

Field Key Messages

TITLE Field Key Messages, authorized by the Humanitarian Coordinator
PRODUCT OWNER Humanitarian Coordinator (HC)
FOCAL POINT Regional/Country Public Information Officer (PIO)
PURPOSE	<p>..... Field Key Messages articulate the HC’s official position regarding an acute crisis or chronic emergency. The messages enable OCHA to shape communications so that the Humanitarian Country Team speaks with a unified voice.</p> <p>Field Key Messages are also a valuable information and advocacy tool for OCHA staff and the humanitarian community when communicating with external partners such as the media, donors, regional entities and the affected national Government.</p> <p>Field Key Messages can also provide substantive input to Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) Key Messages that are distributed to OCHA’s humanitarian partners and donors at the global level.</p>
TRIGGER	<p>..... Field Key Messages should be developed as a standard product in all locations where OCHA has a presence and the HC agrees to them.</p> <p>..... At the onset of a new crisis or the deterioration of an ongoing emergency, these messages should be updated on the advice of the country or regional PIO in consultation with the HC and the Head of Office (HoO). The HC has the final decision as to whether the situation merits Field Key Messages.</p> <p>..... In general, developing or updating Field Key Messages should be considered within the first 48 hours of an emergency in which a situation report is issued, or if there is significant media interest in the emergency.</p> <p>..... If there is a humanitarian emergency in an area with no OCHA presence, the regional PIO is responsible for advising the Resident Coordinator (RC) of the need for Field Key Messages and coordinating their development.</p>
FREQUENCY The HoO should decide how often Field Key Messages are updated and when to phase them out. This is done in consultation with the country or regional PIO and the HC.
AUDIENCE The main audiences are the Humanitarian Country Team, OCHA staff working on or in the country or region concerned, clusters, donors, agency spokespersons, United Nations Information Centres and in-country peacekeeping or political spokespersons.

CONTENT

- The PIO should develop Field Key Messages in collaboration with other OCHA staff, the Inter-Cluster Coordinator and the Humanitarian Country Team. The Coordination and Response Division (CRD) Desk Officer and the spokespersons at Headquarters may also provide input.
- For sudden-onset emergencies, Field Key Messages should highlight the main concerns of the Humanitarian Country Team, and respond to the main questions asked by the media and donors. In chronic emergencies, the content can be supplemented by strategic documents such as a humanitarian appeal or common messages developed in contingency planning, or by the local United Nations Communications Group (UNCG).
- Field Key Messages sent to donors should never include the internal guidance section “If Asked”, which is usually presented as Questions and Answers. These are prepared questions and responses to difficult questions that the media might ask. All internal guidance is always in italics and on a separate page to the Field Key Messages.

CLEARANCE

The final draft of the Field Key Messages should be sent to the CRD Desk Officer and the spokespersons at Headquarters for any final feedback. The Reporting Unit Editor can also do a final edit of the document on request. The final product should then be cleared by the HoO and then submitted to the HC for clearance.

DISTRIBUTION

The OCHA office disseminates Field Key Messages via e-mail on behalf of the HC. They should never be posted on a public website, but should be made available on an in-country Intranet and OCHA.net.

The subject line of the e-mail should read: “[Name of crisis] Key Messages, authorized by the Humanitarian Coordinator, (issue x)”. Field Key Messages should be attached as a PDF file to prevent alteration.

In the body of the e-mail, explain the purpose of the product and highlight the main messages so that busy readers can access the information without having to open the attachment.

Dear colleagues,

Please find attached (insert name and issue of Key Messages), authorized on behalf of the Humanitarian Coordinator. These messages provide strategic communications advice on humanitarian issues and are developed in collaboration with the Humanitarian Country Team. They enable the humanitarian community to speak with a unified voice and should be used when communicating to the media.

The main messages are:

- Key Message
- Key Message
- Key Message

Best regards
 Head of Office
 Country

The distribution list should include the Humanitarian Country Team, cluster coordinators, OCHA staff in-country, PIOs from partner organizations and peacekeeping or political mission spokespersons. Also copy relevant staff in the OCHA Regional Office and neighbouring OCHA Country Offices; the relevant Desk Officer; the Front Office; the Chief and Deputy Chief of the Communications and Information Services Branch (CISB); and the OCHA spokespersons. It is at the HC’s discretion to distribute to donors in-country.

TRANSLATION

..... Field Key Messages should be distributed in English and in the working language(s) of the country. It is the responsibility of the Country or Regional Office to provide translation.

EXCEPTIONS

..... For a regional crisis, country inputs are sent to the regional PIO for consolidation. In this case, the OCHA Regional HoO is responsible for clearance. Reference to HCs should be removed in the Key Message template. The regional PIO is responsible for distribution to partners at the regional level and for copying the Desk Officer, the Front Office, the Chief of CISB, the OCHA spokespersons and the relevant OCHA Country Offices. It is the OCHA Country Offices' responsibility to disseminate them locally.

..... Field Key Messages can also be used for emergencies in RC countries with no HC. In this case, the regional PIO is responsible for drafting Field Key Messages on behalf of the RC and in collaboration with the Disaster Management Team. If a local UNCG is established, the Key Messages should be developed in this forum. A UNCT Key Messages template is available on OCHA.net.

FEEDBACK

..... An audience survey should be conducted annually to receive feedback on the product's value. To create a survey with SurveyMonkey [www.surveymonkey.com], e-mail ServiceDeskOCHA@un.org for the necessary account information.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER
OCHA PRODUCTS

..... **ERC Key Messages** are developed on behalf of the ERC in his/her role as the global advocate. They are issued when the response to a large-scale humanitarian crisis has a political dimension and is attracting significant media interest. Field Key Messages can form the basis of ERC Key Messages when needed. For more information on this product, see the ERC Key Messages product guidance on OCHA.net.

Field Key Messages Checklist

- 1. Does each message advocate specific change or action, or a key concern?
- 2. Is the information timely and relevant?
- 3. Are there no more than seven key messages in the document, or is it no more than 1.5 pages long?
- 4. Does the information represent the position of the Humanitarian Country Team?
- 5. Are relevant contact details listed?
- 6. Have you shared the messages with the relevant HQ sections?
- 7. Has the HC approved the messages?
- 8. Does the accompanying e-mail follow the standard format included in the guidance?
- 9. Have you used the standard template?
- 10. Has the document been posted on OCHA.net?