

Crisis Communications

Communications



toolbox INDIA Foundation

Crisis Communication

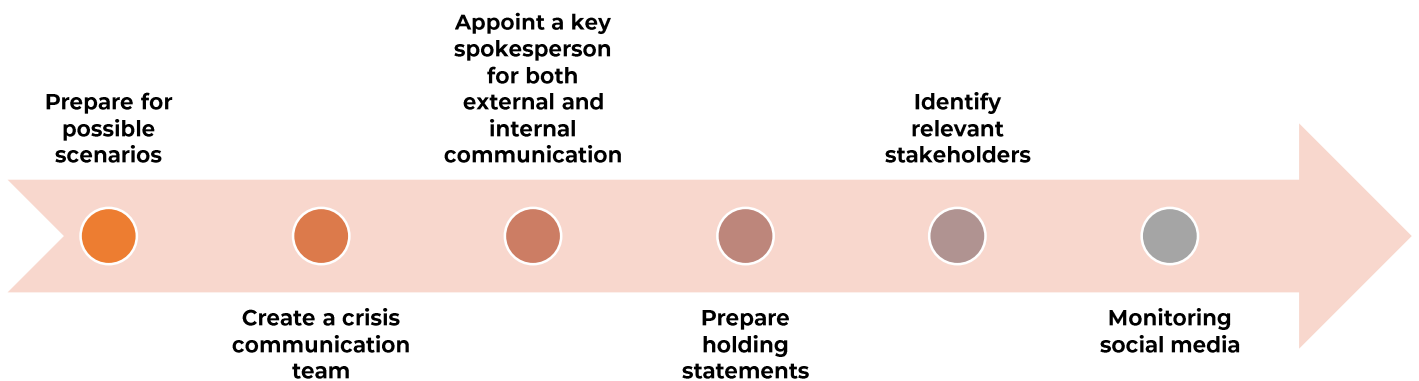
During a crisis, the demand for information increases substantially. Each audience will have a different information need, and you'll want to address these needs effectively. How do you do it? Would you want to decide in that moment who, what, how to communicate? Probably not. On the contrary, you will want to be ready with a plan in place to have the situation under control. Mainly because the way you communicate to your stakeholders and audience in general during those pressing times, will significantly affect your reputation once everything passes.

This section is intended to serve as a crisis communications checklist that you should follow to have your communications staff prepared for a time of crisis. Additionally, it includes a few suggestions on effective emergency messaging. The steps presented might seem excessive or redundant while not being on distress. Nevertheless, it is advisable to comply with them as it could save your organization time and you, mind space when most needed.

What is crisis communications?

Crisis communication refers to the organized interaction of resources like equipment, personnel, and information to avoid or reduce harm. It also includes the coordination of those resources during post-crisis support and recovery.

Crisis communications checklist



- Prepare for possible scenarios

Brainstorm along with your team about worst-case scenarios and prepare responses. Consider two possible scenarios, it “happened only to you” and “it happened to everyone” For example: What if a cyclone demolishes the office building? What if a social worker is murdered while working? What if we run out of funding? In terms of communication, amid the crisis, what would you like the role of your NGO to be?

- Create a crisis communication team

The crisis communication team will be responsible for deciding what messages are distributed externally and internally. Assign roles and responsibilities. Establish who would create factsheets, press materials, social media posts, and give them timeframes for each.

- Appoint a key spokesperson for both external and internal communication.

Select who will be responsible for the communications and establish who shouldn't comment on the situation. Train 2 or 3 spokespeople as this could be a very draining responsibility. Also, because it is more prudent to have a substitute in case either is away or unable to perform.

- Prepare holding statements

Craft messages to be used immediately after a crisis breaks, even before having complete information. It not only gives a sense of being proactive, diligent, and in control, but also establish the communication method and channels where your target audience can expect updates. Some examples of holding statements are the following: “We have implemented our crisis response plan, the safety of our staff and stakeholders is our top priority. Or “We aim to provide further information about this incident on social media at 4 pm.”

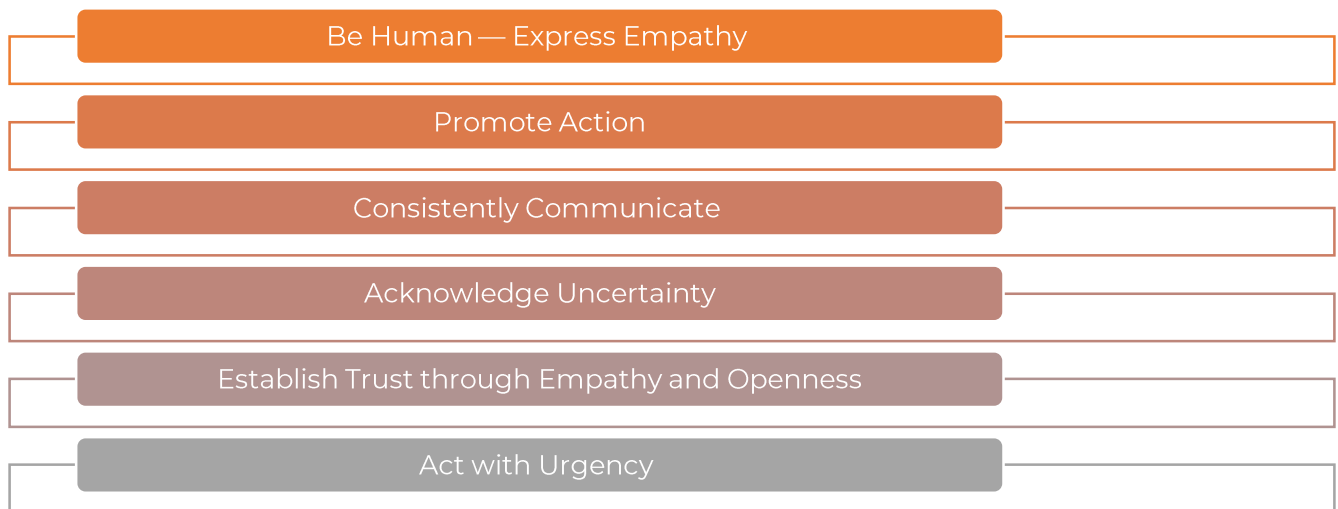
- Identify relevant stakeholders

Keep an emergency list with cell phone numbers and e-mail addresses of the staff and board of directors. Update it quarterly or as often as needed. Additionally, prepare a second list with the telephone numbers and e-mails of relevant stakeholders, as well as emergency services in your area.

- Monitoring social media

Instruct your team on social media monitoring. At moments of crisis, it could provide you relevant insights into the general perceptions of the situation and will allow you to respond in real-time.

Effective emergency messages should:



Further Reading:

Crisis Communication Plan Nonprofit Toolkit by Colorado Nonprofit Association

WHO Strategic Communications Framework by World Health Organization