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An introduction to humanitarian reporting by Natasha Msonza

The HIFC in March this year held an introductory workshop on humanitarian reporting with journalists. The objectives of the workshop were to give journalists an appreciation of what humanitarian reporting involves with the aim of improving their writing skills on the subject as well as increasing the quality and quantity of such reports into the public domain for the benefit of the Zimbabwean community and other stakeholders.

The workshop introduced participants to various international protocols such as the CEDAW and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) from which the facilitator said the media obtain their mandate to play the watchdog role. The need for the media to understand the provisions of the various laws necessitates knowledge of what questions to ask and on what aspects to hold duty bearers accountable.

It emerged that a majority of the participants lacked an understanding of the various laws, including the local constitution. The difference between protocols and declarations was made clear, and journalists had a renewed understanding of the watchdog framework that encompasses human rights law, humanitarian and refugee laws and entailed observing whether protocols were being respected and government implements any promises made to the citizenry. Emphasis was placed on the fact that it is up to the Fourth Estate to ensure the enforcement of protocols.

The facilitator highlighted that the humanitarian story has gone beyond war and disaster to issues of general welfare and quality of life affecting the



Part of the group attending the introductory workshop

citizens of a country. "The shift to a humanitarian situation comes after the violation of human rights, where deaths and numbers of the affected, gravity of situation and disruptiveness of essential services define the human condition," she said.

In the end there was an appreciation among journalists that the humanitarian story is a much larger story than previously thought after examples were cited of news services organizations like Reuters Alertnet and IRIN that focus solely on disseminating humanitarian news. Humanitarian information is invaluable among donor communities, UN, government officials, academics and humanitarian assistance organizations for decision-making and better coordination of responses.

During the workshop, participants had the opportunity to work in groups to interrogate some raw news articles submitted to HIFC as humanitarian news for flaws. They were supplied--

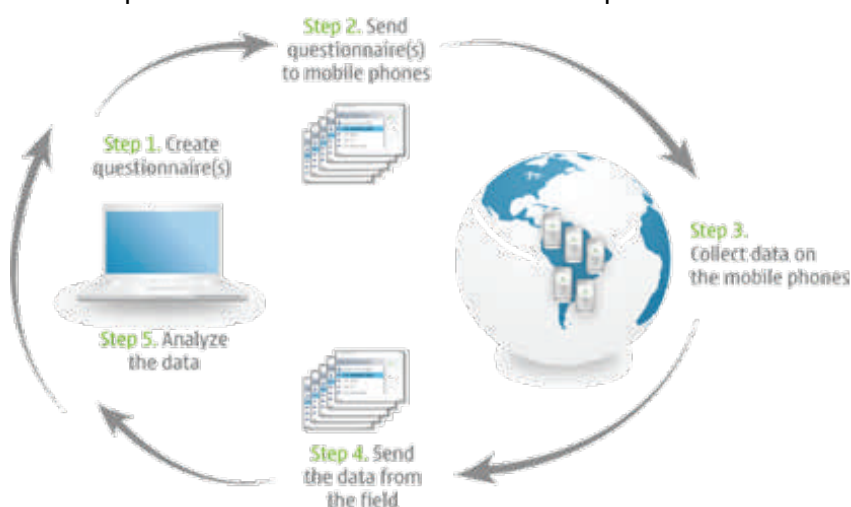
Cont. on page 2

The HIFC Update		Contributors
<i>In this issue:</i>	<i>Page</i>	
An introduction to humanitarian reporting	—1	Leonissah Munjoma
New data gathering tool for humanitarians	—2	Natasha Msonza
Mentoring through different eyes	—3	Tafadzwa Chimbodza
Ending the trauma	—4	
		Design and Layout
		Natasha Msonza

New data gathering tool for humanitarians

HIFC will soon embark on a new and exciting project with a Nokia data gathering (NDG) tool intended to benefit non-profit and governmental organizations carrying out research that demands highly accurate and timely data. The NDG is a software system that enables data collection on mobile devices and the transmission of results for analysis in near real time. A PC application (survey creator) enables the creation of questionnaires which when finalized—are then uploaded onto a server and sent directly to field personnel using normal mobile data or voice networks. Completed questionnaires from the field can also then be sent back in the same way.

Nokia has optimised the Nokia E71 and E61 cell phones for this soft-



ware because they offer the desirable characteristics of long batter life, QWERTY keypad, big screen, built-in GPS and big memory.

Organizations currently using paper forms to collect information will particularly benefit from this software. There are significant costs involved in transportation and duplication of work; accuracy sometimes also suffers from re-entry of hand-written data by another person. In some contexts like health, such delays and errors can have negative consequences.

The solution has significant advantages over other data collection tools like laptops and PDAs, especially because of its portability in the field and ability to transmit collected data, in near real time straight to pre-existing databases tremendously cutting down on transcription time and possibilities of error. It also allows you to take and send pictures!

The NDG has predominantly particularly gained a lot of popularity in Brazil where it was used to assist in the coordination of assistance in response to the Dengue fever outbreaks of 2007. The tool's other potential uses are being explored and those include disaster preparedness and early warning purposes. HIFC will be piloting this tool in Zimbabwe for humanitarian assistance organizations. Watch this space!

Humanitarian reporting

cont. from page 1

- along with principles of writing a good humanitarian story, a checklist and tools to sharpen writing and- presentation skills of humanitarian news. These would also be useful in interrogating their own stories before submissions to editors.

One of the participants, Monica Cheru-Mpambawashe said she had learned a lot, couldn't wait for the second part and was going to apply the new skills to the stories she was currently working on.

Conrad Mwanawashe, a freelance journalist and new media trainer highlighted the need for more of such workshops.

"I think more of these including the empowerment of journalists in the use of new media would go a long way in informing a whole new and exciting approach to humanitarian reporting," he said. "I especially liked the link between violation of rights and that becoming a humanitarian situation. Pat Made really cleared that for us," Mwanawashe added.

Veteran journalist and media consultant, Pat Made facilitated the workshop, which was attended by 13 journalists from different media houses.



Group work during the humanitarian workshop

Mentoring through different eyes *by Leonissah Munjoma*

Under the HIFC media programme, journalists are given grants to facilitate the writing of humanitarian stories. However, these grants are not easy to access or to fulfil as there are requirements which sometimes, one feels, the journalists find too exhausting or bureaucratic. And yet it is necessary!

Under this programme, journalists apply for a grant by proposing to write two stories. In the proposal, they are expected to articulate their ideas well to justify their application. Once the proposal is approved and a contract has been signed, the journalist is assigned a mentor who works with him or her throughout the story development cycle.

But tell a journalist whom you have just given a bit of money that one condition is going through mentoring before their story is published, and consider yourself an enemy

Call the journalist in and discuss the story ideas and make suggestions, then all may be well.

But make extensive comments on their story, chances are you may never see them again and your job changes from mentoring to chasing after the organisation's financial resources.

Such is the nature of being an editor for HIFC's Media Grants and Mentorship programme. The programme seeks to improve the quality of humanitarian reporting in Zimbabwe through support to journalists writing on the issues.

Many of the journalists have embraced the mentorship programme and consider it useful for their continued growth in the journalism profession.

"It is a fantastic programme. I am working with an experienced journalist, Fanuel Jongwe and one gets a lot of guidance because he works for an international news organisation and he is exposed to a lot of information and tips.

"In one of the stories I was writing, on food security, I needed a view point that did not tally with mine and he did just that. He showed me a different angle that I would not have thought of," said John Chimunhu, one of the journalists on the programme.

On the other hand other journalists feel it is a 'drag' for their stories as they "have deadlines to meet". One is

reminded of a journalist who lost it after being told they had breached the contract by not going through mentoring and publishing their story.

Victoria Muringayi agrees with John that the mentoring programme is a good initiative that has taught her the skill of perseverance.

"I think it is good in the sense that you have a one on one with the editor, something that you don't get in the newsroom because there, the editor does not have time to interact and you get to understand and learn more things," she said.

Journalists are reminded they should allocate enough time between pitching their stories and meeting their publications' deadlines to avoid breaching the contract. While it has worked with some of the journalists, it has not been smooth with others. But HIFC does not tire at explaining the importance of going through the mentoring process.

"It is mandatory for all journalists on this programme to undergo mentoring as HIFC believes it contributes immensely to the personal and professional growth of the journalist. The mentors are themselves seasoned journalists who have a wealth of knowledge and experience gained over years of practice," the organisation points out in its documentation.

It outlines that the HIFC Grant and Mentorship programme seeks to fulfill two of the HIFC's core objectives which are:

- to increase the quality and number of stories on humanitarian issues in the media; and
- to improve the management and distribution of humanitarian information into the public domain.

While the indication has been that journalists see the grant as a fund raising venture, HIFC believes that it should be seen as a facilitation fee that seeks to address some of the challenges journalists face in seeking to cover humanitarian stories by taking care of expenses such as travel, research, communication and accommodation.

However, despite the feeling around mentorship, humanitarian reporting has increased in the media as the number of journalists applying for the grant continues to grow and there are a diversity of stories as a direct result of this programme.

Ending the trauma *by Tafadzwa Chimbodza*

RAPE is seen by many as a crime of passion, but those who are traumatized by this heinous act often realize that it is an act of violence and is about power and the rapist wanting to exert power over someone in a vulnerable situation. Coming to this realization and taking back control takes time and most importantly – counseling.

The post rape phase is the most difficult and traumatic time for a rape survivor. For a person to regain control of their life and reintegrate back into society, it is essential to be involved in rehabilitation that has a holistic approach.

According to a Herald report, over seventy (70) percent of rape victims test HIV positive in Zimbabwe therefore the need to provide a holistic approach for survivors of rape.

The Adult Rape Clinic (ARC) based at Mbuya Nehanda Clinic offers medical assistance, psychosocial care, counseling and legal assistance - making it a unique one-stop care facility for rape survivors.

Talking to stakeholders at the monthly HIFC thematic discussion, Sister Kurangwa the clinic manager informed participants that rape victims are free to walk into the ARC and are attended to - no questions asked! ARC does not report cases to the police as that right remains the survivor's. ARC offers immediate care and counseling as well as post-exposure prophylaxis which significantly reduces the likelihood of contracting HIV.

ARC was conceptualized when doctors tending to abused children at Harare Hospital Family Support Trust unit realized the need to extend these services to adults on a more sustained basis. A few doctors and nurses got together to breathe life into the concept. While the ARC relies heavily on donor support, the Ministry of Health has been supportive of the initiative and the US\$10 payment was waived after consultations between the Ministry and ARC representatives. Parirenyatwa Hospital provides the clinic with free anti-retroviral drugs while doctors from vari-

ous departments and other hospitals attend to clients.

The clinic relies on the support from the Zimbabwe Republic Police Victim Friendly Unit, who ensure that an officer is always available at the Clinic during the day and is responsible for following up on reported rape cases. With these support mechanisms in place, the clinic has been able to provide its services free of charge.

Because the clinic cannot be sustained on donations, plans are in place to eventually hand the facility to the government. A number of challenges confront the facility:

- The holistic approach and services offered by ARC are currently available in Harare
- The clinic is open from 8am to 4pm during weekdays only, but rape takes place any time.
- There is an obstacle of societal prejudices and bias. Officials responsible for assisting rape victims are at times the very stumbling blocks on the path of justice and there are instances where individuals in the police force will drop rape charges if they are bribed. The Victim Friendly Unit is however making efforts to curb corruption in this regard.

It was agreed that there is need for a change in attitudes towards gender perceptions if women are to be protected from this crime. The most important factor for sustainability of the ARC lies in exploiting frameworks like The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women, better known as the Maputo Protocol - which can be used to lobby for the empowerment of women.

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