the World Health Assembly in 1977, our governments made a commitment to ensure these essential medicines are available in public health facilities. Yet today, over 30 years later, at any given moment, public health facilities in Africa have in stock only about half of a core set of essential medicines. These are medicines used to treat common diseases such as malaria, pneumonia, diarrhea, HIV, TB, diabetes and hypertension – all of which are among the highest causes of death in Africa.

Ways of Working: The campaign partners use various methods of work to eliminate stock-outs; these include: Information sharing; Advocacy; Lobbying; Workshops and trainings; Information and communication technology.

Campaign Achievements:

- Pill check week – a week where researchers visited public health institutions to check on the availability of 10 essential medicines. Using innovative technology, they then reported the results through short messaging services (SMS) to a common site, and the data have been reflected in an online mapping of the country that shows areas where medication is out of stock.
- Public forums held in Kenya and Zambia.
- Lobbying governments in country and at continental level.
- Increased awareness about stock-outs.
- Increased media coverage of stock-outs.
- Stock-out testimonies booklet.

Getting the Message Out: Dissemination of advocacy messages that are appropriate and persuasive for different audiences are a central component of effective advocacy to mobilize communities and decision-makers to take action. This element of use of media creates interactions between communities and decision-makers and has the potential to generate public pressure for change.

An example from the field...

The Charitable Organization of Roma (KHAM) monitors the realization of government commitments to immunization in Roma communities in Eastern Macedonia. Since mid-2011, KHAM has used a community radio station, Radio Zora, to inform and educate local population on important health-related issues to raise awareness, address concerns and distrust, and propose concrete solutions on the local level. Radio shows primarily target women with children and air in the morning, when a large number of women in the community are working in a local factory where radio is played in the background. The shows inform communities about their health rights, publicize government commitments and interview local decision-makers, social workers and relevant medical professionals about their efforts to ensure health services are provided. As a result of their media work, KHAM is now seeing increased community participation in their monitoring work and greater willingness to demand that deficiencies in state services are addressed. They have also seen more active engagement from local authorities, including the health facility manager, to participate in public events and speak vocally about government commitments to service delivery. In the next period, KHAM will work with media technical resources with expertise in community radio to explore adding interactive capacities to the radio show that promote public dialogue between communities, NGOs, providers and decision-makers.