

Workshops with journalists and media professionals on respectful and sensitive reporting on refugees

Public Attitudes towards Refugees and Asylum-seekers – Local Integration – Usage of Gender-sensitive Language

UNHCR conducted workshops with journalists and other media professionals on the influence of the media on shaping the way refugees and their situation are perceived by society.



Background

The complex political environment in this country makes it quite difficult for UNHCR and other refugee advocates to introduce the refugee topic in the national public debate. When the media does address the topic, messages are often charged with discriminatory and sexist language, which may negatively affect the attitudes of nationals towards refugees and asylum-seekers.

UNHCR is of the view that the refugee topic and their plight could be a common ground to work jointly with journalists from antagonist ideological groups. Upon this realization, UNHCR decided to work on a shared agenda with reporters from the main national media. This led to the development of workshops on respectful and sensitive reporting on refugee-related topics.

Location Latin-America

Time & Duration April 2010

Population Groups Refugees and asylum seekers

Actors UNHCR, NGOs



Description

UNHCR conducted workshops on the influence of the media in shaping the way refugees and their situation are perceived by society. These workshops were directed at journalists and media professionals with the purpose of promoting journalistic practices respectful and protective of refugees' rights, and sensitive to their situation.

Constraints

Public information on the relation between UNHCR, the Government and the media needs to be handled carefully because of the country's polarized political environment. This makes it difficult to work on strong alliances with stakeholders.

Steps to Implementation

- Raise awareness on the importance of respecting the principles of confidentiality and anonymity of refugees when reporting on them (particularly addressing the topics of photography and newspapers articles).
- Instruct participants on the importance of using gender-sensitive language in journalistic reporting.
- Instruct participants on the importance of using respectful, sensitive and non-sexist language when reporting on SGBV.
- Continuously monitor the language used in newspapers, radio, television, internet, etc. when reporting on refugee-related topics.

Impact and Results

- 3 workshops were held.
- 82 media organizations were reached in the workshops.
- All the participants agreed and signed a document setting out rules concerning the coverage and reportage of refugee-related issues. This document draws emphasis on the particularities of a refugee situation, and the specific needs of most vulnerable persons within the refugee community, namely women, SGBV survivors/victims, LGBTI persons, persons with disabilities, children and adolescents.
- An assessment conducted by a media oversight organization indicated that the national media is now using less discriminatory language when reporting on refugees, and also less sexist when addressing SGBV.

Lessons Learned/Keys to Success

The media has the power to shape society's perceptions towards refugees. Improving the quality of the messages the media conveys when reporting on them may reduce discrimination and xenophobia, thus facilitating the social integration of refugees in their country of asylum.