

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY – June, 2013.



WOMEN'S HEALTH AND ACTION RESEARCH CENTRE (WHARC)

KM 11, Benin Lagos Express way, Igue-Iheya, Edo State, Nigeria.

BACKGROUND

The Women's Health and Action Research Centre (WHARC) was founded in January 1993. Although the Centre's operational headquarters is in Benin City, Edo state, Nigeria, its research and other activities have impacted greatly the practice and provision of sexual and reproductive health care in other parts of Nigeria, Africa and the world.

THE VISION OF WHARC

The Women's Health and Action Research Center (WHARC) seeks to create a world where all people are treated with equal respect and dignity and where women and young adolescents have equality and access to basic reproductive information and services.

THE MISSION OF WHARC

Grounded in a deep love of humanity and a belief in equality and dignity for all people, WHARC works to improve the reproductive health and social wellbeing of women and adolescents in Africa so they can lead productive, fulfilling lives and provide a healthy future for their children. Through its cutting edge research, WHARC educates women, youth, community gatekeepers and policymakers about sexual and reproductive health, and advocates for policy change at the local, state and federal level. WHARC also provides current and effective reproductive health services to women and adolescent girls in Africa.

NEED FOR A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY IN WHARC

Since its founding, WHARC has conducted major research and published ground breaking research findings in sexual and reproductive health in Nigeria. To date, WHARC has published more than 170 scientific papers in sexual and reproductive health in leading peer review international journals. It has also presented papers in major international, regional and local conferences that advance various components of sexual and reproductive health. These papers and presentations have focussed on essential topics in adolescent reproductive health, infertility, safe motherhood, unsafe abortion, female genital cutting/mutilation, fertility regulation, sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and sex trafficking.

The Centre also publishes the *African Journal of Reproductive Health* (AJRH) that has been adjudged by the National Universities Commission (NUC) since 2005 as the best journal in Nigeria in all disciplines. The journal has one of the best citation indices among all leading African journals.

Although researchers and students around the world have used WHARC's research, there is little evidence that Nigerian policymakers have used the research findings to design policies and programs in sexual and reproductive health. We believe this to be due to inadequate communication of the research results to key audiences and policymakers.

This communications strategy will build on WHARC's pioneering research work in the area of reproductive health, and its effort in publishing the *African Journal of Reproductive Health*—helping to increase the use and adoption of WHARC's research findings by policymakers in Nigeria, and in other countries.

COMMUNICATING RESEARCH FINDINGS BY WHARC: A SWOT ANALYSIS

1.0 STRENGTHS

- i. Since 1993, WHARC has published more than 170 articles in women's health
- ii. Presented papers in more than 100 local and international conferences
- iii. Publishes AJRH, Africa's leading journal in reproductive health
- iv. AJRH has been voted the best journal in Nigeria by the NUC since 2005

WHARC'S Research to Advocacy campaign led to:

- v. Passage of first law against the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting in Nigeria (Edo State- 2000)
- vi. The political prioritization of safe motherhood in the country
- vii. The enunciation of free maternal health care by 18 states in the country
- viii. Ondo State ascendancy in maternal and child health programming
- ix. The establishment of the mid-wifery corp by the NPHCDA
- x. The development of a youth strategic plan in Edo-State that is now being replicated across several states in Nigeria.

1.1 WEAKNESSES

- i. Lack of a strategic plan to communicate its research findings to various audiences, including policymakers
- ii. Despite its successes, WHARC is still not regarded as a source of useful information in SRHR
- iii. Poor integration of communication into WHARC's program
- iv. Staff not yet knowledgeable and savvy on communication methods and its importance
- v. Poor linkages to communication and media channels
- vi. Poor linkages to policymakers and segmented audiences to use its research findings
- vii. Poor training of its staff on communication and related activities
- viii. Lack of funding for communication activities

1.2 OPPORTUNITIES

- i. Increasing recognition of WHARC as a leading NGO in Nigeria
- ii. Its enlisting of policy champions and role models – President Obasanjo, Governor Mimiko, etc.
- iii. The increasing use of WHARC published research findings by local and international researchers, advocates and programmers
- iv. The improvement of its social networking sites – website, facebook, twitter, etc.

1.3 THREATS

- i. "Competition" with other organizations better able to communicate their work

- ii. Increasing “commercialization” of media and communication work in the country
- iii. The poor recognition of the work of social philanthropy in Nigeria
- iv. Decreasing funding for research and communication of research findings
- v. Poor use of research findings by policy makers

2.0 A summary of WHARC communications challenges include:

1. High cost of communication and media activities
2. WHARC has limited visibility among policy makers
3. Staff buy-in is very low as they lack knowledge of WHARC’s key activities and successes as well as wider issues on reproductive health.
4. Poor funding
5. Poor relationship management
6. The activities of other NGOs who are better able to communicate their activities pose a threat
8. Poor use of research findings by policymakers
9. Commercialisation of the media/cash and carry journalism thus inhibiting the ability of WHARC’s communications team to effectively publicise the work of WHARC.
10. The need for capacity building amongst key communications staff

The plans presented hereunder will hopefully address some of these issues and help re-position WHARC as a reputable organisation committed to research activities in reproductive health in Africa.

3.0 WHARC's Communications Goal and Strategic Objectives

Goal: The ultimate goal is to be known as the leading global research centre on research in women's health in Africa, so we can continue to help women and their children lead healthier and more fulfilling lives.

Strategic Objectives: The strategic objectives are as follows:

1. To increase awareness of WHARC's research findings among women, youth, policymakers and community gatekeepers and girls, as well as policymakers at the national level and in two key states in Nigeria; and
2. To increase adoption of WHARC's research findings by policymakers at the national and state level, as shown by their introduction of new policies and programs in sexual and reproductive health.

4.0 Stakeholders/Target Audiences

WHARC's stakeholders and target publics are the individuals, groups and organisations whose knowledge, attitudes and behaviour are to be changed/influenced through communications.

The following groups of stakeholders have been identified as being strategic to the success of WHARC. These are the publics to be targeted by WHARC's various communications. As part of the implementation of the strategy, WHARC will maintain a detailed contact list in both electronic and hard copies to enable easy reach of these various audiences

S/NO	STAKEHOLDER	CATEGORY	RELEVANCE
1	WHARC Board of Trustees	Internal	Responsible for policy and leadership. Communication required with the management team and external stakeholders.
2	WHARC Management team	Internal	Responsible for day-to-day. Need to communicate vision to the employees and represent WHARC externally

3	WHARC Associates	Internal/External	A group of technical experts that assist WHARC in implementing its project activities in various parts of the country. They therefore have the knowledge and skills to disseminate WHARC's research findings
4	Research/Academic Community/Health Workers	External	They need to be informed of WHARC's research findings so that they can use that to improve on their research as well as medical/clinical practices.
5	WHARC Employees	Internal	They implement management policies and drive WHARC on a daily basis. They need to understand the vision and also have information to help in their jobs.
6	Local community in WHARC's centre and other locations	External	Like the saying goes, Charity begins at home. They need to be informed of WHARC activities so as to win support and sympathy for WHARC activities. They can then take the message forward.
7	Funding bodies/Donor Agencies (Local and International)	External	They need to be made aware of WHARC's relevance in the area of RH so as to give them the confidence to continue to provide funding for WHARC's activities.
8	Legislators (Local, State, Federal)	External	If they are made regularly aware of WHARC's research findings, it can inform their legislative activities in the area of RH.
9	Government officials/Policy makers	External	If they are made aware of the findings of WHARC research activities, it can influence policy in the area of RH and also attract increased funding to the sector
10	The Media (Local, national, International)	External	Their support can help publicise WHARC activities and raise its profile. They need regular information on WHARC activities etc.
11	Non-Governmental organisations	External	Being in the same sector competing for the same donor funds, there are opportunities for cross-

	(NGOs)		learning and sharing of best practices
12	Corporate Nigeria	External	Will require adequate information on WHARC activities to win sympathies for the support (financial & material) of WHARC projects.
13	General Publics	External	Health related issues are usually of interest to the citizens. Ultimately, they are the beneficiaries of WHARC's research findings but such info should get to them in a way that they can access and understand.
14	People in Arts & Entertainment (celebrities)	External	A selected few can be targeted and inducted as WHARC Ambassadors. This will help to raise the profile of WHARC by association with the celebrities.

5.0 Communication Channels

Various communications channels will be employed to reach target audiences, including:

1. In person meetings & direct outreach
2. Events
3. Media (Print, broadcast, social)
4. Film & Video
5. Website
6. Alternative media platforms (these include other formats that WHARC can adopt to propagate its messages and ideals. They are also known as brand collaterals or promotional give-away items and help to generally enhance the brand image of WHARC.
7. Brand endorsement through the appointment of WHARC Ambassadors

6.0 APPROACHES TO REACH TARGETED AUDIENCES

The following methods will be used to develop messages to reach the audiences outlined above:

1. Specific audience messaging. Messages will be tailored to the needs of specific audiences.

Messages will focus on sustained believability, clarity, readability, consistency and succinctness.

2. Messages would be kept simple and short (the Kiss principle)

3. WHARC will establish a Media Relations Office (MRO) and identify a spokesperson that will regularly convey its messages to the public.

4. WHARC will seek to train all its key staff and board members on communication (see 6.1)

5. All messages will be reviewed by WHARC senior staff and associates pre-tested before final production.

6. An integrated approach would be used by combining all the channels listed above to get the desired results and to reach the desired audiences.

7. WHARC will write to editors of targeted dailies requesting a column on reproductive health.

8. WHARC will develop a comprehensive segmented mailing list, which comprises all key funders, policymakers, stakeholders, youth and people that have shown interest in WHARC activities in the past, and conduct outreach to them based on their interests.

Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
• National and international donors (Ford, Macarthur, TY Danjuma etc) • CSOs/NGOs	• Social workers • Public and private health services providers • Mid level health providers • Academia	• Young sex workers • PLWHA • Children, Orphans and vulnerable children • Men

• Women and Girls, including adolescents & young adults in and out of school • Policymakers (Governors, their Wives and Aides, Federal and state legislators, Women legislators and leaders etc) • The Media	• Corporate organizations • Researchers • Key community leaders • Politicians at all levels	
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6.1 Communications Training for Staff

To ensure staff are communicating consistently and effectively, we would train selected staff in the centre on media, public speaking, speech/public writing. The substance of these coaching sessions will vary depending on the needs of each team member, but typically they include practice using key messages with different audiences and in diverse settings, including media interviews, one-on-one meetings and speeches. The training would give practical techniques for connecting with audiences and help staff feel comfortable and confident in front of a crowd.

6.2 WHARC Re-launch. WHARC will also re-launch its brand. This activity will include brand identity and brand collaterals refreshing, creation of new brand liveries and alignment of all brand communications activities. There will also be a formal unveil event. WHARC will take the opportunity of its 20 years anniversary to produce a documentary of its research activities in sexual and reproductive health.

Henceforth, WHARC will seek to develop a media/communication strategy for every activity and research it undertakes and include communication in every funding proposal it develops.

7.0 Strategic Communications Plan

A major challenge for WHARC is how to use the research findings to reach its audiences more effectively. Understanding that all audiences will have an interest in different materials, the organization will target research findings and other content accordingly.

To this end, WHARC can create monthly communications campaigns. Each campaign would involve targeted outreach to each audience, with specific content.

For example, for June 2013, the month could focus on the topic of overcoming health and social inequality in Nigeria, with a special focus on maternal mortality prevention (see table on next page for our initial ideas on how to accomplish this).

Monthly Focus & Channels

Month	Media	Events	Website	Social Media	Partners
June: Overcoming Health and Social Inequality in Nigeria, with a special focus on preventing maternal mortality	<i>Health Happens at Home</i> column. Monthly health column in a Nigeria publication (<i>The Guardian, This Day, The Punch</i>) that focuses on research and health policies for women and girls.	June 1: Ransome Kuti Memorial Lecture June 5: Research Release June 10: Policymaker Advocacy Day June 16: Int'l Day of the African Child June 20: Award Party	One month ad campaign around health and social equality	Twitter Chat about how to overcome health and social inequality in Nigeria	Begin reaching out to 1-2 CSOs/NGOs who you could partner with to co-host events and advocate with policymakers

Monthly Content by Audience

	Audience	Content	Channel(s)
June 1, 2013 Ransome Kuti Memorial	Donors	Press Release, Targeted Email Invite	Email
	CSOs/NGOs	Press Release	Email

Lecture	Policymakers	One-pager	One-on-One meetings with PM staff
	Women & Girls	Press Release, tweets, in-person conversations	Email, Face-to-face, Social Media, SMS
	News Media	Press Release, Ad	Email and follow-up phone calls, ad on FB/website

June 5, 2013 Research Release on maternal mortality and unsafe birth conditions	Audience	Content	Channel(s)
	Donors	One pager	Mention in newsletter, social media
	CSOs/NGOs	One pager	Mention in newsletter, social media
	Policymakers	One pager	Email to policymaker aides
	Women & Girls	One pager and tweets	Social Media, mention in newsletter
	News Media	Press Release w/key research findings	Email, social media

June 10, 2013 Policymaker Advocacy Day	Audience	Content	Channel(s)
	Donors	N/A	N/A
	CSOs/NGOs	Joint statement	One-on-one mtg. with policymakers, media
	Policymakers	Talking points	One-on-one mtg.
	Women & Girls	Paragraph w/outcomes from advocacy	Social media, blog, newsletter

	News Media	Press Advisory & press conference	Email and in person
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June 16, 2013 Int'l Day of the African Child	Audience	Content	Channel(s)
	Donors	Targeted invite & event announcement	Email, phone, newsletter
	CSOs/NGOs	Targeted invite & event announcement	Email, website calendar, newsletter
	Policymakers	Targeted invite	Email, phone followup
	Women & Girls	Targeted invite & event announcement	Social Media, Email, newsletter
	News Media	Press Release	Email, phone followup

June 20, 2013 Party to celebrate WHARC's research grant on maternal mortality prevention	Audience	Content	Channel(s)
	Donors	One-pager on WHARC's research	Email, phone
		Targeted invite	
	CSOs/NGOs	Targeted invite & event announcement	Email, mention in newsletter
	Policymakers	Targeted invite & event announcement	Email, phone followup
	Women & Girls	Targeted invite & event announcement	Social Media, Email, mention in newsletter
	News Media	Press Release	Email, phone followup

***More ideas for mini campaigns can be found in Appendix A and a product guide can be found in Appendix B.**

7.1 Funding and Communication Budget

WHARC will develop a yearly communications budget based on available resources. This annual budget will pay for all communications activities planned for the year with a certain percentage kept aside as contingency to pay for unforeseen expenses.

Leveraging Partnerships: WHARC would build media partnerships as this will help to publicise its work and enhance its public profile at little or no cost. For example a certain lady writes a weekly Saturday column in This Day on reproductive Health. WHARC would make available its research findings to various medial channels for publication as reference materials

Proposal Writing: WHARC will also seek to develop proposals to obtain funds for its communication activities. Also going forward, WHARC would include funding of communication activities into grants obtained from donor agency.

Appendix A. Additional Mini Campaign Ideas

Month	Media	Events	Website	Social Media	Partners
July: Need for Policymaking on Integrated Social Development of Youth	<i>Health Happens At Home</i> column. Monthly health column in a Nigeria publication (<i>The Guardian, This Day, The Punch</i>). This month with a focus policymaking as it relates to social development of youth	July 5: Bring leaders of youth led organisations together to discuss needs for youth social development. July 12: World Population Day article July 18: Present resolutions reached at meeting to Minister of Youth and Sports July 28: Result of Photo contest for best idea on youth development	Blog on World Population Day. Share results and resolutions reached at meetings.	Twitter Chat with youth led organisations about youth development Voting for best photo idea on SM platforms	Partner with youth led organizations to co-host tweet chat, discussions and photo contest.

Month	Media	Events	Website	Social Media	Partners
August: HIV/AIDS and Youth	<i>Health Happens At Home</i> column.	Aug 10: Free condom sharing at different	Share Planned Parenthood's comic strip on	Build opinion on facebook and twitter on HIV/AIDS	Partner with organizations to provide trainings and

Vulnerability	Monthly health column in a Nigeria publication (<i>The Guardian, This Day, The Punch</i>). This month with a focus on how vulnerable youth are with regard to HIV/AIDS	spot Aug 12: Int'l Youth Day bringing youths together to discuss on how best youth can control HIV/AIDS Aug 20: Highlight past work on Youth and HIV/AIDS done by WHARC	birth control	about Youth vulnerability.	lectures to local schools and health centers about HIV/AIDS.
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Month	Media	Events	Website	Social Media	Partners
September: Improving Girl Child Education for Social Development	<i>Health Happens At Home</i> column. Monthly health column in a Nigeria publication (<i>The Guardian, This Day, The Punch</i>). This month with a focus on birth control methods and latest	Free condom giveaway at local hangout spot Friend & Bring a Friend afternoon tea at local café focused on birth control & related questions	Share Planned Parenthood's comic strip on birth control	Twitter Chat about birth control methods	Partner with organizations to provide trainings and lectures to local schools and health centers about birth control methods

	research				
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Month	Media	Events	Website	Social Media	Partners
October: Birth Control Awareness & STD Prevention	<i>Health Happens At Home</i> column. Monthly health column in a Nigeria publication (<i>The Guardian, This Day, The Punch</i>). This month with a focus on birth control methods and latest research	Free condom giveaway at local hangout spot Friend & Bring a Friend afternoon tea at local café focused on birth control & related questions	Share Planned Parenthood's comic strip on birth control	Twitter Chat about birth control methods	Partner with organizations to provide trainings and lectures to local schools and health centers about birth control methods

Month	Media	Events	Website	Social Media	Partners
November: Addressing infertility	<i>Health Happens At Home</i> column. Monthly health column in a Nigeria publication (<i>The Guardian, This Day, The Punch</i>). This month with a focus on infertility	Policymaker advocacy day & letter writing campaign re: health policy and emergency contraception in rural areas Present at an international health conference on fertility research Media workshop on sexual and reproductive health issues, including fertility, HIV/AIDs	Raise awareness of sexual and reproductive health via Int'l Planned Parenthood's video	Weekly "Friday Fertility" day, where you post about an interesting fact related to fertility	Work with local CSOs/NGOs to put pressure on rural government leaders to improve access to emergency contraception

Appendix B: Product Guide

Scope	Product	Length	Audience	Type of Engagement
	Tweets	140 Characters	Women & girls, CSOs/NGOs, donors	Ask questions, tweet articles, notify re: reports

Less than a Page	Blog	5 paragraphs	Staff, donors, CSOs/NGOs, women & girls	Posts about current happenings, new research and upcoming events
	Postcards	4-5 sentences	Donors, women & girls, CSOs/NGOs	“Save-the-Dates” for events, service clinics, etc.
	E-Newsletter	1-2 paragraphs/topic	Donors, women & girls, policymakers, CSOs/NGOs	Update audiences on latest research, new grants, upcoming events and current services
1-10 pages	Video	2-5 minutes	Women & girls, policymakers, CSOs/NGOs, news media	Share relevant research in a digestible way, cross post on social media sites
	PSAs (TV and radio)	30 second script	Women & girls	Latest info. about health solutions & services
	Op Ed	600-800 words	Policymakers	Write about policy solutions to health issues in Nigeria
	Press release	1 page	Media, women & girls,	Highlight upcoming events, research, policy decisions & award ceremonies
	Case Studies	2 pages	Policymakers & their aides	Send with policy brief to policymakers, add case studies to website
	Policy Brief	1 page	Policymakers & their aides	Digestible info. about key health issues and policy recommendations
	Research Journal	25-100 pages	Thought leaders, academics, CSOs/NGOs,	Available on WHARC's website and by mail

25-100 pages			Donors	
	Program reports	30-40 pages	Donors, staff	Distributed internally and shared among WHARC's leadership
	Annual report	40-50 pages	Donors and CSOs/NGOs	Distributed electronically and through mail to donors and NGO partners
100+	Books	100+ pages	CSOs/NGOs, thought leaders	Available at WHARC's office and on WHARC's website as a downloadable e-book