# THE INCLUSIVE CRISIS COMMUNICATION CANVAS TOOL

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# Summary

The Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas Tool[1] is designed for disaster management agencies, such as emergency and rescue services, law enforcement, and providers of psychosocial support and health care.

The Canvas Tool helps these organisations improve their communication strategies and make crisis communication more inclusive, for example by:

- using language that is easy to understand for everyone regardless of their needs in terms of communication and social interaction
- choosing such communication methods and forums that make the shared information accessible to all people,
- lowering the threshold to contact and communicate with crisis managers,
- collaborating with the intermediaries of vulnerable people,
- collecting information about peoples' diverse needs in terms of communication, and thus mitigating communication-related vulnerabilities during crises.

**The Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas Tool is an easy-to-use, concise and free of charge tool that helps to improve your risk and/or crisis communication to be more inclusive and effective.**

[1] The Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas Tool has been based on the Business Model Canvas, developed in 2005 by Alexander Osterwalder. The original Business Model Canvas is distributed under a Creative Commons license from Strategyzer.com.

The Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas was developed in the EU-funded BuildERS project. This project has received funding from the European Union's H2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 83349. This document reflects only the authors' view and the European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.

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University of Stockholm

University of Stavanger

Institute of Transport Economics

University of Tarto

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University of Tübingen

Estonian Rescue Board

German Red Cross

Geonardo Environmental Technologies Ltd.

Autonomous Province of Trento, Civil Protection Department

Salvation Army

# Glossary

**Target audience** is the group of individuals to whom it is important to communicate information about risks or a crisis.

**Intermediaries** are individuals or organisations that connect crisis management officials with vulnerable people.

**Stakeholders** are organisations, communities and individuals who are the key partners in helping your organisation to communicate with and to ascertain the concerns of your target audience.

**Crisis communication** is the collection and processing of information for crisis management along with the creation and sharing of crisis related messages with people.

**Resilience** refers to processes of adjustment, adaptation and change enacted in everyday life, but in particular, in the face of risks, crises and disasters.

**Inclusivity** refers to practices and policies of providing equal access to opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise be excluded or marginalized.

**Information disorder** may develop as a result of mis-, dis- and malinformation.

**Misinformation** is confusing, misleading or false information that was not created with the intention of hurting others. However, it can still be harmful or even dangerous.

**Disinformation** is deliberately shared false or misleading information. It can be harmful or shared with severely destructive intent.

**Malinformation** is genuine, but still harmful information making individuals' situations more vulnerable in crisis. An example is a situation in which an information leak encourages hate speech or harassment targeted against some disadvantaged groups.

**Social vulnerability** is a dynamic characteristic of being susceptible to harm or loss, and an inability to access adequate resources and means of protection. Vulnerable people are less able to anticipate, cope with or recover from the impacts of natural or man-made hazards.

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# 1 Why the Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas Tool?

Does your organisation have a crisis communication plan that addresses peoples' diverse needs (e.g. elderly, persons with disabilities) regarding communication or social interaction?

Do you know which people could be more vulnerable than others in disasters, due to the limited accessibility of crucial information?

Do you know which people could be more vulnerable than others in disasters because they do not (fully) trust or believe the information you share?

Have you identified individuals, who could become vulnerable because you would not be able to (easily) reach them during disasters, for instance due to language barriers or geographical distance?

Have you identified stakeholders, who could be of help in reaching the above-mentioned vulnerable people during disasters, or when preparing for crises?

If you answered 'no' to one or more of the questions above, your organisation will benefit from embedding the Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas Tool in its communication strategy. **The Inclusive Communication Canvas Tool helps you to identify vulnerable individuals, necessary stakeholders and intermediaries, as well as several channels for two-way communication.**

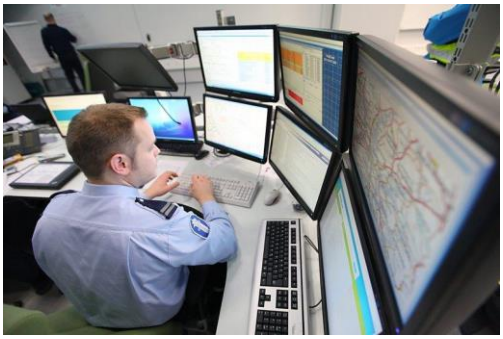


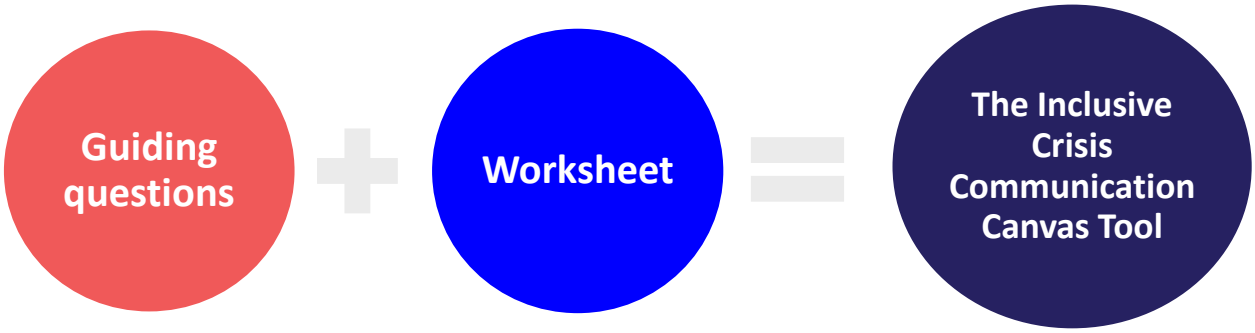
Image: Police University College, Finland

Perhaps your organisation already does have a crisis communication strategy or maybe your organisation is in the process of developing one.

In both cases, the Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas Tool is a supportive tool to improve your communication strategy design.

# 2 Here's how to start

The Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas Tool consists of two parts: **Guiding questions** for the strategic analysis process and a printable **Worksheet** to summarise the results of the analysis.




| | |
|---|---|
| **1** | **Answer the guiding questions**<br>• The guiding questions support you in planning the inclusive communication strategy<br>• You find the guiding questions in the chapter 3 |
| **2** | **Summarise your answers into the Canvas**<br>• Print out the Canvas Worksheet in order to work on it<br>• You find the printable Canvas Worksheet in the appendices of this document<br>• We recommend printing the Canvas Worksheet on A3 paper |

## Before starting to answer the guiding questions, take a look at the Canvas Worksheet

Below are the seven analysis sections of the Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas Worksheet: 1) Target audiences, 2) Aims and benefits 3) Methods and channels 4) Relationships with the Target audiences, 5) Key partners, 6) Key resources, 7) Key Activities.

1. Target audiences

2. Aims and Benefits of the Inclusive Crisis Communication

3. Methods and channels

4. Relationships with the Target audiences

5. Key partners

6. Key resources and Costs of the Inclusive Crisis Communication

7. Key activities in the Inclusive Crisis Communication

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After answering the guiding questions and printing the Worksheet, use sticky notes or index cards to edit the Canvas Worksheet or work through different scenarios. It is beneficial to complete the Canvas Worksheet in collaboration with the Stakeholders.

Once the Worksheet is finished, you have in your hands an Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas – a clear vision of what you want to achieve and a comprehensive inventory of your stakeholders, intermediaries, and communication channels.

# 3 The Guiding Questions

The Guiding Questions are a set of questions that help you to fill in the Canvas Worksheet. Below you will find seven topics with instructions, all of them including concise questions. After answering the questions, summarize the answers in the Canvas Worksheet.

## 1. Define your Target audiences

The purpose of defining the Target audiences is to identify individuals who are at risk to be forgotten in crisis communication and who may have difficulties to understand and adopt protective measures.

In other words, which people are the most vulnerable, if we look at a particular type of crisis scenario (e.g. pandemic, climate-related disasters, cyber crisis) from a perspective of communication?

Consider that some individuals may be vulnerable for several reasons (e.g., an immigrant elderly woman with hearing loss and Alzheimer's disease, who is not fluent in the local language).

Moreover, vulnerability is not homogenous, meaning that individuals with certain vulnerabilities may have different access to resources and support. For example, a disabled young adult living at their parents' home may have more support than those receiving social services once a day. However, the young adults may lack adequate support if their parents suffer from caregiver burnout.

Image: Police University College, Finland

Vulnerability is also dynamic – it may change. This means that new groups that need to be reached may emerge. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the main Target audiences were first the elderly and persons with severe illnesses, then foreign-language speakers. Later, youth and young adults who had not yet received a vaccination and/or were receiving and spreading false information on social media were focused on.

Image: Police University College, Finland

**Use the questions below to define your Target audiences in a particular type of crisis. For this it is helpful to prepare a fictional crisis scenario, and then use it as a source for the analysis. The fictional crisis scenario may relate e.g. to a flood, mobilisation of communities for conflicts, or the rapid spread of a pandemic. By using scenarios, crisis simulation or exercises, it is possible to test the crisis management before a crisis emerges.**

**The questions are meant to guide you. Therefore, you are invited to add questions help you to identify vulnerable individuals in crisis communication and to adapt this tool to your local circumstances.**

## TARGET AUDIENCES

**WHO SHOULD BE PRIORITISED**

Who is most affected by the crisis or exposed to this hazard?
Who has a very low capacity to cope with the crisis?
Who can share crucial information about the crisis?

**WHO IS AT RISK OF EXCLUSION**

Which individuals are at risk of not receiving necessary information due to our current methods and means of communication?

**POTENTIAL CHANGES AS THE CRISIS DEVELOPS**

With whom should we communicate when preparing for crises?
To whom should we reach out during the crisis response stage?
To whom should we reach out during the recovery stage?

# 2. Define the aims and benefits for crisis communication

What benefits does the Inclusive Crisis Communication have? Consider the perspective of vulnerable individuals: What will you do better? What do you try to achieve by communicating better with them?

**Consider here the different phases of the crisis:**

- **pre-crisis (e.g., time for increasing risk awareness)**
- **during crisis (e.g., urgent needs for safety measures)**
- **post-crisis (e.g., rebuilding societies and providing psychological support).**

**However, it is important to understand that all these phases overlap. When using a scenario, it is recommended to designate precise points in time for when the crisis is moving from one phase to the next (e.g. the onset of the underlying event and the end of the deployment of disaster relief services).**

| BENEFITS FOR THE TARGET AUDIENCES |
|---|
| **IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY**<br>How could your information be easier to reach and understand? |
| |
| **ADDRESSING PEOPLES' DIVERSE NEEDS**<br>How do you tailor messages for various kinds of individuals/groups? |
| |
| **ADJUSTABLE COMMUNICATION**<br>How do you support individuals/groups so that they are able to react appropriately to risk or crisis-related information? |
| |

# 3. Define your main communication methods and channels with the Target audiences

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Through which channels can we reach our Target audiences? Which channels are we (not) using? Note that the current means of communication in your organisation may not reach the Target audiences inclusively.

You may need to find new kinds of communication methods and channels. Consider formal and informal communication methods, accessibility, and intermediaries. **Utilise the checklist for mapping the channels in the end of this chapter.**

- Although it is not possible to know for sure which communication channels work best during times of crisis, it is useful to map the POTENTIAL communication forums in advance.
- It is also good to make an overview of different communication methods and channels and their potential audiences. This way you are better able to identify the gaps: who is not reached and why?
- Analyse, what kind of communication methods and channels would the stakeholders have access to?
- Analyse what communication forums are needed in different phases: before, during and after the potential crisis.
- It is recommended to analyse the available communication channels and methods in collaboration with the strategic communication management level of your organisation.

| | |
|---|---|
| **1** | **Assess the current communication channels**<br>• List your organisation's communication channels, as well as stakeholders' channels<br>• Describe the main audiences of the channels, how the channels work and which technologies and alternative formats (e.g. Braille, large print, audio) they use<br>• Assess for what purpose(s) they can be used: collecting information, sharing advice, warning people of hazards, creating trust, identifying first signals of crisis as well as other weak signals that may indicate significant change |
| **2** | **Imagine supportive communication channels**<br>• Go through the list of potential stakeholders<br>• Describe the main audiences of the stakeholders' communication channels<br>• Assess for what purpose(s) they can be used: collecting information, sharing advice, warning people of hazards, creating trust, identifying first signals of crisis as well as other weak signals that may indicate significant change<br>• Analyse and discuss with the stakeholders what type of cooperation would enable two-way crisis communication |

| **CHECK THE INCLUSIVENESS** |
|---|
| **CHANNELS ENABLING ENGAGEMENT**<br>Which channels foster social interaction and two-way communication?<br>Which channels are trusted by the members of the Target Audience? |
| |
| **ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION METHODS DURING DISRUPTIONS**<br>What methods could be used during power outages and other infrastructure disruptions, and/or to counter misinformation? |
| |
| **ACCESSIBLE CHANNELS**<br>Which channels share information in multiple languages?<br>Which channels share uncomplicated information (e.g. plain language)?<br>Which channels use alternative formats (e.g. sign language, tactile signing, audio format, large print, Braille code) for accessing the information?<br>Which channels gather information from the Target audiences?<br>Which channels do our Target audiences use to communicate with us? |
| |

## COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

- Use the checklist as a starting point in identifying communication channels
- Then, add other channels that are not covered in the list

**List of potential communication forums and channels**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ✓ Radio | ✓ Television | ✓ SMS |
| ✓ Face-to-face meetings | ✓ Events | ✓ Messaging apps |
| ✓ Formal visits | ✓ Informal visits | ✓ Q&A Sessions |
| ✓ Press conferences | ✓ Press releases | ✓ Public briefings |
| ✓ Free of charge - media | ✓ Paid media | ✓ Interviews |
| ✓ Posters | ✓ Advertisements | ✓ Blog posts |
| ✓ Activists | ✓ Social movements | ✓ Grassroots |
| ✓ Twitter | ✓ Facebook | ✓ Websites |
| ✓ TikTok | ✓ Instagram | ✓ LinkedIn |
| ✓ Pinterest | ✓ YouTube | ✓ Snapchat |
| ✓ Online forums | ✓ Jodel | ✓ **Social media influencers*** |
| ✓ Flickr | ✓ Reddit | ✓ Tumblr |
| ✓ Channels of international, national, regional and local stakeholders | | |

***) Don't know how to start collaborating with social media influencers? Take a look at our Guidelines for Collaborating with Social Media Influencers**

# 4. Analyse the quality and strength of relationships with the Target audiences

Do you organise inclusive awareness campaigns? Do you go to schools or public venues to spread information about your work? Do you work with intermediaries to spread information about your work? Do you organise open door events so the Target audience becomes familiar with your work? Does your Target audience believe what you say? Or do you need intermediaries to convince your Target audiences?

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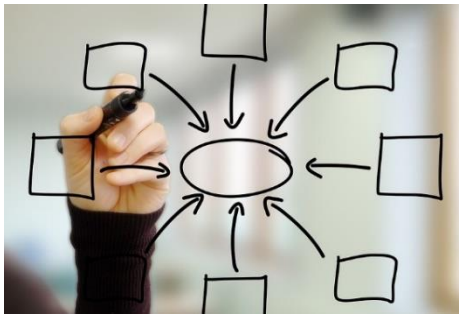
**If you are not known or trusted, your message may not be heard, understood, or accepted.**

**By analysing the relationships with the Target Audience, you will know how you can collaborate with the intermediaries.**

| QUALITY AND STRENGTH OF THE RELATIONSHIPS |
|---|
| **LEVEL OF TRUST**<br>Are you trusted as an organisation by your Target Audiences? |
| |
| **INTENSITY OF COMMUNICATION**<br>How often or regularly do you share information with your Target Audiences? |
| |
| **MANAGING FALSE AND HARMFUL INFORMATION**<br>Have you been able to mitigate the impacts of false/harmful information? |
| |

# 5. Identify the Key Partners

After the analysis of your communication needs and audiences, you can start to design your operational crisis communication model, and plan how to communicate.



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Now, based on the previous steps, think about which individuals, groups, organisations, and communities would be strategic partners in reaching the aims (specified in the step 2) and the Target Audiences (specified in the step 1). Use the Stakeholder Checklist below to discover potential Stakeholders.

Via which organisations or individuals could you reach your Target Audiences? Whom would your Target Audiences trust? Could the Key Partners help you to identify vulnerable individuals that you have not been aware of earlier? Whose messages would they listen to? Who would be able to collect information about their needs and overall situation – for example are they safe or might false information be placing them in harm's way?

- As every crisis is unique in terms of who is vulnerable, you cannot know for sure which individuals or organisations are the key intermediaries for vulnerable people.
- Yet, it is useful to map those stakeholders that can POTENTIALLY be contact points with various types of communities. This helps you to find the relevant intermediaries quicker when the crisis escalates.
- Remember that the potential role of intermediaries is to help reach people in a vulnerable situation AND build stakeholders' trust in your organisation and the information you share.
- Be as innovative as possible and consider both formal and informal groups and activities such as community advocates. Update the list of the Stakeholders regularly and actively seek out new partners.
- NOTE! Build networks and relationships with the various stakeholders as part of a risk management strategy BEFORE any crisis. Establishing cooperation during a crisis is easier if intermediaries are already familiar with your organisation, as well as its values, purpose, and working methods.

## POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS

- Use the checklist below as a starting point for identifying Stakeholders
- Then, seek for other Stakeholders that are not covered in the list

**Organisations, enterprises, social actors and activists working in the fields of…**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ✓ Youth work | ✓ Childhood education and care | ✓ Services for refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented immigrants |
| ✓ Family work (services to families) | ✓ Adult education | ✓ Faith-based services and initiatives |
| ✓ Playgrounds and family houses | ✓ Neighbourhoods' communities | ✓ Social entrepreneurship |
| ✓ Mental health issues and psychological support | ✓ Intercultural communication and tourism | ✓ Services and initiatives related to homelessness |
| ✓ Substance abuse issues | ✓ Cultural and linguistic minorities | ✓ Plain and easy-to-read language |
| ✓ Services for neurodiverse persons (like persons on the autistic spectrum) | ✓ Services and initiatives related to sexual and gender minorities (LGBTQ+) | ✓ Domestic violence |
| ✓ Services and initiatives related to disabilities | ✓ Humanitarian aid | ✓ Preventive policing and Community policing |
| ✓ Services and initiatives related to memory disorders | ✓ Human rights | ✓ Services for (former) prisoners |
| ✓ Media and information literacy | ✓ Social media and influencer marketing | ✓ Trade unions |

| PARTNERS' ABILITY TO IDENTIFY POTENTIALLY VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS |
|---|
| **Which partners could reach individuals without safe social support networks (like socially marginalised and/or excluded people; victims of domestic violence; youth who are not in education, employment, or training)?** |
| |
| **Which partners could reach individuals who lack trust towards authorities?** |
| |
| **Which partners could reach individuals who are not registered by service providers (e.g., homeless, irregular migrants, people living in sparsely populated areas)?** |
| |

**IMPORTANT:** In addition, make sure you include actors that **operate across several fields**, e.g. organisations providing service coordination and counselling for disabled immigrants and persons with chronic diseases; organisations that provide education for prisoners with learning difficulties or ADHD; actors that provide help for farmers who experience family violence in rural or remote areas. **Be innovative and find fresh perspectives.**

# 6. Define the Key resources of crisis communication

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The final guiding questions help to plan your actual communication processes.

Assessment of available and needed resources should be made carefully, and ensure that the inclusive communication strategy can really be implemented.

Consider both your own and potential partners' resources, and how these could complement each other.

## KEY RESOURCES OF COMMUNICATION

| **AVAILABLE RESOURCES FOR CRISIS COMMUNICATION**<br>What human, material, technological and financial resources are now available in your organisation for crisis communication in general? (E.g. crisis communication team members, social media officers, existing communication procedures, contacts and audiences.) |
|---|
| |
| **NEEDED RESOURCES FOR INCLUSIVE CRISIS COMMUNICATION**<br>What human, material, technological and financial resources do you need to achieve all your aims (specified during the 2nd step)? |
| |

## PARTNERS' RESOURCES

| **Go through each potential partner and summarise which kind of additional resources they could share with you?** |
|---|
| |
| **Assess as realistically as possible your ability to ask for those additional resources for the preparedness, response and recovery stages.** |
| |

# 7. Define the Key Activities in Inclusive Crisis Communication

In this phase, you specify your action plan. Go back to the step where you identified the aims and benefits (step 2). What do you need to do to achieve them?

Be creative. Many organisations already have several formal and informal activities for creating and maintaining dialogue between authorities and people. Utilising these activities as a resource of crisis communication may be beneficial.

In addition, consider how the spread of false and harmful information may jeopardize your actions. How can you handle that risk in your actions?

Image: Pixabay -image

## KEY ACTIVITIES

| |
|---|
| **MAIN ACTIONS**<br>What do you need to do to achieve your benefits and aims? |
| |
| **TACKLING INFORMATION DISORDER**<br>How do you combat false and harmful information? |
| |

**Now, use the Crisis Communication Canvas Worksheet to summarize your answers. The Inclusive Crisis Communication Tool is a dynamic tool: update it regularly, revise it if needed, be receptive to new ideas and different opinions, and learn along the way.**

# 4 Recommendations

You may use the Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas Tool to complement your current crisis communication strategy and find new ways to collaborate with relevant stakeholders.

We hope that you find the tool useful, and that it helps you to better address peoples' diverse needs regarding risk and crisis communication.

As the tool is still in the prototype phase, we encourage you to innovate technological solutions that would make the tool more convenient to use. For instance, it would be beneficial to create a technological tool that would replace the paper worksheets. Furthermore, the stakeholder database should be online and allow the end-users to easily update all contact information.

# 5 Background

The Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas Tool has been based on the Business Model Canvas, developed in 2005 by Alexander Osterwalder. The original Business Model Canvas is distributed under a Creative Commons license from Strategyzer.com.

In the EU-funded Unity project (2015–2018 – before the BuildERS project started), the Police University College of Finland utilised the Business Model Canvas as an inspiration in the design of a tool for community policing. The tool, called *Service Design Canvas for Community Policing* (SDCCP), helps local police units to address and prioritise the needs of communities and citizens. Similar to the Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas tool, the SDCCP tool assisted in the definition of the main communication and contact channels with the above-mentioned stakeholders.

In the BuildERS -project we decided to avail the previous good experiences of the above mentioned SDCCP in creating a corresponding tool to help first responders use more inclusive crisis communication strategies. Our aim was to create a practical and user-friendly tool that would synthesise several of the key outcomes of the BuildERS project in a coherent and understandable way. SWOT, PESTEL or other environmental analysis methods can be used together with the Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas Tool to analyse various factors of the crisis communication.

The development of the Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas Tool started from drafting the guidelines and a 'Canvas' template for the first responders and crisis managers. The Canvas tool and the Guidelines were piloted by four of the BuildERS projects' first responder partners during October and November 2021. The pilot took place in Germany, Italy, Estonia, and the UK.

This prototype was developed based on the pilot results and can serve as inspiration for your own initiatives and actions. In case your organisation is interested in further co-development of this tool with us, please contact:

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Please see the publications below for further information:


Hansson S., Orru K., Siibak A., Bäck A., Krüger M., Gabel F. and Morsut C. (2020) Communication-related vulnerability to disasters: A heuristic framework, International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction, 51, December 2020, 101931, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2020.101931

Hansson S., Orru K., Torpan S., Bäck A., Kazemekaityte A., Frislid Meyer S., Ludvigsen J., Savadori L., Galvagni A. and Pigrée A. (2021) COVID-19 information disorder: six types of harmful information during the pandemic in Europe, Journal of Risk Research 34 (3-4), https://doi.org/10.1080/13669877.2020.1871058

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Kuran Christian, Morsut Claudia, Nævestad Tor-Olav, Gabel Friedrich, Segnestam Lisa, Kruke Bjørn Ivar, Orru Kati, Airola Merja, Keränen Jaana, Hansson Sten, Torpan Sten (2020). Vulnerability and vulnerable groups from an intersectionality perspective. International journal of disaster risk reduction, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2020.101826

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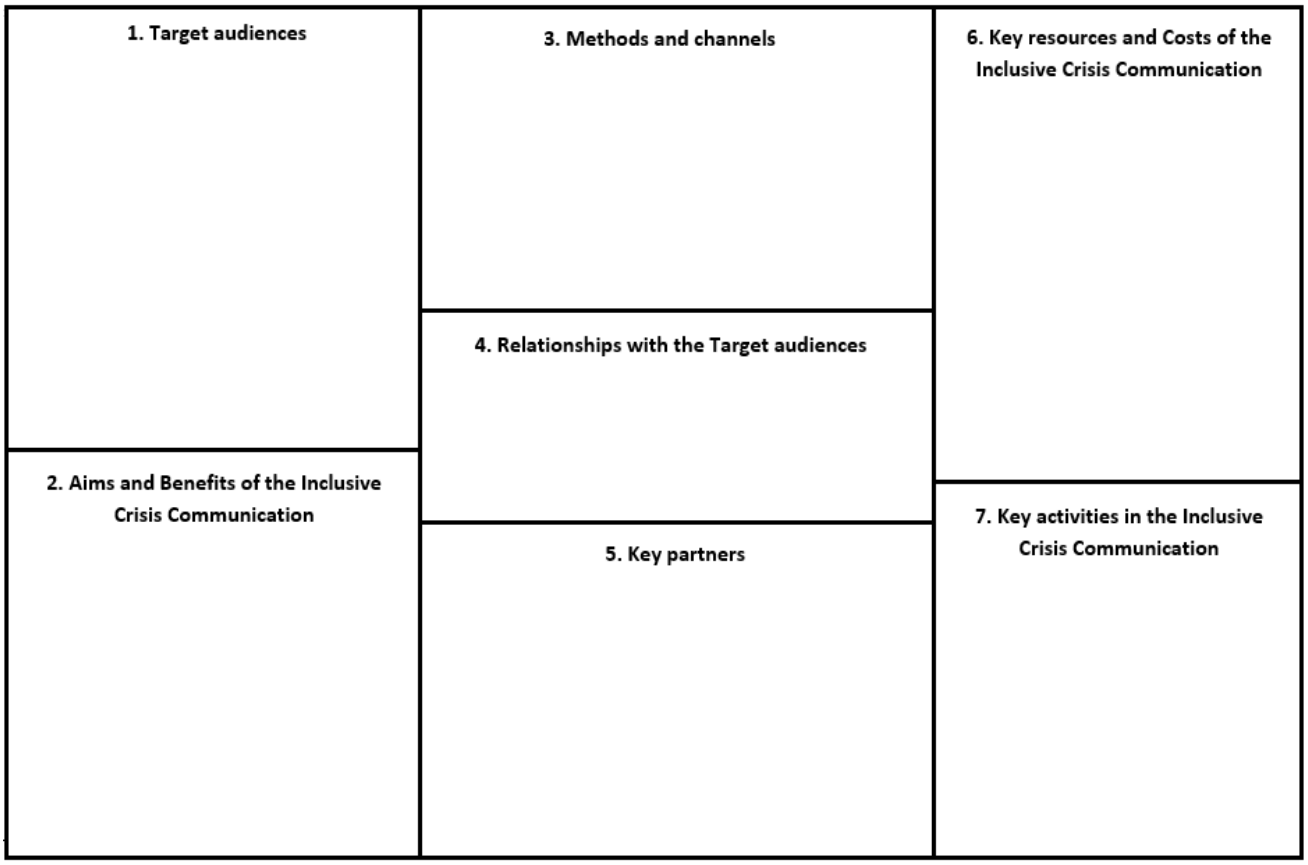
## The Inclusive Crisis Communication Canvas

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