

# THE ACT

## The AHA Centre Crisis Communications Tool Handbook



Edelman



ONE ASEAN  
ONE RESPONSE

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# Introduction

This AHA Centre Crisis Communications (The ACT) handbook\* is designed to provide topline information and guidance during a crisis situation. In this handbook, you will find direction for communications during disaster and crisis situations in the ASEAN region.

Its objective is to:

**Equip personnel with crisis communications tools, documents and resources quickly.**

**Ensure communication response is swift, accurate and calibrated to the incident or disaster.**

**Ensure the conversation about the incident is accurate, factual and balanced by communicating in a timely manner.**

**Increase awareness of personnel toward the social media scenario and impact of crisis in the ASEAN region.**

\*This handbook serves as a guide and not a Standard Operating Procedure in AHA Centre's communications efforts. Each individual is advised to refer back to their respective organisation's communications policy, should there be any questions.

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# About ASEAN



The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the Founding Fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam then joined on 7 January 1984, Vietnam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999, making up what is today the ten Member States of ASEAN.

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# About AHA Centre



ONE **ASEAN**  
ONE **RESPONSE**

AHA Centre (ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management) is an inter-governmental organisation established by 10 ASEAN member states to facilitate the cooperation and coordination among member states and with the United Nations and international organisations for disaster management and emergency response in the ASEAN region.

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# Social Media Landscape

# The Reality of Social Media in ASEAN

Social media\* made its entrance into the communications arena and has overtaken most channels of communication, establishing itself as a platform for people to feed of its circulated news and stories. This has shaped the way in which news travel,

enabling other countries to consume stories about a catastrophe outside of their proximity.

These are some statistics on the digital population in the ASEAN countries:



## Brunei Darussalam

Population: 0.4million  
Social media users: 0.3million  
Mobile social users: 0.3million



## Cambodia

Population: 15.95million  
Social media users: 4.90million  
Mobile social users: 4.40million



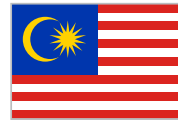
## Indonesia

Population: 262.0million  
Social media users: 106.0million  
Mobile social users: 92.0million



## Lao PDR

Population: 6.98million  
Social media users: 1.80million  
Mobile social users: 1.50million



## Malaysia

Population: 30.96million  
Social media users: 22.00million  
Mobile social users: 20.0million



## Philippines

Population: 103.0million  
Social media users: 60.0million  
Mobile social users: 54.0million



## Thailand

Population: 68.22million  
Social media users: 46.0million  
Mobile social users: 42.0million



## Myanmar

Population: 54.60million  
Social media users: 14.0million  
Mobile social users: 13.0million



## Singapore

Population: 5.74million  
Social media users: 4.40million  
Mobile social users: 4.0million



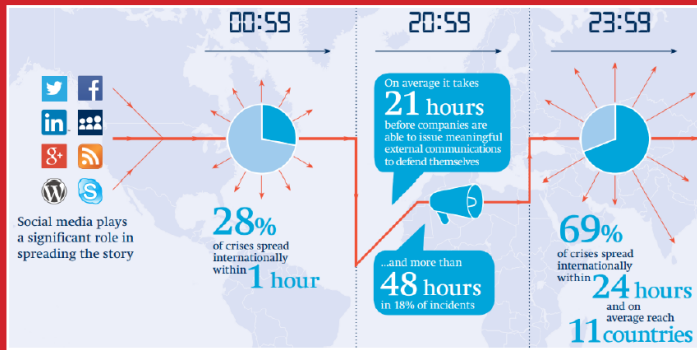
## Vietnam

Population: 94.93million  
Social media users: 46.0million  
Mobile social users: 41.0million

\*Social media channels include, but not limited to: Facebook, FB Messenger, WhatsApp, YouTube, QQ, WeChat, Qzone, Instagram, Tumblr, Twitter, Skype, Snapchat, Weibo, Line, Pinterest, Baidu Tieba, YY, LinkedIn, Viber, KakaoTalk and V Kontakte.

# Speed of Social Media Crisis

The figure below indicates the speed in which stories travel on social media and what happens in 24-hours:



# Best Practices in Social Media

**Key objective is to have a single, consistent response across all personnel. The following guidelines must be adhered to while relief efforts are being provided during an incident:**

1. All personnel are not to post any content related to the incident during the crisis period on:

- Their personal social media channels be it Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn or Twitter.
- Chat apps such as WhatsApp, WeChat or Line (unless it is within working group).
- External online forums or publications.

2. No personnel is authorised to reply/ respond on their personal social media channels, chat apps, online forums regarding queries on the crisis without the approval/ clearance from the management.

3. Should any personnel face a line of hostile questions or queries, all personnel are to respond to the enquirer with the following info: *Thank you for your question, our designated team will be able to assist you if you provide them your details at [social media channel line for relevant countries].*

4. Please consult your manager directly if you have questions regarding to responding to stakeholders on the crisis instead of posting the question openly on social media.

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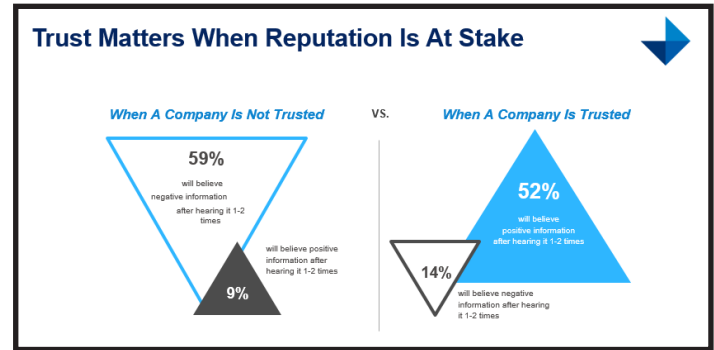
**Trust Matters,  
Especially in Crisis**



# Comparison in Trust Deficit

Organisations and agencies today operate with trust as the most valuable, yet intangible element.

An organisation that fails to prepare for a crisis will fall into a communication failure trap, which will damage the reputation and trust of the corporation amongst its stakeholders.





# Dealing with the Media

# Understanding the Media's Motivation

Editorial's  
point of view



Newsworthy for  
their readers

Timely and relevant

Credible and reliable

Organisation's  
point of view



Gain readership  
and circulation

Credibility

Sales, advertising  
and sponsorship

## Media in ASEAN

The media publications in ASEAN countries can be categorised into:

- **Generalist:**  
All-in-one publications catering to different segments like news, business, sports, lifestyle, entertainment.
- **Segment-focused:**  
Publication on particular segment such as business or lifestyle, but covering a broad range of articles.
- **Trade specific:**  
Publications that cater to a specific target segment i.e. truckers/business/fleets

Some best practices during media-facing engagements include:

- Stick to your key messages and facts, never speculate and never say, "no comment" or "off the record"
- Be a spokesperson and not an answer-person — take control of the interview
- Listen, breathe, then deliver your response

# Media in ASEAN

Some traits and details of the media:



## Brunei Darussalam

Official languages are Malay and English. The primary English-language daily newspaper is the Borneo Bulletin, while the Malay equivalent is the Media Permata. The publications strictly adhere to government directions.



## Cambodia

Official language is Khmer and secondary languages include French and English. Media landscape influenced by the government and public interests – limiting media influence. Top publications are dailies namely Chakravat Daily, Kampuchea Thmei Daily and Kampuchea Thnai Nes.



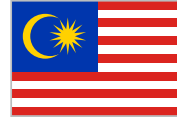
## Indonesia

Official language is Bahasa Indonesia and secondary languages include English and Mandarin. Media freedom in Indonesia increased under the leadership of current president, Joko Widodo. Top publications include Kompas, Jakarta Post and Jakarta Globe.



## Lao PDR

Official language is Lao – speakers of Lao can usually understand Thai as both languages are closely related. The Laotian government exerts almost total control over the press – limiting freedom of press nationwide. Top publications include Passasson and Pathet Lao.



## Malaysia

Official language spoken is Bahasa Malaysia, but Malaysians also speak English, Mandarin and Tamil (depending on their ethnicity). The most circulated publications for each language include Harian Metro, The Star, Sin Chew Daily and Makkal Osai.



## Myanmar

Official language is Burmese. The state still controls the main broadcasters and publications and has a monopoly on telecommunications. When greeting the media, best to ask 'how are you', which is 'neh kaun la'.



## Philippines

Official language is Tagalog, while English is mainly used too. Publications are printed in a variety of languages. In English, the top publication is the Manila Bulletin. In Filipino, the top three are People's Tonight, Pilipino Ngayon and Taliba.



## Singapore

Official languages are English, Mandarin, Malay and Tamil. The most-circulated publications for each of the language are The Straits Times, Lianhe Zaobao, Berita Harian and Tamil Murasu.

# Media in ASEAN



## Thailand

Official language is Thai, and not many media speak English. Address everyone as 'Khun', as you may be addressed as 'Khun' as well. Television is the most popular channel of communication.



## Vietnam

Official language is Vietnamese. The Vietnam News Agency (VNA) is the official government wire service that releases and receives news to and from Vietnamese and international media.

# Controlling Your Interview

You can be in control of:

**Pace**  
**Topic**  
**Message**  
**Delivery**  
**Outcome**



**Understanding what is the media's motivation**

*Outcome: Research and preparation*

**What you want to convey**

*Outcome: Messages*

**Strategy**

*Outcome: Delivery*

**Desired Outcome**

*Outcome: Win/Draw*

# Framing Your Key Message

## Target:

Who are you trying to reach and what are they currently thinking / feeling about the issue?

## Objective:

What do you want them to think and feel?

## Motivation:

What's in it for them?

# Techniques to Bridge Out of a Difficult Question

The main point is...

I think the key question here is...

It boils down to this...

The really important thing is...

The most important issue is...

Let's put this back into perspective...

What really matters here is...



**Primary Key Message**

A stylized globe is shown on the left side of the image, rendered in shades of blue and black. The globe is partially obscured by a network of white lines and dots, suggesting a global or digital theme. The background is a solid, textured blue.

# Dealing with Ambush Interviews

# Communicating in Crisis

## Concern



Identify the real concerns of stakeholders. Never forget you are talking about people

Convey sympathy and empathy over injuries, deaths and material damage

Emphasise that you are doing your utmost to help the affected people

Do not make any promises or open the door to compensation

## Action



Confirm the incident and give a brief overview and timeline

Stick to known facts

Do not speculate

Explain steps you are taking to help the affected people, including specific examples

Assure transparency

Explain how you are working with partners

## Perspective



Remind stakeholders of the exceptional nature of the crisis

But do this with humility and appreciation for those who helped to respond

Briefly re-emphasise the care and concern message and steps you are taking to help



# Facing Ambush Interviews

- Never refuse to do an interview. It is an opportunity to get your message out.
- Never put your hand in front of the lens but address the journalist politely.
- Manage expectations – *“I have five minutes for your questions”* – and keep your answers tight.
- Close with control – *“I have time for one more question”* – then exit after that answer.

# Leaving Ambush Interviews

Example:

*“I’m sorry. We are in the midst of providing relief to the affected public. I want to make sure my comments are accurate and up to date. If you give me your contact details, we will be more than happy to get back to you.”*

IF PUSHED WITH A SECOND QUESTION, ADD:

*“I really want to help you. The faster I can get back to working on the situation, the faster we will be able to get back to you with accurate information.”*

A stylized globe is shown on the left side of the image, rendered in shades of blue and black. The globe is composed of various geometric shapes and is overlaid with a network of white lines and dots, suggesting a global communication or data network. The background is a solid, textured blue.

# Organising Press Conferences

# Dealing with Press Conferences

## Who should be the spokesperson?

The leader of the organisation or senior person on the ground should be the main spokesperson. He / She should be flanked by one operations expert and/ or one logistics expert to provide added context and any technical details.

### Quick tips

- For consistency, the main spokesperson should field all questions and then ask the accompanying experts to provide more detail as needed.
- Always stick to your key message and confirm the facts. Never speculate.
- Always answer in sound bites. This will ensure succinct, easily understandable and quotable messaging.

# Staying in Control is Key

- Keep **focus** on the **output**
- The **output** is usually just a **quote** or **sound-bite**
- Frame your **answer** to include your **context**
- Each **response** must be **self-contained**
- Each **response** must contain your **message** and **story**
- **Stay on-message** all the time



# Holding Statements

# Drafting a Holding Statement

## What is a holding statement?

A holding statement is the first communiqué you put out to the public to counter any rumours and misinformation. It should be issued as quickly as possible with the confirmed facts that you know at that time

## Developing your holding statement using the 4Cs

Confirm AHA Centre's involvement and provide an overview and timeline.

Explain actions you are taking to help authorities.

Confirmation

Compassion

Cooperation

Commitment

Convey sympathy to the families and sorrow for injury, or inconvenience.

Assure that all possible steps are being taken and full effort will be given to help relieve the situation.

# Sample statement

**PRESS STATEMENT BY AHA CENTRE  
(ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on disaster management)**

Up to **[include details of support and relief arrangement]** have been mobilised/ deployed by AHA Centre to assist in **[Incident name/ type]**.

**[Include additional details of support/ relief arrangement and details of affected areas, if necessary]**

We are working with **[insert involved organisations]** to provide relief assistance to ensure all victims are accounted for.

For additional queries, please do not hesitate to contact us at **[email]** or **[phone number]**. AHA Centre will also continue to share updates with regard to the situation on our **[social media pages]**

**AHA Centre**

A stylized globe is shown on the left side of the image, rendered in shades of blue and black. The globe is composed of various geometric shapes and is overlaid with a network of lines and nodes, suggesting a digital or technological theme. The background is a solid, textured blue.

# Dealing with Online Enquiries

# Social Media & The Digital Landscape

## Responding to online enquiries — best practices

**1.**

Take the time to understand social media and its tools (such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), and ensure that your social media team adhere to your rules and guidelines for communicating online.

**2.**

During a crisis situation, respond, react and address the situation on social media within 1 hour to counter any rumours and misinformation.

**3.**

Always stick to the facts during a crisis, and present it suitably for social media: succinct, personalised and to the point.

**4.**

If the public are flooding your social media accounts with queries, never shut them off or delete their posts. Instead, decide whether to use a one-to-one direct message or a collective update on your timeline. This can be a succinct version of the holding statement.

# NOTES

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