

How to Write a Press Release TIE-ENERGIA

General Purpose

The purpose of a press release is to draw the attention of the media. This is achieved by filling the needs of the journalists – to provide the readers with an interesting, relevant and newsworthy story. Thus, in writing a press release, you must think like a reporter, asking yourself not what the press release can achieve for you and your organization, but why the readers of a particular magazine, journal, paper, etc., should care. Remember, papers do not exist to promote your work, nor are they interested in promoting you; they are looking to give their readers headline grabbing stories that will compel them to read their publication. Your goal is to make the journalist's job easier by providing a catchy, persuasive and useful news story that he or she will want to print while also gaining free exposure.

One hint before moving into the actual preparation of a press release: whenever possible, add a 'human interest' element to your press release, as journalists and readers alike are much more apt to take notice. For example, how has that which you are writing about in your press release influenced a government official? Changed the work approach of energy practitioners? Impacted a household, including both the men and women there within? Focus on one individual, interview him or her, write his or her story into the press release, *and always provide quotes*.

Before Beginning

To help you achieve all of the above, ask yourself the following questions before beginning your press release:

1. Who is the audience of your targeted media?
2. What information will be valuable, interesting, and useable by this target audience? Not 'what is interesting to you' but 'what is interesting for them'.
3. Why is it relevant to the targeted audience at the time of writing the press release?
4. What do you hope the targeted audience will gain/take away from the press release?
5. Who has been directly influenced by your work?
6. How do those influenced by your work relate to the targeted audience?

Structure of a Press Release

Press releases must conform to an established format, detailed below.

1. Letterhead and logos: Press releases should be printed on company letterhead and should include all relevant organizations' logos, including that of TIE-ENERGIA, ENERGIA, EIE (the EU) and your own.
2. Heading: **PRESS RELEASE** should be spelled out in all CAPS and centred in bold. Immediately below 'PRESS RELEASE' should be contact person's details, numbers and email address. On the next line, on the left hand margin and in all CAPS, should be information regarding when the press release is

available for release: 'IMMEDIATE RELEASE' if immediately, and 'EMBARGOED UNTIL <TIME> <DATE>' if the press release should be held until a particular date and time.

3. **The Headline:** No more than 10 words, the headline should be centred and in bold text. Think carefully about your headline, as this is how you will grab the attention of the journalist and reader alike. Journalists and readers are faced with a multitude of headlines competing for their attention on any given day – you *must* grab their attention. As well as being exciting and proving the story's newsworthiness, the headline should summarize the information in the press release. Never rush the preparation of a headline. Consider the following headlines:
 - a. "Gender Audit Results"
 - b. "TIE-ENERGIA project results"
 - c. "Gender Finally Has its Say in Energy Policy and Practice in Africa"

Example a. is only understandable for someone who already knows all about gender audits. And why would someone read that article? What is interesting about the results? And what is relevant for the reader?

Example b. talks about TIE-ENERGIA. Most people won't know what that is. And it doesn't grab the attention of the reader.

Example c. however is much more interesting. While you might be able to come up with something even better, this option says something about the contents of the article, it doesn't use jargon, it sounds quite ambitious... hmmm 'I wonder what that is all about'?

4. **Opening Paragraph:** Almost as critical as the headline in grabbing attention, the opening paragraph must include the hook; this is the one element that will compel journalists and readers to keep reading, and thus this is where you must emphasize why the story is relevant, interesting, and newsworthy. In addition to containing the hook, the opening paragraph must also explain the who, what, when, where, why, and how, summarizing the press release and the details which will follow in the remaining paragraphs.

Regarding the format of this paragraph, it should be begin with the date and city of origin; the paragraph should also be double-spaced.

5. **The Body:** The body of the press release should explain the details, including why the reader should care, who else should care, the implications, information about related activities, etc. The body should be where quotes are placed and the 'human interest' element included. As with the opening paragraph, the body should be double-spaced.

While there certainly is an inclination for people in energy to think that lots of statistics and data is fascinating, this is a sure way to turn off a non-energy audience. Don't try to say everything... choose the one or two most interesting issues, and write about them. If there is a lot more, tell people where they can find more information, but *don't try to describe everything*. If you do, people simply won't read it!

6. Closing paragraph: This paragraph is boilerplate language that should never change from one press release to the next. It should contain information about Gender Finally Has its Say in Energy Policy and Practice in Africa

ALL press releases, reports, articles, etc from the TIE-Energia project should have the following boilerplate material (please copy and paste). Take special care to ensure that web page or email addresses are given as one coherent line (not split between two lines which is confusing):

TIE-ENERGIA builds on the existing network, ENERGIA-Africa, which is a regional network on energy and gender and is part of ENERGIA, the *International Network on Energy, Gender and Sustainable Energy*. The project works in 12 countries in Africa and continues until June 2007 with support of the European Union's COOPENER programme and co-funding from SIDA. For more information and resources on TIE-ENERGIA and ENERGIA please visit the website or contact the African Regional Co-ordinator, ENERGIA Africa Gender and Energy Network.

Email: co-ordinator@energia-africa.org

Web: www.energia-africa.org

The following logo and disclaimer MUST also be added to all press releases and other publications under the TIE-ENERGIA Project.

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7. Finishing & Other Formatting Concerns: Immediately centred underneath the closing, or 'boilerplate', paragraph should be ###. These three # symbols signify the end of a press release. Below the ###s, include a sentence which lists the name of a contact person, along with the individual's phone and e-mail address. This should be preceded by a statement such as: 'For more information, or to schedule an interview, please contact <<Name>> at <<Phone>> or <<E-mail>>.

If the press release exceeds one page, the second page should contain, in the upper right hand corner, the words 'Page Two'.

Never exceed two pages and always use a font that is clear and easy to read (*i.e.*, Times New Roman, Arial).

As stated above, the opening paragraph, the body, and the closing paragraph should all be double-spaced.

EXAMPLE PRESS RELEASE



PRESS RELEASE

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IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Gender Finally Has its Say in Energy Policy and Practice in Africa

February 17, 2006, London: Although just over one years since it's initiation, TIE-ENERGIA has achieved great strides in removing one of the major roadblocks to the successful implementation of policies and projects seeking to increase access to improved energy across Africa - the complete disregard of the gender aspects of energy in policy, planning and practice.

This achievement is a result of TIE-ENERGIA's, or "Turning Information into Empowerment: Strengthening Gender and Energy Networking in Africa", straightforward, yet groundbreaking, approach - direct education of the energy policy-makers and practitioners themselves on how to integrate gender into energy. To do so, twelve national workshops attended by a select group of development practitioners are being conducted, in addition to the implementation, in three countries, of gender audits which will identify gender gaps in energy-poverty policies.

With the process and methodologies developed as part of this project all being adaptable to other countries, activities such as the dissemination of training packages and the creation and maintenance of a knowledge repository are crucial to ensuring not only that the integration of gender into energy issues across all of Africa becomes

second-nature, but that such methods are constantly being updated given the experiences and outcomes of others. The importance of this point is underscored by the impressive results already emerging from the very initial stages of capacity-building – just one of the three country-level gender audits is underway while just one of the three workshops in which the trainers of the national workshops themselves are trained is complete.

As one workshop participant, Francis Songela of the Tanzania Traditional Energy Development Organization (TaTEDO) relates, ‘Before, gender was hidden. People were talking about gender and the need to consider it, but no one knew how to approach it.’

Now no longer the case, Mr. Songela is already putting to use his newly acquired knowledge by both integrating gender into TaTEDO’s upcoming energy projects and by planning a workshop for those within TaTEDO, this in addition to the Tanzanian workshop he is planning for March.

Indeed, such an outcome has been the rule, and with the bulk of capacity building yet to come, the long-term impacts are likely to be deeply felt across Africa. As Lydia Muchiri of Practical Action - Eastern Africa relates, ‘the fact that I can now pick up the phone and call colleagues [across Africa] to discuss mainstreaming gender into energy is very gratifying to me’.

Thus, to ensure that such benefits are not limited to the participants alone nor static, Eco Ltd., as the partner responsible for the dissemination and knowledge repository component of the project, is catalysing change from project results by building the capacities of project partners in communicating project results so that projects are not just events that happen till end of project period, but are processes of desirable and sustainable change. Eco is also responsible for establishing and

managing the TIE-ENERGIA website - www.energia-africa.org. By the end of the project, Eco Ltd and its TIE-ENERGIA partners, which include ENERGIA and ITDG-EA, will have proactively informed 180 African change makers on energy and gender issues. Eco will also act as a peer reviewer for materials produced under the programme.

TIE-ENERGIA builds on the existing network, ENERGIA-Africa, which is a regional network on energy and gender and is part of ENERGIA, the *International Network on Energy, Gender and Sustainable Energy*. The project works in 12 countries in Africa and continues until June 2007 with support of the European Union's COOPENER programme and co-funding from SIDA. For more information and resources on TIE-ENERGIA and ENERGIA please visit the website or contact the African Regional Co-ordinator, ENERGIA Africa Gender and Energy Network.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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TEMPLATE FOR YOUR OWN PRESS RELEASES



PRESS RELEASE

[your name][organisation]

[contact details]

Your logo
here

[IMMEDIATE RELEASE] or [EMBARGOED UNTIL <TIME> <DATE>]

[headline]

[date, city]: [opening paragraph]

[press release body]

[concluding paragraph – do not change] TIE-ENERGIA builds on the existing network, ENERGIA-Africa, which is a regional network on energy and gender and is part of ENERGIA, the *International Network on Energy, Gender and Sustainable Energy*. The project works in 12 countries in Africa and continues until June 2007 with support of the European Union's COOPENER programme and co-funding from SIDA. For more information and resources on TIE-ENERGIA and ENERGIA please visit the website or contact the African Regional Co-ordinator, ENERGIA Africa Gender and Energy Network.

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[your contact details]