

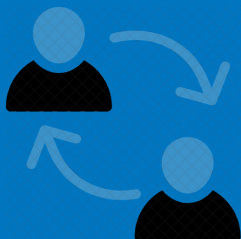


# **GUIDE ON HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLIANT CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS**

**UN HUMAN RIGHTS, MOLDOVA**

## What should be the aim of communicating to the public, the rights holders, during a crisis?

Your aim should be to provide accurate, evidence-based, timely, regular and transparent information at all stages of the crisis or crises. This helps the public to adapt their behavior as required, to participate meaningfully in decisions that may affect them, and to support in identifying gaps that may exist in the state's response.



### WHAT DO VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS NEED?

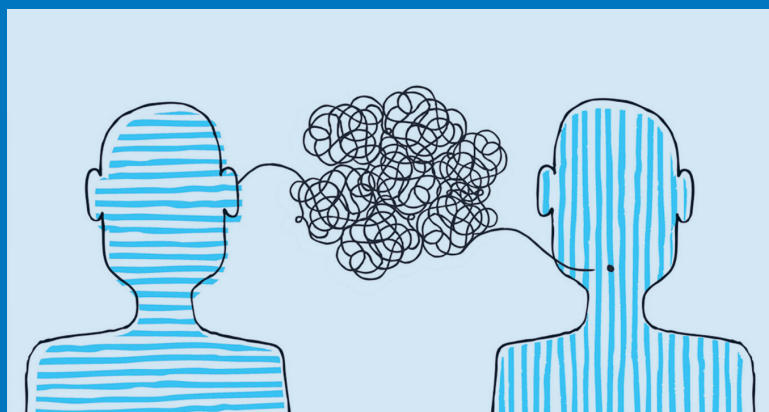


#### The public, the rights holders:

- **Practical information on:**
  - what has been or is being done to prevent the crisis or prevent its worsening;
  - how is the situation being assessed, or evaluated;
  - what services and help can they get such, as support and treatment in case of need;
- Information must **reach everyone**, without exception. This means making information available and accessible in readily understandable formats and languages, including minority languages, and adapting information for people with specific needs including visually- and hearing-impaired, and reaching those with limited or no ability to read or with no internet access;
- Fears should be acknowledged and the public's legitimate concerns should **be respected**;
- The **perspectives, voices and knowledge of women** in outbreak preparedness and response is essential and should be incorporated;
- Any information campaign must be **gender-sensitive**, with a view to empowering women to take adequate prevention measures;
- **Confidentiality** of information provided by or related to rights holders unless informed consent was provided by the rights holder to do otherwise.

#### The communicators:

- As communicators you should be **part of decision-making** to ensure a swift communications response;
- Common messages should be developed and distributed to all in charge of making information public so that the **messages are consistent**;
- You should act quickly to be the **first to inform** the public about the crisis, how it is developing, about prevention, early diagnosis and treatment issues, to ensure that evidence-based information is out there first before rumours and misinformation spread;
- The **ultimate test** for the information that is being supplied to the public is the extent to which it enables individuals to make their own decisions regarding the crisis, based on awareness of the situation and of the ramifications of their decisions.
- Target messages, information and interviewees at a **range of media**, from those at national level, to **local outlets**. Local print media, radio and television can play a key role in conveying information to hard to reach communities, and may have a unique understanding of their local audiences. Local channels often have the ability to communicate in a focused way with a distinct population that is directly affected by the crisis.
- Reach out to **informal community focal points** for the distribution of your messages during the crises. Such informal community focal points in rural areas may be social workers, Roma community mediators, post-officers, or local activists or entrepreneurs; they are usually well known to local public authorities.
- It should be **ascertained** that the messages sent have indeed **reached the public**, including the previously mentioned people with specific needs, such as persons with different types of disabilities (visual and hearing, learning and intellectual disabilities), ethno-linguistic minorities, persons from rural areas, persons with limited ability to read. This can be done by reaching out to local authorities, community contacts and others at local level.
- The principle of confidentiality should be respected: confidential information about individuals should be treated **confidentially** and respectfully. Also, information that is shared for the benefit of the community should be anonymized.



## WHAT SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND WHEN PRODUCING COMMUNICATIONS?

- What is the message I am trying to convey?
- What is the best way to convey the message? Which tools should I use? What platform should I use?
- When and how do I need to update the information?
- What are the sources of information I am using?
- Who is my intended audience, and how do I need to present the information to reach them?
- How will I evaluate the impact of my message?



## AND COMMUNICATIONS AT TIMES OF CRISES SHOULD ALSO BE ABOUT:



### Empowering rights holders

- It is essential to provide **information that is accurate and comprehensive** about the causes and effects of the crisis, and what is being done to mitigate the crisis. That helps to strengthen resilience of the rights holders during and after the crisis;
- It is important to consider the **perceptions, needs and preferences of various groups**. The consideration of the needs of the most vulnerable supports all the other efforts in communicating during crisis;
- Communication should **empower and/or protect the stakeholders** who contribute to overcoming the crisis. This can include specific groups such as medical personnel, young people, etc;
- Ensure **wide access to the information** of the public. Consider the communication means suitable for each of the groups, including groups who have specific needs;
- People have the right to participate in decision-making that affects their lives. Being open and transparent, and **involving those affected in decision-making** is key to ensuring people participate in measures designed to protect their own health and that of the wider population.



### Zero-Tolerance for stigma, stereotypes and discrimination

- A crisis can generate a wave of stigma and discrimination against certain individuals. Public messages have to **push back** against such a trend by making statements on **zero-tolerance for stigma, stereotypes and discrimination**;
- Communication needs to quickly **counter rhetoric that strokes fear**, and has to ensure that communication does not make certain populations more vulnerable to violence and discrimination;
- Take care that you **don't** inadvertently **reinforce the false information or stereotypes**;
- The dissemination of accurate, clear and evidence-based **information** and awareness-raising campaigns are the most effective tools **against discrimination and xenophobia**, which feed misinformation and fear.
- Consider whether it is better to take on fake news head on and risk repeating the false claim or whether it is better to just put out as many clear, accurate messages as you can. That is really important on social media.
- Efficient **public information and education campaigns** should aim to **address stigma and stereotypes**; but as above, think about whether you want to push back or just push on with positive messages. Bust the myth, don't feed the myth
- The focus should be on **messages that are unifying**, and take a positive stance, emphasizing the future and the measures that must be taken, as opposed to a retrospective stance, which focuses on the past accompanied by blaming and pinpointing those allegedly at fault.

### For more information, see:

- **OHCHR's guidance on COVID-19** at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/COVID19Guidance.aspx>
- **"A Crisis Communication Guide for Public Organizations"** at: [http://www.crisiscommunication.fi/criscomscore/files/download/GUIDE\\_for\\_Public\\_Organisations.pdf](http://www.crisiscommunication.fi/criscomscore/files/download/GUIDE_for_Public_Organisations.pdf)