

WSPA Balkans Workshop

Working with the authorities

- Want to make this an interactive exercise
- Appreciate the fact that many, if not all of you are coming from a far advanced environment, from which especially BiH could learn a lot. Having said this many of you would be in fact far better placed to do this presentation and teach us how to get where you currently stand in working with authorities.
- Nevertheless, you are stuck with me:-). Apologise if most of what I am about to say you already know. Take it as a refresher course.
- Having said this, I would like to give us all an opportunity to share to the rest of the group your experiences and lessons learned in working with authorities, so I plan to make my part as short as possible.

Perceptions/biases/myths

- Want to touch a bit on how we-animal welfare organizations are perceived by the authorities (which largely depends on us, the work we do, but then also their predisposed judgements, biases and deep rooted myths).
- **In most of the countries we are still perceived negatively:** disorganized (lacking structure, right hand does not know what the left is doing, have lack of managerial skills), disunited (every town having minimum 2 confronted groups, confronted out of vanity, unhealthy competition for the sake of monopolizing the contacts, benefits, work; community is fragmented, efforts and time wasted, added value not recognised), easily manipulated, corrupt, weak, pain, inconsistent (policy wise), control freaks, necessary evil, crazy, enemy (not a partner), unconstructive (just complain, no real wish to take responsibility)
- **In advanced countries** this picture already looks much different, but it is the years of painstaking work and fight to prove as a partner/stakeholder that got them where they are now
- **We perceive authorities as:** corrupt, mafia, malicious, manipulative, tendentious, looking for our failure and not for a success for a greater good, bad guys whereas we are the good guys, they hate us, no interest in animal welfare, animal haters, cruel, enemy, incompetent, want to bypass us and do things without us their way with again minimum applied humanity.

The question is how do we get authorities to start caring for animal welfare, to start recognizing it an important issue to address, how do we make them work with us? It is a process rather than anything else as the change does not happen over night.

Visibility - getting started, getting active, being visible, raising awareness

- When we think about working with authorities as well as other stakeholders, we need consider our visibility: Do people know we exist? How do we get introduced in the political/social arena, get visible?

- Many of these questions are related to organization and establishment of the NGO and not policy, and as such had already been covered or will be covered.
- The real **Q is what kind of activity helps us become more visible** and get us into position of a recognized stakeholder, negotiator, increasing our bargaining powers.
- **How do you become a visible recognised stakeholder:** start small; increase visibility through public/media campaigning (topics: animal cruelty, legislation, etc) and increase media and public profile/awareness (same topics); education-debunking myths (great examples seen in the leaflets you produced and brought here); lobbying: writing protest letters, organizing signing of petitions, demos, meetings, public gatherings, billboards, info centres on line and in person, being active to record cruelty– make everybody know, leaflets (we have seen yesterday how important they are in stating your mission, purpose, goal and **describing your campaign in a concise, user friendly manner – remember you want to get people to listen to you not necessarily to like you, but start thinking about you. You want to become their worst nightmare in short run, but a partner in a long run**).

Build partnership with authorities: approach; educate, advise, change perception, lobby, assist

- Instead of leading a war try build a partnership relation and as Scott point out yesterday build coalitions
- In a long run nothing can be achieved without partnership and commitment on both sides. Otherwise you will be trapped and they will absolve from responsibility waiting for you to fail and failing to see benefits in your proposals
- You are the one they will eventually want to turn to advice and count on – thus pursue an advisory role
- **Approach:** To achieve this one needs to act responsibly, professionally, be perceived as knowledgeable (you need to know what you are talking about), accountable for its actions, reliable, organized, united, strong, consistent, balanced in approach and criticism, diplomat. Bottom line you will need to know how to play this game. Ensure positive spin is given as well as encouragement for the authorities to do the right thing. Make them feel safe with you
- Avoid underestimating the issue or the solution, be realistic despite your personal preferences
- Communicating target and focused messages to public, help reveal pressure and raise awareness
- Be calm but persuasive, persistent, but not too pushy or too aggressive that can be counter productive
- Establish regular meetings/ Sign a MoU
- **Analysis** of other stakeholders, other target group, networking
- Identify and analyse the source and scope of the problem.
- Identify “lobbyists” within your organization, not all people are capable or everything – delegate tasks!!!
- Identify regular contacts through identifying animal lovers amongst the authorities

- Active lobbying political parties: get them to incorporate animal welfare in their political platforms and to long term commit to protection of animals and prevention of cruelty, public speeches, public statements, info stands,
- **Educate** authorities as well as public
- Conflict resolution: in a situation where an assumption is that there is an utter ignorance, lack of understanding, lack of support from both the professional public (you need to win the vets over which is also not the case) and political establishment, need to play this very carefully, as conflicts may prove destructive and further dividing, we are not talking about group of alike thinkers but confronted groups where difference in stands is often originating from sheer ignorance combined with arrogance – dangerous. Always leave room for them to come back on previous rejection, do not cement the conflict
- Try speaking with one voice, try uniting animal welfare community in your town/canton, entity - if there are too many, authorities will get confused, especially if different stands/priorities are being presented, more importantly it would only further reinforce the previous negative perception and biases.
- Influence the consistency of the media – one day positive spin, the other negative article, one day welcome TNR in SA, the other day report in context of abandoned animals that smb dog has slaughtered a cow or had bitten the old lady.
- What is the measure of success-depends what you define as your goal in what timeframe? To achieve full success you need support and recognition from authorities. How can it be that we do everything rights and still there is absence of concrete action/success?
- What if authorities are not responsive: change the focus and reshift to public and education, create a critical mass, which would condition changes. Lessons learned – let go of big egos, ask for help. Info centre, make citizens come to you, makes them trust you. Propose solution\promote ad reiterate responsibility of other stakeholders

Micro vs. Macro agenda

- Not all NGOs have a capacity to go both micro and macro
- It is a choice that we have to make at a certain time, a choice to do with an objective analysis of our human resource capacities, financial capacities, positioning in the political sphere.
- It is about allocating the resources you have to the best of your abilities, knowledge/expertise
- If you cannot do both then don't.
- Local NGOs active on the territory of one municipality will primarily be interested in building relations with municipal authorities, vets, community, schools, overseeing the work of the local shelter, or establish and run one on its own, sitting on a school committee, education in local area
- NGOs which aim to go nation wide will target governments, parliaments, be interested in lobbying for legislation, be interested in having a seat on the ethic committee, etc
- Cooperating and networking between different levels will be crucial in overseeing implementation of the legislation at the lower levels which may impact state nation wide strategy.

- Still, regardless if your target authorities are municipal level authorities or a state parliament, government the principles of the work are pretty much the same

Areas of work with authorities not talking about substance but principles (solving problems requires a combination of different methods in order to address the cause of the problems not the consequence)

- That again depends on whether we go locally or at macro level
- **Working on legislation** (providing for various means of population control: CNR, registration, micro chipping, obligation to form and run a shelter, responsibility of a owner, sanctions for abandoning animal, procedures with abandoned animals,
- **Education:** public, media, authorities (get authorities to recognise importance and benefits of alternative approach) Usually convincing politicians in a greater good can only be done once the pressure is there from the public that smt needs to be done. That is what it is so important to educate people and to change perception long term
- **Specific projects:** Catch-neuter-release, re-homing, pet clinic, etc.
- **Control mechanism/Corrective**

Lobbying for the new legislation-condition for efficient animal welfare, population control, human approach

- Be a recognized stakeholder
- Get to know the legislative procedures, as well as the rules of procedures governing the work of government and the parliamentary assembly when adopting legislation
- Ensure your organization is on the list of stakeholders invited to comment on the legislation, government decisions, by-laws
- Participate in drafting legislation where possible, through work in various working group
- Were not possible to be directly involved in the drafting process, or in proposing its own legislation as an initial draft to the authorised proponent, get involved in the post drafting and prior to launching of the draft into legislative procedure consultations
- If and where the authorities are not in legal obligation to run prior consultations with a wider public, organize public round tables to discussed the proposed draft, and collect comments and submit comments to the authorised body
- Follow all stages of legislative process of the legislation both in the government and in the parliament
- Identify opportunities for interventions during lobbying in various stages of legislative life of a legislation: meetings, letters, media. Carefully plan the timing
- Identify target groups for lobbying in various caucuses both in the so-called parliamentary majority as well as in the opposition, potential proponents of your amendments
- Draft amendments/Submit amendments through identified proponent
- Request presence at committee sessions, parliament sessions, call through parties proponent for public discussion and round tables
- Work with other NGOs and other stakeholders to attempt to speak with one voice
- Be concrete, substantiate every amendment with arguments

- During lobbying be in contact with international partners from animal welfare community; draft letter which they would ideally send at an identified point in time during parliamentary/government lobbying to add to pressure and substantiate your arguments
- Plan media campaign and pace it carefully to call authorities for a swift adoption of the law either in proposed format or with your proposed amendments: press releases, TV, radio, print media, develop generic tps, careful timing
- Submit other written proposals and distribute leaflets in the parliaments, and other materials from various sources to all delegates
- You are lobbying on behalf of the organization not in private capacity
- Be ready to speak at the session if opportunity arise, be ready to use carrot and stick, countries in transition and candidate countries fall for EU standard, EU Directives, etc, but also do not throw that easily if it is not fully true as it can easily come back to haunt you once proven wrong, once proven that EU countries are not in obligation to address a particular issue in a unique manner
- Organize yourself a public meeting: prepare ground, advertise, invite friendly media, other civil society ngos
- Want to be perceived seriously, consistently, professionally, need to show you know where we stand exactly in the legislative process, what is possible and what is not possible procedurally (often politicians give ad hoc blurred primness's counting on our ignorance, etc), what other legislative impact this particular legislation has, etc.
- Individual approach depends on who you talk to is it in or off the record, do you do good cop bad cop deal

Catch – neuter – release

- Cooperation with authorities (government and local authorities; and veterinary bodies, communal companies, association, and citizens) necessary for this project to succeed in a long run
- It is about sharing responsibility
- It is a bout having authorities to commit long term to solving the overpopulation in this manner
- Lessons learned: planning, financial, human resources, underestimated the issue of catching, of time needed for recovery, costs, no time invested to prepare the public, educate, large scale support of authorities missing; letter problems: who is the owner, no contract, level of tolerance in society, consistency by IC also lacking