

GUIDELINE 6: Communicate effectively with migrants

Migrants need to understand potential risks associated with a crisis, where and how to obtain assistance, and how to inform stakeholders of their needs. Stakeholders should find appropriate channels to communicate with migrants and to identify their needs and capacities. To do so effectively, States, private sector actors, international organizations, and civil society should address language, cultural, and other barriers. The effects of crises, such as power failures, loss of internet and satellite communication systems, and even the deliberate spread of misinformation (for instance, by people smugglers) may disrupt or constrain communication with migrants.

Communication efforts should also take into account the diversity among migrants present in host States. Diverse, multiple, formal, and informal methods of communication can help overcome barriers to effective communication with migrants. Women migrants are a large majority of domestic workers worldwide. Due to the isolated nature of this work, women in domestic work are extremely vulnerable to abuse and exploitation, including physical and sexual abuse, forced labor, and confinement. In times of crisis, this vulnerability is exacerbated and they can be hard to reach via traditional communication channels. Fear of being detected, detained, or deported may inhibit migrants in an irregular immigration situation from accessing available communication channels. Migrant children can become unaccompanied or separated. They absorb information and communicate their needs in different ways than adults. Elderly migrants sometimes lack host-language capabilities. Migrants with disabilities may need braille, audio cues, and other disability-sensitive interventions. In the chaos that can ensue during crises, migrants in detention may be overlooked. Efforts to communicate with migrants should be sensitive to the predicaments of migrants in different circumstances.

Communication channels can take advantage of social media, places of worship, and migrants' connections with their families and communities in their States of origin. Enlisting and involving migrants and faith-based and other civil society in establishing communication methods, and promoting their ability to communicate with each other, can facilitate communication with migrants, including hard-to-reach and hard-to-engage populations. Health or outreach workers who are already present in the community may be able to communicate in the languages migrants speak and understand different cultures in the community. Engaging and training them may be an effective method to deliver information to migrant communities.

Sample Practices

- *Multiple traditional and innovative communication channels to reach diverse migrant populations and minimize the effects of possible communication disruptions.*
- *Multiple mediums for communication in the languages migrants speak, at diverse literacy levels, to accommodate ways in which people absorb information, including accessible formats for persons with disabilities.*
- *Mobile applications and social media as a cost-effective, user-friendly, and widely accessible mechanism to provide crisis-related information.*
- *Helplines, hotlines, and call centers as an accessible and low-tech means through which one-way or two-way communication with migrants can be facilitated.*
- *Communication by civil society, especially migrant networks, diaspora, and faith-based actors with migrants in an irregular immigration status and others who may be hard to access.*