
A CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR MUNICIPALITIES: THE CASE OF THE FRANCES BAARD DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

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ABSTRACT

A crisis communication plan facilitates the effective flow of information between relevant organisation(s) and a community affected by a crisis. In 2010 the Frances Baard District Municipality, situated in the Northern Cape, commissioned the development of a crisis communication plan for the municipality. It was to be developed in consultation with various stakeholders. Once developed, the plan had to be reviewed and serve as an educational document that could be used by other municipalities. The study found that drafting a crisis communication plan has to include best communication practices for each anticipated problem and effective implementation. Continuous evaluation and updating of the plan are necessary to ensure that critical business functions are not jeopardised in the event of a crisis.

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INTRODUCTION

The Integrated Development Plan 2010/2011 of the Frances Baard District Municipality (FBDM) states that public participation is a prerequisite for sustainable development and it is on this premise that the municipality developed a communications strategy. Creighton (2005: 2) supports the significance of public participation as an organised process that goes beyond the creation of sustainable development to provide accountability and assistance with decision-making in a democratic system. The FBDM communication strategy highlighted the need for a crisis communication plan. In 2010 a crisis communication plan was developed in cooperation with lecturers from the University of the Free State and the director of a marketing and communication company.

The background of the crisis communication plan is the South African Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002 (DPLG 2008). The focus of the crisis communication plan was on different sections, subsections and paragraphs within subsections from the above-mentioned Act. These sections highlight the importance of having a crisis communication plan in municipalities: The first section 16(1)-(3) states that the National Disaster Management Centre must establish communication links with disaster management role players. The Act also highlights this importance for Provincial and Municipal Disaster Management Centres in section 39(2) (k) (iv) (v) and section 53 (2) (k) (iv) (v). The second section 17(1)-(4) states that the National Disaster Management Centre must act as a repository of and conduit for information concerning disasters and their management. A crisis communication plan must also be guided by other pieces of legislation such as the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, The White Paper on Local Government 1998, the Municipal Structures Act 1998, the Municipal Systems Act 2000, and the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2000.

Following the original development of the crisis communication plan in 2010, the researchers reviewed and analysed various components of the FBDM crisis communication plan to determine whether it met the requirements. The purpose of this article is to educate other municipalities on 1) how to draft a crisis communication plan; and 2) to understand the crisis communication best practices for effective implementation.

FRANCES BAARD DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY

The Frances Baard District Municipality (FBDM) is located in the Northern Cape Province in South Africa and is one of five district municipalities within this province. According to the FBDM Integrated Development Plan 2010/2011, the FBDM has a total population of 353 198 people residing in four different local municipalities, namely Dikgatlong, Magareng, Phokwane and Sol Plaatje,

as illustrated in Table 1 below. The FBDM is concerned about the safety and security of its community, hence the vision: “To be a municipality with a clear developmental focus to improve the quality of life of all communities in the district”. The crisis communication plan referred to the potential hazards that were identified in the FBDM Disaster Management Plan (2006) during a risk assessment. The same hazards were also identified and confirmed during the data collection phase of this research to evaluate the FBDM crisis communication plan. The hazards are illustrated in Table 1 below, showing various hazards for each local municipality.

TABLE 1: POTENTIAL HAZARDS IN FBDM

Dikgatlong LM	Magareng LM	Phokwane LM	Sol Plaatje LM
Heavy rains	Heavy rains	Floods	Heavy rains
Air pollution	High winds	Air pollution	High winds
Water pollution	Floods	Water pollution	Floods
Road accidents	Water pollution	Shack fires	Dam failure
Floods	Road accidents	Heavy winds	Droughts
Erosion	Shack fires	Drowning in canals	Air pollution
Dam failures	Communicable diseases	Road accidents	Power failure
Shack fires		Veld fires	Water pollution
Veld fires		Communicable diseases	Aircraft accidents
Hail storms			Road accidents
Drowning in quarries			Veld fires
Communicable diseases			Communicable diseases

(Source: FBDM Disaster Management Plan 2006; Local informants 2010)

Hazard identification is the foundation upon which all emergency planning efforts in a community should be built. It sets priorities and goals for resource allocation, response, recovery, and mitigation activities prior to an incident occurring (Identify Hazards and Risks 2012: 24; cf. Lordan 2003).

RESEARCH PURPOSE

According to Cleveland Metropolitan School District (2009), a crisis is any situation that may significantly affect a community, its image, reputation and/or environment. It may be sudden and unexpected and may result in news coverage and public scrutiny. A crisis communication plan aims to protect a municipality’s image, reputation and credibility, and enables it to rapidly release factually accurate and timely information to all internal and external stakeholders when confronted with a crisis.

Some municipalities' image ends up being tarnished because they are not aware of and are unable to implement the best practices of crisis communication. According to Coombs (2011: 250) the best practices of crisis communication can be classified into three categories, namely 1) pre-strategic planning (organising logistics, coordinating networks, accepting uncertainty); 2) pro-active strategies (forming partnerships, listening to public concerns, being open and honest); and 3) strategic response (being accessible to the media, communicate compassion and the provision of self-efficacy).

Some municipalities lack a solid understanding and implementation of these practices. They are also not knowledgeable on the various statutes as mentioned in the introduction, which support the importance of this plan. A crisis communication plan is a vital part of emergency preparedness and response. According to Fearn-Banks (2011: 306), a crisis communication plan should be a part of the larger crisis management or disaster management plan of any municipality. During implementation of a plan the Crisis Response Team (CRT) and the Crisis Communication Team (CCT) should (depending on the crisis) operate within the relevant legislation and policy documents.

Objective of this research

The objective of this study was to determine the significance of a crisis communication plan in a municipality and analyse the content of the FBDM crisis communication plan specifically.

Research questions

The following research questions pertain to this study:

- ◆ What barriers do municipalities generally encounter in the application of crisis communication best practices?
- ◆ Were a Crisis Communication Team and Crisis Response Team(s) identified and assigned for the FBDM crisis communication plan?
- ◆ What are the roles and responsibilities of these teams?
- ◆ Was a comprehensible systematic guide to manage communication during a response to a crisis identified in the FBDM crisis communication plan?

Methodology

For the purpose of drafting the plan, the researchers used the FBDM crisis communication plan as a case study for an in-depth study. Data collection included one-on-one interviews with the disaster managers of each of the four

local municipalities. The district municipality officers, the Head of the District Municipality and the heads of the communication departments were amongst the 14 officials interviewed. From relevant stakeholders, 32 government and private stakeholders were interviewed. As part of the multiple data design, telephone interviews were conducted with community leaders and a focus group discussion was held with 20 councillors, including the mayor of FBDM. The focus group was led by two researchers and thus made use of team member check to confirm the validity of the data.

The FBDM crisis communication plan was reviewed through the examination of relevant documents, best practices and whether the plan complied with legislations. These documents served as supporting references to the project, as well as a framework within which the crisis communication plan can operate. The questions in the data collection instruments were designed to determine the effectiveness of the crisis communication plan. Questions focused specifically on issues pertaining to potential hazards in the district, other preparedness plans available, roles and responsibilities played by different stakeholders in a crisis, training requirements, communication within the FBDM, and communication with the media, the community and external stakeholders during a crisis.

The data collected was organised and categorised, including the strengths and weaknesses of the plan. An interpretation and identification of patterns was carried out, and the analysis indicated whether the various stakeholders had an understanding of the communication plan itself, as well as the best practices. The conclusion drawn from the findings could be generalised to other municipalities.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA POLICY

Media policies are not only enacted or mandatory within local municipalities; they are policies that emanate from national spheres of government. For example, South Africa began the formation of its media policy in 1990. The focus of this policy was the importance of the media sector and its role in the transition to democracy and beyond. Another aim was to give previously disadvantaged communities a voice. Article 19 in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was unveiled on 10 December 1948, was adopted in abstention by South Africa in 1990 as a landmark of media policy. It states that, "[e]veryone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers" (Hadland & Thorne 2004: 26). This adoption by South Africa made it obligatory for the FBDM to have a media policy within the formulation of this crisis communication plan.

The media policy entailed principles that the CRT and CCT should adhere to in order for these teams to respond quickly and accurately to an event as it unfolds. These teams should also ensure effective, accurate communication through the media and other means to present clear and consistent messages of the District Municipality's response to the crisis at hand. The FBDM guarantees that, within the capacity of its resources, they will adhere to the principles provided below as set out by the Whitsunday Regional Council (2010: 1):

- ♦ Timely: Respond in an appropriate manner and on time to concerns raised by the media;
- ♦ Frequency: The community, media and interested stakeholders should constantly be communicated with in regards to the crisis;
- ♦ Honesty: The FBDM will never knowingly mislead the public, media or staff on an issue;
- ♦ Transparency: The FBDM will promote openness and accessibility in dealing with the media, while complying with the law and maintaining confidentiality when appropriate;
- ♦ Balance: Information to the media should be objective, sensitive, accurate and informative;
- ♦ Clarity: Communication should be done in an official language approved by the council;
- ♦ Governance: The FBDM should govern hand in hand with the people and not for the people. Any form of participation should be genuinely empowering and not just a token of consultation or manipulation;
- ♦ Accessibility and dissemination of information: Information or content in the message must be disseminated in a manner that is acceptable or receptive to the audience to which it is targeted; and
- ♦ Database: A centralised database of all interest groups that have a role to play in the successful operation of the crisis communication plan should be maintained. The database should be used to create linkages and interactions between the interest groups. In addition, the database should be made available to all staff members and councillors in order for them to have on hand information on their areas of jurisdiction and the municipal affairs they might be interested in. This should guide them on how to take an active role.

With regard to any crisis communication plan, Chandler (2010: 84) states that it is of great importance to build and review – on a regular basis – a valid and

effective emergency contact database for the organisation. Details of all media enquiries should be logged on a crisis enquiry record. A designated spokesperson, communication officer or disaster manager should fill in this form after response to the crisis event (Whitsunday Regional Council 2010; Pool Hospital NHS Foundation Trust 2010).

KEY MESSAGES

During a crisis it is easy to forget, or state precisely, what one intends saying to the media or to the affected community (Fearn-Banks 2010: 316). Hence, it is important to prepare well in advance what primary information will be conveyed as key messages or speaking points. In addition, Fearn-Banks (2010: 316) states that key messages are important to avoid misquotation and they assist in the establishment of organisations' credibility when handling the crisis.

Based on this background a set of prescriptive key messages were developed by the researchers for the FBDM crisis communication plan. The aim of these key messages was to assist the CCT (through the elected spokesperson) to effectively communicate to all audiences. Throughout the emergency response and recovery phase communicated messages should frequently change in order to address different situations. The key messages are as follows:

- ◆ a message of what is being done to manage the crisis;
- ◆ a message of empathy for what has happened to the people, their property and the environment in which they live;
- ◆ a message of assurance that the situation is being handled in all the best possible ways to resolve it, with emphasis on the different organisations assisting;
- ◆ a message of reassurance that things will return to normal; and
- ◆ a message of safety for the people, their belongings and the environment in which they live.

Key messages are fundamental for a crisis communication plan. Because the FBDM crisis communication plan was never put into practice, the spokesperson had little knowledge of these key messages. The spokesperson's lack of knowledge of these key messages makes them worthless.

INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Through established networks, the municipality is able to enter into programmes with other organisations and municipalities at an international, national and

regional level. The identified CCT and CRT should keep watch over specific hazards and respond effectively in combating it when it causes calamity within the community.

Effective communication, planning and coordination should be done through the establishment of the following organisations, as suggested by the researchers and agreed to by the FBDM:

- ◆ Crisis Communication Steering Committees: Established to take ownership, advise, approve and recommend on the running of crisis communication projects. This committee should be a sub-committee of the Municipal Disaster Management Advisory Forum, according to the Disaster Management Act (Act 57 of 2002). District municipalities may establish a municipal disaster management advisory forum for the purpose of consulting one another and coordinating their actions on matters relating to disaster management.
- ◆ District Communication Forum: Represents communication practitioners, significant decision-makers and those working directly with communities. The forum provides a platform for integrated communication and planning. The forum also encourages the practitioners to learn from each other and to create messages that are more integrated.
- ◆ Ward committees: Link the community to the CCT/CRT/Council. They play an active role in assisting with the implementation of the plan and monitoring change, as well as the needs of the community.

Some of these platforms are active but very little reference is made to the crisis communication plan.

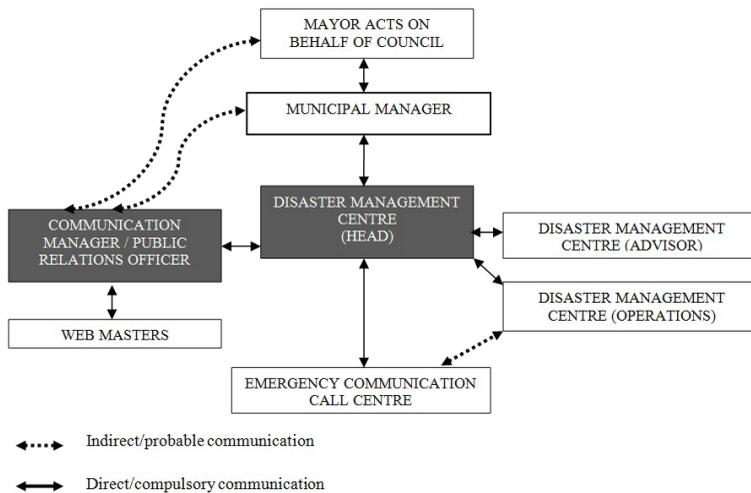
Crisis Communication Teams (CCT)

It is general knowledge that a CCT should ensure the smooth operation of the plan and be responsible for communication, both internally and externally, before, during and after the crisis. They should plan, manage, coordinate, monitor and evaluate the whole process and write reports to evaluate the team's response and lessons learnt. The team is essential to come up with a plan of action, select an official spokesperson who will be the primary contact for all media inquiries, and to execute the overall plan. There are no defined boundaries for these roles and responsibilities and they tend to overlap. Figure 1 illustrates the flow of information within the CCT, as developed by the researchers and approved by FBDM.

Responsibilities of Crisis Communication Team

The CCT should react quickly to the crisis that is occurring by reducing the number of phone calls from the public and the amount of time put into crisis recovery. This is done by constantly updating information about the crisis on the organisation’s website and other relevant communication media. In addition, input from the public on social media networks should be constantly monitored. Social network platforms are relevant to FBDM because they are frequently used by the public, FBDM officials and other relevant officials. Facebook friends and other contacts with whom the organisation has built a relationship could spread the news to a wider group of people. For Twitter, on the other hand, relevant key messages should be prepared and posted (Fearn-Banks 2010: 316).

FIGURE 1: CRISIS COMMUNICATION TEAM



(Source: Developed by the researchers for FBDM)

The various team members’ responsibilities during a crisis, as discussed by the researchers and approved with FBDM, are as follows:

- ◆ Web masters: Appointed on an ad-hoc basis to feed and monitor information on social networks and on the organisation’s website;
- ◆ Head of Disaster Management Centre: Deals with management of hazards; the HOC should coordinate, but the relevant municipal department should lead the communication function. The Head of the Disaster Management Centre should lead and coordinate the communication function during a crisis, liaise with senior management, and provide guidance to stakeholder

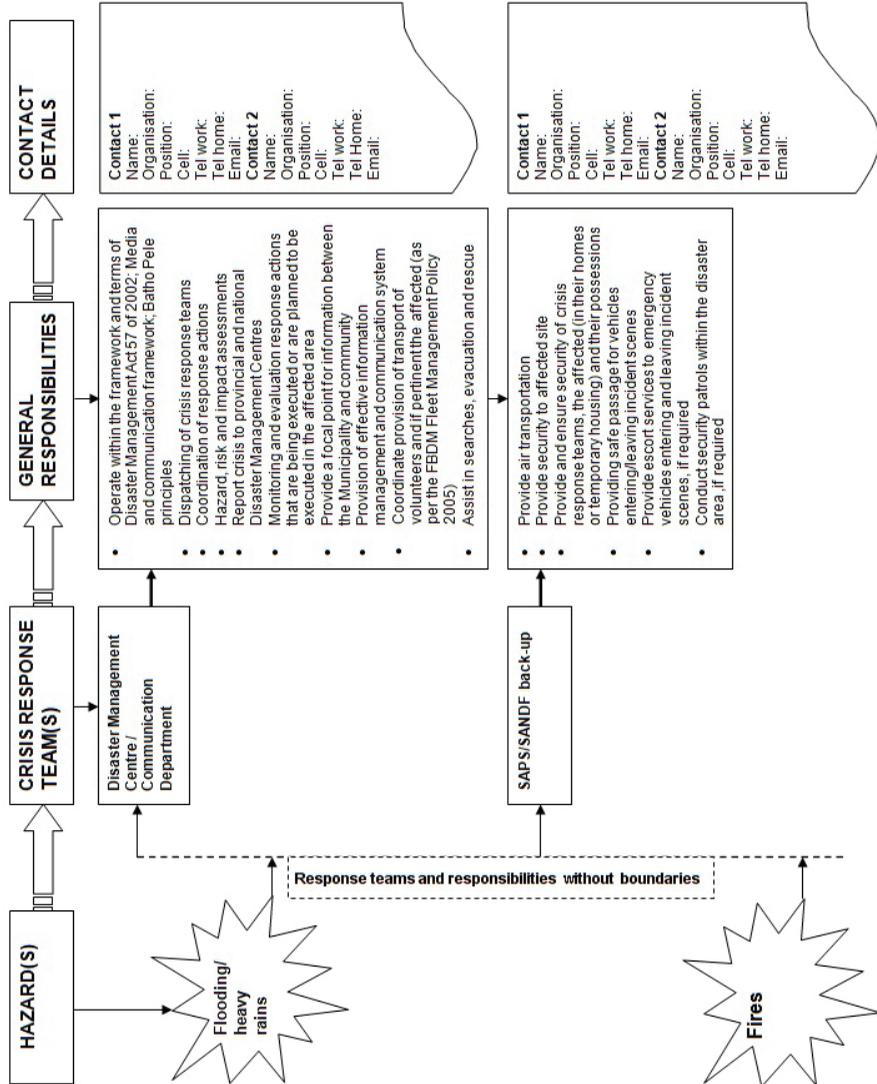
representatives (these are heads/representatives of relevant stakeholders during a specific crisis e.g. the Fire Department, seating in the Disaster Management Operations);

- ♦ Disaster Management (Operations): Assist in distribution of resources and information to affected communities; gather, manage and handle information flow between the members of the CCT and CRT stakeholders; work with other external experts and keep senior management updated;
- ♦ Disaster Management (Advisor(s): Depending on the crisis, the technical personnel act as advisors, for example IT specialists, GIS specialists, engineers, strategic decision makers, etc.). They monitor reactions during the crisis and advise on appropriate actions. In addition, they monitor the web functioning, call centre equipment and support technicians in the functioning of all communication media;
- ♦ Communication Manager/Public Relations Officer: Manages communication issues and coordinates media matters; develops and distributes key messages to different target audiences; identifies and helps prepare a primary and back-up spokesperson; monitors the media, web, and other channels of stakeholder feedback and feed-forward;
- ♦ Emergency Communication Call Centre Operators: Receiving and dispatching calls and notification of CCT about the crisis; informing Disaster Manager of the incident; updating all relevant contacts; assisting Disaster Manager to link the community with relevant CRT;
- ♦ Municipal Manager: Approves operational messages or tasks; and
- ♦ Mayor/Council: Approve politically influenced messages or tasks and express sympathy to the affected.

Crisis Response Team (CRT)

An identified CRT consists of different institutions that are expected to coordinate and contribute their technical expertise and resources through effective communication. Table 2 was developed as an example by the researchers for FBDM. It serves as a framework for the crisis response teams for each hazard, including their general responsibilities and persons to contact from each organisation. Crisis response teams and their responsibilities are not only limited to the ones indicated for identified hazards. Due to compound crisis events, some role players in crisis response teams can assist other crisis response teams in managing other hazards. Crisis response teams are subject to review, depending on the magnitude and impact of the event.

TABLE 2: FRAMEWORK FOR HAZARDS, CRISIS RESPONSE TEAMS, GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND CONTACT DETAILS (SHORTENED EXAMPLE)



Crisis communication operational plan

The steps of the operational plan that forms part of the crisis communication plan are listed in this section. These procedures will assist in the analysis of the practicality of operational plans. It is non-prescriptive procedures that the crisis response and crisis communication teams can easily follow. A crisis communication operational plan should operate within an Incident Command System (ICS), or Joint Operations Centre (JOC). This JOC houses professionals from relevant departments in order to help cut costs and improve the overall coordination of the plan. These steps (developed by the researchers for, and approved by the FBDM and other disaster management experts in South Africa) are as follows:

STEP 1 (Hour 1 or Immediate)

A 24-hour dispatching call centre (initial call might go through the police, or relevant stakeholder depending on the crisis event) notifies the Disaster Management Centre about the full details of the crisis, for example, what happened, where, when, if possible how it happened, and the number of casualties. The Disaster Manager (Head) then notifies the other CCT members of the details of the crisis. A briefing may be held to update the CCT so that the team can also determine the next step(s) in respect of communication of the crisis and response.

STEP 2 (Hour 2 or Immediate)

The CRT responsible for the occurring hazard, under the coordination of the Disaster Management Centre, will carry out a fully-fledged assessment e.g. nature and location of incident(s), number of people affected, magnitude of damage/losses, and risks/potential risks for surrounding(s) and or neighbours/adjacent areas. They record all findings and draw conclusions for purposes of amending any response activity if required. A briefing may be held to update the CRT so that the team can also determine the next steps to crisis communication and management.

STEP 3 (Hour 3 or Immediate)

Preparations are made to communicate information regarding the situation. All members of the CCT and CRT should understand their role and their immediate tasks. Specific assignments are given to each team member and all experts are informed. At this stage, the media and the community are beginning to enquire and search for information. At this step, a Joint Operations Centre can be established at the incident area.

STEP 4 (Hour 4 or Immediate)

At this step, the level or magnitude of the crisis should have been determined and communicated. The Disaster Management Officer and his/her internal CCT meet

and consult with relevant CRT (this will entail an addition of ward councillor(s), and other community leaders/stakeholders to the CRT).

STEP 5 (Hour 5 to ongoing period)

Key messages for different target audiences are developed and executed after accuracy of information has been checked and approved (the Communication Manager in consultation with the Municipal Manager/Councillor should approve and release the messages). Messages can be released through a variety of communication channels and at various periods, depending on the type of crisis and critical questions. During this time the CCT should anticipate a list of questions that could be asked by a variety of audiences and develop new messages and answers.

STEP 6 (Ongoing period)

The Disaster Management Official and Communication Manager must ensure that there is maximum coordination and effective communication amongst the relevant response teams and the community affected. Members of the Mayoral Committee (MMC) and ward councillors may be expected to give political support, depending on the type of incident, to fulfil responsibilities such as political assessment, address politically-related matters at the scene of the incident and coordinate political response and advice.

STEP 7 (Ongoing period)

Public education has to be considered if there is a need, depending on the type of crisis. For example, public health issues have to be highlighted to the community, if there are any. The audience not directly involved in the crisis should also be considered.

STEP 8 (Ongoing)

The main issue here would be to convene the CCT after the crisis to find out what worked well and what did not work during the crisis. This would be the time to analyse media coverage and feedback from the community. A debriefing form should be used and a report compiled for the crisis communication coverage.

STEP 9 (Ongoing to end of crisis)

Through monitoring of the public and media opinions the CCT will be able to determine what messages are still needed, what misinformation needs correcting, and to identify concerns, interests, and needs arising from the crisis as it is being reported. The CCT can also exchange information with other response partners at this stage.

STEP 10 (Ongoing to end of crisis)

At this step, reports are written and submitted together with templates used during the crisis. Both the CRT and CCT are involved in the compilation and submission of reports. This will help improve the crisis communication plan through identification of lessons learnt. (Media involvement can be initiated when necessary).

Table 3 illustrates the above-mentioned operational steps of the crisis communication plan. It illustrates the flow of information when an alert about a hazard arises. The crisis communication team is first alerted, after which the crisis response teams, either internally or externally, are alerted and coordinated. The choice between internal and external depends on the magnitude of the hazards or crisis.

Communication channels

In order to communicate effectively with the target audience, a set of efficient communication media were identified for the FBDM by the researchers. Examples of these are cellular ‘phones, two-way radios, landline telephones (with one common/toll free number known by everyone), email, website, newspapers, pamphlets, and face-to-face communication through community meetings. The use of these media depends on the magnitude of the crisis and whether communication is with the municipal officials, with the external stakeholders, or with the community.

Resources: equipment and supplies

The crisis communication and response team will need resources during a crisis (Fearn-Banks 2010: 314). Resources for the CRT will vary according to the crisis event. The general resources for the CCT are listed in the table below. The CRT can also make use of these resources in addition to their other essential resources. These resources were identified by the researchers and acknowledged by FBDM.

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF INFORMATION FLOW ON ALERT OF A SPECIFIC HAZARD (EXAMPLE)

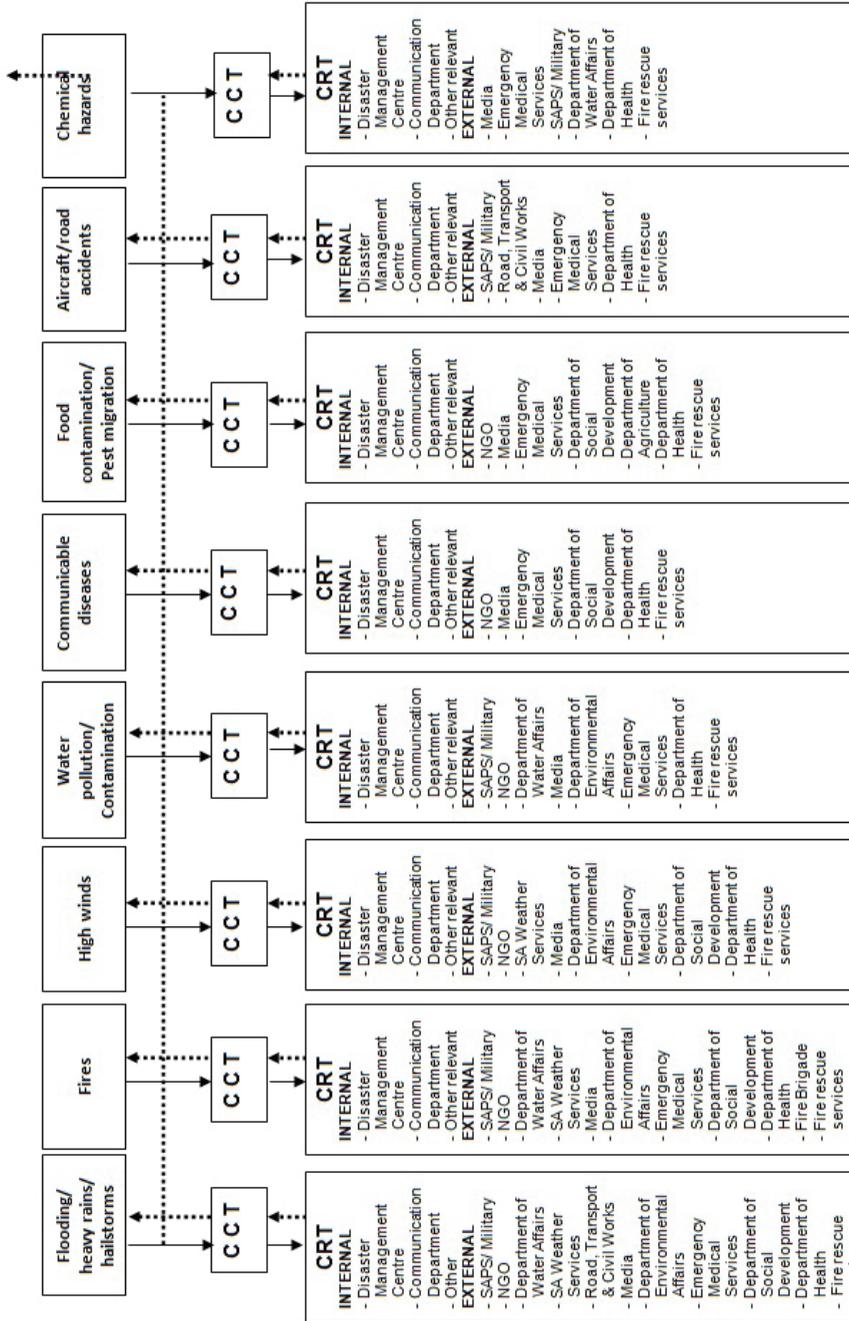


TABLE 4: EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES FOR CCT AND CRT

Flip charts and chalkboards	Chairs and desks	Motorcycles
Computers/laptops/tablets	Internal contact list	Bicycles
Portable computer printer	First-aid kit	4x4 vehicles
Telephones	Radio	Pens and pencils
Telephone directory	Television	Cameras
Cellular ‘phones	Food and beverages	Photocopying machine
Two-way radios	Detailed maps	Wireless internet
Fax machines	Generator and solar panels	

Crisis communication and response team training needs

According to Zaremba (2009: 13), training, practice and simulation are essential for crisis communication to be effective. Coombs (2011) recommends that specific training modules be developed for a crisis communication team. Everyone involved in the management and response to crisis events need to go through basic training. The CCT forms a critical link between technical experts and the population at risk, thus the crisis communication team should have the necessary skills to communicate with both groups. They should also be able to handle communication with the public via meetings (Lindell & Perry 2004: 198). Training equips the teams in handling various crisis situations. Volunteers can also undergo training. Suggested training programmes include trauma counselling, conflict management, media management, listening skills, first-aid, as well as legislation and frameworks relevant to different hazards.

Crisis communications checklist

A crisis communication checklist is essential for sending out error-free messages. This checklist is used by the Communication Manager and the Disaster Manager to check:

- ◆ before or during the alert phase of the crisis – as rumour investigation and/or confirmation of facts is being done;
- ◆ during the crisis – actions such as securing the site and notification of teams are done; and
- ◆ after the crisis – the report is completed and the media updated.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main finding with regard to the crisis communication plan for FBDM was that there was no skills transfer after the development of the plan. This then answers the research question on barriers municipalities encounter when implementing

best practice. Skills transfer was not done because of lack of funding to accomplish the project. The recommended CCT and CRT were not officially appointed. There is a need for these teams to be appointed officially and for them to sign acknowledgement of acceptance of these responsibilities. Not all crisis communication best practices are being practiced with regard to the successful implementation of the plan. The crisis plan was developed to address all the hazards identified in the disaster management plan but this is a major weakness of the plan. Every hazard has its own specific character, hence the need for a single hazard or problem-specific crisis communication plan.

The following are some recommendations to support effective implementation:

Institutional arrangements

To meet the objectives of institutional arrangement platforms resources have to be mobilised, including financial resources (priority on the government budget and donors), physical resources and qualified human resources. Crisis communication team and crisis response team members identified or currently participating in the above-mentioned platforms are encouraged to continually participate and make valuable contributions by attending meetings as stipulated by member(s) in charge. The functioning of these platforms will assist in the effective running and implementation of the plan.

Key messages

Messages should be released as quickly as possible; it is a rule of thumb to give the same information to all media at the same time (cf. Gribb & Hartomo 2002). Spokespersons should be aware of the key messages since all eyes and ears are on the spokesperson as he/she communicates about the crisis.

Simulation

A simulation exercise is important for preparation and for testing the feasibility of any plan. A simulation is a situation in which a particular set of conditions are created artificially in order to study or experience something that could exist in reality. Since the development of the crisis communication plan, FBDM has not done any simulations and it is recommended that they implement simulation exercises.

Crisis communication monitoring and evaluation

Evaluation should be carried out at every step of the operational plan. This should be done through debriefing of the teams, viewing and reading media coverage of the situation, and reviewing any feedback received from members of the

community and other stakeholders. Monitoring of an event gives an opportunity to apply lessons learnt. What worked well? What could have been done better? What actions may need to be reviewed and revised to operate more smoothly in the future?

CONCLUSION

This article critically analysed the FBDM crisis communication plan. The FBDM plan included many of the components of a crisis communication plan. For example, the crisis communication and response teams were identified and the roles and responsibilities of each team member were described. However, the team members lacked important elements such as skills transfer and simulation of the plan. Effective communication is the key to the successful mitigation and prevention of hazards that may turn into disastrous events. In conclusion, it can be stated that within municipalities there is a need for proper management (through the comprehension and practice of crisis communication best practices), coordination, and availability of resources in order to improve efficiency.

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