

CASE STUDY 5

Selecting advocacy tactics and creating advocacy messages: Mexico Salud-Hable Coalition and its #HealthyVote campaign

Background

Seizing the opportunity of simultaneous national and Mexico City elections in July 2018, the Mexico Salud-Hable Coalition launched a campaign to raise the profile of NCDs and hold candidates accountable for NCD commitments in their election manifestos, which despite escalating rates of NCDs, were weak on NCD prevention and control policies. The alliance mobilised public interest through an online platform in which they publicised candidate positions on NCDs. They also approached candidates with a civil society agenda for action on NCDs (Healthy Agenda or Salud-Hable Agenda) for endorsement in their manifestos. This campaign led to increased public and political acknowledgement of NCDs, including the first ever inclusion of health as a topic in the presidential debates, and UN recognition for its impact on NCD prevention and control. This work was supported by NCD Alliance, via its Advocacy Institute Accelerator Programme (2017-2019).

Approach

In April 2018, Mexico Salud-Hable launched the [#VotoSaludable online platform](#), consisting of a dedicated website, Facebook page, Twitter, and YouTube channel at a press event. The launch was accompanied by an intensive social media campaign, questioning candidates about their NCD proposals, and inviting them to endorse the Salud-Hable Agenda. The initial social media messages carried a hook to attract the public to the platforms, followed by action-oriented messages on key NCD facts, policy issues and demands using attractive infographics. The alliance called on candidates to publicise their proposals addressing NCDs, and then monitored, verified, and published the statements and manifestos of all candidates on the platform to inform citizens about candidate positions on NCDs.

Some of the innovative tactics used by the alliance include:

- Replacing traditional in-person public discussion forums with candidates with a digital campaign to allow a greater reach for messages to the public and candidates.
- Using a digital platform to monitor candidates' proposals on NCDs.
- Using Twitter hashtags creatively to gain public and political attention, tagging candidates in social media posts and adding links to the campaign site to draw attention to the Salud-Hable Agenda.
- Delivering copies of the Salud-Hable Agenda with personalised letters containing the logos of more than 50 supporting organisations directly to candidates' campaign offices and seeking meetings with the candidates.
- Taking photos during visits to campaign offices and disseminating them with short press releases, and encouraging candidates to share them in their press briefings.
- Holding press conferences using different spokespeople representing a range of sectors and disease groups to appeal to different audiences (researchers, health professionals, CSOs working on different NCDs, people living with NCDs and their primary caregivers, young people, social activists, etc.).
- Tailoring messages to candidates to include information about the economic as well as the health benefits of addressing NCDs.
- Encouraging voter participation through buttons on the platform launching pre-set tweets to candidates seeking clarity on their health and NCD agenda, as well as calls for public support of the NCD policy demands.

Recommendations

Mexico Salud-Hable recommends the following when tailoring messages to different audiences and selecting appropriate tactics:

- Encourage the active participation of a wide range of stakeholders in the design, organisation and implementation of the campaign and its messages, and invite them to participate in specific tactics.
- Design messages that appeal to a broad base of support, for example, point out that candidates tend to ignore health issues because they are not politically expedient.
- Provide training workshops for new spokespeople to diversify the messengers, and identify real, credible, and eloquent representatives of different sectors.
- If faced with limited resources, effective campaign tactics can be carried out on the street to prompt media coverage, such as through demonstrations in front of political party headquarters, at campaign offices or outside of media buildings.
- Use popular characters, mascots or musical groups to draw attention to your activities and to get the general public and the media interested and engaged.
- Consider using a digital campaign based on election cycles to raise the profile of any NCD concerns directly with the electorate and candidates.