

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Online communication is widely used by NGOs, but the full potential of social media is not always realised.
- The most effective use of online communications requires an organisational culture that values social media as central to its overall strategy. However, there is frequently a lack of integration of digital technologies within NGOs.
- The social media landscape is fast-moving and changeable and demands creative management. There is a danger that NGOs think too much about the platform and not enough about the message and the audience.
- NGOs need to move away from a predominantly broadcast model to a more dialogical model that encourages two-way communication.
- Measurement is essential to build an evidence base for future decision-making and the increasing availability of analytical tools facilitates this. But NGOs should be wary of simply aiming to gain followers or likes. “Going viral” raises awareness, but does not necessarily lead to sustained commitment.
- Listening has been undervalued and is vitally important in order to understand supporters and monitor public debate about development issues.
- There are NGOs who are leading the field and embracing the full potential of social media. This is reflected in a series of high profile campaigns that tap into cultural trends, work across online and traditional media, and provide a platform for seldom-heard voices.
- The future will present further possibilities for building greater engagement via social media as access to the internet and mobile technology continues to grow in both beneficiary and supporter countries.

INTERVIEWEES

Tom Allen, Acting Head of Campaigns, ActionAid International

Karina Brisby, Director of Blog Action Day and EU Director, CoreLab

Nigel Campbell, Associate Director, Communications and Marketing, Rethink Mental Illness

Richard Darlington, Head of News, IPPR

Neil Gunn, Head of Online, WWF

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