



Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

PCBS Experience in Activating Role of Media Representatives and Channels and its Impact on the Dissemination of Statistical Figures

**Prepared by:
Loay Shehadeh
Public Relations Officer**

April 2011

Contents

- I. PCBS mechanisms in dealing with journalists and media
- II. Characteristics of officers dealing with journalists and media, publication and marketing outlets
- III. Impacts of dissemination of statistical figures to media representatives and outlets
- IV. Means used to activate relations with media representatives and outlets
- v. Aspirations

Introduction

Since its establishment, PCBS has endeavored to explore the best ways to address the media community of all types, whether printed or audiovisual. It focused on communicating with media representatives and encouraging them to write about statistics by making statistical material more appealing and more easily understood to them.

I. PCBS mechanisms in dealing with journalists and media

How did PCBS mobilize various media outlets and representatives to serve the achievement of its purposes and dissemination of its mission?

1. Journalists received humane treatment with respect of their principles and the doctrines of the media outlets they work for.
2. Our answer to questions raised by the media is always ready and we abstain from showing any sign of anger.
3. Make media representatives and outlets feel comfortable and safe
4. Honor media outlets and continually encourage and support them
5. Fulfill the queries of journalists and different media and provide them with answers, data and printed material
6. Abstain from attacking media outlets or journalists and avoid use of any impolite terms
7. Abstain from lying to media outlets and journalists
8. Avoid making too many comments on what media outlets and journalists publish on PCBS
9. Abstain from correcting any leak of information from PCBS to the media.

1. Characteristics of officers dealing with journalists and media, publication and marketing outlets

- 1) Talent
- 2) Be updated with the latest news and media coverage
- 3) General knowledge
- 4) Enthusiasm to work
- 5) Credibility: experience, good knowledge, intelligence, expertise and training
- 6) Appeal: smartness and ability to draft properly and interestingly in Arabic
- 7) Audacity

2. Impacts of dissemination of statistical figures to media representatives and outlets

PCBS adopted policy played a positive role in disseminating the Bureau's mission and objectives. It also raised interactive communication by media representatives and institutions of all types, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Raise awareness of statistics and statistical figures and their use by media representatives and outlets.
2. Promote the importance of statistical figures in making decisions or in devising different policies by media people and outlets
3. Raise media public awareness of the importance of statistical figures
4. Fulfill public needs in terms of statistical data
5. Raise public awareness of statistics and how to cooperate with PCBS requests and respond to its requests
6. Raise importance of the importance of statistical figures in the processes of planning and policy making by media representatives and institutions.

VI. Means used to activate relations with media representatives and outlets

- **Accountability:** commitment to public interest and abstention of use of the media to serve personal interest or aimless. Such improper use constitutes betrayal of public confidence. Provide true and honest information and always check accuracy of data before publication; refrain from distorting or hiding journalistic facts.
- **Accuracy:** lack of accuracy results from negligence, partiality, and distortion via omission from the news. It also appears when there is no acknowledgement of errors and subsequent correction in an obvious place.
- **Integrity:** abstain from emotional coverage of controversial issues; news must be published regardless of its personal interests. Announcers must be given equal treatment without any preferential treatment of any party over the other.
- **Fairness:** (equity and impartiality)
- **Independence:** from sources of finance
- **Commitment** to telling the truth
- **Commitment to objectivity:** commit to publishing variant viewpoints.

V. Means used to activate relations with media representatives and outlets

1. PCBS Monthly meeting

PCBS monthly meeting was one of the key and successful activities. It is a monthly meeting on a set time and date, held for two hours, during which the Bureau meets with members of the local and international media family. The meeting also gathers personalities and other high-ranking officers from outside PCBS, who have some expertise in the topics under discussion.

An agreement was made with a permanent group of journalists (20 – 30 journalists) to attend this meeting, which focuses on consultancy rather than publication. Material on the topic under discussion is sent to participants to enable them follow up on the discussion.

Meeting objectives:

1. Train journalists to handle statistical data and figures in the media and inform them of the manner of data collection and results output, while analyzing and linking them to other topics
2. Train media people in statistical themes and their use, in addition to consulting them on hot issues and their relation to statistics.
3. Simplify the informational mission of PCBS
4. Highlight PCBS activities and publications
5. Attract the largest number possible of media representatives to the Bureau and its activities and publications from time to time
6. Develop awareness of media needs in terms of statistical data

Examples to this activity

| Meeting theme | Participants |
|--|--|
| Palestinian consumer's price index, its importance and mode of calculation | PCBS president, Minister of Economy and Trade, Vice Minister of Finance |
| Poverty in Palestine | PCBS president, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Minister of Social Affairs |
| Labor market in Palestine and mode of calculation of unemployment | PCBS president, Minister of Labor, President of the General Federation of Labor Unions - Palestine |

7. Fax Bulletin

A monthly bulletin distributed to around 200 specialized agencies. It comprises 6 pages and addresses one statistical theme in each issue. It is distributed via the Fax Modem installed on computers. It is edited by a number of specialists in PCBS. It helped the Bureau address many topics including the Palestinian Price's Index, National Accounts in Palestine, Labor Force in Palestine and statistical indicators, education in Palestine and Statistical indicators, health in Palestine and statistical indicators, and agriculture in Palestine and statistical indicators.

The bulletin was very well received by all institutions and other recipients thanks to the important topics it presents and its easily accessible and understandable presentation.

Content

1. Comprehensive bulletin that addresses all aspects of proposed topics; it does not only contain statistical tables but also analysis and explanation of the most important data
2. Simplified easily understandable language by the targeted public
3. It addresses several trends, analyzes, reviews, reads, and concludes final recommendations on the proposed topic.
4. The bulletin also included graphs and diagrams to complement the core content.

Objectives

1. Disseminate and publish PCBS data to the largest number possible of official, private and media agencies
2. Simplify PCBS informational mission statement
3. Highlight PCBS activities and publications to targeted audience
4. Attract as many readers as possible to PCBS activities and publications
5. A channel used by PCBS to communicate with its beneficiary public in the shortest time possible and as per PCBS need, in particular and public needs, in general.

3. Monthly e-bulletin

A monthly bulletin published electronically (base available at the Public Relations Department), which addresses many topics (press releases, publications, pictures, statistical indicators, statistical output for the coming month).

Recipient institutions and agencies welcomed the Bulletin thanks to its diversified and easily understandable content.

Bulletin objectives

1. Disseminate and publish PCBS data to the largest number possible of official, private and media institutions

2. Simplify PCBS informational mission
3. Highlight PCBS activities and publications to the beneficiaries community
4. Attract more public to PCBS activities and publications
5. A channel of communication between PCBS and its beneficiaries to respond to both parties' needs.

4. Press Conference Handbook

It is an effective and unique method of communication of the statistical material to be published by the media. It includes indicators and basic terminology definitions of its different themes. It covers every theme in several chapters including introduction, press release showing the most important results, key tables and basic definitions.

PCBS adopted this method to give a clearer picture of the topics it publishes upon dissemination of statistical results. The handbook is distributed to media representatives after announcement of results by PCBS officials. It aims to give them the necessary explanations they need for comprehensive coverage of different themes.

5. Provision of statistics, releases and material:

This is an important service, which facilitates journalists' quick access to all statistical data and reports through different media including fax, email, telephone, and visit to PCBS premises to receive data.

PCBS provides all printed and audiovisual media with regular statistical reports. As witnessed by all users, this service has been instrumental in keeping media representatives updated with the latest statistical developments for better coverage.

6. Training

PCBS endeavored to train media on comprehensive handling of statistical themes. It organizes training sessions to teach them how to best address statistical figures and decipher its significations to upgrade public awareness thereof. PCBS actually organized several training courses in and outside its premises.

Journalists also benefited from international training and seminars on statistics, facilitated by PCBS.

7. Communication

PCBS has always been keen to communicate with media people to provide them with modern and distinguished round the clock services using cutting-edge technology. Through its public relations department, PCBS monitors the effectiveness of its communication methods and consults with beneficiaries to identify their needs. It organizes press conferences and publishes press releases in addition to sending data and bulletins to them.

Communication with the media involves:

1. On the spot coverage of PCBS news and activities;
2. Issuance of press releases and reports upon release of any statistical report or bulletin;
3. Organization of press conference to announce any implemented statistical subjects;
4. Organization of meetings and printed and audiovisual interviews with PCBS officials and other interested parties;
5. Use of statistics in reports and other press and media reportages and investigations.

8. Web page pressroom

PCBS created a special link for media and journalists on its web page, called (the pressroom). This link publishes topics related to journalistic data, pictures, bulletins, etc. it aims to provide journalists with easy, immediate and direct access to data and subjects they wish to cover.

9. Electronic and postal addresses database

This database is the vein of publication of statistical data and products. It is also used to promote activities and publish pictures. PCBS has an address database with over 50,000 addresses. It also has subscriptions in a number of local, Arab and international groups. The database is divided according to topics and agencies. It has a list of all official and private media outlets and of local, Arab and international journalists.

Objectives:

1. Ongoing communication with all stakeholders
2. Ability to control all trends and sectors
3. Establish a strong network of relations with (the friends of PCBS)
4. Communicate PCBS mission statement to all interested parties in the fastest ways
5. Ensure institutional communication with the interested public.

Types of Address Databases:

1- Postal addresses: (name, title, institution, address, phone number, fax number, mobile number, email)

Objective: Send statistical products and bulletins; participate in conferences, seminars and other meetings.

Category: institutions, embassies, ministries, universities, media outlets, research centers, etc.

2- Electronic addresses (name of person or institution and email)

Objective: send invitations and press releases

Category: Institutions, embassies, ministries, universities, media outlets, researcher centers, etc.

3- Phonebook: (name of person or institution and their landline and mobile numbers as well as their fax numbers)

Objective: quick communication

Category: Institutions, embassies, ministries, universities, media outlets, researcher centers, etc.

Building and operation of beneficiaries' databases:

The database is constructed through:

1. Communication with official, community, research and other institutions;
2. Search on the Internet
3. Collect published addresses books;
4. Conduct visits to institutions;
5. Visits and activities of PCBS and its staff in Palestine and abroad.

Updating: continual updating of information and data.

10. Producers-Users Dialogue

PCBS established a dialogue with data users (ministries, governmental and nongovernmental institutions, private sector, research centers, media outlets and journalists) to disseminate statistical data and enhance its relations with all these segments. Through this communication channel, PCBS consults its users and receives their feedback on its products to improve its publications and fulfill their needs.

Since its establishment, PCBS effectively used this method and organized workshops in different governorates. It organizes several meetings throughout the year to cover statistical themes related to the geography, economy, demography and social issues among others.

11. Public services

Since its inception in 1993, PCBS adopted a comprehensive official statistics plan to serve different Palestinian and non-Palestinian sectors. It created a special department to respond to beneficiaries' needs and named it "Public Services". This department provides data to users and other interested parties to enable them draw a clear picture of the Palestinian society. The Department receives and answers several requests every day. It coordinates with PCBS technical departments to provide the requested information.

12. Tribute to the media

حرص الجهاز منذ تأسيسه على توثيق العلاقة مع الصحفيين والإعلاميين، من خلال تكريمهم عن طرق منحهم شهادات ودرع تقديرية لمساهماتهم في نشر وتعميم رسالة الإحصاء، ولا سيما في تعدادات السكان والمنشآت. كما قام الإحصاء بتنظيم مسابقة لأفضل عمل إحصائي إعلامي خلال العام 2010 حيث تم تكريم الفائزين بالمسابقة على شرف يوم الإحصاء العالمي 2010/10/20.

Since its establishment, PCBS has been keen on consolidating its relations to the media. It honored them in several occasions and granted them appreciation certificates and decorations for their contribution to the publication of its mission state, mainly in the population and establishments censuses. It also organized a contest to select the best media work on statistics in 2010. Winners were honored on the International Statistics Day, on 20 October 2010.

VI. Aspirations

- 1. Pressroom:** PCBS is currently establishing a statistical media center to serve journalists. The center aims to better communicate with media people and provide them with updated picture of different themes and events. It also provides services to journalists through online distribution of publications and assistance in preparing press reports on its activities.
- 2. USE of SMS:** sending SMS to journalists and media outlets mobile phones to update them on statistical activities.