

SECTION 1. WHAT IS COUNTER-NARRATIVE CAMPAIGN

1.1. An introduction to counter-narrative campaign

The decision to develop and conduct a counter-narrative campaign is prompted by the perception that the campaign can contribute to raising awareness about, addressing, or overcoming a specific human rights violation, such as hate speech problem within a specific community or among a specific targeted audience to achieve a particular social or behavioural change. And thus, a counter-narrative campaign's needs assessment substantiates such a perception through research process that supports the assessment and analysis of the human rights problem in question. A human right violation can be committed by **an Act** (e.g., arbitrarily depriving people of their freedom or torturing them), or by **Omission** (e.g., not providing protection against the systematic abuses or violence committed by one group against another group), or by **advocacy of hatred** (e.g., consciously expressing discriminatory hatred messages and/or narratives which constitute incitement to violence, hostility, or discrimination). In this section, we only focus on human rights violation by advocacy of hatred, which will further explain how to identify "hate speech" and how to effectively counter and/or prevent it while protecting and respecting the rights to both freedom of expression and equality. Hence, much of our discussion will focus on freedom of expression as a human right proclaimed in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in its Article-19.:

- a. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of a person's choice.

Advocacy of hatred is the advocacy of national, racial, religious, ethnic, gender and sex based abusive and discriminatory, hatred narratives and/or messages, that constitute incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence. In other words, it is not an exercise of freedom of expression to consciously intimidate or harass others, express the wish or threats to harm them or incite others to do so. Hence,

it cannot be stressed enough that a human right violation by advocacy of hatred is more than just the expression of ideas or opinions that are hateful. It requires a clear showing of intent to incite others to discriminate, be hostile towards or commit violence against members of the group or the person in question.

E.g.:

Online expressions that consciously intimidate a person by expressing, and/or posting messages which undermine their intellect, body, gender, sexuality etc. threat to harm them or incite others to do so, etc. are acts of human rights violation by advocacy of hatred.

Hence, counter narratives are understood as strategically constructed storylines that are projected, nurtured through strategic communication and messaging activities with the sole intention to undermine the appeal of acts of human rights violation by advocacy of hatred through a wide range of social media, such as You-tube, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc. in the form of campaigns. Though this is not as straightforward as it sounds since research on the counter narrative campaigns indicates that many campaigns are not set up in a way to engage with specific target audiences and help them change their thinking, attitudes, or behaviours. Often, campaigns do not have clear and measurable goals, and lack in-depth knowledge about their target audience, call-for-action, or intervention components. As a result, those campaigns can appear to be monologues, where one side tells a story and the other side targets random people from the broader public, who are supposed to listen. Well, imagine someone standing on a public square in your own town telling a story that they care about to random people passing by. What kind of effect and impact would they expect?

1.2. Counter-narrative campaign's needs assessment

The planning phase of a counter-narrative campaign allows us to find answer to the most relevant question: **what is the long-term consequence or effect of the campaign?** Will the campaign lead to the ultimate social or behavioural change

we aim to contribute to? For example, facilitating and encouraging youth from engaging in Online conversations that advocate to and/or promote advocacy of racial, gender based and sex abusive and discriminatory, hatred narratives or messages, which constitute incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence? That is, setting a counter-narrative campaign's expected impact helps us ensure that we understand research data, and make sure that we use the most effective channels, message, and medium to realise, achieve what we want to accomplish by considering the thoughts, opinions, values, behaviour of the target audience vis-à-vis the human rights violations situation in question. Once we have a clear picture about the target audience and the longer-term results "the ultimate social or behavioural change we aim to contribute to", we then work backward to set or define the campaign objectives, think about the right message, select the medium to use, and decide whether a messenger is relevant or not.

The first step is thus defining our audience. Identifying the right audience for a counter-narrative campaign and further understanding the reasons why we are going to address such a specific audience is the first important consideration. Before beginning the process of designing our campaign, we should make sure that we have thought about whether we want to produce the content intended for social or behavioural change's interventions among people with hate speech views or to facilitate people from engaging, supporting, sharing, and promoting hate speech views. This helps us to focus our overall counter narrative campaign design, delivery. For example, we might want to create a preventative campaign educating a broader audience:

1. This could be young people, parents, youth workers, or organisations and other practitioners working with youth.
2. Reach a more specific age or gender group such as young women aged 20-25, or teenagers aged 14-19.
3. Reach young people actively watching or searching for gender or sexual based abuse content online who could be at-risk.
4. Influence members of online hate speech groups or the followers of known hate speech accounts.

1.3. Counter-narrative campaign's audience matters.

Counter-narrative campaigns can attempt to reach more than just one audience. However, it is important not to be too ambitious by trying to reach everyone. Be as specific as possible by focusing more on and thinking about exactly who the right audience is, and most importantly why this audience. This is very important since the characteristics of the audience determine the message, medium, and messenger for any counter-narrative campaign. It is therefore vital that these characteristics are included when thinking about an audience, as these help a campaigner to really know who they are trying to reach, why and how. The next step in the planning phase is researching where our audience spends their time online: understanding how our audience acts both online and offline will help to figure out who they are and how best to reach them. Researching audience can be as simple as talking to them! It is important to engage with, and if possible, co-design counter-narrative content with the members of the targeted audience themselves. For example, if we are looking to engage with youth:

1. We can recruit and run focus groups with young people within our community.
2. We can ask the youth what they think about our message or campaign and the kind of content they are likely to engage with.
3. We can also gain insights into our audience by researching them online without meeting face to face.
4. We can conduct research to understand how youth interacts online, what platforms they use, and what they are interested in.

The final step is then setting comprehensive goal and achievable objectives for a counter narrative campaign. Tangible objectives help to have a clear target to aim for and provide a framework or a benchmark to evaluate the impact the campaign has had at its completion. To define objectives, we have to consider the size of our audience, and the resources we have available.

For example:

1. The goal could be educating youth about human rights violation by advocacy of hatred. Or changing youth attitudes on narratives which undermine women intellect, body, gender expression, sexuality, etc.
2. The objectives could then be reaching 5000 youth, where 1500 youth will engage with the campaign content on Instagram and Facebook.

However, before starting it is also a good idea to reflect on these questions: *1. Are you okay for your campaign to be linked back to you or your organisation?* *2. Are you happy for your organisation to be visible online?* *3. Are you prepared for members of the audience to contact you?* *4. Have you taken into the account the safety, privacy of your messenger or others that may be featured in your content?*

1.4. Creating counter-narrative campaign's content

There is no one-fit-all rule for creating counter-narrative content, though while creating the content of your campaign you should be as creative, bold, and open minded as possible, and seek to test out a wide range of different styles and/or formats with your audience to determine what works best. Where possible, it is productive to develop counter-narrative content with some members of your targeted audiences; this is the best way to ensure that your content includes a message that a targeted audience will resonate with. So, great counter narrative campaign content can be created without spending much of resources; there are many free tools and apps available out there, which can be used effectively over time with a little practice. The most important thing is that content reflects the campaign strategy:

1. The hate speech situation you want to address.
2. The ultimate social or behavioural change you seek to contribute to.
3. The target audiences you want to interact and engage with.
4. The overall goal(s) of your campaign.
5. The overall objectives of your campaign.

The first thing to consider is creating an engaging message that resonates with your targeted audiences, and through which medium will your message be most effective at reaching the targeted audiences of your campaign. Whether you are trying to find music to set the right tone for your video or trying to decide on the colour-scheme of your piece of art, have a range of options and ask people for their thoughts and feedback. If possible, ask your audiences directly what they think. If this is not an option, then you can ask colleagues or others working on counter-narrative campaigns. Choosing the right medium that fits well with your message will depends on your resources, budget, inhouse expertise, and the social media platforms you intend to you use:

1. **Videos:** short films or animations.
2. **Images:** photos or memes.
3. **Text:** slogans, hashtags, or open letters.
4. **Online literature:** brochures or informative posters.
5. **Audio recordings:** podcasts or short audio-clips.
6. **Comics:** manga, short panels, or graphic novels.

Videos and pictures often do well on social media as they are more visible on people's news feeds or timelines. Text-based campaigns may work better with platforms that focus on discussion such as Facebook page, Twitter, blogs, or forums. Video can be difficult and expensive to make but does not have to be. If you do decide to use video, make sure that it is short and attention grabbing to retain audiences online. Consider using emotive music to maximise impact but be sure to check copyright restrictions. Copyright is a type of intellectual property (others include original designs, patents, and trademarks). Intellectual property allows the creator or owner of an idea or original work exclusive legal rights to use, reproduce, and distribute it. Be aware that copyright laws will vary between different countries and jurisdictions. If you are planning to make your content freely available online or offline, so then a copyright licence can protect your content from being copied, changed, and/or altered by others. The Creative Commons website offers advice on what you can and cannot use, under flexible copyright licences.

1.5. Counter-narrative campaign's message and medium

Once you have developed your campaign strategy and decided on your targeted audiences and why you want to interact and engage with them, you need a story to tell them; a story is a message with a purpose. At a basic level, your message should speak with your audience, but not at them. Creating a message that says **body shaming** is bad without offering a positive alternative and/or well thought out explanation why, this message is unlikely to have a strong or lasting impact. The most effective messages do not lecture the audience, they offer something to think about and reflect on. There are several different message types that you should consider:

- a. Facts from credible sources (victims or survivors) to de-construct, discredit and demystify hate speech messages.
- b. Emotional appeals highlighting the impact of hate speech or violence.
- c. Satire and humour to de-glamorise and undermine the rebellious appeal of hate speech groups.
- d. Positive stories and messages from people within your audience, to whom your targeted audience can relate.

While creating your message, it is important to remember and reflect on the key characteristics of your targeted audiences:

- a. age, language, gender, cultural or social background, and places in which they live.
- b. Be clear about:
 - What they care about and why they would listen? Why would they care and interact with your campaign? Why would they share your campaign with others? Why would they change their thinking and behaviour?
 - Where do they get their information from? This is where you want to get your message through: your platform. How will you stay safe online?

- c. A good message includes a call to action. A call to action asks audiences to do something immediately in response to your message and makes it clear why it is important. This could be as simple as getting them to share a video, sign a petition, or get involved more directly in the campaign or cause. Calls to action should be creative but also realistic. A clear, positive call to action engages the audiences and offers inspiration for how to get involved.

Once you have decided on your message, you need to consider how you want to package it. A counter-narrative campaign could be made up of one or more mediums:

- a. **Videos:** short films or animations.
- b. **Text:** slogans, hashtags, or open letters.
- c. **Images:** photos or memes.
- d. **Online literature:** brochures or informative posters.
- e. **Offline mode:** forum theatre, exhibitions, or literature.

It is important to think carefully about how your content or message could be misinterpreted or cause offence to some audiences. Conducting research with members of your audience can help to gauge the potential reaction. You are not just only competing with hate speech content but also everything else out there for the attention of your audience. Further, it is not relevant to have a messenger for your campaign, but if you do use a messenger, consider who your audience finds credible and is likely to trust, be inspired by or listen to. But there are many ways to make your content engaging and resonate with your audience. There are some key questions you should be asking as you design your content: *1. Is it age appropriate and/or pitched at the right level for my audience? 2. Will the language be easily understood? 3. What do I want my audience to feel when they see my campaign content? 4. If I want my audience to remember one thing from the campaign, what would that be?*