



the advertisers' voice...

Brand Name

Reprieve / Foundation for Fundamental Rights

Campaign Title

Not A Bug Splat

Product / Service Type

Drone strikes collateral damage awareness

Agency

BBDO Pakistan

Category Scenario:

Drone strikes in Pakistan have killed an estimated 3500+ people, a disturbing percentage of which have been innocent civilians, including more than 200 children (Source: Bureau of Investigative Journalism). The Foundation for Fundamental Rights has been working to raise awareness of this crisis. Our task: to create something that would be noticed, especially by the drone operators themselves.

Strategic/Communication challenges of the Campaign:

The situation is dire: more than 200 children have become collateral damage due to drone attacks in Pakistan (Source: Bureau of Investigative Journalism). Despite frequent protests in Pakistan, not much news of this makes it out of the country. We needed a massive awareness campaign that would bring this news to as many people as possible around the world and help FFR in their fight for human rights. The bigger challenge was not only to create such massive awareness of this human rights violation but to do so with a nonexistent budget.

Campaign objectives and the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) against the objectives:

The goal was twofold: not only did we want to create massive global awareness of the drones crisis in Pakistan that would create pressure on policy makers, but also wanted to make a direct and emotional appeal to a drone pilot that these are not faceless tiny dots, but human beings. We needed to create something that would reduce the distance between the predator and the victim, in order to create a visual dialogue between them, which would possibly lead to empathy. Our measure for the campaign was to see how many people we could reach and create awareness with for the campaign and hopefully create an outcry of this human rights violation. We also wanted to create an impact on drone operators and policy makers to cause an attitudinal change towards the drone program and see its negative impact.

Target audience for the campaign:

There were three target audiences. Firstly we wanted to reach out directly to the drone operators. We knew that the idea of reaching out to a drone pilot was very powerful in itself, and would strike a note with our secondary target audience: masses around the world. This would in turn create pressure on our tertiary audience, the policy makers, regarding this crisis.

Insight that led to the big idea:

The insight was very powerful: we decided to highlight the fact that drone operators routinely describe their casualties as 'Bug Splats' (Source: George Monbiot/The Guardian), since a human being appears as a tiny dot viewed from far above and gives the sense of an insect being crushed.

Big Idea of the campaign:

We printed an affected child's portrait large enough to be seen as a face by a drone camera, showing the operator that we are #NotABugSplat.

Bringing the big idea to life:

Our strategy was to not only address pilots directly and create dialogue, but also raise awareness globally of this ignored human-rights issue. A large-scale portrait (90 feet by 60 feet) of an affected child was laid on the ground facing up in the heavily bombed area of NorthWestern Pakistan, so a drone camera could capture and transmit it to an operator's screen. It was a very unique way to use a BTL activation to engage and create a dialogue with our audience. The poster was also meant to be captured by satellites to become a permanent part of the landscape on mapping sites. To raise awareness, the campaign - part of French artist JR's Inside Out movement - was put online on an informational website (www.notabugsplat.com) which would be open to anyone - including the press, and to highlight the campaign with a hashtag that not only described our campaign, but also delivered a powerful message: #NotABugSplat. Not only did we want to create massive global awareness of the drones crisis in Pakistan that would create pressure on policy makers, but we also wanted to make a direct and emotional appeal to a drone pilot that these are not faceless tiny dots, but human beings. Imagine the reaction of a pilot when on their screen, it's not a bug but a giant face of a child staring back at them from the ground, engaging them directly. The UK Guardian described it best: 'It has the power to startle...and perhaps even render (the pilot) incapable of using his weapon afterwards.'

Bringing idea to life (Communication touch points):

BTL, Events, Interactive / Digital / Mobile, Outdoor, Public Relations

Campaign Results:

In terms of global recognition, this became the biggest campaign to ever come out of Pakistan. The campaign went viral overnight, making its way into the global news-sphere rapidly. In a polarized and dehumanized environment, in which not much news about drone strikes made it out to the global public, we managed to register over 3.5 billion impressions in the news and 62+ million impressions on Twitter, amounting to a staggering \$182+ million in earned media. And all for a budget that was under \$1500. Our campaign was tweeted about by members of National Assembly of Pakistan, who raised the concern of drone strikes with the International Court of Justice. Rights activists in USA have protested at drone training facilities using our image. The girl in the picture has become the poster image for anti-drone protests everywhere: the Tate UK has included the campaign in their learning program, amongst other museums displaying the work, while protestors in Yemen are planning to replicate the idea there. The image even became part of internet memes as the weapon of choice for anti-drone messages. Strikingly, the latest US Government Accountability report indicates that all the negative publicity is affecting pilot morale. The UK Guardian described our work best: "It has the power to startle... and perhaps even render (the pilot) incapable of using his weapon afterwards." Even an ex-drone sensor pilot gave a statement confirming the effectiveness of this campaign.

The pressure created by the hype against collateral damage caused by drone strikes has caused a shift in the policy to now have stricter guidelines that prohibit drone strikes unless there's a near certainty civilians won't be harmed. Strikes have lessened, and the total number of civilians and children killed by drones since this work was put up last year - according to the Bureau of Investigative Journalism – has been brought down to almost zero.