

East Africa A photo of a dead child

How is the photo of a dead refugee child on a Turkish beach connected to a group of African employers' advocacy officers on a three day training in Nairobi, September 2018? The answer is hidden in the underlying trends in communication that change the tone of voice, the format and the strategy of modern business agendas.

The child, or rather it's dead body, made the frontpages of papers, websites, tv-channels and other media worldwide during the European refugee crisis of 2015. Europe was facing an influx of people fleeing the Syrian war, the rule of Isis in Northern Iraq or the dismal economic circumstances in their African home countries. The European Union was the promised land, but Europe did not want to cope with the seemingly unending stream of desperate people.

Until that photo. Public opinion swung from one minute to the other, politicians had to swing along.

In the Nairobi training room the usual ooh's and aah's sounded when the photo was shown, underlining the strong effect that visuals can have. The growing importance of visuals – photo's graphics, drawings – in communication is one of the trends DECP experts Arnout de Koster and Jannes van der Velde demonstrated during the 3-day DECP-training 'The making of a business agenda'.

The DECP experts informed the participants, all with experience in the field of advocacy, about the latest developments in policy making, advocacy and lobbying. The trainees were introduced in the more than 20 steps that together form a systematic approach to developing a business agenda.

The formats of business agenda's, one of the most important tools of a business members' organisation in which it makes clear what should be done to improve a business climate, is changing because of the effects the technological revolution has on the way people communicate and the way they process information, De Koster and Van der Velde claimed. Facebook, Twitter, Netflix – pictures are more and more replacing words.

Business members organisations have a lot of data to share. Traditionally those are brought across in words and tables. But putting the same information into a graph may be a more effective way to pass the message across. Graphs speak, so to say. Thus tapping into the trends in communication new business agenda's across Africa will have a more direct approach, be more brief, more colourful and have more eye catching graphs than ever before. And they will be more convincing.

Note: the photo of the dead child on the beach can be found on the internet using 'dead child refugee beach'.