



Guide to communication in contexts of humanitarian aid and peacebuilding



EU Aid Volunteers
We Care, We Act



GUIDE TO COMMUNICATION IN CONTEXTS OF HUMANITARIAN AID AND PEACEBUILDING

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We Care, We Act



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Thanks to every person and entity that make possible our work within the **EU Aid Volunteers** framework. Solidarity among people, organizations and countries is more important than ever.



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1

Information that protects people

Humanitarian crises, be they human-made or natural, affect millions of people around the world each year. The COVID-19 emergency has highlighted the need of using different tools to tackle, in a global and multidisciplinary manner, crises that have arisen in order to manage them effectively. This is also the case with communication.



The role that organisations and volunteers play as regards communication in humanitarian aid contexts and as a source of information is crucial before, during and after an emergency. Conveying the true magnitude of the damage, getting vital information to the people affected, and providing the media and society with information which is accurate, verified and useful, is one of our main functions.

To do so, we need to collaborate with the individuals, communities and organisations with whom we work in the field, as partners in the humanitarian action response and not only as recipients of the information.

The European initiative EU Aid Volunteers, which provides the framework for this guide, brings together volunteers and organisations from different countries around the world in order to provide support for humanitarian aid projects and strengthen the local capacity and resilience of affected communities in humanitarian aid contexts.



Through the project *EU Aid Volunteers: MPDL Deployment of Volunteers for Peacebuilding and Women's Rights*, we have prepared this guide with simple and useful resources to facilitate communication efforts in humanitarian aid contexts for organisations and volunteers. We have updated this document over the course of the project in the face of the COVID-19 emergency, with the aim of:



▶ Providing tools that help communicate vital and accurate information in order to protect people, with special attention to the application of basic principles.



▶ Providing guidelines, resources and ideas for a careful and effective communication for society and the media.



▶ Communicating to mobilise human and economic resources, crucial for a response which is appropriate to the needs of the affected communities.

Over the following pages we provide tools and guidelines to help communicate in humanitarian aid contexts with coordination, efficiency, accuracy, respect and security.



A recommendation:

Read this guide thoroughly.
It contains information that protects people.



2

Communication in complex contexts



Communicating in a humanitarian crisis is not an easy task. On the one hand, people who are working or volunteering in the countries experiencing the crisis have to deal with the situation and its effects themselves. On the other hand, the organisation itself has to manage changes and readjustments in its work. Each day brings communication challenges in the face of an unforeseen situation which at the beginning can generate confusion, insecurity and information that changes rapidly.

The political and social context and public opinion must also be taken into account when devising our communications. Issues concerning the safety and integrity of the people in the field, potential reputational crises on social networks or in the media, fake news, etc. can often arise, so it is crucial that we work in coordination with various colleagues from the organisation.

Our networks with NGOs, governments, the media and other local and international actors, in addition to our proven experience in the affected countries and areas and, above all, our close links with the people, make us qualified sources of information who can help people to communicate in an appropriate and responsible fashion. Our communications must therefore be accurate and verified.

The more fluid our internal communication and our networking with various actors that we identify for our work – local actors, donors, international NGOs, UN agencies with a humanitarian mandate, the Red Cross and the media, networks and platforms to which we belong, among others – is, the more capable we will be of obtaining the appropriate information and identifying information needs in a timely fashion.

Special attention should be given to the role that social networks, digital platforms and messaging currently play in a humanitarian crisis, since it is where people spontaneously go to get information and to communicate with friends or relatives who may have been affected. Furthermore, offline channels, such as community radio stations and networks with local people and entities, are the most effective option in certain contexts, since not all population groups have access to new technologies.



The focus of our communication

3

In our work, the rights, dignity and living conditions of people, especially those in vulnerable situations, are the priority.

We must therefore comply with the principles, values and mission of our organisation, placing special emphasis on the humanitarian principles of “do no harm”, the inclusion of people, their needs and diversities, and the gender-based approach.



3.1

Humanitarian principles

There are four basic humanitarian principles shared by the international community that have a necessary and practical application in the field of humanitarian communication.

The people and organisations engaged in humanitarian work must respect these principles, since it is the only way that the various parties will allow them to do their work and to access the areas and people affected. Adherence to these principles is what allows humanitarian action to distinguish itself from the activities and objectives of other actors.

Clearly communicating humanitarian principles and ensuring that we act in accordance with them is therefore essential.



Humanitarian Principles



HUMANITY

Human suffering must be attended to wherever it is encountered. The objective of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for human beings.



NEUTRALITY

Humanitarian actors must not take sides in conflicts and disputes of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

IMPARTIALITY



Humanitarian action must be carried out according to need, giving priority to the most urgent cases and without making distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, sex, religious beliefs, class or political opinion.

OPERATIONAL INDEPENDENCE

Humanitarian action must be separate from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any humanitarian actor may have with respect to the areas where humanitarian measures are being carried out.

Source: OCHA

3.2 Do no harm



In a transversal manner, as with the rest of the actions we carry out, our communication will respond to the principle of “Do no harm”. Our actions will thus not harm any of the parties involved, promoting the common interest and links between communities. In our communication, we will act with extreme caution with regard to the information and image we present of the people, communities, staff and volunteers in the field.

The “Do no harm” approach is based on the analysis in each case of what Mary B. Anderson calls “local capacities for peace”, and on seeking to base cooperation and aid projects on these capacities, avoiding other factors which are likely to aggravate the conflict.

Source: <http://iecah.org/images/directory/1295231648AHCoopDes.pdf>

3.3 Inclusion



The situations in which we carry out our work, which are in turn modified by the crises and emergencies that occur, mean that we have to take multiple factors, diversities and contexts into account when planning and carrying out our communication. It needs to be inclusive and, therefore, truly useful and effective, reaching all the people who need it. It also has to reflect the diversity of people and societies.

Likewise, the channels and content selected must be based on and respect the needs of the people we wish to address, providing resources that do not increase the various disparities that exist and that exacerbate inequalities.

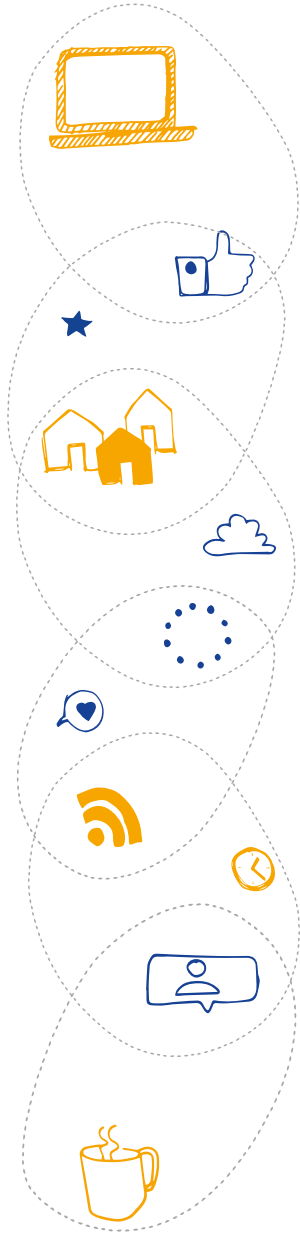
Digital connectivity - which we will look at later - has enormous potential and presents a wide range of opportunities

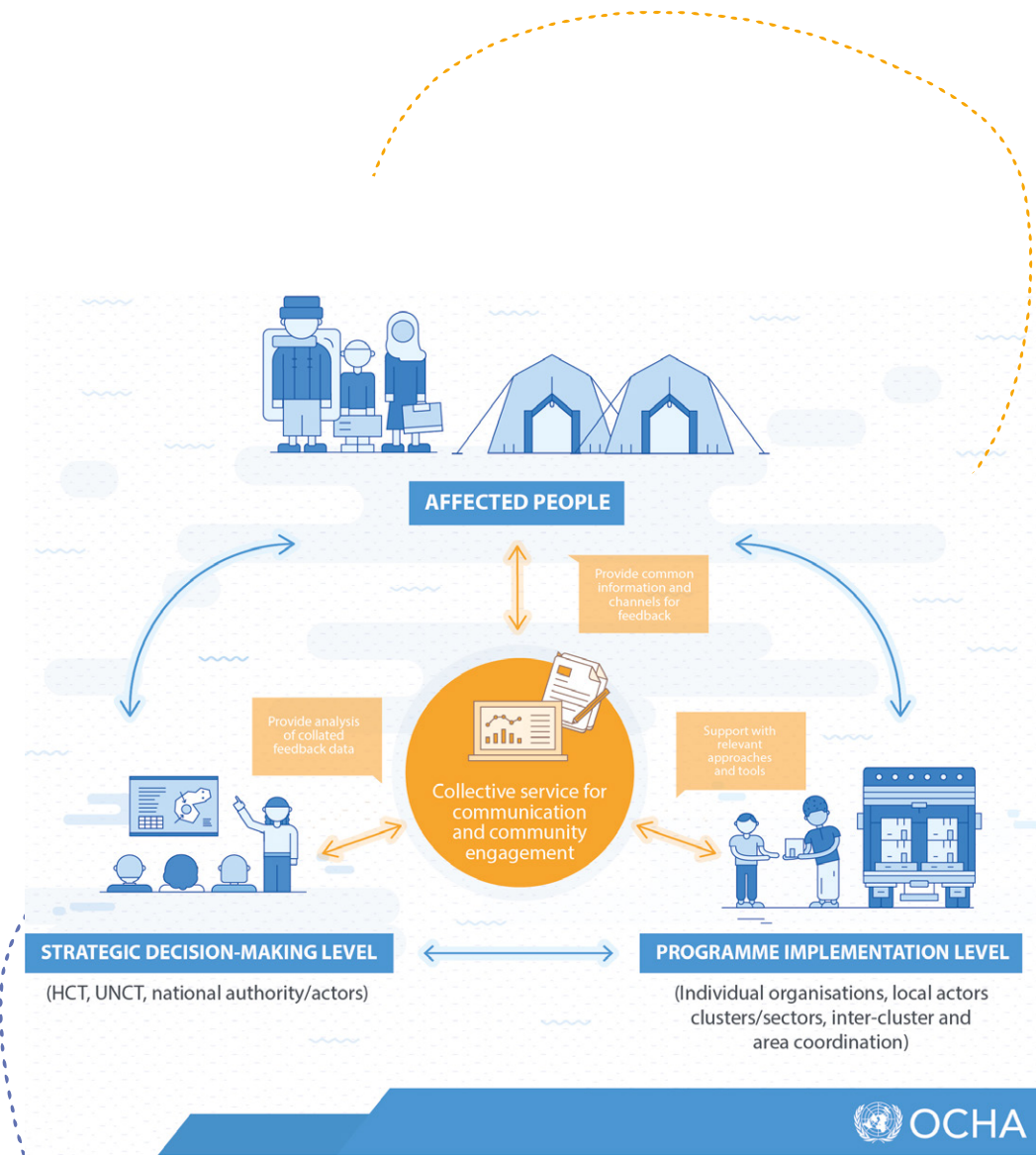
and resources for organisations, communities and individuals. However, it also leads to new vulnerabilities that we need to take into account, such as digital inequalities, online human rights violations, harassment, surveillance, hate speech and cyber insecurity, among others. These issues are always of great importance, but they are even more so in particular countries and contexts, and so every action we carry out must create a safe environment for people.

For this reason, we need to obtain first-hand and in-depth knowledge of the contexts in which we are working, their potentials, characteristics, limitations, needs and risks. We must also include the communities and people affected by the humanitarian crises in decision-making processes to ensure that the humanitarian response is appropriate, timely, effective and efficient. In this way, people can make informed decisions and play an active role. It is also important here to remind ourselves of the difference between victims and affected people in the context of humanitarian aid, a crisis or emergency and its consequences.

In order to be able to include people in communication processes, we must provide accessible and clear information which avoids using the *language of projects*. We must also ensure that an effective participation and feedback process is established, and that development and management decisions respond to the various characteristics, situations, needs and intersectionality of the people and communities affected.

The channels and networks that we have previously created with local media, individuals, communities, and organisations during the implementation of our development projects can be very useful when it comes to including people and their specific needs in the communication process and making it truly effective.





Source:

https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/Graphic_community%20engagement-02-02-02.jpg

3.4

Gender-based approach



Humanitarian crises, disasters and conflicts do not affect all people equally and they increase the vulnerability of women and girls.

Communication which is person-centred and which has a gender-based approach should highlight the specific needs and issues of women and girls, while also taking into account factors relating to age, race, ethnicity or social conditions of other type.

Violence against women, exploitation and sexual abuse increase during and after emergencies. Furthermore, given the pre-existing situation of discrimination, if the appropriate measures are not taken, women and girls can be left without spaces for representation and without specific support for their differentiated needs. While it is true that emergencies can intensify inequalities and situations of injustice, they can also represent an opportunity to promote the improvement of the situation of women and girls by putting the communication and the media focus on their situation, needs and decisive role, as well as through advocacy, public awareness and/or social mobilization actions. Communication can play a key role in this regard.

For humanitarian aid to be effective, as well as communication in these contexts, it must include the gender focus, taking into account and highlighting the real needs and active role of women and girls, who are half of the world's population.

When we speak of incorporating the gender-based approach in humanitarian communication, we are referring to:

- ▶ The active participation of women in all spaces involving organisation and decision-making with regard to communication.
- ▶ Identifying their specific needs and including them in communications.
- ▶ Breaking down data by sex and age, in addition to other factors that we will determine according to the context.
- ▶ Highlighting their role, experiences and stories.
- ▶ Supporting their empowerment through communication, providing them with tools so that they can report their own experiences.
- ▶ Valuing their work and not always portraying them as victims but rather as active agents of change, development and peacebuilding.
- ▶ Using our communication to promote a plural, dignified and fair representation, avoiding stereotypes and roles that perpetuate inequalities, especially regarding women and girls, and all those who are in vulnerable situations, in all the content, channels and tools at our disposal: images, videos, events that we organise, designs and graphic materials, etc.
- ▶ Using inclusive language and avoiding stereotypes.
- ▶ Finding the most effective communication channels and spaces, since in many contexts women and girls have less access to the internet and the public space.



4

Where to begin

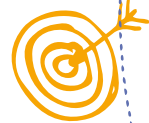


During or after a humanitarian crisis, the affected population and society as a whole need information, and humanitarian aid organisations and volunteers can make a significant and highly valuable contribution.

It is crucial that coordination and monitoring mechanisms be established from the first cycle of the emergency, so a SWOT analysis will be highly useful to us. What has happened? How do we organise ourselves internally? What do we want to communicate? What resources do we have? Who do we want to reach? These are questions that will have to be asked at the beginning as well as throughout the different phases of the humanitarian crisis, since each of these will require different actions.

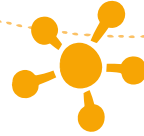
To answer these questions, we need to establish simple and clear communication protocols for obtaining and approving information, aiming to use familiar and understandable language and avoiding technical terms. This is important since it will enable us to receive regular information from different sources, which is good quality and verified, and to draw on all the resources at our disposal both internally and externally, as well as to address potential reputational crises and have a better relationship with journalists, the media and other stakeholders.

In a context where information rapidly evolves and the political, social and security context can be complex, internal coordination is of vital importance.



4.1

How to organise ourselves



Humanitarian crises greatly increase the pressure that organisations are subjected to, which is why clear and concise protocols are necessary for the correct handling of information. Equally important will be support for people on the teams and volunteers dealing with emotional and stressful situations, as well as the volume and pace of the work that is generated in an emergency.

For international NGOs, with regard to external communication, coordination with the organisation in the field, led by the Head of Mission, as well as with the Communications Department/Area and the person in charge of the Security Plan at headquarters, is crucial. Coordination should also occur with other colleagues in the organisation whose involvement in the analysis, planning and implementation process is considered important, focal points in key places and areas or volunteers.

It is also essential that the organisation's various plans, both general and specific to the emergency or context, are followed in our communication actions and in the content we develop, as in other areas of the entity.

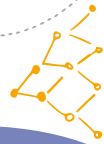
We therefore need to establish a plan with the various teams in the field and at headquarters, including volunteers and especially those involved in communication, dissemination and visibility, in order to:

- ▶ Establish a communication coordination protocol and flowchart: information gathering, how to act, what to communicate and when, and how to respond to different issues that may arise. It could be summarised as follows: who does what, when, and why¹.



1 Source: Cipó Company

- ▶ Establish priorities regarding the amount and speed of the work that may arise in an emergency, from the most important and urgent to what you may expect.
- ▶ Appoint a spokesperson: the best way to guarantee that the information is accurate and appropriate is by assigning one or two colleagues who are capable of clearly transmitting the information requested while also being familiar with the work and the position of the entity and the political and social context, in coordination with the colleagues designated in the plan. It will be also important to analyse the situation at every stage, elaborate clear and homogeneous messages, prepare public speeches and interviews, etc.
- ▶ Assess the status of the organisation's offline and online communication channels and how they can be used in the humanitarian efforts.
- ▶ Help transmit relevant, useful and accurate information to the affected population, the media, the social base and society as a whole.
- ▶ Gather information on the initiatives that are being carried out by various local and international actors. When possible, we could join thematic coordination clusters in order to obtain information on the context and distribution/action points and initiatives.
- ▶ Conduct reports and gather content, photographs, interviews, stories...etc. for the preparation of press releases and various materials.
- ▶ Organise with the networks and platforms to which we belong, in the field and at headquarters, in order to assess the situation, coordinate amongst ourselves and develop joint communication actions.



Regarding the organisation's Communications Unit or Department at headquarters, the working relationship will be bidirectional: headquarters will be able to identify communication needs and request information from the organisation in the field; and the organisation in the field will in turn be able to propose communication actions in order to support or develop different content depending on the needs identified.



4.2

What do we communicate? To whom?



Given the overload of communication and information that can occur in an emergency, it is important that we define our role and objectives as an organisation and analyse our added value. What can we contribute? How can we be useful? What resources do we have? Who do we want to reach? How are we going to do so?

One of the most important roles of humanitarian communication involves connecting people and communities so as to facilitate their access to information and meet their needs in humanitarian aid contexts/emergencies/crises. It is also important to inform society as a whole, the organisation's social base, volunteers, donors and the media, etc. when considered appropriate.

Before, during and after an emergency, people need to get useful and accurate information, in a timely manner and in the appropriate format, channel and language. Depending on the profile of the audience we want to reach, the channels, times and formats used will be different and we will have to adapt the content and materials we develop.

As we have seen previously, all communication, information and material that we publish must comply with the humanitarian principles, *do no harm*, inclusion and a gender-based approach, in keeping with the mission and values of the organisation, guaranteeing people's dignity, privacy and safety. In every moment, as well, we must guarantee the respect of the personal processes they go through in a humanitarian emergency.

Data protection, the right to privacy and the image rights of all people must be guaranteed, and so every person who appears in our content must be fully informed as to how it is going to be used. Special mention, attention and care must be given to minors and people in vulnerable situations or who may be in danger, and so we need to analyse the situa-



tion in detail before creating and publishing content. When in doubt, it is better not to share it, since we are talking about people's lives.

Our communication in all its forms needs to fit with the various plans the organisation has established, be they general or specific in scope, as well as the recommendations of the competent authorities in each case. For example, in the face of the COVID-19 crisis, content should reflect the guidelines established for protection and prevention, such as the use of masks, social distancing, etc., in photographs or videos, and compliance must be ensured at the events that we organise.

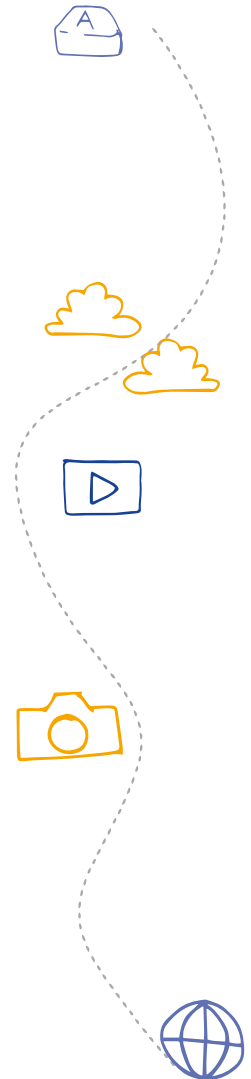
We must also follow accessibility guidelines by, for example, using subtitles in videos, larger fonts in materials, audio instead of written content or different languages, among others.

The environmental sustainability of the materials we create is also important, and we need to consider it in our planning.

The information that we are to transmit must be relevant and useful, employing the correct terminology and according to the competent authorities in each case, in different formats, depending on the purpose of the information and to whom it is addressed.

We can use statistics, graphics or infographics, images, videos, news, interviews or storytelling, reports, press releases, podcasts, audio recordings, presentations, illustrations, comics, printed materials and other content to be disseminated through our offline and online channels. Always remembering that the objective of our communication is that it reaches the people we want to keep informed at all times: local communities, the media, the organisation's social base, donors, etc.

Our information must also be a tool for the transparency and accountability of the work we are doing.



4.3

News verification and data checks



In a digital context that increasingly moves faster and faster, it is difficult to monitor the integrity of the conversation that is generated around a crisis. Fake news, unfounded alerts, biased information... it is often difficult to pass on accurate communication in the face of so much misinformation. The COVID-19 emergency has led to a worldwide push for the verification of information given the prevalence of so-called fake news and hoaxes, and there are many initiatives emerging aimed at combatting them.

As we have mentioned, our organisations are an information source, so ensuring that the information we transmit is accurate, current and useful is always important, and even more so in emergency and humanitarian aid contexts.

The most common formats via which disinformation spreads are:

- ▶ Fake news
- ▶ WhatsApp chain messages
- ▶ Modified images on Twitter
- ▶ Memes with inaccurate data
- ▶ Fraudulent emails
- ▶ False statements from significant individuals
- ▶ Alarmist, subjective or biased headlines



There are many initiatives and measures being implemented by various actors. Below is a list of some of these, although it will be important to keep abreast of new ones that emerge:

- ▶ European Union: Action Plan against Disinformation, Rapid Alert System and Code of Good Practices, among other measures.

https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/es/ip_20_1006

▶ **United Nations: 'Verified' global initiative**

<https://www.shareverified.com/es>

▶ **Google: Fact Check News**

<https://toolbox.google.com/factcheck/explorer>

▶ **Wikipedia: list in different countries**

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_fact-checking_websites

▶ **Media in Spain: 'Comprobado' (Checked)**

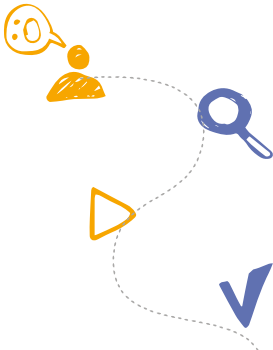
<https://www.efe.com/efe/espana/varios/efe-se-une-a-comprobado-un-proyecto-de-16-medios-contra-la-desinformacion/50000073-3950477>

▶ **The Associated Press: AP Fact Check**

<https://apnews.com/APFactCheck>

In the face of the COVID-19 emergency, for example, the World Health Organisation has launched a Health Alert on WhatsApp to answer questions about the virus and provide official, fast and reliable information.

To help prevent the spread of fake news, there are certain guidelines we can follow:



1. Be suspicious if the headlines are overly alarmist or biased.

2. Verify the date and place.

3. Find more reliable sources that cite the information.

4. Investigate the source.

5. Verify the images.
Check whether they appear to be manipulated and do not publish anything that does not include the source. Searching on *Google Images* will tell us when it first appeared on the search engine, so we can find out whether it corresponds to the situation being talked about.

6. View and listen to videos and audios before sharing them.

7. Fact checking via the various initiatives created for this.

When collecting information, it is important that we remember the difference between primary information, generated directly by the actors involved, and secondary information, mainly produced by journalists, analysts and the media. It is also always important to cite the source of images, information, materials and content, if they are not of your own creation.



What communication channels do we use? 5

The COVID-19 emergency has led to the development of the digital space, offering innumerable possibilities for carrying out various tasks. In a world where more than half of the population now has access to a mobile phone and the internet, digital channels are key to transmitting information. This is undoubtedly due to their simplicity, immediacy, frequency of use and penetration. However, it is also because it enables people to participate in the process themselves and to become sources as well as recipients. This can facilitate their involvement in the process of reconstruction or improvement, as long as we have firstly verified the news and information we have seen.

Messaging apps and social networks are widely used: they are a means of connecting with family and friends, as well as of obtaining all kinds of information related to the humanitarian aid context. However, these should be used judiciously so as to avoid saturating telecommunications, unnecessarily contributing to the information overload and propagating hoaxes, as we have seen.



In addition, as we will see below, social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube, messaging applications, Google and other alert systems have become essential platforms for communication and coordination in humanitarian aid contexts. As well as contacting people, they allow organisations to disseminate alerts and important information regarding the situation.






For our communication to be effective, we must not neglect offline communication. According to the United Nations' "Roadmap for digital cooperation: application of the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation", 3.6 billion people, 46.4% of the world's population, do not use the internet. What's more, in the countries with the fewest resources, only 19% of the population has internet access. This roadmap published by the United Nations highlights the urgent challenges identified in the face of the COVID-19 emergency and measures to strengthen global digital cooperation.



Given this situation, if we only take digital media into account, we run the risk that a section of the population will be misinformed, thus exacerbating their situation of vulnerability and inequality. Therefore, depending on the country/area of action, as well as the channels that the organisation already has available in the field and at headquarters, we will need to assess which ones will be most effective as regards reaching the people through whom we disseminate content or information.



Here are some things we can do to help with our selection:

1. Study the digital penetration reports of the country. 
2. Observe and ask which ones are being used the most and are the most useful, since this will vary according to the context and situation. 
3. Use the tools provided by the CDAC Network, which include a communication needs questionnaire that may be helpful. (source: <http://www.cdacnetwork.org/tools-and-resources/i/20140721171402-wj4au>). 
4. Assess the human resources and time available to us to properly update the channels we already have with accurate and useful content and focus on these. 
5. Collaborate with the people, communities and organisations we work with in the field to carry out joint actions via different channels. 

During the COVID-19 emergency, local and international organisations and agencies have launched additional initiatives in order to reach specific population groups: chat bots, new apps, helplines, informational messaging channels in different languages, webinars and virtual forums, resource guides, help centres, phone trees for the person-to-person transmission of information, specific hashtags, volunteer groups, using microphones and loudspeakers to inform populations in isolated areas, and many more. Each organisation should assess these actions depending on what people it needs to reach.

5.1 Online channels

During the COVID-19 emergency, multiple platforms, applications and social networks have activated specific sections related to the topic so as to facilitate access to reliable sources of information. These initiatives continue to emerge on the internet and social networks, and we need to monitor them when attempting to tackle a humanitarian crisis or emergency since they are constantly being updated.

5.1.1 Facebook



In general, Facebook will be our main communications network. It is the most widely used in the greatest number of countries and is probably where we will be able to reach the largest number of people from our social base.

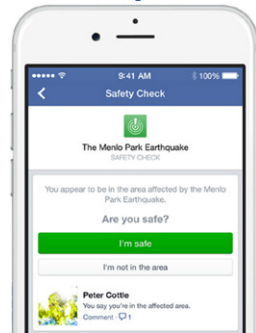
Facebook has implemented significant developments to assist in humanitarian crises, which it updates periodically. Some of the best features it offers in the early stages of an emergency include:

▶ Mark yourself as “safe”

People can report their status, reducing anxiety among the population with the advantage that telephone lines do not collapse due to people contacting family and friends.

▶ Give or find help

Connect directly with others close to you in order to provide or find help with resources such as food, supplies or shelter.



Crisis response allows people affected by a crisis to inform their friends that they are okay, to seek or offer help, and to get the latest news on the crisis.

(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/crisisresponse/>)

It also has a Data For Good programme, in collaboration with the European Union's Directorate for Humanitarian Aid (OCHA), which involves the creation of movement, coverage and density maps that allow us to predict potential crises, as well as to plan actions for reconstruction, public health, etc.

(Source: <https://dataforgood.fb.com/>)

► COVID-19 emergency

As an example of the initiatives and options that social networks can implement, during the COVID-19 crisis Facebook enabled the coronavirus (COVID-19) Information Centre, which provides news and notifications from official sources, as well as resources regarding COVID-19 for businesses on their Facebook pages and the 'Small Business Emergency Response Kit'.

(Source: https://www.facebook.com/coronavirus_info)



Disaster Maps

Reaching displaced communities after the floods in Kerala

"People could just get online and immediately start helping in a huge way."

Rachel (Hurricane Harvey)

SHARE VIDEO



5.1.2 Twitter



Of all the social networks, Twitter is the most sector-specific and is used for networking. We use it to keep in contact with actors in humanitarian aid contexts and to keep up to date with current issues and the most recent information.

It is always useful to search for hashtags or conversations concerning the emergency in each location (e.g. #COVID19 or #COVID19mexico, and variants of these), as well as topics of interest, so that we can remain up to date, and to post information we have on the subject within that framework.

It is also a good idea to create or join specific Twitter Lists, e.g. this “ECHO in the field” list:

<https://twitter.com/i/lists/198692602>

► Alerts

Twitter alerts are tweets posted by particular public agencies and emergency organisations during a crisis, which contain pertinent and up-to-date information regarding an ongoing event, such as public safety warnings and evacuation instructions. Alerts will be highlighted in the home timeline and sent to the device instantly as a notification.

► COVID-19 emergency

Twitter is another social network that has dedicated a specific space to the COVID-19 emergency, gathering information on the issue in a specific tab that also includes “Recommendations from health specialists”.

<https://twitter.com/explore/tabs/covid-19>



As we have mentioned, Twitter is one of the social networks where hoaxes and fake news spread at the quickest rate, so it is important that we ‘follow’ verified entities, organisations and media before sharing information. Numerous accounts also exist which are dedicated to the verification of information.

5.1.1 Instagram.....



Photography is the focus on Instagram, and it is the social network where we share images or very short videos of the contexts where we are working, the people and communities, and depict our work there. It gives us more space to describe our actions in humanitarian aid contexts, and the option of stories for sharing content with a maximum duration of 24 hours.

Hashtags are also useful on this social network to add our content to the various topics.

► COVID-19 emergency

Like other social networks, Instagram has activated resources concerning COVID-19, giving companies the option of receiving donations or providing food orders, among other things.



5.1.4 YouTube



Videos are becoming more and more potent in communication. We can use our YouTube channel to create our own online “television channel” and to share more or less elaborate videos and live broadcasts, depending on our capabilities and resources.

In humanitarian aid contexts, they can be a very useful way to share information on the situation and our work, and to present personal accounts or interviews, bringing people closer to these situations and contexts by means of videos. Whenever possible, it is recommended that you use subtitling, and create lists to group together the videos we have concerning a particular context or emergency.

In the Trends section and within it, in News, we can find videos relating to the latest world events. Another option is to subscribe to the channels of various actors involved in humanitarian assistance so that we can be kept up to date with the videos being published, or to use the search engine to find the latest content published on the subject we are interested in.

As we have discussed, videos and live broadcasts (streams) are becoming more and more important and all the social networks that we have mentioned now have the option of broadcasting live. While this is very useful, it also requires care and preparation. Speaking live is not always easy, so we will have to prepare thoroughly both the content and our presentation.



5.1.5 Messaging apps



The power of messaging tools - and specifically WhatsApp - as a channel for transmitting information on a massive scale almost surpasses that of traditional media. As we have seen, its biggest drawback is the uncontrolled dissemination of hoaxes and fake news. Nonetheless, its penetration rate makes it extremely useful for sharing important information, and in different formats: audio, video, GIF, images or video calls, links, among others.



It is useful for:

- ✓ Location and rescue in the first hours of an emergency.
- ✓ Coordination with groups for the response.
- ✓ Gathering of information and needs.
- ✓ Dissemination of preventive information (alerts, advice, resources).
- ✓ Countering hoaxes with verified information.
- ✓ Dissemination of specific information on a topic.

Depending on the country or area, we can also use other messaging tools such as Viber, WeChat, LINE or Telegram by creating a public group, secret chat or channel with information on the humanitarian aid context in which we are operating. We can also join groups and channels which have already been created.

Regarding the use of apps and messaging, it is always advisable to establish which ones are the safest by consulting the person in charge of the organisation's Security Plan. The latter can give us guidance regarding the encryption of information, privacy guarantees, etc., which will be of great importance in various contexts due to the sensitivity of the issues we deal with.

5.1.6 Google



Google, with extensive NGO programmes, also uses its data and platforms to assist in humanitarian crises. Examples include:

► SOS Alerts

The goal of SOS Alerts is to make emergency information more accessible during a natural or human-made disaster. Google collects relevant content from the web, social media and Google products, and it is highlighted in Search and Maps. Depending on the nature of the crisis and the location, it shows news from local, national and international authorities, including emergency phone numbers and websites, maps, translations of useful phrases, and ways to donate, among other things.

(Source: <https://support.google.com/sosalerts>)

► Public Alerts

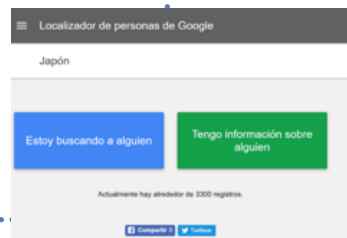
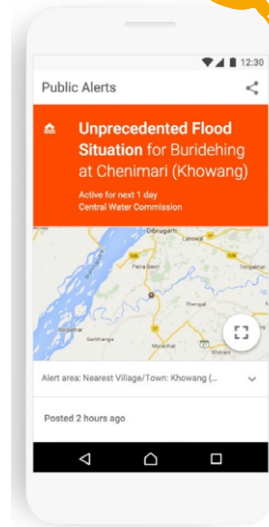
As a complement to SOS Alerts, Public Alerts helps local and public authorities share urgent messages specifically related to official weather, public safety and earthquake alerts.

(Source: <https://www.google.org/publicalerts>)

► Google Person Finder

Another prominent feature of Google are its forecast maps for climate catastrophes and its missing persons finder.

(Source: <https://google.org/personfinder/>)



► COVID-19 emergency

Google has also enabled specific information relating to the COVID-19 emergency, providing updated statistics, data and maps at global and country level.

(Fuente: <https://www.google.com/covid19-map>)

When using Google searches, you should always obtain figures and information from the official sites of the reference bodies and entities.



5.1.7 Data management

In 2012, 24 hours after Typhoon Bopha hit the Philippines, the Digital Humanitarian Network was able to categorise 20,000 social media messages in order to create a map of the storm's impact.

Artificial intelligence and the processing of big data are in continuous development, since they can give us an almost exact mapping of the impact of a crisis, allowing us to gather information for our preparation and response to a crisis or emergency.

However, we need to take some of its limitations into account when conducting analyses in certain contexts, since there may be bias where internet access is limited and the data extracted from Twitter or mobile phones probably represents urban elites more than other population group.

Some tools that may be useful are UN Global Pulse, Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System (GIVAS) and Ushahidi, among others.



5.1.8. Smartphones



As we are seeing, many of the contents, channels and communication tools are easily accessible on mobile phones. Mobile Journalism (MOJO) consists of using a smartphone to film, produce, edit and distribute stories in different formats. It is already widely used around the world, not only by communications departments, but also by journalists themselves, as a means of providing informative coverage on their media.

What's more, it means that any member of the public can become a meaningful "testimony". However, it is important to differentiate between journalism and a citizen giving his/her experience at a given moment, and to verify that it is not fake news, or inaccurate or partial content.

Mobile journalism has opened up a wide range of possibilities. Recording on the mobile phone itself is especially useful in humanitarian aid contexts where it is impossible to deploy cameras, cranes or cables, or even to access with a camera if there is a conflict situation.



In addition, the many applications that exist, ones which are native to social networks and others that can be downloaded, allow for considerable creativity and good quality output. The immediacy and ease of use the mobile phone offers, especially in emergency or humanitarian aid contexts, requires compliance with all the guidelines and recommendations mentioned throughout the guide for all channels and content.

5.2

Offline channels and spaces

In addition to the online channels and tools that we have looked at, it is important to consider other options, such as radio, newspapers and television, both nationally and locally. These offline media still have high levels of penetration in many parts of the world and for many population groups.

Nor can we forget that there are actions, populations and groups for which the most appropriate channel is still face-to-face. If we are to reach these people, we will need to distribute printed materials, hold information meetings and participate in community channels.

This is especially the case in the early phases, when thoroughness and first-hand information are particularly important, but also for medium-term campaigns among certain groups, where local leaders, volunteers and local networks play a key role.

Collaboration with the networks that we have already created with the communities, social leaders, human rights defenders, teachers and students in schools, partner organisations, local and community media, etc., will thus be crucial in order to begin and maintain the dissemination of materials and content that generate a specific reach.

Face-to-face communication allows us to establish greater levels of trust, to engage in active listening, and to come to an agreement as regards alert messages which are suited to the local situation and actual needs. Involving people in these coordination processes can also allow us to identify those who may have more influence in the community so that we can seek their help with the dissemination of important information.



As we have seen in Section 5 with examples from the response to COVID-19, different offline actions such as the following may be essential: on-site dissemination, face-to-face meetings, press events (conference, breakfast with the media, etc.), street events or door-to-door actions; as well as the preparation of printed materials for distribution at key points (posters, brochures, advice leaflets), and the projection of visual content or the broadcasting of audio messages which comply with the guidelines of inclusion and accessibility that we have mentioned above.



6

Communication to mobilise

Many humanitarian crises are unforeseeable and shake the foundations of the organisation in the area in which they occur, thus affecting their work in the field. In order to be able to respond to the crisis and continue supporting the population without putting the rest of the development projects at risk, it is often necessary to mobilise human or economic resources, volunteers or additional funds in order to be able to do so in the fastest and most efficient way possible.

Whatever the crisis, it often leaves thousands of individuals and families without the basic means for survival. In many cases, communities depend on human support, the donation of basic products and materials, and fundraising by organisations in order to recover and meet their basic needs.

It is in the early stages of an emergency, when social and media interest is at its greatest, when the best response to requests for assistance can be obtained.



The objective of mobilising volunteers and resources and raising funds will also have to be included in the plans that we establish at the beginning (Chapter 4 and 4.1), so that it can be managed in the most efficient and appropriate manner possible. The needs identified and the objectives of the actions should be clearly indicated so that they can also be included in communication.

6.1 Mobilising volunteers

Our first port of call will be our social base, but there are also various online platforms and rosters for mobilising external volunteers depending on the country in which we are located, and we need to be aware of these in advance. In this regard, it is important that we mention the EU-initiative of humanitarian volunteering EU Aid Volunteers, which connects volunteers from EU member countries with organisations in the rest of the world in order to support the work they are doing.

Volunteers will also need to be managed effectively, something that we look at in depth in the manual “International volunteering for host organisations”, developed by Movimiento por la Paz -MPDL- and ONGAWA within the framework of the EU Aid Volunteers project: *Volunteering Capacities Matter: Strengthening organisational capacities for a suitable humanitarian volunteering management*¹.



1 Available on: www.mpdl.org/euaidvolunteers.

6.2 Fundraising



With regard to fundraising, crowdfunding methods are recommended. This is a type of collective funding, usually online, where, through small financial donations or other kinds of donations, a particular project can be funded. Some of the most prominent platforms are the following:



migranodearena

FUNDACIÓN

Migranodearena

The leading social crowdfunding platform in Spain, connecting people and companies committed to social causes through the creation of charity challenges:

<https://www.migranodearena.org>

It works as follows: a person (or group of people or company) takes the initiative and creates a charity challenge in support of an NGO, they set a fundraising target and share it with their family, friends and acquaintances so that they can support them by donating.

There are basically two types of charity challenges:

1. those that encourage fundraising through their **direct link** with the social cause/entity.
2. those that do so **indirectly** through other activities.

By way of illustration, below are some examples:

Direct link

- ▶ **NGO Challenge:** proposals in support of the entity's causes or projects.
- ▶ **Humanitarian emergency:** in instances of a humanitarian crisis, a natural disaster or a pandemic such as COVID-19.
- ▶ **Charity campaign:** in support of major initiatives such as the global movement Giving Tuesday.

Indirect link

- ▶ **Sports event:** request for support through participation in organised sports activities (a marathon, a triathlon, etc.).
- ▶ **Personal celebration:** birthdays, weddings, a party with friends, raffles or challenges such as climbing a mountain, among others.
- ▶ **Charity event:** offer "phantom" or solidarity tickets to attend certain events.

A charity challenge is, in short, a personal or collective action in support of a charitable cause.

It is important to note that the migranodearena.org model is "everything counts", i.e. the beneficiary organisation of a charity challenge receives all the funds raised regardless of whether the target has been reached.

▶ COVID-19 Emergency

With the declaration of the State of Emergency in Spain, the platform launched the *#coronaretos* initiative to facilitate fundraising for campaigns related to the pandemic.

As with the above platform, it allows you to raise funds for an NGO through the creation of a charity challenge:

<https://ihelp.org.es>

Its fundraising model also involves the entire amount collected being transferred once the deadline has passed.

► **COVID-19 Emergency**

As a result of the crisis, they launched SOS COVID-19, an international collaborative platform designed to channel requests for help in the face of the coronavirus health emergency.

The platform allows you to publish urgent requests, to participate in order to meet those needs, and to propose additional aid, both via volunteering and fundraising.

Regarding communication for mobilisation, in all cases it will be crucial that it is transparent and accountable as regards the actions we are taking. Communication for social and resource mobilisation requires an unparalleled exercise in transparency on the part of organisations. Therefore, we must:

- ▶ Provide all available information on the damage caused and its human, social, ecological and economic costs.
- ▶ Make a list of needs that the organisation will need to meet in order to support individuals and communities.
- ▶ Demonstrate the consequences that the crisis is having on people, communities and projects.
- ▶ Gather personal experiences of the situations people have found themselves in.
- ▶ Highlight, when possible, how the local people is leading the recovery.
- ▶ Avoid presenting an “assistentialist” image of humanitarian aid and show how local people, communities and organisations are participating in decision-making processes.
- ▶ Document the various steps taken in all the aid and rehabilitation projects we participate in.
- ▶ Periodically report on fundraising and the destination of funds.
- ▶ Show how we are acting, what we are doing and why.
- ▶ Assign spokespersons in order to better manage the media requests.
- ▶ Thank people for all the support received, for volunteering, for the donations and public and private contributions that have helped us during our work in the humanitarian aid context.

7

Additional resources



Managing communication in humanitarian aid and peace-building contexts requires that we remain updated as regards current information and documents. Reading, verifying sources and being familiar with different approaches, tools and applications is of vital importance.

To this end, below we list some resources which may be useful, which were used in the preparation of this guide, or which may be of interest should you wish to broaden your knowledge of the area we are addressing.

▶ **EU Aid Volunteers, ECHO and EACEA**

https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/eu-aid-volunteers_en

▶ **European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations ECHO**

https://ec.europa.eu/echo/publications-events/publications_en

▶ **Humanitarian Aid, ECHO**

https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid_en

▶ **Gender -and age- Sensitive Aid, ECHO**

https://ec.europa.eu/echo/what/humanitarian-aid/gender-sensitive-aid_en

▶ **Humanitarian Principles, OCHA**

https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM_HumPrinciple_Spanish.pdf

▶ **Roadmap for digital cooperation: implementation of the recommendations of the High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation, United Nations**

<https://www.un.org/en/content/digital-cooperation-roadmap/>

▶ **Connectivity for Refugees, The UN Refugee Agency**

<https://www.unhcr.org/innovation/connectivity-for-refugees/>

▶ **Digital Inclusion policies, strategies, and toolkits, Telecommunication Development Sector (ITU-D)**

https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Digital-Inclusion/Pages/Digital_Inclusion_Resources/Policies_strategies_toolkits.aspx

▶ **ReliefWeb Labs projects, ReliefWeb**

<https://labs.reliefweb.int/>

▶ **UN Global Pulse, UN**

<https://www.unglobalpulse.org/>

▶ **UNDP Digital Strategy 2020, UNPD**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXeLzGHZFA8&feature=youtu.be>

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- ▶ **Media audit guide for social human rights organisations in Guatemala, Movimiento por la Paz -MPDL- in Guatemala**

<https://www.mpd.org/sites/default/files/200324-auditoria-medios-guatemala.pdf>

- ▶ **Mapping of Communication Resources COVID-19, Communication for Development Network**

<https://c4d.org/covid-19/covid-19-mapping>

- ▶ **Risk Communication and Community Engagement: Positive Practices from Europe during COVID, ReliefWeb**

<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/risk-communication-and-community-engagement-positive-practices-europe-during-covid>

- ▶ **Collective Communication and Humanitarian Engagement for Humanitarian Action, CDAC Network**

<http://www.cdacnetwork.org/contentAsset/raw-data/9c01795a-4f55-46f2-bb01-86b959be1ea8/attachedFile>

- ▶ **Digital News Report 2020, Reuters Institute and University of Oxford**

<http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/>

- ▶ **How does “Big Data” help in natural disasters? - Universidad Politécnica de Madrid**

<https://www.upm.es/e-politecnica/?p=9049>

▶ **Mobile Journalism, MOJO**

<https://www.mojo-manual.org/>

▶ **How to use social media to engage with people affected by crisis, ICRC**

<https://www.icrc.org/en/document/social-media-to-engage-with-affected-people>

▶ **SWOT analysis, Capacity4Dev**

https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/evaluation_guidelines/wiki/analisis-dafo-debilidades-amenazas-fortalezas-oportunidades-swot

▶ **Instituto de Estudios sobre Conflictos y Acción Humanitaria (IECAH)**

<https://www.iecah.org/>

▶ **La Cooperativa Humanitaria**

<https://www.cooperativahumanitaria.org/es>

▶ **ONGAWA**

<https://ongawa.org/>

▶ **Movimiento por la Paz -MPDL-**

www.mpd.org

▶ **Movimiento por la Paz -MPDL- EU Aid Volunteers Projects**

www.mpd.org/euaidvolunteers

EU Aid Volunteers: MPDL Deployment of Volunteers for Peace-building and Women's Rights

#EUAidVolunteers

#VoluntariadoMPDL



EUAidVolunteersMPDL



@EUAidVoIMPDL



www.mpdl.org/euidvolunteers



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EU Aid Volunteers

We Care, We Act



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