

## Developing and managing a website 29<sup>th</sup> September 2009

### Training notes

#### 1. What makes a good website?

A website doesn't just need to look good, it needs to work well. That means that people need to be able to find the information they need as easily as possible.

The best way to understand what makes a good website is to see which sites work well and why.

Test how easy it is to find information on various sites. What makes one better than another?

#### >> How people use the web

- People don't read from left-to-right and from top to bottom. They scan.
- They look for a link to click and will often click the first one they see that looks about right.
- They're impatient
- They don't try to work things out – they muddle through.

So, make things as easy as possible for your users. Don't design and build a site to be a glossy corporate brochure. Design and build a site that people will be able to use.

See the handout "How we really use the web" by Steve Krug

## >> Common features of good websites

Different sites have different requirements and different audiences, but we can identify some common features.

- 1) Prominent logo and name on all pages – normally top left
- 2) Clear description of what organisation does on home page
- 3) A 'news' element on the homepage to keep it current
- 4) Clear navigation – either down the side or across the top (or, for large sites, both)
- 5) About Us - history of the org & current projects
- 6) Contact details – including location, telephone and email
- 7) How to volunteer and how to donate
- 8) Information about the various projects and campaigns.
- 9) Some nice images
- 10) Clearly headings that tell you what to expect when you click on them
- 11) Clearly written articles that aren't too long.

Other things RCOs might consider:

- Case studies – make it clear who your beneficiaries are
- Some historical background...where refugees you work with tend to come from and why
- Signposting to other relevant sites

## >> Who is your site for?

Before you start with any of this, you need to decide who your website is for and what they want from it.

This should be the first step in the process of developing a website (see page 3).

## 2. How websites work

### >> Technical background

**Without getting into too much detail... :**

- Your website has to be 'hosted' somewhere – ie have a home on the internet where other people can find it.
- It is written in code – which you can learn if you really want to
- Increasingly you can find tools to make it easy to create a website, using templates and free hosting.
- So, you can try to do it yourself. Or you can pay someone to do it for you, or get help from volunteers.

### 3. Common problems running a website

People sometimes set up a site without thinking through exactly what and who it is for.

The next problem comes when a site is built but can't be updated. That's the danger with getting someone else to do it for you. A website will always need to change. Plan for that from the start.

#### Editorial policy

It might sound a bit grand to think about an editorial policy for your site but remember it will be the main way that people learn about who you are and what you do. So think about:

- Who will write, approve and publish articles?
- Who will decide on the development of the site over time?
- Who will make sure that everything is up to date?

Someone in your organisation will effectively have to become a website editor and it can help to have some written guidelines. These might cover who has authority to publish; that nothing offensive or libellous will be published and how often updates will be made.

#### Confidentiality policy

This is particularly important if you are featuring children and refugees. You probably just need a simple form for people to sign to say that they are happy to be featured.

#### Blogs, video and podcasts

In addition to a basic site there are lots of other ways to present material. We'll look at things like blogs, videos and podcasts in our next training session.

### 4. Research: Identifying the target audience for your website and what they want

Think about the target audiences for your website. There might be more than one. For example:

- Existing members
- Potential members
- Existing funders (of various kind)
- Potential funders (of various kind)
- Policy makers
- People in 'home' country

What might these people want from your website? And what information do you want to make sure they get?

List them in order of priority – the most important should get the highest profile on your site.

**>> Research: What sites are online already for your target audience?  
What does that mean for your website?**

Think about your different target audiences and the main things they want from your website. Now, put yourselves in their shoes and search the web to see what you can find.

This will show you what exists already for the audience you're looking to serve. Will help you to avoid duplication, link to useful resources and find out who you can ask to link to your site.

**Tom Green for the Basis Project September 2009**