

Case Study Template

Problem Overview

This section includes the following sub-sections:

- 1. Initiative:** A Citizen's Watchdog for Quality Communication, Asociación de Comunicadores Sociales CALANDRIA, Perú
- 2. Type:** Advocacy campaign in four Peruvian cities: Arequipa, Iquitos, Lima and Puno
- 3. Beneficiaries:** Citizens as consumers of TV entertainment
- 4. Project Partners:** Project led by CALANDRIA under the leadership of Rosa María Alfaro with the collaboration of REVOLCOM Network of Communication Volunteers a network of young people who are either students of communication at university level or young people with strong interests in communications and the media. The whole process of the campaign was supported by myriad people concerned citizens, educators and media activists as well as representatives of social organisations.
- 5. Timeframe:** One year. Project started mid 2007 and was completed by mid 2008
- 6. Region / Country:** Latin America, Perú

2. The problem/obstacle addressed/objective:

1. The project sought to organise a number of activities which would empower ordinary citizens allowing them to relate to Peruvian Television, letting them know their opinions, reactions and ideas concerning their entertainment output.
2. A second objective was not only to ensure that the decision makers in TV were aware of the audience's opinions but also that the process should be such that the citizens could contribute ideas about what kind of output them, as citizens, felt was appropriate. Therefore the project also aimed at putting forward proposals and ideas that would improve TV's entertainment output.
3. An unstated objective was that of TV consumers taking responsibility for their own TV consumption.

3. Project Implementation:

Project activities

Held in four of Peru's main cities, Arequipa, Iquitos, Lima and Puno, the consultation was the culmination of a series of activities in a process that encouraged citizens to engage with mainstream media in order to provide unrequested feed-back as well as to put forward proposals for change to the content offered by Peruvian TV.

Under the theme "TV – How I dream you" the first step was to call up and train some one hundred members of REVOLCOM – Network of Communication Volunteers, a network of young people who are either students or have a strong interest in communications. The trained volunteers then proceeded to organize different social animation activities or 'citizen's caravans' in each of the cities. Conceived as a communication strategy that allows the use of public spaces to establish a dialogue with the public, these caravans are more like street performances. Drama, street musicians and performances, traditional dances and collective games were all tactics employed by the volunteers to awaken interest and generate public debate in town squares. Thus they generated enough public and media interest for the four events to be great

successes. Clowns in stilts walked up and down inviting people to go into one of several booths to record their opinions on the entertainment programmes being offered, or write down their thoughts on large sheets of papers placed strategically around the town square. A number chose to be interviewed and went live on television and in radio with their opinions. Upwards of 2,300 people participated in the public space interventions.

At the beginning of 2008 and after the information gathered in the four cities was systematized, analysed and distributed, the four 'media parliaments' were organized with the one in Lima being held in the facilities of Peru's Congress. Extensive media coverage of the event in Lima guaranteed that the other three 'parliaments' got almost as much media exposure as the one in the capital city. Participants were asked to debate and attempt to provide answers and recommendations to five key questions dealing with the quality of TV offer and improvements and changes that they, as citizens saw as necessary. Finally and with the objective of bringing together proposals to improve Peru's audiovisual entertainment offer, the public was invited to produce and send videos and power points illustrating some of the aspirations of ordinary citizens for quality TV entertainment.

Project Outcomes

The **real impact** of the project at the ground level.

1. There was good coverage of the four events in the mainstream media in general.
2. The results of the four consultation processes generated a great deal of attention on the part of the media – both in the regions and in Lima the capital. The media highlighted the citizen's opinions as a collective call to the TV channels to review their entertainment programming.
3. The media also highlighted the contradiction which means that the most criticised programmes are the ones with the highest audience either because of the content or the format. This then became one of the key points of discussion during the Media Parliament. Thus the project generated several elements for public discussions in and through the media on matters that are relevant to all citizens.
4. Groups of citizens concerned with the entertainment programming offered by the TV industry now exist in all four cities.
5. The content of TV, in particular of entertainment has been firmly established into the collective mind as an area of social concern of all, not as a matter of relevance only for the industry.
6. There is a growing affirmation and identification among citizens with the Citizen's Watchdog for Quality Communications. As a consequence of this citizens' awareness of their right to demand quality communication has increased and it implies that people are re-thinking in the content that reaches people through their TV screens. When citizens perceive and question existing TV programming and relate it to their own needs, then citizens became active proponents of solutions and ideas and therefore make use of their communication rights.

7. An unforeseen effect was the impact that this project had in some schools of communications of different universities which have not only adopted this approach as a communication strategy but also have been using the experience and results to generate debate among students.
8. ANDA, Peru's Association of Advertisers published an article regarding the project and the need for the entertainment offered in TV to improve. ANDA is now reviewing its ethical evaluation it periodically does of TV programming.
9. The best programme named during the Media Parliaments has continued to appear in the State channel with more frequency and with higher audiences.
10. There are indications that there has been an increase in the production of Peruvian series with actors, producers and themes relevant to Peru.
11. Citizens began to know and understand legal instruments which favour and protect citizens and open up the possibility to question certain output of the media.

Lessons Learned

This section includes the following information:

a. Key lessons learned: The need for each Citizens Watchdog to start with a common proposal and common basic actions and to develop from there specific questions and or actions relevant to the zone since the four cities in which the project took place represent are very different contexts.

b. Challenges/obstacles faced: While some actions and the use of public spaces in the provincial cities are very effective, to replicate them in the capital city required a double effort for them to have an impact.

c. Key constraints and dependencies that affect the initiative: The major constrain is the financial one and the almost impossibility to make this type of citizens watchdog self sustaining.