

# Impact COMMUNICATIONS

## Toolkit for Small Scale Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)



A knowledge product of



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## Section 1: About the Toolkit

### 1.1 Purpose of this Toolkit:

Communication is the process of sharing information, ideas, messages, and knowledge between individuals or groups. In organizations, communication helps build understanding, trust, and visibility. It is essential for every organization, as it enables them to clearly present their purpose, showcase their work, highlight key issues and concerns, and document best practices. This communication toolkit provides simple and practical guidance for small and medium organizations to develop their communication systems, strategy, messaging content, and platforms in a structured and effective way. It is designed especially to support small organizations in setting up their communication systems from the beginning and strengthening them over time.

The toolkit offers a clear, step-by-step guide. It explains what to do and what to avoid, outlines possible communication risks and backlash, and suggests practical ways to manage them. It recognizes that limited resources, skills, and time often make communication feel secondary to program delivery. Therefore, the toolkit focuses on realistic, low-cost, and practical communication approaches that small CSOs can easily adopt. It aims to bridge the gaps by helping organizations communicate with confidence, clarity, and integrity, regardless of their size or capacity. The toolkit will help to achieve the following:

- Enable the CSOs document real experiences from their work, based on genuine community voices and realities.
- Support clear and effective communication with both internal teams and external audiences, including communities, donors, and partners.
- Show how honest communication can attract donor interest by demonstrating real impact, learning, and credibility.
- Encourage authenticity and trust, while promoting safe communication practices that protect communities, staff, and the organization.
- Ensure all communication respects local culture and protects the dignity of beneficiaries, avoiding stereotypes, overexposure, or misrepresentation.
- How to showcase impact of the work that they do.

### 1.2 Primary Users of the Toolkit:

This toolkit is designed for small and medium CSOs, NGOs, and grassroots organizations. It is especially useful for organizations with limited resources that want practical guidance to strengthen their communication systems and strategies.



## Section 2: The Changing Funding & Trust Landscape

### 2.1 Changed Funding Landscape in Pakistan for Local and Small NGOs.

In recent years, the global funding environment for development and social work has changed a lot. Historically, the United States was one of the largest contributors of development aid in the world, including through USAID. This aid supported many health, education, and community development projects in Pakistan and other countries. However, recent policy changes in the US led to pauses and reductions in foreign aid funding, affecting many programs that CSOs relied on. For many small and medium-sized civil society organizations (CSOs) in Pakistan, this shift has created real challenges. Some development initiatives were temporarily halted or completely stopped as they faced uncertainty when funding was paused, delaying planned activities. This changing funding landscape has also had an impact on trust. Donors and communities now expect organizations to be more transparent, accountable, and self-reliant. Small CSOs must demonstrate clear impact, strong systems, and good financial reporting to build confidence, especially when traditional aid streams are less certain.

### 2.2 New Diversified Opportunities for NGOs and CSOs

Many organizations are exploring new funding sources to sustain their work. These include support from the Pakistani diaspora, local philanthropists, academic and research grants, and private sector sponsorships. Some organizations are also partnering with universities for joint research projects or accessing small innovation grants. Other emerging sources include Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds from local companies, crowdfunding platforms, faith-based charity networks (such as zakat and waqf-based giving), membership contributions, and social enterprise or fee-based services such as training and consultancy.

At the grassroots level, CSOs can also align their work with government priorities, especially during humanitarian appeals and emergency responses. By coordinating with district authorities, disaster management bodies, and social protection departments, small organizations can contribute to national or provincial response plans. This alignment can open opportunities for sub-grants, partnerships, or inclusion in humanitarian funding frameworks. This shift encourages CSOs to diversify their funding base instead of relying mainly on international donors. By exploring multiple funding streams and strengthening government coordination, small CSOs can reduce financial risk, improve sustainability, and build stronger local ownership and trust.

### 2.3 Developing Honest Communication Channels and Content

In the current funding and trust landscape, small NGOs need to shift their communication from simple activity reporting to clear, honest, and impact-focused messaging. Instead of only sharing long reports or listing interventions, they should provide short, evidence-based updates, human-centered stories, and simple data that show real change. A consistent social media presence, bridging the gap between the community and the donors, transparency about challenges, and clear information on governance and safeguarding are now important for building credibility. Donors increasingly expect measurable results, accountability, and ethical communication that respects community dignity. In short, communication must move from publicity-driven visibility to trust-based credibility.

### 2.4 Evidence vs Claims

In today's environment, donors and partners look for evidence, not just claims. Saying "we empowered women" or "we improved livelihoods" is not enough. Organizations must show proof through data, real examples, community feedback, or case studies. Evidence can include numbers, testimonials, before-and-after

comparisons, or independent assessments. It is also important to follow ethical standards. Case studies and quotes must never be falsified or exaggerated. They should be genuine and based on real-life interventions and the lived experiences of community members. Honest and accurate communication builds credibility and trust, while unsupported or false claims can seriously damage an organization’s reputation. Moreover, in our communication we should report/commit realistic results that can happen in short project period and not build tall claims that the entire community has transformed.

## 2. 5 Inclusive Donor Communication

Funders and Donors expect communication and reporting to highlight how projects reach and benefit the most vulnerable groups, such as persons with disabilities (PWDs), women, marginalized communities, minorities, and people affected by crisis. This is not just a preference; it is often part of their funding standards. Inclusive donor communication therefore requires organizations to disaggregate data (e.g., by gender, disability, age), highlight accessibility measures, and demonstrate how programs promote equality and inclusion. It is about showing equitable impact, not just overall numbers.

For example, UN donor communication guidelines on inclusive reporting emphasize that organizations should show who is being reached, who may be left behind, and how barriers are addressed. Reports and case studies are expected to reflect diversity, use respectful language, ensure informed consent, and protect dignity. They should avoid stereotypes and portray people as active agents of change rather than passive beneficiaries.

## 2. 6 Important Donor Communication Tips

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Overall, UN and EU guidelines promote ethical storytelling, accountability, and visibility of results while ensuring no harm to the communities involved.

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# Section 3: Foundations of Impact Communications

## 3. 1 What is Impact Communication

Impact Communication is the strategic process of conveying the measurable and qualitative changes resulting from an organization’s interventions. It goes beyond documenting activities to demonstrate evidence-based outcomes and societal benefits, highlighting both successes and lessons learned. In development programming, impact communication integrates data, case studies, and beneficiary perspectives to provide donors, partners, and stakeholders with a clear understanding of the real-world effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability of interventions.

**For example,** if a project provides solar lamps to rural households, an activity report would say, “We distributed 500 solar lamps.” But impact communication tells the story of how families can now study at night, children are performing better in school, and health problems from kerosene lamps have reduced. It shows why work matters and how it truly changed lives. When organizations communicate, they usually go through different levels of reporting.

- **Activity reporting** simply lists what was done, like “We conducted five workshops on hygiene for 100 participants.”

- **Output reporting** goes a step further by showing the immediate results, for instance, “100 participants attended hygiene workshops and received information booklets.”
- **Outcome reporting** looks at the changes resulting from these outputs, such as, “80% of participants started washing their hands regularly, reducing illness in their families.”
- **Impact storytelling** brings the human side to life. It shares real experiences, lessons, and emotions. For example, “Fatima, a mother of three, said her children rarely fall sick now because she and her neighbors practice proper hygiene. This has allowed her children to attend school regularly and improved her family’s wellbeing.”
- In short, while activity and output reports show what was done and immediate results, outcome reporting shows change, and impact storytelling shows the real human impact — the reason why the project matters.

### 3.2 Reporting on Failures and Learning

Impact communication can and should show failures. It provides a realistic picture of interventions, highlights lessons learned, and helps organizations improve future programming. By sharing what did not work, why it didn’t, and how it is being addressed, organizations build transparency, accountability, and trust with donors, partners, and communities. Honest reporting of failures also demonstrates learning, adaptability, and a commitment to continuous improvement, which are highly valued in development work.

### 3.3 Internal and External Communication Flow

Effective communication in an organization requires two-way communication channels. This means not only sharing information but also listening and receiving feedback.

- **Internal communication:** Staff, teams, and management should have clear ways to exchange ideas, updates, and feedback. Examples include team meetings, emails, instant messaging groups, suggestion boxes, or internal newsletters. Two-way communication ensures everyone is informed, aligned, and able to contribute to decisions.
- **External communication:** Communities, beneficiaries, donors, partners, and other stakeholders should also have ways to respond, ask questions, or give feedback. Examples include community consultations, surveys, social media engagement, hotlines, or regular stakeholder meetings. Two-way channels help organizations understand needs, improve interventions, and build trust.

### 3.4 Selection of Communication Platforms:

Organizations should select communication platforms that are both affordable and impactful, based on their resources, audience, and goals. Key steps include:

- **Know your audience:** Choose platforms that reach your stakeholders effectively — for example, SMS or WhatsApp for rural communities, email or LinkedIn for donors.
- **Assess cost vs. reach:** Compare options like social media posts, newsletters, or local radio broadcasts based on budget and expected impact.
- **CSOs should select a language that targets their local beneficiaries and that they themselves are more accustomed to (e.g., Urdu or local languages).** For donors or wider stakeholders accessing organizational communication, selective materials can be prepared in English where required.
- **Leverage existing tools:** Use free or low-cost platforms such as Google Workspace, WhatsApp groups, Zoom, or community notice boards.

- Test and adapt: Start small, measure engagement and effectiveness, and scale what works best.
- Focus on sustainability: Pick platforms your organization can maintain over time without overextending resources.

### 3. 5 Moving from Conventional Reporting to Impact Storytelling

Activity reporting is important. It helps document work for record-keeping and donor requirements. For example, a workshop report may include the number of participants, topics discussed, objectives of the program, and key outcomes. This information is useful, especially as an annex or part of formal donor reporting. However, numbers and activities alone do not always show real impact. Real impact — the human-to-human change, is often better explained through storytelling, especially using a case study approach. Stories help people understand how someone’s life improved, what challenges they faced, and what difference the intervention truly made.

### 3. 6 Ethics in Impact Communication

Ethical impact communication requires organizations to present information truthfully, responsibly, and transparently. Data and results should always be factual, verified, and evidence-based, avoiding exaggeration or “tall claims” about impact. Organizations should communicate both short-term achievements and realistic long-term changes that occur through sustained funding and partnerships. Ethical communication also means acknowledging challenges and changes in context and developing situations and risks, not only successes, so stakeholders receive a balanced and credible picture of the work.

### 3. 7 Dignity-First Storytelling

Stories about communities and individuals should always respect dignity, agency, and rights. People featured in stories should be presented as ‘Rights Holders’ and partners in change, not as passive beneficiaries or charity cases. Their informed consent must be obtained before using their images, names, or personal experiences. Narratives should highlight strength, resilience, and contributions, rather than reinforcing stereotypes of vulnerability. Dignity-first storytelling ensures that communication empowers communities while accurately reflecting the role of long-term development efforts and funding in creating sustainable change.

## Examples:

#### Example of an Activity Report:

On 15 January 2026, the organization conducted a one-day training workshop on climate-resilient agriculture for 35 women farmers in District X. The session covered climate risks, adaptive farming techniques, and access to local support services. Participants engaged in group discussions and practical exercises. At the end of the workshop, 30 participants expressed interest in applying at least one new farming method in the upcoming season.

#### Example of a Storytelling Approach:

Amina, a 38-year-old farmer and mother of four, used to struggle with crop losses due to irregular rainfall. After attending the climate-resilient agriculture training, she started using drought-resistant seeds and improved water management techniques. In the next season, her harvest increased, and she was able to sell surplus crops in the local market. Amina now feels more confident in managing climate risks and supporting her family’s income.

**Example of a Case Study:**

Shazia, a small farmer from a village in Sindh, wanted to improve her family’s income but had limited access to farming knowledge and markets. Through a women-focused agriculture programme, she joined training on better farming methods and small business skills. With this support, she increased her vegetable production and started selling extra produce in the local market.

Her story is shared with her consent and highlights her hard work and skills, showing her as a rights holder and active partner in change. The programme supported her with training and resources, while the progress came from her own efforts and determination.

**Simple Case Study Template (Dignified Storytelling)**

**1. Title**

A short title highlighting the positive change.

Example: Women Farmers Improving Livelihoods in Sindh

**2. Background**

Briefly describe the person/community and the situation before the project. Share profile details with consent including household size, location, profession, income levels etc.

Example: Shazia is a small farmer from a village in Sindh who wanted to increase her family’s income but had limited access to training and markets.

**3. Project Support / Intervention**

Explain what support the programme provided.

Example: Through the programme, she received training on improved farming methods and basic business skills.

**4. Change and Results**

Describe the outcomes and progress made.

Example: After the training, Shazia increased her vegetable production and started selling extra produce in the local market.

**5. Voice of the Participant (Optional Quote)**

Add a short quote if available.

Example: “The training helped me grow better crops and earn more for my family.”

**6. Dignity and Rights-Based Framing**

Highlight the person’s role, effort, and leadership.

Example: The story shows Shazia as a skilled farmer and active decision-maker who used new knowledge to improve her livelihood.

**7. Consent and Ethical Note**

This story, photo, and quote are shared with the informed consent of the participant. The individual agreed to the use of their information for communication purposes and was informed how the story would be used.

## 4. Communication and Outreach Strategy Framework

Organizations can use different planning models when developing communication strategies. This framework provides a structured sequence of steps that can guide institutions in planning and implementing effective communication and outreach. Strategy Components:

- Aims and Objectives
- Target Audience
- Key Messages
- Communication Strategies
- Traditional Communication Approaches
- New and Digital Approaches
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Branding and Identity

### 4.1 Aims and Objectives

The communication and outreach strategy should clearly define its overall purpose. In general, the aims of a communication strategy are to:

- Serve as a guiding tool for staff and partners on communication practices and outreach activities.
- Increase the visibility and understanding of an organization’s work, programmes, and impact.
- Build public trust and credibility by communicating transparently and consistently.
- Strengthen relationships with stakeholders and communities through clear and accessible information.

Example of objective: Establish a structured organizational communication system by developing a communication calendar, producing success stories monthly, and sharing quarterly highlights with stakeholders.

### 4.2 Target Audience

Effective communication requires identifying and understanding the key audiences that the organization wants to reach. These may include:

- General Public, communities, and local groups who may benefit from or interact with the organization’s work.
- Internal Audience – staff members, management, and partners who need clear internal communication and alignment.
- Duty Bearers and Decision Makers – government officials, policymakers, institutions, and development partners.
- Donors and Philanthropists – development partners, funding agencies, foundations, and individuals who support programmes financially and are interested in learning about results, impact, and responsible use of resources.

Understanding the needs, language, and expectations of each audience group helps tailor communication effectively.

### 4.3 Key Messages

Key messages are the core points of information that an organization wants to communicate to its audiences. These messages should be:

- Clear and concise, usually three to five simple sentences.

- Easy to remember and repeat.
- Focused on results, outcomes, and relevance.
- Aligned with the interests, areas of funding and concerns of the target audience.
- Adapted to suit different audiences in terms of language and detail.
- Action-oriented, encouraging awareness, engagement, or participation.
- Free from unnecessary jargon, technical language, or acronyms and can be understood by easily.
- Direct and factual rather than promotional slogans.

Examples: The following sample messages are provided as examples for a health awareness project on Tuberculosis. They demonstrate how simple, clear, and action-oriented key messages can be developed for community outreach.

### Message on Early Testing

- Cough for two weeks? Don't delay,
- Get tested early, start today.

### Message 2 – Complete Treatment

- TB medicines work, stay on track,
- Finish the course and don't turn back.

### Message 3 – Prevent Spread

- Cover your cough, let fresh air flow,
- Test early and stop TB's spread below.

## 4.4 Communication Strategies

Once the objectives, audiences, and messages are defined, organizations should determine the overall communication approach. Communication strategies focus on the broad methods and style of engagement rather than individual activities. Important elements to consider include:

- **Communication Style:** The method of communication should suit the context and audience. This may include face-to-face meetings, written materials, media engagement, or digital communication.
- **Tone of Communication:** The tone should match the purpose and audience. Communication may be informative, empathetic, motivational, or formal depending on the situation.
- **Spokesperson:** Selecting the appropriate spokesperson is important for credibility. This creates one clear line of communication from the organization internally and externally both. Better to assign communication role to senior person who is in close contact with organization leadership. The spokesperson should be knowledgeable about the organization's work and able to communicate clearly and confidently.

**Credibility and Accuracy:** Messages should be based on verified information and reliable data. The person delivering the message should have appropriate authority and understanding of the subject.

**Timing:** Timing plays an important role in communication effectiveness. Messages should be shared at times when the intended audience is most likely to engage with them. For example, digital platforms may have peak engagement hours, while community outreach may be more effective at specific times of the day.

### Traditional Communication Approaches

Traditional communication methods remain important, particularly for reaching communities with limited digital access. Traditional and digital methods together ensure wider and more inclusive communication reach. These may include:

- Community meetings, street theatres and dialogues
- Print materials such as brochures, posters, and newsletters
- Radio programmes and public announcements
- Workshops, seminars, walks and public events
- Engagement with local media

Digital communication approaches complement traditional methods by enabling faster information sharing, broader outreach, and greater engagement with diverse audiences. They are particularly useful for reaching younger populations, urban communities, and stakeholders who actively use online platforms. When combined with traditional communication, digital tools help strengthen the visibility and impact of messages. These may include:

- Social media platforms for awareness campaigns and storytelling (e.g., Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn)
- Websites and blogs for publishing updates, reports, and resources
- Email newsletters and digital mailing lists for regular stakeholder communication
- Webinars, virtual workshops, and online discussions.

Digital storytelling through videos, podcasts, and multimedia content. Messaging platforms such as WhatsApp or Telegram for community updates and coordination

### Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular monitoring helps assess whether communication efforts are effective. Evaluation findings should be used to improve future communication strategies and ensure resources are used effectively. Organizations should track:

- Audience reach and engagement
- Media coverage and digital analytics
- Feedback from communities and stakeholders
- Changes in awareness, attitudes, or participation

### Branding and Identity

A strong and consistent brand helps organizations communicate clearly and build recognition. A well-defined brand strengthens credibility, visibility, and trust among stakeholders. Branding should include:

- Consistent use of logos, colours, and visual identity
- Correct placement of donor logos (important to read donor logo guidelines).
- Clear messaging aligned with organizational values
- Consistency across reports, social media, publications, and events

## 5. Traditional Communication Approaches for CSOs

Traditional communication approaches are methods that civil society organizations (CSOs) have used for many years to inform communities, stakeholders, and partners about their activities, progress, and results. While digital media has grown rapidly in recent years, traditional communication methods remain relevant and effective, especially for reaching local communities and stakeholders with limited internet access. Some commonly used traditional communication approaches are outlined below.

**a) Press releases** are short announcements used to share important updates such as the launch of a programme, release of a report, signing of a partnership agreement, or completion of a major activity. Press releases should usually be short, clear, and not more than 500–600 words. They should highlight the key message and important outcomes.

**b) Photo releases:** use a strong photograph along with a short caption that summarizes the event or activity. Photo releases are often effective because they attract attention and are easier for newspapers or online platforms to publish.

**c) Media advisories** are brief notices sent to journalists to inform them about upcoming events, such as workshops, conferences, or community activities. They usually include basic details such as the date, location, purpose, and speakers.

- When preparing press releases, photo releases, or media advisories, CSOs should consider the following:
- Include the date, location, and a short description of the news or activity.
- Include quotes from relevant stakeholders, such as project leaders, community representatives, or partners.
- Place organizational and donor logos according to agreed branding guidelines.
- When donors or partner organizations are mentioned, their approval may be required before publication.
- Provide contact details of a focal person who can respond to questions from journalists or the public.

CSOs can share these materials with local newspapers, online media outlets, and news agencies to reach wider audiences.

### 5.1 Opinion Articles (Op-Eds) and News Columns

In addition to press releases, organizations can publish opinion articles (op-eds) in newspapers or online platforms. These articles allow experts, project leaders, or organizational representatives to share insights, lessons, and perspectives on important social or development issues. Op-eds help create public discussion and awareness about important issues and highlight the organization’s experience and knowledge.

For example, a CSO working on women’s economic empowerment may write an article on the importance of supporting women entrepreneurs in rural areas or the impact of community-based programmes. Learning Resource links for writing (Op-Eds) are given in Annex A Table – Communication Toolkit for CSOs

### 5.2 Radio and Television Programs

Radio and television remain powerful communication platforms, particularly for reaching wider and rural audiences. CSOs can participate in radio or television talk shows to discuss development issues, share programme results, or raise awareness about community challenges. These platforms are particularly useful when there is a major announcement, campaign, or awareness initiative. For example, a CSO working on climate

resilience may participate in a radio programme to discuss community preparedness for floods or droughts. Possible engagement approaches include:

- Partnering with local radio stations or television channels.
- Participating in talk shows or interviews related to social and development issues.
- Sharing stories that highlight community experiences and human-interest perspectives.

### 5.3 Press Conferences

Press conferences provide an opportunity for organizations to share detailed information and interact directly with journalists. CSOs may organize press conferences when:

- Launching a major report, campaign, or initiative
- Announcing significant programme achievements
- Sharing important research findings or policy recommendations

When organizing press conferences, CSOs should consider:

- Ensuring senior representatives or subject experts are present to speak.
- Preparing clear talking points, key facts, and supporting data.
- Inviting journalists who cover development, social issues, or community affairs.
- Providing information materials, such as press releases or fact sheets.

### 5.4 Events

Events are valuable opportunities to raise awareness, share knowledge, and engage stakeholders. These can include workshops, conferences, seminars, community dialogues/ walks, or programme launches. Well-planned events help organizations strengthen relationships and increase visibility.

When organizing events, organizations should:

- Clearly define the purpose and key message of the event.
- Prepare an agenda that outlines the sequence of activities, such as welcome remarks, presentations, discussions, and closing remarks.
- Invite relevant stakeholders, community representatives, partners, and media where appropriate.
- Decide whether the event will include media engagement, such as press briefings or press releases.

### 5.5 Brochures, Flyers and FAQs

Brochures and flyers are simple and effective tools used to share key information with communities and stakeholders. They can highlight programme activities, services offered, or key messages related to the organization's or CSO work. These materials are relatively low-cost and easy to distribute at community meetings, public offices, events, and partner organizations. Links to websites that offer free designing tools for simple brochure design are given in ANNEX A. To increase accessibility and reach:

- Materials should be available in local languages commonly spoken in the community.
- They can also be shared digitally through websites or social media platforms.
- Brochures may include a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section to help audiences understand the organization's work more clearly.

Example FAQ topics may include:

- What services or support does the organization provide?

- How can community members participate in programmes?
- How can individuals contact the organization for information or support?
- How can communities collaborate with the organization on local initiatives?
- What opportunities exist for volunteers or community engagement?

## 6. New Communication Approaches

### 6.1 Social Media

Social media platforms such as Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn have become important tools for civil society organizations (CSOs) to communicate with communities, partners, and stakeholders. These platforms allow organizations to share updates quickly, increase visibility of their work, and interact directly with the public. Unlike traditional media, social media also enables two-way communication, where audiences can comment, ask questions, and share feedback.

When creating social media posts, start with a short statement that highlights the problem to grab attention. Show a real human story to make it relatable and include one quick fact or statistic to support it. Use images or videos that are respectful, ethical, and relevant, and always avoid showing people in ways that exploit or stereotype them. Finish the post with your organization’s logo, website, or donor acknowledgement to build trust and credibility. Keep the language simple, clear, and easy for your audience to understand CSOs can use social media to achieve several objectives, including:

- Awareness: Share information about programmes, events, reports, and community initiatives.
- Engagement: Encourage dialogue with communities, volunteers, and stakeholders.
- Influence: Raise awareness about development issues and encourage positive attitudes and behavior.
- Action: Encourage people to participate in campaigns, events, or community activities.
- Social media can also help organizations highlight project results, share success stories, and acknowledge the role of partners, donors, and communities.

#### 6.1.1 Basic Guidelines for Responsible Social Media Use

Organizations should ensure that social media content is accurate, respectful, and aligned with the organization’s values. Some simple guidelines include:

- Ensure all information shared is factually correct and verified.
- Share information only when authorized by the organization.
- Avoid sharing confidential or sensitive information about individuals or communities.
- Obtain consent before sharing photos, videos, or personal stories of beneficiaries or staff.
- Always maintain respectful and professional language when communicating online.
- Avoid comments that may be politically biased, discriminatory, or offensive.
- Credit the original source of information, images, or data when sharing external content.
- Maintaining professionalism online helps protect the credibility and reputation of the organization.

#### 6.1.2 Moderating Social Media Pages

Organizations should regularly monitor and moderate their social media pages to ensure respectful discussions. The following practices can help manage social media platforms effectively:

- Ensure posts are relevant to the organization’s work and mission.
- Respond to comments and questions in a timely and professional manner.

- Remove comments that are abusive, offensive, discriminatory, or unrelated to the discussion.
- Encourage constructive dialogue and feedback from communities and stakeholders.
- Avoid sharing excessive personal information about staff or community members.

### 6.1.3 Guidelines for Public Contributions

When social media pages allow public comments, it is helpful to set clear rules for participation. These may include:

- Do not share personal contact details such as addresses or phone numbers.
- Keep comments relevant to the topic being discussed.
- Do not post offensive, abusive, or discriminatory content.
- Avoid spreading misinformation or unverified claims.
- Respect copyright and do not share material without permission.
- Avoid promotional or commercial advertisements in comments.
- Comments that violate these guidelines may be removed by page administrators, and repeated violations may result in restrictions.

**Credible Website development:** A well-designed website helps a CSO reach more people, share accurate information, and build trust with communities, partners, and donors. A good website also shows that the organization is professional, transparent, and credible.

### 6.1.4 Simple Guidelines for CSOs to Design and Post Website Content:

- Keep it simple and clear – Use short sentences, simple words, and easy-to-read fonts so everyone can understand your message.
- Highlight key information – Make important updates, programmes, or services easy to find on the homepage.
- Use visuals carefully – Include photos, videos, or graphics that are respectful and relevant. Always get consent before showing people.
- Update regularly – Keep content current with news, events, reports, or achievements so visitors see accurate information.
- Show credibility – Add your logo, partner or donor names, and contact details to build trust.
- Be accessible – Ensure your website works on phones and computers, and consider using local languages for your audience.
- Protect privacy – Do not share personal details of staff, volunteers, or beneficiaries without permission.
- Link to resources – Provide links to reports, toolkits, or partner websites for visitors to learn more.

### 6.1.5 Free Online Tools for Designing

Several free online tools are available that help organizations design visuals for social media posts, websites, reports, or posters without needing professional graphic design skills. One popular option is Canva, which provides ready-made templates and a simple drag-and-drop interface for creating social media graphics, presentations, and posters. Another useful platform is VistaCreate, which offers thousands of templates and design elements that allow users to easily produce banners, social media visuals, and marketing materials. Piktochart is particularly helpful for creating infographics, reports, and visual storytelling for development projects. For users who want more advanced image editing, Photopea works directly in a browser and supports common design formats like PSD, PNG, and JPG. Finally, PosterMyWall allows users to design posters, flyers, and social media graphics using customizable templates. These tools are mostly web-based and offer free versions,

making them accessible for local organizations and CSOs with limited resources. Resource links also given in ANNEX A. Sources:

- <https://www.canva.com>
- <https://create.vista.com>
- <https://piktochart.com>
- <https://www.photopoea.com>
- <https://www.postermywall.com>

## 7. Crisis Communication table for CSOs

Crisis communication for CSOs means sharing clear and timely information during an unexpected problem or emergency that affects your organization, the people you serve, or your reputation. The goal is to inform, reassure, and guide people while preventing confusion, rumors, or harm. This keeps the public informed, shows the CSO is responsible, and prevents misinformation.

**Example:** If a local community center faces flooding and some families are affected, a CSO might quickly post an update on social media and send messages to partners saying: “Our center is temporarily closed due to flooding. Staff are safe, and we are coordinating relief for affected families. Please contact us at [number] for assistance.”

A good crisis management response to any crisis requires a good crises communication strategy and its quick implementation, some recommended steps are given below:

Action / Means	Simple Requirements
Crisis Response Team	Form a small team (3–5 members) responsible for managing communication during a crisis. Include at least one senior staff member who can approve external communication. The team should prepare clear talking points and key messages explaining the situation and next steps.
Designated Spokesperson	Assign one trained spokesperson to communicate with media, partners, and the public. The spokesperson should remain calm, provide clear information, and avoid speculation.
Proactive Communication	Share timely and accurate updates to prevent confusion and rumours. Inform key stakeholders, donors, and partners early about the situation and how the organization is responding.
Media and Public Communication	Respond to media and public inquiries respectfully and transparently. If full information is not available, acknowledge the issue and inform that updates will be shared soon. Avoid saying “no comment.”
Clear Internal Process	Ensure staff know who to inform, when to report an issue, and how information should be shared during a crisis. Clear internal communication helps avoid misinformation.
Accountability and Monitoring	Monitor media coverage, public feedback, and stakeholder responses. Ensure communication remains accurate and aligned with the organization’s values.
Debrief and Learning	After the crisis, hold a short internal meeting to review what worked well and what could be improved. Document lessons learned for future crisis situations.
Transparency with Public	When appropriate, share verified updates, reports, or information through the website, social media, or briefings to maintain public trust.

## 8. Safeguarding and Data Protection Protocols for CSOs

Effective communication is essential for CSOs to share their work and engage communities. However, protecting the rights, privacy, and dignity of the people represented in stories, images, or data is equally important. This chapter provides simple guidelines on safeguarding, consent, and data protection.

### Consent Protocols

Consent is the foundation of ethical communication. Always obtain clear and informed consent before sharing anyone's story, photo, or video. Explain how the content will be used, where it will be shared, and for how long. Give individuals the option to decline without pressure, and keep a record of consent for accountability and reference.

### Image Dignity Rules

Images and videos should respect the dignity of the people portrayed. Avoid photos that stereotype, sensationalize, or humiliate vulnerable individuals. Show people as active participants rather than passive subjects of pity. Ethical imagery strengthens credibility and trust with communities and partners.

### Vulnerable Populations Guidance

Extra care is needed when communicating about children, women, or marginalized groups. Protect their identities and privacy to avoid exposure to harm. Always prioritize their safety and wellbeing over publicity and avoid using content that could make them vulnerable.

### Data Privacy Basics

Personal and sensitive information must be kept secure. Only share what is necessary for communication, avoiding names, addresses, phone numbers, or other identifying details without permission. Follow basic data protection principles to prevent misuse or unauthorized access.

### When NOT to Publish

CSOs must recognize situations where content should not be shared. Avoid publishing material that could put people at risk, violate consent, or breach privacy. Sensitive stories, legal cases, or crisis situations may require holding back content until it is safe and appropriate. When in doubt, seek guidance from senior staff or legal advisors.

## 9. Closing Note

This toolkit equips local CSOs with practical guidance to communicate effectively, build trust, and showcase their impact. By blending proven strategies, modern approaches, and essential safeguards, it offers a clear roadmap for meaningful engagement. CSOs can adapt these tools to their context, stay consistent in messaging, and focus on transparency and community connection. Strong communication, after all, is the bridge between action and lasting impact.



## ANNEX A

### Learning Resource Table – Communication Toolkit for CSOs

Category	Resource Title	Description	Learning Focus	Link
Brochure Design	NGO Brochure Design Guide	Step-by-step guide for creating NGO brochures	Structure, layout, messaging	<a href="https://www.fundsforngos.org/free-resources-for-ngos/brochures-ngos/">https://www.fundsforngos.org/free-resources-for-ngos/brochures-ngos/</a>
Brochure Design	Free Nonprofit Brochure Templates	Ready-to-use templates for CSOs	Design, formatting	<a href="https://www.kapwing.com/templates/brochure/non-profit">https://www.kapwing.com/templates/brochure/non-profit</a>
Visual Design	Open-Source Design Resources	Free lessons on visual communication	Typography, layout, visuals	<a href="https://opensource.design.net/resources/">https://opensource.design.net/resources/</a>
Publishing Tools	Open Publishing Toolkit for NGOs	List of free open-source software	Design tools, publishing	<a href="https://www.networklearning.org/100-network-learning-blog/news-from-ngos/35-toolkit-of-free-and-open-source-software-for-ngos">https://www.networklearning.org/100-network-learning-blog/news-from-ngos/35-toolkit-of-free-and-open-source-software-for-ngos</a>
Op-Ed Writing	Communications Toolkit – Writing Op-Eds	Templates and examples	Opinion writing, advocacy	<a href="https://www.storyofstuff.org/communications-toolkit/">https://www.storyofstuff.org/communications-toolkit/</a>
Op-Ed Writing	Op-Ed Writing Toolkit	Practical examples and format	Storytelling, structure	<a href="https://sites.google.com/view/op-eds-toolkit">https://sites.google.com/view/op-eds-toolkit</a>
Op-Ed Writing	Develop an Effective Op-Ed	Step-by-step writing guidance	Hook, argument, clarity	<a href="https://www.sfu.ca/communicators-toolkit/media-news/sharing-content/develop-op-ed.html">https://www.sfu.ca/communicators-toolkit/media-news/sharing-content/develop-op-ed.html</a>
Communication Resources	Nonprofit Communications Resources	Templates and planning tools	Strategy, messaging	<a href="https://www.evergreencomms.org/resources/">https://www.evergreencomms.org/resources/</a>