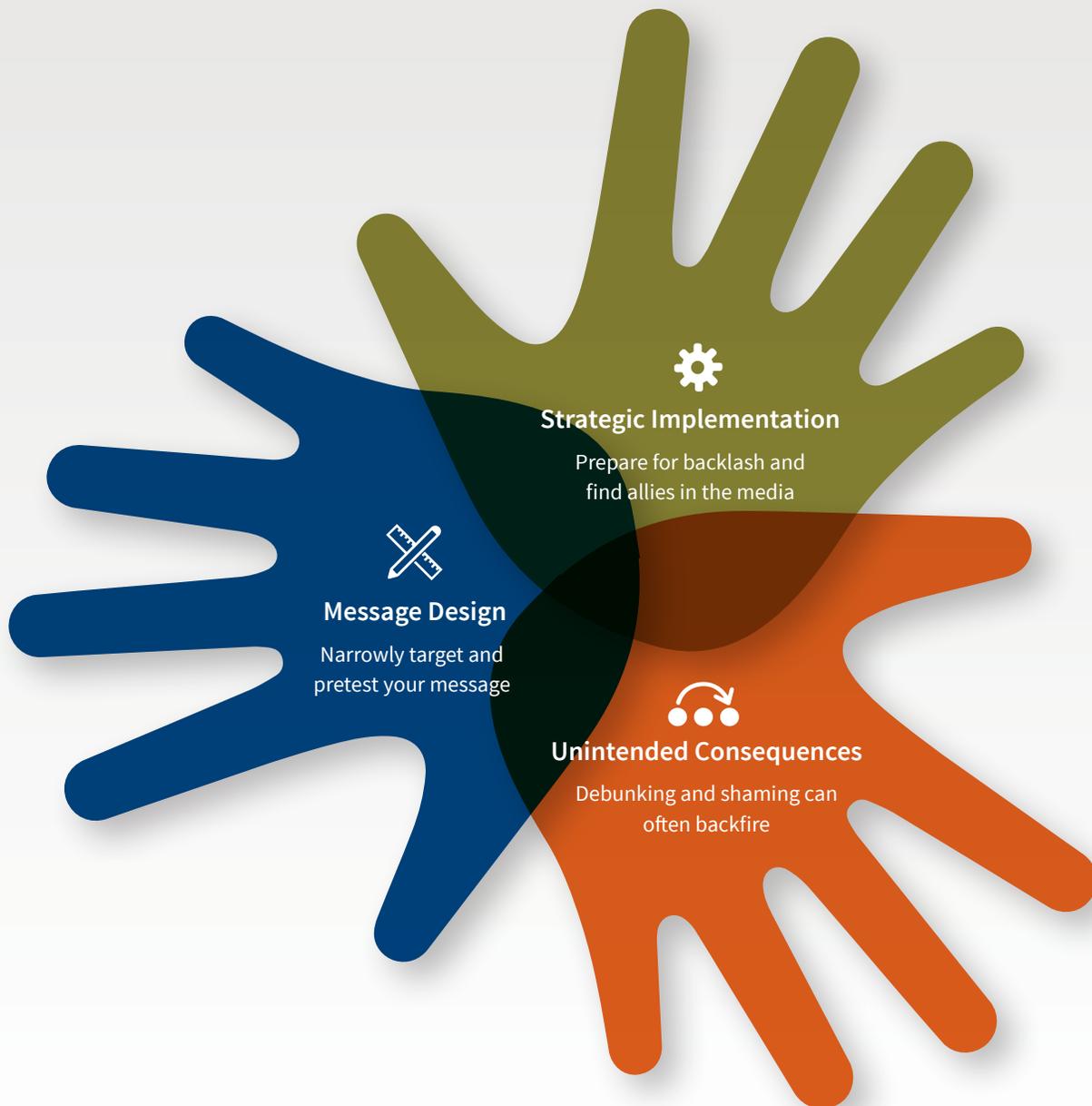


## Design and Implement Effective Human Rights Campaigns



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

A USAID-funded literature review addresses questions about human rights awareness campaigns, including the following: What makes human rights awareness campaigns successful? Why do many campaigns fail? What are the unintended negative consequences of both successful and failed campaigns? This literature review will help inform USAID's strategic planning, project design, and in-service training in the democracy, human rights, and governance sector.



**About the Report:**

Heger Boyle, Elizabeth, et al. (2017). Making Human Rights Campaigns Effective While Limiting Unintended Consequences: Lessons from Recent Research. (Research and Innovation Grants Working Papers Series). Institute of International Education. Available at <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Publications/DFG-UMinn-Publication>.

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Recommendation	Findings in the literature	Example
 <p><b>Know and clearly articulate campaign goals</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Framing a campaign is vital for shaping message design and sequence; successful campaigns mix diagnostic frames (define the problem); prognostic frames (highlight remedies); and motivational frames (provide a rationale).</li> <li>• Oversimplifying an issue can lead to misunderstanding and loss of credibility.</li> </ul>	<p>The “Talk to Your Partner” HIV prevention campaign was intended to promote conversations about safe sex between partners. Unfortunately, the campaign did not result in behavioral change. There was no prognostic frame, and promoting conversations about safe sex was insufficient to prevent behaviors.</p>
 <p><b>If behavior change is the goal, make that clear and recommend resources or paths to action</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frame campaigns in culturally relevant terms.</li> <li>• Raising awareness without providing a way to act creates harmful dissonance.</li> </ul>	<p>A campaign in Ethiopia promoted awareness among women of the danger of cooking with biomass fuels to children’s respiratory systems. The campaign increased knowledge and created willingness to change practices. Yet, some women could not afford cleaner fuels and better stoves, resulting in harmful dissonance because they were unable to implement changes.</p>
 <p><b>If improving awareness is the goal, target messages to local and homogenous audiences</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translate human rights ideas into terms that make sense in the local vernacular, using local language and local terminology, ideas, and practices.</li> <li>• Discouraging people from a certain behavior can entice them to engage in that behavior by suggesting it is commonplace or desirable.</li> </ul>	<p>The Soul Buddyz campaign in South Africa successfully raised awareness of HIV/AIDS among children and promoted children’s health rights. The campaign used various media to create entertainment that translated complex ideas into accessible language, teaching children about their rights and responsibilities in a meaningful way.</p>
 <p><b>Invest time and resources to research audience, tailor messages, and pretest messages to ensure they resonate</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for “counter-mobilization.” When campaigns directly or indirectly threaten the standing of government actors, state institutions and agents will be deployed to neutralize campaign messages.</li> <li>• Intense exposure to an issue can create apathy or desensitize audiences.</li> </ul>	<p>In Bangladesh, a campaign to promote a program that empowered villagers through human rights and legal education received social backlash because the campaign imagery did not resonate with its targeted audience, who tore down campaign posters and organized demonstrations. Although many did not oppose the campaign’s goals, they found the imagery problematic, compromising the campaign’s success.</p>
 <p><b>Use novel arguments, messages that spark discussions, and credible messengers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing alliances between mass media companies and human rights NGOs may lead to media content and framing that is favorable to the campaign’s goals.</li> <li>• Campaigns may depict certain behaviors as abnormal and create stigma against those who practice them.</li> </ul>	<p>Collaborations between NGOs and private media organizations succeed only when both parties have a clear benefit, such as the transfer of knowledge, cost advantages for local media organizations, and greater legitimacy for the organization. This is best achieved through a continual rather than ad hoc relationship. Amnesty International and Médecins Sans Frontières use a media liaison (preferably a former journalist) to maintain relationships with journalists.</p>