



Communications is capacity

Align message, audience,
and channel to share
multi-stakeholder
organisational stories

Table of contents

Preface	4
Introduction	6
Start before choosing a channel	7
Understanding communication channels	7
How to use these channels	9
Ethics and safeguards	12
Using communication channels for internal communication	12
Reviewing and improving your communication	13
What you can do next	14
Conclusion	18

Preface

For many non-profit organisations, communications often sits at the edge of the work—something done after programmes are implemented, reports are written, or events are completed. Yet communications is not an add-on. It is a core institutional function that connects programmes, strategy, partnerships, and public understanding of the work. When approached this way, it helps build trust, strengthen relationships with communities and funders, and ensure that efforts reach the people they are meant to serve.

Many grassroots organisations in India are doing significant work but face challenges in communicating their impact—often due to limited budgets, small teams, or the absence of structured communication systems. Developed through a partnership between Axis Bank Foundation and India Development Review (IDR), with IDR serving as the knowledge partner, this playbook is part of a series of seven that aims to provide practical, accessible guidance organisations can use regardless of size or resources. Together, the playbooks are designed to walk non-profits through the essential building blocks of organisational communications.

This playbook, titled *Align message, audience, and channel to share multi-stakeholder organisational stories*, helps readers understand how different communications channels work and offers quick tips on deciding when to use which channel, including social media.

These playbooks are not meant to be read only once or followed in a strict order. Organisations can return to them at different stages of their communications journey, using them as references while planning campaigns, documenting programmes, or strengthening internal communication systems.

At the end of each playbook, you will find short exercises and reflective prompts designed for teams to discuss together. These are meant to help organisations pause and reflect on their current practices, and consider how communications can better support their mission and goals.

Used together, these playbooks aim to help organisations treat communications not as a separate activity, but as a system that strengthens the work they already do.

Introduction

In the previous playbook, you learned how to write strong case studies that combine stories and evidence to demonstrate impact. The next step is deciding where and how those stories should be shared.

How often have you heard someone say, “We should post this on Instagram,” or “Let’s share this as a case study with our donors”?

For non-profit organisations, telling your story is as important as doing the work on the ground. The challenge is not the lack of tools. It is choosing the right channels for the right purpose.

Communication tools can be thought of as bridges. They connect your mission to the people who care about it—your stakeholders. The right channels help your stories travel further, inspire action, and build trust. The wrong ones can stretch limited capacity without delivering meaningful results.

Not every channel is right for every audience. With clear goals and planning, organisations can choose tools that amplify their voice without spreading themselves too thin.

How to use this playbook

This playbook will help your organisation move from posting content reactively to choosing communication channels strategically.

- Read it with communications, programme, and leadership teams to reflect on how your organisation currently shares information.
- Use the guiding questions to identify your audience, message, and objective before selecting a channel.
- Review the channel table to understand what each platform is best suited for.
- Use the exercise at the end to assess whether your current channels match your communication goals and capacity.

By the end of this section, readers should be able to:

- Understand how communication channels support different communication goals.
- Identify the audiences their organisation is trying to reach.
- Select channels that align with their message and objective.
- Use communication tools more intentionally and effectively.

I. Start before choosing a channel

1. Who is the audience?

Different audiences consume information in different ways. Non-profit organisations often communicate with donors, community members, government stakeholders, media, partners, and internal teams. Each group may prefer different communication channels.

A message that works well for one audience may not work for another. Clarity about who you want to reach should guide how you communicate.

2. What is your message?

Not all communication serves the same purpose. Your message might be a story from the field, a programme update, research findings, or a fundraising appeal. The type of message often determines which channel will work best.

The type of message should guide the channel you choose.

3. What action do you want people to take?

Communication should ideally lead to a next step. For example, audiences may be encouraged to donate, attend an event, learn more, or share the message.

The most effective communication channels make it easy for audiences to act.

II. Understanding communication channels

PAUSE AND REFLECT

Before choosing a communication channel, consider the following:

- Who is the primary audience for this message?
- What information are you trying to share?
- What action do you want people to take?

Non-profits today have access to a wide range of communication channels—both digital and offline. Each channel serves a different purpose. Some are useful for building visibility and awareness, while others support deeper engagement or information sharing.

The table below provides an overview of commonly used communication channels in the non-profit sector. It is meant to support decision-making, not prescribe use.

Each channel serves a different purpose and is suited to specific audiences and types of content. The strengths and limitations outlined here can help organisations assess which channels are most relevant to their goals, context, and capacity.

Organisations do not need to use all these channels. Instead, this table can be used to:

- Compare options before selecting channels
- Understand what each channel is best suited for
- Anticipate challenges or limitations in advance

By offering clarity on audience, message, and objective, this table can help organisations prioritise a smaller number of channels and use them more effectively.

Channel	When to use	Audience	Strengths	Challenges
Facebook	For building communities, events, and awareness	Volunteers, rural communities, general public	Broad reach, visual, supports many languages, supports community outreach	Changing algorithms, needs regular posting to keep momentum
Instagram	Visual storytelling, showcasing stories through reels and visuals	Youth, general public	Youth-friendly, visual, widely used	Needs a strong visual identity, consistency in posting, video content for reels, staying updated with trends, and to keep up with the platform audience
LinkedIn	For professional updates, partnerships and talent scouting, building thought leadership	General ecosystem professionals, partners, funders, policy stakeholders	Builds credibility with partners, donors, ecosystem-at-large	Engagement can be limited; it needs to maintain a tone distinct from other platforms
X (formerly Twitter)	For real-time updates, engaging with media, advocacy	Journalists, policymakers, advocacy leaders	Real-time reach, builds visibility among opinion influencers and leaders	Rapid content turnover, limited character count
WhatsApp	For community mobilisation, quick updates, and small group communication	Field teams, community groups, programme participants	Personalised reach, quick and direct communication	Needs to be moderated
Website	For detailed content, information, and long-term reference	Donors, partners, media, general public	Permanent record, central hub for all communications	Needs regular updates and maintenance
Email / Newsletter	For consistent updates and engagement	Donors, partners, staff,	Direct, personal, measurable	Risk of low open rates, mailing list needs to be updated

	with existing supporters	long-term supporters		and maintained on a regular basis
Print materials (posters, flyers, brochures, reports)	For areas and audiences with limited digital access, handy collateral for lasting visibility	Grassroots partners, community partners, event participants	Tangible, trustworthy, easy to distribute in person	Printing costs, not possible to update
Events (in-person or virtual), webinars, convenings, workshops	For building relationships, exchange of ideas	Programme staff, partners, community members, funders, government stakeholders	In-person connection, experiential, long-lasting impression	Resource-intensive, needs planning
Media/PR (newspapers, podcasts, TV)	For credibility and broad public reach	General public, policymakers, government stakeholders, funders	Third-party validation, broad base for reach	Limited control over message, requires media relationships

III. How to use these channels

Using communication channels effectively requires adapting the same content for different platforms and audiences.

A single piece of content, such as a case study, can be shared across multiple channels when it is presented in ways that suit each medium.

Social media: For social media, longer stories can be broken into shorter, platform-specific pieces. On visual platforms, photographs and short quotes help draw attention, while professional platforms benefit from highlighting key insights, data points, or lessons learned. Posts aimed at building community engagement often work best when they are simple, personal, and easy to relate to.

Website: Websites are well suited for hosting complete stories and detailed information. Case studies can be presented as part of a dedicated section, supported by photographs, short videos, or infographics. Additional context or background can be provided through blog posts or updates linked to the main story.

Media engagement: Media engagement requires a different approach. Rather than sharing full organisational narratives, it is more effective to identify one specific story or insight that is relevant to a wider audience. Pitches should focus on why the issue matters, rather than on describing the organisation's work in detail.

Case studies: Case studies can also be used in workshops, presentations, or discussions. Visuals, short quotes, and examples from the field can help illustrate key points and support conversations around programmes, processes, or learning.

The same principle applies across channels: adapt content to the platform, audience, and purpose to extend reach while keeping communication focused and manageable.

What works versus what doesn't on each platform

Facebook

Facebook works best for complete storytelling and community engagement. Its audience tends to be older and more willing to read longer posts.

What works

- **Share the full story in the caption**

Posts with 200–400 words paired with one strong image often perform better than graphics followed by “Read more on our website.”

- **Upload videos directly to Facebook**

Videos posted natively tend to reach more people than links to external platforms.

- **Use multiple images to show progression**

Posts that show a sequence—such as preparation, implementation, and results—encourage people to pause and engage.

- **Highlight real people and experiences**

Specific stories create stronger connections than general programme descriptions.

- **Respond to comments early**

Engagement in the first hour helps increase visibility.

What does not work

- **Posting external links as the main content**

Facebook often deprioritises posts that direct users away from the platform.

- **Using short, minimal captions designed for other platforms**

Facebook audiences tend to engage more with reflective content.

- **Posting irregularly**

Consistency matters more than occasional high-effort posts.

Instagram

Instagram is a visual-first platform where immediacy and authenticity matter. Content performs best when it feels real and current, rather than overly produced.

What works

- **Prioritise short videos (Reels)**

Videos between 30–90 seconds often perform well.

- **Use Stories for behind-the-scenes moments**

Stories work well for field visits, event preparation, or quick updates.

- **Use carousels to tell a visual story**

Posts with several images that unfold a narrative often see higher engagement.

- **Keep captions short and conversational**

Visuals do most of the storytelling.

- **Maintain visual consistency**

A recognisable style helps audiences identify your content.

What does not work

- **Text-heavy graphics**

Posts that require reading dense text are often skipped.

- **Irregular posting**

Long gaps reduce visibility.

- **Overly polished, corporate-style content**

Simple, authentic field footage often performs better.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a professional platform where reflection, learning, and insight are valued. Audiences here respond well to experience and perspective, rather than promotion.

What works

- **Post from individual profiles when possible**

Content shared by organisational leaders or staff often reaches more people.

- **Lead with outcomes or insights**

Start with a result or observation, then explain the learning.

- **Share challenges and lessons**

Posts that reflect on what did not work can build credibility.

- **Use PDF carousel posts**

Short slide decks summarising insights or case studies often perform well.

- **Write longer, reflective posts**

LinkedIn audiences engage more with thoughtful analysis than quick updates.

- **Engage through comments**

Responding to discussions increases visibility and strengthens networks.

What does not work

- **Direct fundraising appeals**

LinkedIn works better for relationship-building and thought leadership.

- **Stories without reflection**

Personal experiences should be paired with insights.

- **Copying content from other platforms**

LinkedIn has a different tone and audience.

Effective use of communication channels depends less on following trends and more on aligning content, audience, and organisational capacity.

V. Ethics and safeguards

Before sharing content publicly, organisations should ensure that consent has been obtained in a way that is informed and voluntary. People should understand where their story or image will appear and how it may be used. Consent should never be assumed, even when participation in a programme is ongoing.

Communication should also avoid reinforcing stereotypes or presenting individuals only through hardship. Stories are most respectful when they recognise agency, context, and dignity, rather than reducing people to beneficiaries or symbols of impact.

VI. Using communication channels for internal communication

Internal communication includes messages and interactions that occur *within* the organisation—between management, teams, and employees. Typically, the purpose of internal communications is to share information and updates about the organisation’s work and impact, align the team’s efforts and purpose with strategic plans, motivate staff, and build a culture of inclusivity.

Some tools for strengthening internal communication include the following:

Slack/Microsoft Teams

- For real-time communication, team discussions, and quick updates.
- Conversations and discussions remain saved and can be searched for when needed.
- Both options need to be moderated.

Google Drive/SharePoint

- Useful for sharing and storing documents, collaborative editing, and accessibility.
- Requires consistent organisation and management; permissions have to be managed.
- Encourages transparency.

Team group emails

- For official and organisation-wide announcements.

- Formal, trackable, and reliable for key communication.
- Works best for structured updates.

WhatsApp Groups

- For quick coordination among field teams.
- Immediate and accessible in low-connectivity environments.
- Not ideal for formal communication.

VII. Reviewing and improving your communication

Communication becomes more effective when organisations pay attention to how people respond and use that feedback to adjust their approach. Learning from communication does not require complex systems, but it does require regular review and reflection.

Different communication channels offer different signals about how audiences engage with your content.

Examples of signals across channels

- **Social media:** comments, shares, direct messages, or repeated engagement from the same users.
- **Website:** page visits, time spent on key pages, report downloads, or enquiries submitted through contact forms.
- **Email:** open rates, click-through rates, and replies that show whether the content is being read and acted upon.
- **Media coverage:** mentions in publications, follow-up requests from journalists, or the quality and relevance of coverage.

Simple tools are often enough—focus on noticing patterns over time rather than tracking everything.

Quick recap

Strategic communication means choosing the right channel for the right purpose rather than sharing content everywhere. By first identifying the audience, message, and intended action, organisations can select communication tools that help their stories reach the people who

What you can do next

Choosing the appropriate channel

This exercise helps your team think through how communication channels are currently being used and whether they are aligned with your organisation's goals, audiences, and capacity.

Use the prompts below to reflect on your current practices and identify areas for improvement.

Step 1: Identify your purpose

Before choosing a channel, clarify what you want the message to achieve.

What do you want this piece of information to do?

- Share learning or insights from your work
- Inform stakeholders about programme updates
- Demonstrate impact to donors or partners
- Engage communities or participants
- Build visibility or credibility for the organisation
- Mobilise support or resources
- Other: _____

Step 2: Identify your audience

Different channels work better for different audiences.

Who is this communication for?

- Donors and funders
- Partner organisations
- Community members or programme participants
- Policymakers or sector leaders
- Media or public audiences
- Internal staff or programme teams
- Other: _____

Step 3: Choose the right channel

Use the table below to identify which channels are most appropriate.

Message or story	Audience	Possible channels	Why this channel works

Examples of channels may include:

- Website
- Social media (LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook)
- Email newsletters
- Case studies or reports
- Flyers or brochures
- WhatsApp groups
- Community meetings
- Workshops or convenings
- Media engagement

Step 4: Reflect on capacity

Even when a channel seems appropriate, it should align with your organisation’s capacity.

Ask yourself:

- Do we have the time and skills to maintain this channel consistently?
- Can we update it regularly with meaningful content?
- Does it help us reach the audiences we prioritise?

Channels we should prioritise:

Channels we may need to reconsider or reduce:

90-day action plan

Create a 90-day action plan for using communication channels more effectively based on the plan below:

Objective	Key action	Timeline
Take stock of existing and prioritise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List all communication channels currently in use (online and offline). • Identify the primary purpose of each channel. • Identify key audiences for each channel. • Clarify who currently manages or contributes to each channel. • Select two to three priority channels to focus on. 	Day 1–30
Improve quality and consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on the type of content each priority channel will carry. • Set a realistic frequency for each channel. • Repurpose existing content rather than creating new material. • Agree on basic norms for tone, visuals, and language. • Begin light monitoring of responses and engagement. 	Day 31–60
Review, learn, and adjust	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review engagement, feedback, and responses across channels. • Discuss what is working and what is difficult to sustain. • Identify one or two small adjustments (format, frequency, or focus). • Decide which channels to continue, adapt, or pause. • Document key learnings. 	Day 61–90

Conclusion

The most effective communication strategies do not rely on more channels; they rely on the right ones, used consistently and with purpose.

When every story, post, or update aligns with your mission and audience, communication not only serves as outreach but also creates and enables impact.

- Refer to the playbook *Write case studies that show your organisation's impact through stories and data* on how to write a case study to know more about ethical considerations while drafting content and taking photographs.
- See the playbook *Assess strengths, understand gaps, and prioritise your organisation's communications* to understand where your organisation stands on ownership and responsibilities of communications activities.

**KNOWLEDGE
PARTNER**

India Development Review (IDR)
