



CARIBBEAN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES (CVC) COALITION COMMUNICATIONS TOOLKIT

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CARIBBEAN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES (CVC) is a coalition of community leaders and non-governmental agencies providing services directly to and on behalf of Caribbean populations who are especially vulnerable to HIV infection or often forgotten in access to treatment and healthcare programmes.

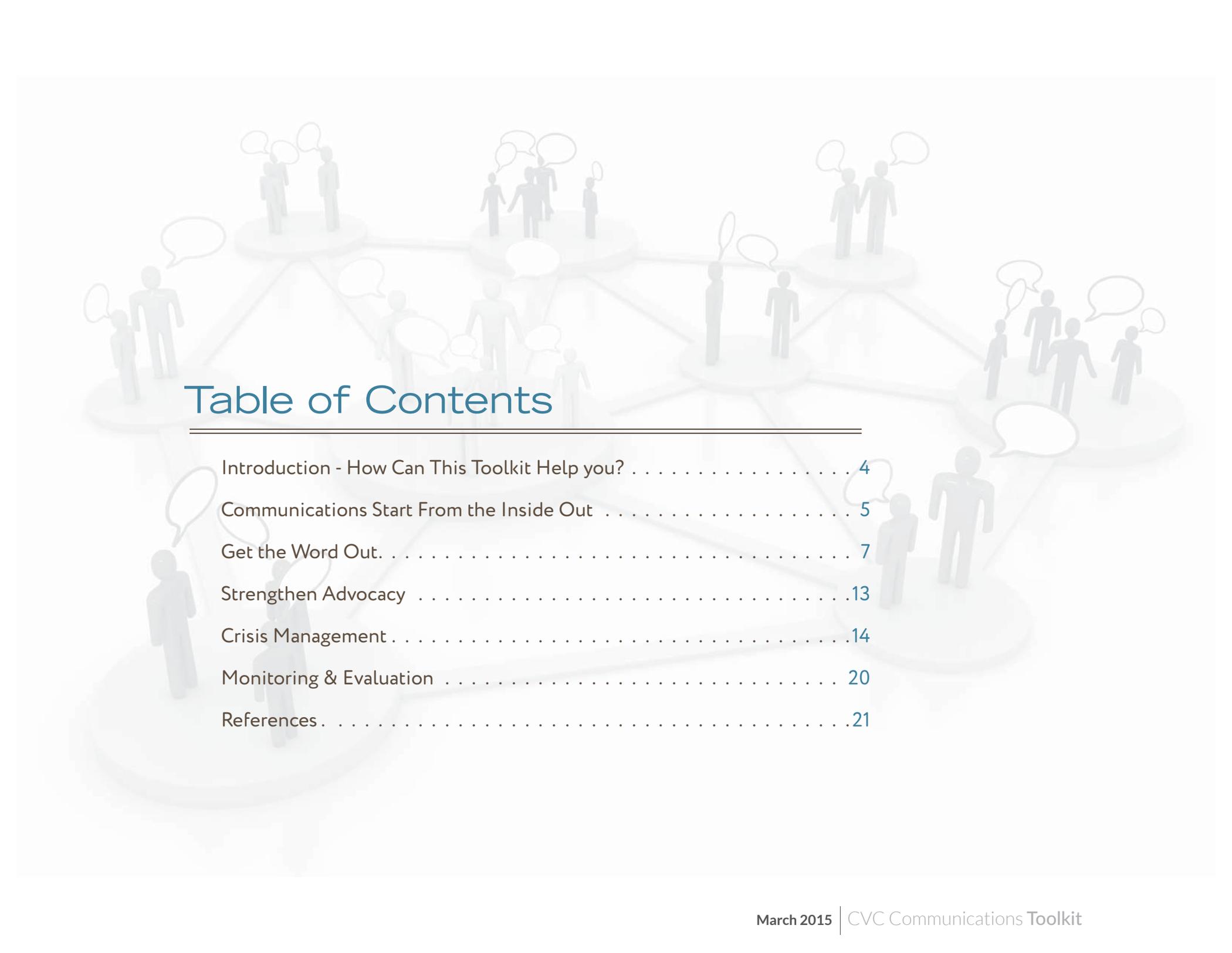


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01 Introduction

How Can This Toolkit Help You?

Communications is a way of thinking and planning as much as a doing process

This Toolkit is offered as a **guide** to improve our ability to tell our organisational stories well, build or strengthen internal and external relationships, win allies, and build and maintain a strong image as experts in the field of HIV.

As responders and advocates for health for all, within a human rights framework, we very often forget or feel we don't have time to communicate, except in a limited way.

But, communication is essential for our effectiveness and organisational growth. It is a way of **thinking and planning** as well as a **doing** process.

This toolkit can help to guide communication efforts at two levels.

1. **Strategic communications** - the deliberate use of existing and new channels of communication to **highlight** and **influence public awareness and understanding**; **influence policy** and to **promote** the vision of a Caribbean free of stigma and



discrimination and where all groups have their rights to health and human dignity respected.

2. **Promotional/ practical communications** – using various means including new and traditional media to inform, educate, mobilize support and share knowledge.

The toolkit will be helpful to you as you plan projects, take steps to bring your issues to public notice, strategize for getting the attention of key individuals and groups AND in being careful to avoid crisis.

You will find guidance on **crisis communications** – with strategies to protect or defend your organisation's reputation and reduce negative perceptions by stakeholders.



02 Communications Start from the Inside Out

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS START FROM WITHIN!

With the help of this communications toolkit your organisation will be better able to achieve the following key objectives/functions.



Internal communication is the glue that holds an organization together. Yet, when we think of communications, we often think 'external'. What happens within your organisation is just as important. Internal communications is more than information sharing. It includes the climate within the organisation that is based on management styles, team relationships, whether there are clear arrangements for managing and sharing information among other things.

Make your organisation communications friendly. You can do this by:

BUILDING TEAM SPIRIT

- ◆ Pay attention to team members, don't take each other for granted.
- ◆ Recognize effort, those who go the extra mile, those showing improvement, the strengths and/or special qualities of each team member.
- ◆ Create a humane work atmosphere and environment – be considerate of each other's feelings, challenges and needs. Be supportive. Collaborate.
- ◆ Create 'team time' not just for staff meetings to discuss the business of the organisation but also for creating an opportunity to air concerns, make suggestions etc. and for socializing.



Here are some activities that can help.

<http://www.huddle.com/blog/team-building-activities/>

And for more check out :

<http://www.wilderdom.com/games/InitiativeGames.html>



KEEPING EACH OTHER IN THE KNOW VIA:

- ◆ Office bulletin boards (e-bulletins or physical)
- ◆ E-messages
- ◆ Scheduled virtual or physical meetings
- ◆ Travelling officers report on return/at staff meetings
- ◆ Timely sharing of Board and other policy decisions
- ◆ Regularly scheduled “Ideas exchange” meetings - share ideas for the organisation and/or projects, share information, trouble shoot and problem solve

KEEPING GOOD RECORDS IN A PLACE EVERYONE KNOWS OF:

- ◆ Organize the work space no matter how small
- ◆ Keep a filing system and let team members know how it is structured – what is where, who can/should access what, what information is to be kept in a central place
- ◆ Rotate the job of chief documenter – someone assigned to :
 - do newspaper clippings of reports relevant to or about your organisation and its work
 - make sure photos, videos and/or recordings are made of the organisation’s key events etc.
 - ensure copies are kept of anything the organisation prints (brochures, flyers, posters, reports etc.



03 Get the Word Out



TOOT YOUR OWN HORN!!

There are things you can do to build your group's image as a **dynamic**, **credible** and **visible** organisation of experts in the HIV response, in advancing **Human Rights and Health** and in the empowerment of key Caribbean populations.

- **Document your work** – pictures, videos, success stories, work methods (how you do what you do) etc.
- **Display your work** - look for opportunities to showcase what your organisation is doing. Your pictures, videos, stories, brochures etc can be used for this purpose.
- **Publicize** your work once appropriate (mindful of confidentiality issues) – publicize to internal stakeholders (staff, clients, members, Board, funders) and to external stakeholders (wider CVC network, policy makers if appropriate etc.) Use various media to build awareness.

START WITH WHAT IS CLOSEST TO HAND!!

- Mobile telephones are useful for information sharing via calls, texts, tweets, emails; taking pictures and videos
- Web based communications – Email, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Blogs etc.
- Community radio, cable, newspapers and newsletters
- Events – stage and/or participate in relevant events at which you can mount displays, hand out fliers, brochures, posters etc.



TOOLS & RESOURCES

CHECKLIST FOR COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING

- ✓ There is a clear organisational position/view on the issue
- ✓ Target groups/audiences and stakeholders are identified
- ✓ Communication targets are established (for example, x number of posters, x number of page views or video hits etc.)
- ✓ The best strategy/ies (eg.campaign, publication, public forum etc.) and potential partners have been decided.
- ✓ The key messages to be communicated have been identified.
- ✓ The best/most effective means of communication have been decided– print or electronic media, social media, word of mouth, face-face outreach or meetings etc.
- ✓ The activities, responsibilities (task and person/s) timelines, expected results/milestones and other relevant aspects of the plan have been decided
- ✓ A budget has been determined.
- ✓ There is a plan for Monitoring and evaluation (what, when, how etc.)

Source: Convention on Biological Diversity; Communication, Education and Public Awareness (CEPA) Toolkit; Section 4 - How to Plan Communication Strategically

http://www.cepatoolkit.org/html/resources/34/34404DBC-7BBF-48CA-BFCA-1F5A3BBD906D/Section%204%20_final.pdf

CHECKLIST FOR ESTABLISHING GOOD MEDIA CONTACTS

1. **Identify your audience.** Are you targeting the general public? Policy makers? A local audience? A national audience? An international audience? An issue-friendly audience? An issue-hostile audience?
2. **Research media outlets that cater to your audience.** Make sure that the media outlet you want to contact is relevant to your target audience.
3. **Research who the appropriate journalist contact(s) will be.** Take a look on the web site of your target media outlet and find out if they have already written about your issue. If so, which journalist(s) have written the article(s)? Make a note of these individuals.
4. **Contact the media outlet.** Use public information to contact your target media outlet. Ask to speak either with any journalists you have identified who have already written on your issue, or ask to speak to an assignment editor who can help direct your call.
5. **Be polite.** Journalists may sound rushed on the phone; it is probably because they are on a tight deadline. Be courteous; ask if the journalist or editor has a couple of minutes to talk about your issue.
6. **Explain the purpose of your call.** You will only have one or two minutes to make your pitch, so be prepared to concisely state who you are, which organization you work with and why you are interested in being in contact with the journalist at hand.
7. **Take notes.** Be prepared to jot down some notes on the basis of your phone conversation. Chances are, after a few of these calls you may forget who said what. Keep your notes organized in a file so that you can refer back to your new media contacts when you need them later.
8. **Lay the foundations for future contact with the journalist.** Ask if the journalist would be interested in receiving information from your organization and follow up with a thank you email.

TIPS ON WRITING FOR PUBLICATION

Articles, Newsletters, Press Releases, Letters to the Editor etc.

- ✍ Before you start writing a draft, think about these questions:
- ✍ Why am I writing this?
- ✍ What do I want to achieve?
- ✍ Who am I writing for?
- ✍ What do I want people to think, feel, know or do after they have read it?
- ✍ What would be the best form for it to be written in? An article, pamphlet, poster.

People write for different purposes, for example, to:

- Advocate
- Agitate
- Educate
- Entertain
- Train
- Debate
- Inform
- Lobby
- Mobilize
- Persuade
- Strategize
- Raise awareness
- Win an argument
- Evoke certain emotions
- Promote particular action



When preparing to write determine:

- The reason for writing the story, newsletter etc
- The audience
- The type of publication that will be used – print, electronic media, social media
- The key message/s
- What if any useful data may be needed

Audience Matters : Knowing whom you are going to write for helps you to decide:

- What to keep in
- What to leave out
- What style to write in
- What language to write in
- What tone to write in
- What form to produce your writing in (e.g. writing for policy makers vs for project beneficiaries)

Remember:

- Keep It Simple
- You are the expert/your point of view is important
- Be passionate but not hysterical
- Use examples, personalize your message
- Avoid jargon and cliches
- Have a 'hook' – a key fact, statement, quote etc that gets attention and leads people to read what is written

DOING EFFECTIVE MEDIA INTERVIEWS

BE PREPARED



- ☑ Have key messages and talking points ready
- ☑ Know which media you will be on
- ☑ Know the format for your interview – one on one, panel, etc
- ☑ Anticipate questions you may be asked – ask other colleagues what they think you could be asked
- ☑ Find out about your interviewer – what is his/her view on the topic/s
- ☑ Be aware of misinformation and common misunderstandings about you/your organisation/sector/work and plan for dispelling them
- ☑ Find out who other guests will be if any
- ☑ Ask if there will be a call-in portion of the interview (an interesting but unpredictable format)
- ☑ Think of colleagues who could help emphasize your angle on the story who you could suggest be invited to speak as well.
- ☑ Know the interview format before-hand, will it be live, recorded, by telephone etc.

If you can, avoid spontaneous interviews. You can give the journalist a time to contact you for your comments. If you are not very well informed about the issue at hand then decline to comment but offer to speak with appropriate colleagues for a possible interview. If you are very informed about the matter, and feel comfortable, then you can choose to respond then or a later agreed time.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Remember that you're the expert
- Pace yourself – don't speak too quickly or too slowly.
- Keep responses short
- Don't ignore questions – if you don't know say so etc.
- Look/listen for bias – this way you avoid traps
- Stay calm
- Use real world examples to make your points
- Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know"
- Don't be afraid to end the interview politely.
- Aim for simple, punchy messages
- Avoid jargon

AND REMEMBER TO...

Stay on message - during the Interview keep the conversation on your message by using bridging statements such as:



"...that's an interesting question, but I think the real issue here is..."

"...what's important is..."

"...the point is..."

"...what I really want to focus on is..."

"...that question is important but doesn't really get to the heart of the matter ..."

POINTERS FOR PRESS RELEASES

Make sure your story is newsworthy

Before you write a press release, think about the things you like to read, watch and listen to in the media - most of us are generally interested in things we haven't heard before, find surprising or help solve our problems. So before drafting your press release, ask yourself:

1. What is "new" in my story?
2. Is there anything unusual or unexpected about it?
3. Would this be of interest to anyone outside my network?
4. Will anyone actually care? If the answer is "no", hold off on that press release until you've got a better story.

If you're not sure whether your story is newsworthy, read, watch or listen to the publications or programmes you'd like coverage in to get a feel for the kind of stories they typically cover.

WRITING A GOOD PRESS RELEASE:

Have strong, catchy headlines - that convey what your story is mainly about. Many people write the body of the release then come up with a strong headline that summarises the key message/point being conveyed

Get the main point/message in the first line - if your first sentence doesn't grab the journalists they may not read any further - which is why you need to get the „top line“ (the most important bit) of your story right at the beginning of your release. Your first line should be a summary of the story (in no more than around 15-20 words) and read like the opening of a news story.

Get as many of the „five Ws“ (who, what, where, why and when) in the opening line of news stories. A trick is to imagine your story is going to be covered on a TV or radio programme. A presenter generally has around 5-6 seconds to introduce each item eg „And coming up next ... a leading human rights group says.... If your story was going to be featured on the radio today, how would the presenter introduce it? The

answer should give you the top line of your story.

Be concise - The ideal length of a press release is about 300 to 400 words That's just three or four short paragraphs and a couple of of quotes. Don't be tempted to include background information about your company in the opening paragraph. This - along with any other additional information - can always be included in a „notes to editors“ section at the end.

Use quotes to provide insight, not information - Including quotes from people in your organisation can be helpful but avoid using quotes to provide information, for example, „last year, we employed 100 staff in 12 different regions.“

Quotes should be used to provide insight and opinion and sound like a real person said them. They shouldn't be full of jargon or technical language.



04 Strengthen Advocacy

WHAT IS ADVOCACY?



The nature of what you do is “**advocacy**”. Advocacy in general refers to taking action - speaking and acting on behalf of yourself or others. There can be more to the concept than that however.

A person or group can implement:

Self-advocacy: taking action to represent and advance your own interests;

Peer advocacy: taking action to represent the rights and interests of someone other than yourself who shares similar characteristics as you do;

Systems advocacy: taking action to influence social, political, and economic systems to bring about change for groups of people; and

Legal advocacy: taking action to use attorneys and the legal or administrative systems to establish or protect legal rights.

The bottom line however is that whatever the focus or nature of the advocacy that your organisation is doing, it will be most effective if you take a systematic and planned approach.

Here are some tools and resources to help.

ADVOCACY RESOURCES

Straight to the Point: Assessing the Political Environment for Advocacy.

See: <http://www.pathfinder.org/publications-tools/pdfs/Straight-to-the-Point-Assessing-the-Political-Environment-for-Advocacy.pdf>

Straight to the Point: Mapping an Advocacy Strategy.

See: <http://www.pathfinder.org/publications-tools/pdfs/Straight-to-the-Point-Assessing-the-Political-Environment-for-Advocacy.pdf>

Straight to the Point: Setting Advocacy Priorities.

See: <http://www.pathfinder.org/publications-tools/Straight-to-the-Point-Setting-Advocacy-Priorities.html>

05 Crisis Management

Crises are a potential risk/hazard of advocacy organisations. Like most hazards, crises can be prevented. When not properly handled, a crisis can seriously damage the organisation's reputation and ability to function. Such damage impacts not only the organisation but also its partners and stakeholders.

A Crisis management plan allows the organisation to anticipate the potential for crisis and to be ready to respond effectively.

A crisis moment is a teachable moment. The wise organisation learns a tremendous amount.

Ensure your organisation has a good and effective plan in place to anticipate, manage, recover and learn from any crises which may arise.



ASSESSING RISK

When planning a project, activity or advocacy action it is important to not only think of the potential benefits. You must also think about the potential risks. Risks may be particularly high when the organisation is taking a strong stand on an issue or about an issue that there are sharp differences in public opinion.

- ✓ Identify possible risks arising from proposed action (or lack of action)
- ✓ Assess the potential benefit of the proposed action
- ✓ Identify who will/could be harmed
- ✓ Assess level of risk of harm (to the organisation or another related party) and the possible consequences
- ✓ Consider measures you can take to reduce the severity of risk
- ✓ Assess the level of risk remaining after measures have been taken to reduce the severity of risk
- ✓ Decide if the benefit outweighs the risk

THINGS AT RISK	NATURE OF RISK	CONTINGENCY PLAN
Personnel & Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be targeted or subject to violence as a result of speaking out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection and security measures
Your organisation's programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be constrained or even closed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure programme staff and partners are aware of reasons for advocacy and consulted on decisions and messages as appropriate
Relationship with Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be strained May be broken off May cause potential ally to lose face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use lobbying and negotiation first. Make sure targets know why you have taken action. Ensure power analysis is accurate
Relationship with others e.g. other NGOs, UN agencies and professional bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May cause allies to lose face if advocacy criticises work of other organisations. May offend allies if research with others is published without consultation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure evidence and quality of research is sound. Ensure good quality research. Check the reputation of allies and/or coalition members Scrutinise sources of money.
Your organisation's reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional reputation may suffer if research is not sound. Association with certain partners may damage relations with others Legitimacy may be undermined if money is received from certain sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure good quality research Check the reputation of allies and/or coalition members Scrutinise sources of money



CRISIS MANAGEMENT & RESPONSE PLAN

Designated crisis communications/reputation management team—including persons from Board, programmes and operations. The team should have decision-making powers, knowledge of the issues, institutional knowledge and have basic training on doing interviews and interacting with the press.

Designated spokespersons - to speak publicly on behalf of the organisation if there is a crisis. Name the person(s) identified as the crisis spokespersons or focal point(s), and backup person(s). The team should have comprehensive training on doing interviews and interacting with the press and need access to high-level decisions and information to most accurately advise on communications tactics and to respond.

Who should be advised not to comment publicly if asked?

Person/s assigned to gather critical data (monitor, collate and analyse media reports/discussions, telephone and on-line enquiries/comments etc.) in the early stages of a crisis—this quickly defines the extent of the problem.



MATERIALS THAT NEED TO BE PRODUCED

- ✓ Talking points on issues, actions taken/to be taken, projects, specific groups' situation etc. (brief, bulleted)
- ✓ Fact Sheet/s
- ✓ Name & Contact Information for designated spokespersons and resource persons
- ✓ List of sympathetic, respected experts in the field to field for interviews

OUTREACH PLAN

* POTENTIAL TARGET AUDIENCES	COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS TO REACH THEM	WHO TO MAKE CONTACT	WHAT TO COMMUNICATE	BY WHEN

* These could include donors, project partners, government officials, other NGOs etc.

KEY RESOURCES

- 📄 A contact list of media outlets – national, regional and international. E-mail, office, and cell numbers of important reporters and editors.
- 📄 A cultivated group of media contacts who can be called on to assist in getting the organisation’s point of view out.
- 📄 Holding statements – based on already known vulnerabilities of the organisation – its goals, projects, partners etc. Prepare general responses in advance. These can be quickly picked up and altered as necessary if a crisis happens.
- 📄 A plan for setting up a crisis communications centre—including for the quick procurement of additional personnel, equipment etc. (e.g. computer equipment, phones, desks, copy machines and so on.)
- 📄 A schedule for regularly briefing all staff, members, partners on essential crisis communications procedures—such as referring all media contacts to the communications focal point.
- 📄 Operations/Administrative staff and systems thoroughly up-to-date and able to provide information to spokespersons at short notice.

SPOKESPEOPLE

1. Anticipate the tough questions and practice answering them.
2. Clarify your objectives, know what you do and do not want to say.
3. Stay focused on your key messages.
4. Acknowledge fault, error, misunderstanding etc. up front. Get the bad news out first. If the organisation is at fault in an institutional crisis, accept responsibility and then immediately explain what it is doing to fix the problem. At the same time, don’t volunteer negative information that people may not already know (eg. “Our Board members were not aware of the action that the staff took”). This can provide media with additional fodder.
5. Acknowledge public sentiments, fear and concern. You may not have to ‘solve’ these feelings, but you do have to listen and recognize that some people are going through them—often that can be enough to diffuse strong emotions. Otherwise, you may come across as inhumane. Acknowledge, clarify, express empathy etc. Don’t hesitate to offer reassurances, but don’t make promises you can’t keep.
6. Be open about facts that you know are true, with consideration for any political or other sensitivities. Do not be dishonest; a cover-up

can destroy the organisation's credibility if the media discovers it later on.

7. Silence and the phrase 'no comment' are often interpreted as a sign of guilt or cover-up. You should respond to all questions, even if you don't answer them fully. Don't hesitate to admit that you don't know something, or are trying to find out more about it. This can help buy time to craft the right response.
8. Don't blame other people, use obscure language, minimize the problem or go off the record. In a crisis there is no 'off the record' information. Anything you say may be used

IN A CRISIS.....DON'T



× **Play Ostrich** – Don't bury your head hoping the crisis will 'blow over'. By the time it does the organisation could be irreparably damaged.

× **Only Start Work on a Potential Crisis Situation after It's Public** – In planning strong advocacy or lobbying

action or in handling a difficult organisational situation assess the risks, anticipate

- × **Rely Solely on Your Reputation to Speak For You** – Reputations are gained and lost in a moment. Don't assume that yours is enough to get you or your organisation through a crisis. Not acting in a timely way can ruin your/your organisation's reputation.
- × **Treat the Media Like the Enemy** – Only your organisations loses from a hostile or antagonistic relationship with the media. In a hostile media environment you have to work doubly hard to be diplomatic, accessible, and forthright without being antagonistic etc. Enlist

the aid of sympathetic journalists.

× **Get Stuck in Reaction Mode Versus Getting Proactive** – By all means

get your own message or

truth out. Don't leave the media or other actors to define you, your

organisation, what your intentions are/were. If you are only reacting

to what others say about your you/organisation you are losing the

cause and coming across as defensive.

× **Use Language Your Audience Doesn't Understand** – avoid jargon and 'insider' language. Avoid highly technical language and being too academic in your responses.

× **Leave Your Stakeholders Out of the Loop** – Much of the response to a crisis takes place in person-person dialogue. Your stakeholders are likely to be asked questions. Don't let the press be the primary source of information for them. If people are not well informed, they may say or do the wrong things in public. Stakeholders can guide the communications decisions.

× **Assume That Truth Will Triumph Over All** – perceptions can be just as, or even more damaging than truth/facts

× **Address Only Issues and Ignore Feelings** – acknowledging people's feelings, even if you don't agree, helps to take the edge off those feelings and creates rapport to facilitate discussion.

× **Make Only Written Statements** – remain accessible, visible and vocal.

× **Use "Best Guess" Methods of Assessing Damage** – Base your assessment on data that will indicate the actual extent of the challenge/damage/opposition.

Effective communication during a crisis can make all the difference between quickly resolving the situation and it becoming a nightmare.



MUST DO'S IN A CRISIS



- ❑ Immediately convene the crisis management and communications team/s
- ❑ Decide on a set of three to four key messages
- ❑ Communicate the key messages to staff and partners, along with essential information on what is happening and basic guidelines on how to respond. Get their feedback and input. Ensure regular communications/briefings/updates
- ❑ Immediately start gathering information – who (for and against/allies or opposition), what (actions, statements/points made etc.), when, where, why, how (what medium)
- ❑ Draft an initial statement on the organisation's position. Include as a minimum the who, what, when, where, why and how of a situation. Distribute the statement to journalists, donors, partners and government and other decision-making persons and follow up—don't wait for anyone to come to you.
- ❑ Prepare a short briefing paper with essential facts and background details, avoid figures/information that cannot be confirmed.
- ❑ Ensure that all spokesperson's telephone and email contact points are functioning and monitored. Assess communications materials for what you have and what you need.
- ❑ Return media's phone calls promptly; make sure designated spokespersons are available. Be patient and courteous.
- ❑ Avoid opinions, speculation and emotional language in all communication materials.
- ❑ Monitor news reports in order to quickly correct inaccuracies, and keep a log (clippings, audio and video recordings etc.) of responses to journalists and target audiences.

06 Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are key to knowing whether you have achieved what you set out to achieve. Your communications programme should have specific indicators that will guide you in monitoring and evaluating the activities.

TYPES OF INDICATORS

Output Indicators

For example:-

- Number of communication and advocacy materials produced, by type, during the period of the strategy;
- Number of planned events that will have taken place; and,
- Number of beneficiaries to the numerous planned interventions.
- Number of radio or TV spots aired per day/week/month/year
- Number of print publications related to your organisation/issue per day/week/month/year
- Number of materials distributed
- Number of posters placed
- Number of events conducted
- Number of participants

Outcome Indicators:

It is definitely helpful to know how many people visited your website, received your brochure, watched the live stream of your event, or viewed your ad. However, the numbers don't prove that your communications increased awareness, enhanced knowledge, or changed attitudes or behaviors which are usually the ultimate goals or outcomes you are trying to achieve.

Plan to monitor and evaluate your outcomes. You can do this in many ways including surveys, focus groups, interviews, e-mail response forms, and more. The key is to build research methodologies into your plan. Some indicators you can measure include

- Percentage of the target audience who correctly understand and internalize the messages;
- Percentage of the target audience who express positive attitudes and beliefs consistent with the messages and advocacy efforts;
- Percentage of the target audiences who report having taken action or changed their behaviour consistent with the messages and advocacy efforts
- Number of policies, laws and strategies developed and adopted.

Resource for Monitoring & Evaluation

DFID – Monitoring and Evaluating Information and Communication for Development (ICD) Programmes: Guidelines

<http://www.oecd.org/dev/devcom/46388330.pdf>



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