

WACC CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN

Draft March 2020

This document provides guidance to WACC staff and governance to prepare for and to effectively and appropriately handle a crisis.

A crisis is any unexpected event that may significantly disrupt normal operations, create a legal or economic liability and/or pose a real, perceived or possible threat to the public reputation or credibility of WACC.

Crises can be divided into two main categories:

1. Sudden and unforeseen *external incidents and emergencies*, such as accidents, natural catastrophes, outside criminal offences (including terror), regulatory changes and political turmoil.
2. *Organizational “internal” crises*, ranging from acts such as fraud, scandals, and abuse of power, to matters of changes in employment, financial difficulties, personnel disputes, etc. These may be more preventable (with appropriate policies and procedures in place) and in fact may be foreseen in advance internally. They also run a greater risk of escalating if not addressed appropriately and in a timely manner.

A badly handled crisis may endanger safety and/or seriously damage the reputation and viability of the organization. A crisis managed well, however, may not only minimize injury or ensure safety but demonstrate leadership, core values, and effective management.

This plan is prepared in conjunction with the Risk Register and should be reviewed annually by WACC management and officers.

I. Prevention and Preparation

Action	Complete (date)	Comments
1. A “Crisis Management Team” (CMT) is established that oversees both the planning and preparation process and the management of the overall response in the event of a crisis. The Crisis Management Team is responsible for gathering facts, determining action and implementing that action. The team also leads the post-crisis evaluation.		<p>The core members of the team should be the General Secretary, President and Treasurer. The team may also include the Deputy General Secretary and the Finance Manager. The team should ensure that at least one member is specifically responsible for paying attention to reputational and communication aspects and implications.</p> <p>The team may call on additional appropriate internal or external legal, financial or other expertise</p>

		<p>depending on the nature of the crisis and response.</p> <p>In case key members of the Team are unavailable during part or whole of the crisis arrangements should be made for substitute members to take their place.</p> <p>Arrangements should also be made to ensure that the CMT has appropriate administrative backup available. It is particularly useful (and often vitally important) to keep a careful running accurate record of what is known, when and by whom and of what specific steps are being taken to deal with the crisis. <i>This will be important in the case of internal evaluation (and perhaps even an external formal review by a regulator) of the way the crisis was handled. (See also Section 7)</i></p> <p>It is also important for the CMT to start creating a list of Questions and answers (Q&As) to help clarify what is known and unknown in the crisis. This Q&A list is vital in helping to prepare reliable, accurate information for stakeholders and the media. (see section 3)</p>
<p>2. All staff should be reminded to have available to them at all times:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - emergency numbers (police, fire, ambulance) - contact numbers of the general secretary and deputy general secretary (mobile numbers). 		<p>Important that these are updated regularly</p>
<p>3. Members of the CMT should have a full staff list with contact numbers.</p>		<p>Important that these are updated regularly</p>
<p>4. A Risk Register is reviewed annually and specific procedures for high and medium risk are prepared (see section II).</p>		

<p>5. All staff and board members should have access (online and offline) and knowledge of WACC policies and practices in line with identified risks. This include, but are not limited to:</p> <p>Financial risks, i.e. Procurement policies; Anti-fraud and corruption policies; Staff expense reimbursement</p> <p>Human Resources, i.e. Personnel policies;</p> <p>Staff rules and regulations; Sexual harassment; Child and adult safeguarding</p> <p>Security, i.e. Travel policy and procedures; Office emergency procedures; IT security</p> <p>Communication, i.e. Media and social media guidelines</p>		
<p>6. Training/role play conducted to address high and medium risk crisis scenarios. This can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Staff induction on policies and procedures, including crisis responses b) Media interview training for possible crisis spokespeople c) Emergency response handling d) Crisis communication guidelines 		<p>Initial induction and training should be followed up by annual refresher sessions</p>
<p>7. Basic communication materials are prepared, updated regularly and available:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website is up to date with organizational and staff information - Background materials on internal crisis management communications are prepared and accessible to staff both in online and offline form including WACC profile, profile of key staff, key facts and stories of WACC's positive contributions. - Template is prepared for public statements - Key stakeholders as appropriate (e.g., trustees, members, donors, partners, charity regulators, media) should be identified and contact/ mailing lists should be easily accessible to key staff. <p>(See section III)</p>		<p>When thinking of communicating with stakeholders the Board of Directors as a whole should not be forgotten. It is sensible and efficient to keep the management of a crisis in the hands of a small CMT and directors/trustees don't need or want to know all the details of every decision. However, their responsibilities as trustees means that they should be brought up-to-date as soon as possible. The Charity Commission in the UK is very strict about trustees being seen to discharge their responsibilities as trustees when dealing with difficult issues. (See also the</p>

		comments on keeping a record of decisions, in Section 1.)
8. The CMT has reviewed and agreed on the principles of crisis management and communication (see particularly section III).		

II. Contingency measures for specific risks

1.1 Death or severe illness of CEO	1.1 Deputy General Secretary (DGS) and Board Liaison trained to act in interim. Officers to start search committee.
1.2 Death or severe illness of senior staff	1.2 GS or DGS to work with other staff members to act in interim until replaced.
1.3 Early departure of CEO	1.3 DGS to take charge and implement Emergency Planning Policy.
1.4 Major funder reduction in funding	1.4 Finance Committee to advise on emergency strategy.
1.5 Damage to reputation	1.5 Crisis Communications Team to intervene.
1.6 Major Fraud or other serious criminality or misconduct	1.6 GS or DGS to alert Board. CMT to take action.
1.7 Severe public criticism/attack	1.7 GS or DGS to alert Board and Crisis Communications Team to intervene.

III. Crisis Communication

1. The crisis communication team will consist of:

General Secretary
Deputy General Secretary
President
Treasurer
Communications Officer
Legal or other technical adviser as appropriate

(Should any of the positions be directly implicated in the crisis, they will be replaced on the team as necessary.)

2. WACC Spokespersons

WACC's spokespersons are the General Secretary and the President, unless this role is delegated by the Crisis Communication Team.

A spokesperson must:

- be knowledgeable and credible
- have the authority to answer questions
- perform well under stress
- be comfortable with media
- be an official source of information

- be easily and readily available to the media

3. Establishing and maintaining crisis communication channels

Action	Complete (date)	Comments
Q&As should continue to be refined and updated bearing in mind the requirements of different stakeholders and the media. NB: Not all Q&As need to, or should, be communicated publicly.		
An email and a WhatsApp group (or other appropriate channels) will be created for the Crisis Management Team (multiple channels should be used) and all members of the group should be knowledgeable about how to use the channel.		
The WACC communication officer or designated staff should monitor traditional and social media both to proactively alert WACC management of any negative “trend” that might turn into a crisis as well as the narrative in the midst of a crisis.		
<p>Basic “holding statements” are developed for risk scenarios.</p> <p>NOTE: The timing of initial communications in a crisis depends upon many factors and must be considered carefully. Often there are legal or other reasons which may seriously restrict what can be said, when and to whom. Advice from external persons or bodies may be required before any substantive statement can be issued.</p>		<p>Possible statements are:</p> <p>“We have implemented our crisis response plan, which places the highest priority on the well-being of our members and partners.”</p> <p>“We are gathering information about what has happened and it will be reviewed immediately by WACC’s Officers.”</p> <p>“We will be providing additional information when it is available and posting it on our website.”</p>

The following principles should guide actions and communication:

- * The wellbeing, safety and security of people affected by the crisis is the absolute priority.
- * WACC will respect the privacy of individuals and their families but will, as far as possible, be open regarding its organizational actions.
- * WACC’s mission and core values will be the baseline of its crisis response.

The key elements of crisis communication are:

- * **Be quick:** As far as possible, WACC will respond to a crisis proactively rather than reactively. We need to be prepared to get a trustworthy message out fast, following an initial assessment of the situation, even perhaps before all facts are collected but avoiding speculation. Then continue to update information as more facts are available and the situation is clearer.
- * **Be helpful:** Key staff and officers will be available and credible, and give communication the highest priority. This will be appreciated by media and foster goodwill for the long-term.
- * **Be open:** WACC will seek to be as transparent, honest and open as possible regarding the crisis and WACC's response, knowing that the slightest hint that the organization is hiding the truth will cause significant reputational damage.

There should only be one point of contact for the media (WACC Spokesperson/administrative office), and one location for information (WACC web site). All other staff should direct enquiries to this contact/location.

Note that all communication coming from official channels (e.g. web, Facebook, Twitter) including from the General Secretary's Twitter feed (if applicable), will be considered official organizational responses by the media.

All personal communication publicly available (e.g. from staff social media accounts), may also be monitored by media and the public. Personal communication intended to be private may also end up in the public domain. The rule of thumb is do not write anything in personal communications that you would not want to see published.

4. Determining Key Messages

The Crisis Communications Team must determine the key crisis-specific messages required for any given situation.

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">* What should stakeholders know about this crisis?* Keep it simple. Have no more than three main messages that go to all stakeholders and, as necessary, some audience-specific messages for individual groups of stakeholders.* Adapt messaging to different forms of media. |
|---|

IV. Post-Crisis Analysis

A formal analysis of what was done right, what was done wrong, what could be done better next time and how to improve various elements of crisis preparedness should be carried out by the Crisis Management Team.