

# **Internal and External Communications Strategy of the Coalition for Inclusive Legal Reforms**

## **Background of the Coalition**

The Coalition for Inclusive Legal Reforms was formed in 2017, aiming at the consolidation of the efforts of the civil society towards advocacy for the adoption of legislation on the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities.

The Coalition for Inclusive Legal Reforms is the largest coalition of organizations, dealing with the issues of persons with disabilities and is composed of 15 member organizations and 7 individual members.

The Coalition for Inclusive Legal Reform is not yet registered as a legal entity and is an informal association of member organizations and individuals.

The ongoing work of the Coalition is supported by a staff consisting of a Coalition Coordinator, Program Manager, Assistant to the Manager, Communications Coordinator, Advocacy Coordinator, Legal Coordinator, a lawyer, and a Community Empowerment Coordinator. The General Assembly, composed by the member organizations and individual members of the Coalition, is the Coalition's decision-making body of the.

## **Internal Communications Strategy**

The Coalition prioritizes effective internal communication as an important prerequisite for the development of the Coalition, the implementation of its activity and the achievement of the goals set by the Coalition's strategy.

The aim of this strategy is to strengthen the communication skills within the Coalition, choose effective means used for the implementation of internal communication, ensure smooth and rapid communication between the staff and members of the Coalition.

The rules set out in the Internal Communication Strategy apply to the Coalition staff, its member organizations and individual members. This document defines the main principles and problems of internal communication and the main ethical norms, regulated the conflict-of-interest cases and disputes, and defines the procedure for responding to force majeure situations.

This document is approved by the staff of the Coalition and all member organizations and shall be revised or amended as a result of a discussion held within the framework of the General Assembly session, convened upon the recommendation of the Communications coordinator of the Coalition and on the basis of the decision, adopted as a result of consultations with the Coordinator.

## **Main Criteria**

The Coalition shall work to promote the rule of law, an inclusive society, equal opportunities, accountability, solidarity, tolerance, to make the voice of persons with disabilities heard, protect and realize their political, ensure their civil, socio-economic, educational, health and cultural rights, eliminate discrimination for all in accordance with the principles of creating an accessible environment. The activities of the Coalition shall be organized and implemented according to the standards of publicity, efficiency, transparency, continuous improvement, awareness raising, non-disclosure of internal information to third parties, cooperation, and partnership.

## **Goal**

To contribute to the provision of effective, quick, unhindered internal communication between the staff and members of the Coalition.

### Challenges for Internal Communication

- Failure to respond to email correspondence,
- Inefficient dissemination of information of the Coalition's publications on social media,
- Failure to share materials with relevant content, given the specificities of member organizations' activity,
- An unclear decision-making hierarchy within the staff.

To overcome the existing challenges, the Communications Coordinator of the Coalition shall develop an action plan together with the Coalition Coordinator.

## **Force Majeure**

The following situations shall be considered as force majeure: natural disasters (an earthquake, a flood, a storm, an epidemic), armed conflicts (military operations, a civil unrest, a coup d'état, mobilization), labor conflicts (a strike, a lockout, dismissal of employees at the initiative of the employer due to labor disputes within the staff and calling a strike, as well as the dissolution of the Coalition and other such actions), transportation difficulties (impossibility of using vehicles), Government decisions and actions (e.g., freedom of movement restrictions).

For the purpose of this document, cases, circumstances, conditions or situations, the occurrence of which may fully or partially disrupt the implementation of regular internal communication among the member organizations and individual members of the Coalition, shall be considered as force majeure.

Examples of such events are: the loss of the database, information security incidents (for example, a hacker attack on a website), temporary or long-term disruption of internal

communication channels of the Coalition, persistently unresolved conflicting situations that disrupt the normal course of communication, intentional failure to provide information by the members or employees of the Coalition, which may lead to a force majeure situation.

In the event of the emergence of an internal force majeure situation in any of the member organizations, which may lead to the disruption of the normal activity of the given member organization within the Coalition, the given member organization (individual member) must adequately notify the Coalition Coordinator within 2 working days. The organization must also notify about the changes it has introduced internally, containing cases, such as amendments to its Statute, a new President taking office, etc.

An external force majeure shall be a circumstance, a condition or a situation, emerging beyond the Coalition. Examples of such cases are: amendments to the legislation (policy) or similar initiatives, which may threaten the existence of the Coalition, may control or place restrictions on its activities, or render the attainment of some goals of the Coalition impossible.

In case of force majeure, the Coalition staff shall not bear responsibility for the disruption of its normal operations due to the impossibility of full or partial fulfillment of duties. The deadline for the fulfillment of certain tasks shall be revised and extended for as long as the force majeure situation lasted.

During the implementation of the project, the donor organization shall be informed about the disruption of the work process caused by a force majeure. In that case, the period for the fulfillment of the obligations provided for in the contract shall be extended proportionally to the time it took to overcome the situation and its consequences and/or proportionally to the period determined on the basis of the agreement reached between the parties.

### **Response procedure**

Response to force majeure events shall be carried out at the level of the Coalition Coordinator.

In case of a potential force majeure, the Coalition Coordinator shall be notified about it.

After gathering facts about the incident, the Coalition Coordinator and the General Assembly shall decide whether the incident is force majeure. The decision shall be made by voting on the principle of 50%+1 of the Coalition Coordinator and the General Assembly.

In the case of force majeure, the staff shall inform the members of the Coalition of the event through an e-mail, which also indicates the deadline for a response.

Depending on the urgency of the situation, the staff may take appropriate response measures without the approval of the General Assembly. In this case, the feedback and proposals submitted by the above deadline shall be taken into account. During the extraordinary session of the General Assembly, the force majeure response action plan shall be developed and approved.

In cases where force majeure requires not only an immediate response, but a review of the Coalition's strategy or plan, too, an extraordinary session of the General Assembly shall be

convened, during which the long-term response plan shall be developed.

### **Goals of Norms of Ethics**

The norms of ethics are meant to ensure the principles of transparency, efficiency and accountability during the activities of the Coalition and reduce as much as possible the cases of conflict of interest and the negative consequences thereof, exclude the emergence of crisis situations, ensure the implementation of effective communication among member organizations and the formation of internal relations among organizations, based on partnership.

The staff of the Coalition and its member organizations shall agree to maximally comply with the requirements arising from these norms in their performance.

### **Key Values**

In line with the Coalition's goals, the Coalition's staff and member organizations shall contribute to the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in Armenia, advocacy of equal opportunities, awareness raising among the public and decision-makers, meanwhile adhering to the principles of non-discrimination, inclusion and accessibility.

Coalition members shall value diversity of viewpoints, freedom of speech, and open debate and embrace these values as guiding principles.

The rules and standards of the Coalition for Inclusive Legal Reforms shall be consistent with the following values which the Coalition shall be guided by in the implementation of its internal communications:

- Trust
- Respect for colleagues
- Integrity
- Accessibility
- Consistency
- Spirit of cooperation
- Encouraging teamwork
- Encouraging free expression of opinions and ideas
- Ability to listen to colleagues
- Targeted information sharing
- Avoiding information overload
- Mutual understanding
- Objectivity and impartiality
- Responsibility for one's actions
- Conscientiousness

- Commitment to the Coalition's mission

## **Norms of Ethics**

In order to increase the effectiveness of the Coalition's activities, support its authority and good reputation, and ensure public trust, its member organizations and staff shall undertake the adoption of the following norms at the internal and external levels of their activities:

### **Norms, regulating the activity of the Coalition's staff**

The staff of the Coalition shall be obliged to:

- apply open and transparent staff recruitment mechanisms, taking into account the professional qualities and experience and excluding discriminatory treatment on any ground,
- be transparent and accountable internally,
- ensure respect and trust for the employees and members of the Coalition, create a favorable environment for them to enjoy equal opportunities, fully untap their potential,
- regularly monitor and review internal communications,
- show respect for the employees' privacy, requiring them to submit only personal data related to the implementation of their activities,
- be open to justified and correct external and internal evaluations and constructive criticism regarding the work of the Coalition,
- consult the Coalition's Communications Coordinator before giving an interview to the media.

### **Norms, regulating the activity of member organizations and individuals within the Coalition**

The member organizations and individual members of the Coalition shall be obliged to:

- Engage in impartial communication, promoting mutual respect and understanding,
- Avoid labeling colleagues due to mutual insults and opinions expressed,
- Strive to resolve disputes and disagreements in an efficient and cooperative atmosphere,
- Ensure prompt and timely exchange of information among committees on important activities, events and updates,
- Be honest, responsible, transparent, consistent and accountable with Coalition members in all their actions,
- Respect the principles of human rights and gender equality,
- Refrain from any words or actions that may prove discriminatory on any grounds in their work relationship,

- Avoid and refrain from taking actions and making decisions that may lead to a conflict of interest,
- Properly disclose and declare existing or perceived conflicts of interest,
- Refrain from participation in the emergence and scaleup of situations within the Coalition, that may cause fear, enmity, hatred, as well as in actions leading to humiliation of human dignity,
- Refrain from the use of the resources acquired as part of the Coalition in an inappropriate manner while performing their work duties,
- Ensure an atmosphere of trust, honesty, and transparency,
- Respect colleagues' opinions, culture, and lifestyle,
- Strive to ensure the highest quality in their work and act in accordance with the best standards known in the industry,
- Make efforts aimed at raising and improving the level of one's professional abilities,
- Cause no harm to the reputation of the Coalition by using inaccurate or unreliable information,
- Refrain from overstating one's achievements and results,
- Assist in raising the Coalition's reputation, maintaining its good reputation and spreading word of it,
- Follow the rules of professional ethics, as well as the provisions of the internal documents of the Coalition,
- Be open to cooperation with individuals and various organizations, if this cooperation does not contradict the mission, goals, and values of the Coalition, as well as the provisions approved and fixed by its internal documents.

### **Accountability**

The Coalition's staff and its members shall embrace the following levels of accountability:

- Top-down accountability – to the people the Coalition serves, i.e. its target groups,
- Internal accountability – Coalition staff members must be accountable to Coalition member organizations, on the one hand, and member organizations shall be held accountable to the staff, on the other, based on procedural documents,
- External accountability – in accordance with the RA Constitution and legislation and to donor organizations,
- Horizontal accountability – the member organizations of the Coalition shall be accountable to the staff of the Coalition in the activities carried out within the framework of the Coalition's activities.

**Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest shall be defined as a situation when a person holding a position performs an action or makes a decision in exercising his/her powers, which can reasonably be interpreted as being guided by his/her personal interests or those of a person related to him/her.

A conflict of interest can be caused by situations and cases in which the private interest of the Coalition's staff member does not coincide with the interest arising from his/her duties in the job

## **Other situations**

- A member organization, a person acting on its behalf or an individual member of the Coalition shall represent his/her own organization or his/her own person instead of representing the Coalition,
- Not delegated by the Coalition, the organization or individual may represent the Coalition. It is also taken into account that the member of the Coalition, in addition to representing the Coalition, may act on his/her own behalf as appropriate.

The Coalition Coordinator shall be notified about the problem, who makes a decision to call a General Meeting related to the situation and sends an e-mail circular to the member organizations. If any question put to the vote of the General Assembly leads to a conflict of interest for any of the employees, the latter shall not participate in the vote.

## **Dispute (Conflict) Resolution Procedure**

**The Ethics Committee of the Coalition deals with dispute resolution.**

This procedure shall apply to the settlement of those disputes which arise within the Coalition, that do or may negatively affect the general activity of the Coalition or the implementation of a particular activity.

### **The dispute resolution platforms include as follows:**

- a) Interpersonal platform: disputes between Coalition members shall be discussed and settled through a dialogue between these individuals. If necessary, the Coalition Coordinator can also participate in the dialogue. The dialogue can be initiated both by persons in dispute, and by coordinators, group members, as well as by any other member of the Coalition.
- b) The platform of the General Assembly, consisting of the Coalition staff. This platform shall be used to settle only those interpersonal disputes which have failed to be settled through the interpersonal platform. If necessary, the General Assembly shall settle the disputes through a majority vote.

### **Dispute Resolution, Liability**

Coalition members shall strive to resolve disputes, conflicts of interest and other ethical violations in a negotiated and cooperative format, in an amicable spirit, using one of the above-mentioned platforms and mechanisms, as per the nature of the problem. If the resources for negotiating a solution of the problem is exhausted, the Coalition Coordinator shall initiate a General Assembly session with the participation of the staff of the Coalition and, if necessary, the members thereof, too.



Depending on the specifics of the problem and the existing or potential negative consequences on the Coalition's activities, the General Assembly may choose any of the listed options of liability:

- a) a verbal warning,
- b) a written warning,
- c) If the dispute is not resolved as a result of the two steps above, the General Assembly may also consider the adoption of a decision to revoke the membership.

An extraordinary session of the General Assembly shall be called upon the initiative of the Coordinator of the Coalition, if there has been a violation, consisting in the use of a statement or action involving discrimination against persons with disabilities in their work situation, leading to a particularly great threat to the authority, good reputation and credibility of the Coalition.

### **Maintaining Documents and Accessibility Thereof**

All necessary documents and materials related to the Coalition's activities shall be posted on Google Drive. This is a convenient way to store information, because on the one hand, it allows you to quickly find the necessary document, and on the other hand, it helps to archive them.

The Coalition's Google Drive can be used by the Coalition's staff. If necessary, member organizations can get access to a specific piece of material or document with the permission and consent of the Coordinator of the Coalition and the coordinator of the relevant committee. If access to a document is granted to another person or organization that is supposed to work on that document or make changes to it, the permission of the author of the given document shall also be necessary.

The documents uploaded onto the Coalition's Google Drive shall be grouped in separate folders. When uploading new documents, the Coalition employee, member or person who enjoys access must choose the appropriate folder to upload the file into, and if no such folder exists, they should create one. Coalition members shall be obliged to notify the Coalition Coordinator in cases of transfer of internal documents to a third party.

### **External Communication Strategy**

#### **General Provisions**

This document defines:

- The public relations, outreach, and operational principles, methods, target audiences, and key messages disseminated by the Coalition for Legal Reforms,
- The functions and powers of the officers, mainly responsible for external communication, namely the Coordinator of the Coalition and the Coordinator of the

Communication Committee.

- The Coalition employees' and members' functions and powers regarding public relations.

The external communication strategy is an important component for establishing and promoting the external relations and public image of the Coalition. The purpose of external communication is to present the activities of the Coalition to target groups, shape a positive image of the entity and maintain it consistently.

The issues and priorities, pertinent to the management of Coalition's communications shall be defined by the Coalition's Public Relations Officer and Communications Committee Coordinator and later they shall be discussed with the staff. The organization's Communications officer shall be the Coordinator of the Communications Committee, in cooperation and coordination with the Coalition Coordinator. If the information to be distributed is about the members of the Coalition, the information shall be coordinated with them. In separate cases, certain representative functions may be performed by other members of the Coalition staff, depending on the program requirements or the ex officio powers of these persons, but the overall coordination of these dimensions shall be carried out by the Communications Coordinator.

In their working contacts beyond the Coalition, the members of the Coalition shall be guided by the provisions of the Coalition's external communication strategy.

This document shall be approved by the staff of the Coalition and all member organizations and shall be revised or amended as a result of discussions within the framework of the General Assembly, convened on the basis of the decision adopted upon the recommendation of the Coalition's communication coordinator and upon discussion with the Coalition Coordinator.

### **Key Challenges in Coalition's External Communications**

The external communication on the objectives of the Coalition's activity shall be aimed at increasing the awareness of the society and decision-making bodies regarding the problems faced by persons with disabilities, non-discrimination against them, the advocacy carried out in order to ensure the inclusiveness of the legislative acts, discussed and adopted in our country. In this regard, the following constitute the most important challenges of external communication:

- discrimination against persons with disabilities,
- the inaccessibility of the surrounding environment and the services provided to them,
- violation of the rights of persons with disabilities in various areas of public life,
- misconceptions about the nature of the problems and the abilities of persons with

disabilities, stereotypical attitudes within the society,

- neglect of the rights of various groups of persons with disabilities in the legislative acts adopted by the state.

By treating persons with disabilities as those "with limited abilities", as "disabled", the members of the society create a divide between persons with and without disabilities, which hinders the efforts to promote inclusiveness and disability rights-based approaches. Thus, this kind of public attitude towards persons with disabilities is a challenge for the Coalition. The activities of the Coalition are aimed at developing the abilities and skills of persons with disabilities and their empowerment, which may lead to raising their role in the society, ensuring social, political and civil rights. The Coalition also faces the challenge of the insufficient visibility of persons with disabilities in the public, in relation to issues that are of relevance to the disability community or general public.

Another challenge, faced by the organization in its external communication, is the distrustful attitude of various entities, individuals and associations towards the effective functioning of non-governmental organizations. Labeling non-governmental organizations as driven by foreign agenda and going against national values and traditions is one of the most tangible manifestations of this attitude.

The lack of cooperation by the Coalition's human rights organizations is another challenge for the Coalition.

Given the role of media as the most important institution that shapes public opinion, the Coalition also considers the terms and phrases, insulting the dignity of a person and leading to discrimination, used in media publications covering persons with disabilities as a challenge, since thereby the media reinforce the stereotypes already existent in the society, which leads to the feeling of pity.

Another important issue is the continuous increase of the visibility and recognition of the Coalition, among persons with disabilities and partners and not only. To have greater influence on the decision-making process, the continuous increase in the visibility and recognition of the Coalition is a must.

Another challenge is to present the Coalition to various target groups as an entity with a tangible impact and an important role in the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities in our country.

### **Components of External Communication Strategy**

The Coalition's external communications consist of the following components:

- active coverage of activities in order to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, provide them with equal opportunities, exclude discrimination against them, change

the attitude of the society, promote a higher degree of activity for persons with disabilities, ensure the inclusion of legislative acts and their implementation,

- covering significant success stories, recorded in the course of the Coalition's activities,
- covering the Coalition's meetings and activities,
- building a positive image of the Coalition and consistently maintaining it, including neutralizing the disseminated false and defamatory information about the Coalition through a quick and well-structured response.

When shaping its external relations, the Coalition is willing to cooperate on initiatives that share the mission and vision of the Coalition to boost advocacy on legislative acts that promote the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, ensure stronger capacity among persons with disabilities and help fully exercise social, economic, political, civil and other rights.

The external communication strategy contains answers to the following questions:

1. What? – What do we want to convey? (the main message)
2. Why? – Why do we want to say it? (the purpose of choosing a target audience)
3. To whom? – the target audience (Whom do we address the message we want to convey?)
4. Where? - Where do we say what we have to say? (channels)
5. How? – How is the message delivered? (tools)

The message is the main idea or thought that conveys the Coalition's position, tailored to the interests of a specific target group.

The target audience consists of groups of natural, legal or mixed persons, which have been identified due to the features which are of interest to the Coalition.

Communication channels are ways of conveying a message to a target audience, taking into account their preferences.

PR tools are concrete events and materials that express the Coalition's message to the target audience through predetermined communication channels.

In general, the Coalition distinguishes among three main formats of coverage of its activities:

- coverage through its own media channels (owned media), namely website, pages in social media,
- coverage through conventional media outlets, celebrities, bloggers (earned media),
- paid means of content creation: advertisements, paid broadcasts, videos, paid promotion of publications in social media (paid media).

## **Target Audiences**

In order to achieve success in the central areas of the Coalition's activity and to effectively convey the relevant message to the audience, the following target audiences, as well as sub-audiences, have been identified, as appropriate:

- Persons with disabilities, the family members and/or care-givers thereof,
- The society of the RA,
- State/Government bodies and local governments, the Office of the Human Rights Defender,
- Political forces,
- CSOs,
- The media: TV, radio, print media, online media, social media,
- Donor organizations,
- Business sector
- Universities, colleges, professional orientation centers, schools,
- other healthcare institutions, service providers and individuals.

## **Persons with Disabilities, Members of Their Families**

Another key area of the Coalition's activity is the permanent work with these target groups. The Coalition makes consistent efforts to empower persons with disabilities, increase their legal awareness, as well as protect their socio-economic, political and civil rights, ensure equal opportunities for persons with disabilities, and create an inclusive society.

Raising the awareness of persons with disabilities, involving them in active civil and public life, promoting capacity building for them, encouraging them to exercise their rights will make it possible to spread the ideas of equality, non-discrimination, and inclusiveness among the new generation.

Continuous outreach, research, and discussions with the representatives of the target group make the problems faced by persons with disabilities clear. Ways and mechanisms are being developed for solving these problems. Problems considered easy to solve are regulated by the intervention of employees (provision of information, counseling, etc.), and problems considered particularly difficult to solve and requiring a long-term solution may require the intervention of the General Assembly to discuss and develop a strategy for the solution thereof.

## **Coalition's Communication Objectives**

- Protection of interests of persons with disabilities,
- Strengthening their human rights protection capacity.

## **Messages**

Every individual, regardless of their disability status, should be fully engaged in public life and have protected rights.

Persons with disabilities have the right to independent living. Independent living does not mean living alone and without anyone's help. Independent living means living in an accessible environment, receiving necessary services, including that of a personal assistant, reasonable accommodations, and the provision of assistive devices that enable a person with a disability to live independently.

Persons with disabilities must make their voices heard, participate in the discussion and adoption of decisions that concern their rights.

It is also about ensuring equal opportunities for untapping the potential of persons with disabilities.

## **Communication Channels**

- Internet
- Correspondence (electronic)
- In-person meetings/visits
- Group meetings
- Discussions
- Workshops.

## **Communication Tools**

- Letters
- Social media
- Print and online materials
- Interviews
- Legal, psychological and other types of counseling
- Involvement of other, sector-based organizations in order to solve the recorded problems.

## **The Public**

The public is one of the Coalition's target audiences. In cases of the violation of the rights of persons with disabilities, disability-based discrimination and other related protected grounds, the atmosphere of public intolerance towards such phenomena is one of the priorities of the Coalition. In the way of realizing their rights, persons with disabilities very often encounter stereotype-based attitudes by the society, which sets boundaries and gaps between persons with and without disabilities. In order to have an inclusive society, it is necessary to change the public's attitude and evaluation of persons with disabilities and their abilities. In this case, the information and communication flows transmitted by the Coalition should serve to form a positive dialogue with the society.

Communication with the public is carried out in two main ways:

- directly – through meetings, discussions, public awareness events organized within the framework of program activities,
- indirectly – through the mass media, through publications on the Coalition's activities, interviews, open letters, announcements, as well as publications by partners and stakeholders on their websites and social media pages.

### **Coalition's Communication Goals**

- Increasing public awareness about the approaches to the human rights model of disability,
- Promoting the participation of the members of the public in the fight against discrimination against persons with disabilities,
- Formation of a positive image of the organization and consistent improvement,
- Shaping an adequate understanding of disability,
- Increased interest in the Coalition's activities.

### **Messages**



The violation of the rights of persons with disabilities, the discriminatory approach towards them, the restrictions to their participation in public life endangers not only the development of these persons as individuals, but also threatens the formation of an equal and tolerant society in our country, hindering the discovery and realization of the potential of persons with disabilities.

Every person with a disability has his/her own place and role in the society and has a right to participate in public life equally with others.

### **Communication Channels**

- Personal ties,
- Events, organized by the Coalition on specific issues (seminars, conferences, discussions, etc.),
- Internet (website),
- Media (newspapers, TV stations, radio, electronic media),
- Social media (Facebook),
- Brochures, videos, podcasts,
- community meetings and public consultations, organized for target groups living in the region,
- Awareness raising campaigns within the community.

### **Communication Tools**

- Phone calls (calls to stakeholders),
- PR events – organization of press conferences, round table discussions, conferences, working meetings, targeted events,
- Printed materials – press releases, reports, publications, booklets, brochures, infographics,
- Interviews and speeches, participation in TV shows,
- Social ads,
- Videos,
- Interviews to and speeches at the local mass media outlets, participation in TV shows.

### **State Bodies and LSGs/Territorial Employment Centers**

The Coalition develops and regulates the directions of its interaction with state bodies based on the fact that on the one hand, the latter are meant to contribute to the creation of a legislative base for creating an environment, conducive to the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring equal opportunities for them, and on the other hand, state bodies are meant to ensure the effective implementation of that legislative framework, to promote inclusion in public life and state matters.

The Coalition views state bodies as not only subjects of necessary changes, but also as implementers of those very changes. Hence, the Coalition is willing to provide expert and informational support as necessary inasmuch as the Coalition's resources allow. Communication with state bodies is carried out by the coordinator of the Coalition, in his/her absence and in case the function is delegated by him/her, by the coordinator of the program department or the Communication Committee or the person in charge of public relations. Since the Organization is active in various fields (promoting the culture of ensuring equal opportunities, empowering persons with disabilities, developing an inclusive legislation), the Coalition's coordinator and the staff consult and adopt a decision on who shall participate in the meetings, round table discussions, and other events, convened by the government. The accountant interacts with the state authority for finance and taxation, submitting relevant financial statements.

### **Communication objectives of the Coalition**

- Multiplication of number of persons affected and the effect due to the achievement of the goals and implementation of projects,
- Effective implementation of projects and achievement of the goals,
- Empowerment of persons with disabilities, raising awareness of their own rights, perception of disability from the point of view of human rights,
- Development of mechanisms to assess the potential of persons with disabilities and enable their participation in political, civic, social and economic life.

## **Messages**

State bodies' failure to comprehensively ensure the rights and assess the potential of persons with disabilities endangers the effective and socially beneficial operation of state bodies and causes public mistrust towards these bodies.

In order to ensure equal opportunities for all, it is necessary to ensure the inclusiveness of legislation, physical and information accessibility, implementation of effective steps within the framework of clearly developed policies, including those aimed at deinstitutionalization. The implementation of community-based services for independent living in communities will help to ensure that the right to independent living for persons with disabilities is exercised.

The Coalition is ready to make its expert contribution to the capacity building efforts in these target state and local government bodies by providing advisory assistance in order to support efforts, aimed at having the rights of persons with disabilities exercised in various spheres of public life.

## **Communication channels**

- Coverage of events (seminars, conferences, discussions, etc.) organized by the Coalition on specific issues through various channels,
- Correspondence (both electronic and post),
- Internet (Website),
- Phone calls (calls to stakeholders),
- Media outlets (newspapers, TV stations, radio, electronic media).

## **Communication tools**

- PR events,
- Print materials,

- Publications,
- Public statements,
- Announcements,
- Surveys,
- Evaluations,
- Interviews.

### **Political Forces**

The Coalition can cooperate with various political forces, which may lead to the signing of documents on a political platform. The latter may undergo changes due to a new political reality in the country. These documents may, for example, include recommendations for political parties and alliances, developed by disability rights and other human rights NGOs so that after winning the elections the former incorporate the needs and demands of persons with disabilities in their programs.

Moreover, the Coalition can cooperate with both the ruling and oppositional political forces.

### **Coalition's Communication Objectives**

- Establishment of the agreements, reached within the framework of the political platform in the new political conditions,
- Implementation and monitoring of agreements reached by the document.

### **Message**

Political forces, which may be potential decision-makers, shall value the formation of an inclusive society and affirm their support to the efforts for this objective.

### **Communication channels**

- Coverage of events (seminars, conferences, discussions, etc.) organized by the Coalition on specific issues through various channels,
- Correspondence (both electronic and post),
- Phone calls,
- Media outlets (newspapers, TV stations, radio, electronic media outlets).

### **Communication Tools**

- Meetings
- Negotiations
- Invitations to events for advocacy.

### **CSOs**

CSOs include actors, representing the civil society, who are of primary importance for the Organization, namely, local non-governmental organizations, organizations dealing with the rights of persons with disabilities, and international organizations.

As a step to empower CSOs, the Coalition can organize courses, workshops and other events of the kind related to human rights, rights of persons with disabilities, and this sector in general, and as a step to empower itself, the Coalition also can participate in events which are in line with or do not contradict the activity thereof, organized by other CSOs, in full composition or as represented by some member NGOs. It can cooperate with various CSOs in advocating various human rights related activities.

Non-governmental organizations that are effective in their operations and fulfill their mission, have an important role in presenting their position to public policy-makers and decision-makers, in their lobbying for political and social changes to protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

If the Coalition wants to join any initiative or statement, this shall be discussed by the General Assembly. The Coalition can join an initiative or a statement, if no provisions contained therein contradict the ideology and values of the Coalition and if it is aimed to address the problems declared by the Coalition.

### **Local Non-Governmental Organizations**

## Communication goals for the Coalition

The Coalition makes efforts to develop closer and more effective cooperation with its partners.

### **Message**

Cooperation with NGOs contributes to the more effective and multifaceted activities of the Coalition, exchange of information, sharing of knowledge and experience.

### **Communication Channels**

#### **Personal ties**

- Partners participate in the events, organized by the Coalition, and the Coalition in its turn participates in the events organized by partners (seminars, conferences, discussions, etc.)
- Correspondence (both electronic and post)
- Internet (Web site, exchange of online materials, newsletter on the Organization's activities, disseminated by e-mail and social media platforms)
- Phone calls (calls to stakeholders)
- Publications

#### **Communication tools**

- PR events
- Print materials
- Electronic materials
- Initiatives

## **Political Groups and Initiatives**

In Armenia, cooperation with groups and civil initiatives dealing with the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities, as well as the protection of the interests of vulnerable communities, and the fight against discrimination and violence against them is important both due to the convergence of views and positions on a number of key matters, and the exchange of experience, information and knowledge. The decision to cooperate with and support any civil initiative is taken by the staff of the Organization, and in case of reservations and/or uncertainty, the issue is discussed at an extraordinary session of the General Assembly.

## **Coalition's Communication Objectives**

- Effective collaboration
- Strengthening trust and confidence in partners

## **Message**

Persons with disabilities themselves, who are active citizens, play a primary role in the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities.

## **Communication Channels**

- Personal interactions
- Events
- Social media platforms
- Electronic correspondence

## **Communication Tools**

- Electronic materials
- Petitions
- Announcements

## **Donor Organizations**

Financial resources are required to fulfil the mission of the Coalition. Therefore, the Coalition is willing to partner with all donors whose values and projects align with its mission and goals.

Communication with donor organizations is mainly carried out by e-mail, sometimes also through other means of telecommunication, as well as business trips. If the donor organization is located in Armenia, there may also be face-to-face meetings.

The Coordinator of the Coalition shall be the one in charge for communication with donors, also involving Coalition member NGOs, as necessary. The reports submitted to the donor by the Coalition shall be monthly, quarterly, annual, interim and final (depending on the request of the donor) and shall be prepared by program managers. The accountant who can communicate with the donors on the financial matters of the implemented projects shall be in charge of the financial section of the reports.

### **Coalition's Communication Objective**

- Ensuring financial stability
- Having influential partners

### **Message**

Cooperation with donor organizations plays an important role in achieving the goals of the Coalition.

### **Communication Channels**

- Official communication (participation in events organized by target audiences),
- Informal interactions (business lunch with the representatives of target audiences),
- Correspondence (both electronic and by post),
- Internet (Website),
- Phone calls (calls to stakeholders),
- Publications,



- Interactions and networking.

### **Communication Tools**

- PR events,
- Print and online materials,
- Reports/statements,
- Responses to inquiries.

### **Media**

Media relations play a key role in coalition operations. The role of the mass media becomes more important in the sense that sometimes not having large financial resources for advertising, close cooperation with the mass media is deemed necessary in order to cover the Coalition's activities as broadly as possible. In this regard, adequate and effective organization of public relations within Coalition's activity is important.

The Coalition is open to cooperation. Possessing comprehensive information on the state of rights of persons with disabilities and manifestations of discrimination against them in the Republic, the Coalition can and is ready to deliver an expert opinion on the problems or put forward a recommendation.

The Coalition considers all media (except those that serve as consistent platforms of discrimination and intolerance) as partners that disseminate information about the Coalition and cover its activities. The Coalition has no specific priorities for types of media outlets and values engagement with both traditional (press, radio, television) and new online media.

Since the Coalition engages in activities for ensuring socio-economic, educational, political and civil rights for persons with disabilities, non-discrimination against them as well as equal rights for them, when communicating with the media, both the Coordinator of the Coalition and a dedicated specialist can talk about the problems related to each of the above-mentioned. The Communications Committee Coordinator or the PR officer must be present when interviews are given to the media.

### **Coalition's Communication Objectives**

- Coverage of Coalition's activities
- Use of information, published in the mass media and within the scope of the Coalition's interests
- Promotion of the positive image of the Coalition through the media

### **Message**

The consistent and conscientious activity of the mass media contributes to making the current problems in the field of protection of the rights of persons with disabilities heard by the general public.

### **Communication Channels**

- Internet
- Face-to-face meetings
- Round table discussions
- Press conferences
- Events
- More targeted, bilateral forms of cooperation with individual media outlets.

### **Communication Tools**

- PR events
- Print and online materials
- Interviews
- Implementation of joint projects, aimed at the interests of the Organization

### **Business sector /it was proposed to add employers as a subgroup/**

The business sector is viewed as a separate audience due to the fundraising strategy, promotion of social entrepreneurship, awareness raising activities among the representatives of the business sector implemented by the Coalition, as well as the efforts of the Coalition towards voicing the issues of employment for persons with disabilities and raising awareness on leveraging the potential of persons with disabilities in the business sector.

### **Coalition's Communication Objectives**

- To ensure financial stability,
- To ensure diversity of financial sources,
- To implement social programs
- To represent persons with disabilities as untapped potential and making a shift in their position from a consumer to a producer

## **Message**

The business sector's interest in the problems in this field and the support to the Coalition shows that various groups in the society are keen on shaping an inclusive society.

## **Communication pipes**

- Personal contacts
- Correspondence
- Phone calls

## **Communication tools**

- Meetings
- Discussions on the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labor market
- Reports
- Responses to inquiries

## **Educational institutions: universities, vocational education and training (VET) institutions, professional orientation centers, schools, preschool institutions**

The Coalition emphasizes working with leaders of educational institutions and students to promote inclusiveness in education. When educational institutions are inclusive, persons with learning disabilities enjoy more opportunities to become good professionals in the future and to enter the labor market.

## **Coalition's Communication Objectives**

- Increasing the awareness of the teaching staff and students at educational institutions on the human rights model of disability
- Introducing them to the importance of inclusive education

## **Message**

Everyone has the right to education under equal conditions.

## **Communication Channels**

- Personal interactions
- Joint events
- Workshops
- Discussions

## **Communication tools**

- Dissemination of survey reports in academic circles, by the social media, through university, electronic and other libraries, presentation thereof at relevant events, organized by partner organizations
- Flash mobs
- Workshops on the rights-based approach, a higher level of legal awareness, and empowerment of persons with disabilities
- Preparation of various information materials (podcasts, videos, and so on)

## **Institutions and individuals providing medical and care services**

Since persons with disabilities have a lot to do with institutions that provide medical and social care services, the availability and accessibility of such services for persons with disabilities is therefore important.

## **Coalition's Communication Objectives**

- Raising the awareness of service providers for persons with disabilities on the disability rights-based approach
- Skills for communicating and working with persons with disabilities

## **Message**

Persons with disabilities have the right to access health services on an equal footing with others.

### **Communication Channels**

- Personal contacts
- Training sessions
- Workshops
- Seminars
- Discussions

### **Communication tools**

- Provision of information materials to medical facilities on how to work with and provide services to persons with disabilities
- Workshops to increase awareness on the rights-based approach and legal awareness

### **Promotional Materials**

In order to create and further develop effective communication with the target audience, the Coalition's Communications Coordinator and Public Relations Officer develop and use promotional materials, involving program assistant(s), member organizations, and other experts, as necessary. In order to effectively advance the Coalition, it is necessary to develop an appropriate budget/program budget line for more targeted and consistent policy making efforts and long-lasting impact. A public relations officer and/or program assistant shall contact suppliers during the development of promotional materials.

A preliminary, however not exhaustive, list of promotional materials includes the following items, showing the symbol of the Coalition, which may be used as a program logo or the Coalition's logo itself, as well as other information related to the Coalition, as appropriate: office pens, notebooks, flags, magnetized souvenirs, mugs, calendars, bookmarks, folders, fliers and so on. The materials may be intended to promote the overall activity of the Coalition as well as its individual projects. The symbol of the Coalition is used on all documents meant for the promotion of the Coalition, as well as all its communication and official documents.

The symbol of the Coalition must be present on the Coalition's official website and Facebook pages, as well as in press releases, announcements, letters, and publications distributed on behalf of the Coalition. It is also used on materials provided at events, training sessions, and discussions organized by the Coalition.

Consultation with the Communications Coordinator is mandatory before Coalition members prepare various promotional materials.

## **Equipment and Materials for Communication/Public Relations**

The annual report of the Coalition is prepared by the program officer, approved by the General Assembly and published at the end of the current year, summarizing the previous year's activities. The annual report should be posted on the Coalition's website and sent to stakeholders: state agencies, donor organizations, partners, and others.

The Coalition may have the necessary technical equipment for communication: a telephone, a digital video camera, a recorder, a projector, etc., and in the case of the absence thereof, it may use the property of the member organizations by mutual oral or written consent.

The organization has a bilingual (Armenian, English), adapted and accessible website for persons with disabilities, where information about the activities of the organization is posted. Available information is regularly updated by the Communications specialist. The English and Armenian pages are mostly identical and have the same content as possible. The content of the website materials is developed and posted on the website by the PR officer. The website URL of the organization is [www.....](http://www.....)

## **Website Structure**

The materials covering the activities of the Coalition, the coverage of the Coalition's activities by various media outlets, as well as the statements by the Coalition are regularly posted on the website of the Coalition.

Materials about events are posted on the website in the following cases:

- If any representative of the Coalition has participated in the event and made a speech, the material shall contain a mention thereof. If possible, the material shall include a video recording and the text of the speech.
- If no representative of the Coalition is attending an event, but the topic is related to the Coalition, the material about the event can be posted on the website as a news item.
- If a representative of the Coalition has participated in the event, but has not made a speech, the website shall contain only some information on the event, without an indication of the Coalition's participation if the event falls within the scope of matters posing interest to the Coalition.

The Coalition shall have pages on social media platforms such as ..... News reports, photos, videos, social clips about the Coalition's activities shall be posted on those platforms, and the pages shall respectively contains links to media interviews and publications

about the Coalition's member organizations, as well as the announcements and statements made by them..

The Communications Coordinator shall be responsible for the Coalition's website and social media updates. Member organizations shall be obliged to send the following kinds of information to the Communications and PR officers within at least 1 day after the event:

- Photos (if 2 events have taken place during the given day, and separate articles are going to be drafted about them, the photos shall be submitted in separate folders, named respectively),
- An overview or the minutes (number of participants, venue, in the case of a training course, also the first/last names of the trainer/s, their position, the topic of the course).

The Coalition shall be provided with information on those activities, which can be posted on the Coalition's website or its social media pages.

The PR officer shall post the content on the social media, taking into account the specific characteristics of social media platform audiences.

## **Media kit**

A media kit is a collection of materials, information pieces and publications intended for the media. The Coalition shall provide its members with such a kit to be used at press conferences, interviews or events. It shall be given to media representatives before the events start.

The Coalition's media kit shall include:

- a press release about the organized event,
- the Coalition's fact sheet,
- printed materials necessary for a specific event (statistical data, infographics, the text of the speeches, contact person's business card, etc.).

The kit shall be prepared in two languages – in Armenian and English, as necessary.

The Communications coordinator shall be responsible for preparing the kit. The prepared documents must show the symbol of the Coalition, its logo, as well as the logos of donor and partner organizations, in accordance with the requirements of the donors of various projects.

The materials included in the media kit shall be placed in a folder, bearing the logo of the Coalition, as well as the logos of its donor and partner organizations, in accordance with the requirements of the donors of various projects.

## **Press release**

The Coalition shall have a designed standard template for a press release, to be sent out to all media (print, electronic) outlets, if necessary. At the top of the press release, there shall be the Coalition's logo as well as logos of donor or partner organizations, as requested or appropriate, along with the Coalition's contact information at the bottom of the text. It is preferable for the press release not to exceed the volume of a page. If necessary, additional information can be sent as an attachment. From the content point of view, the press release, issued by the Coalition, should provide a comprehensive answer to the following questions:

- Who? Who are the main actors - the Organization, along with other participants involved in the project? Who are the main beneficiaries?
- What? What's new/innovative here?
- Why? Why is this news important? What sets it apart from the rest?
- Where? Where is this happening?
- When? When is it happening? Does it add extra importance to this news?
- How? How did succeed in doing it?



## **Forms of communication**

The Coalition shall communicate orally and in writing as appropriate and necessary.

Oral communication shall be carried out both through personal visits and means of telecommunication. Written communication shall be carried out through letters, public statements, and reports.

When interviewed by the mass media or during events, the representatives of the Coalition can present pre-agreed positions.

The invitation to cover the planned event shall be sent electronically to the media two days in advance. The Communications coordinator, as needed, shall make phone calls the day before the event to find out if media representatives are going to attend the event. The Communications Coordinator shall follow up during the event to see if the journalists have additional questions or are interested in other aspects of the Coalition's activities. In such cases, the PR officer can arrange an on-site interview or provide contact information to arrange a meeting with the journalist on another day.

After the event, a press release and photos shall be sent to the media outlet.

## **Social media platforms**

The Coalition shall emphasize its presence on social media in the context of the increasing role of social media. At the moment, the Coalition only has a Facebook page.

The Coalition's Communications Coordinator shall compile a calendar of monthly publications, updating them as needed throughout the month.

Questions.

- What would you change in the current activities on social media platforms?
- Do we need to use other social media platforms?

## **Coalition's Branding Policy**

The branding policy of the Coalition shall be implemented by including information about the Coalition and, if necessary, other partner and donor organizations on its products (press releases, publications, official letters, survey reports, videos, etc.) and organized public events.

## **Externally funded publications**

The branding policy for publications (survey reports, videos, information sheets, press reports, guides and other similar products) made with full or partial external donor support shall be carried out based on the requirements, set by the donor organization. Coalition members shall accept any special conditions, set or requested by some donors if the given project is implemented with the funding, received from such a donor. If donors do not set such requirements, the branding policy shall be implemented based on the following criteria:

1. The title page or header of the publication shall carry the full names of the Coalition and the respective donor organization and their official symbols are written in equal proportions.

2. The acknowledgements section at the end of the publication shall state:

"This publication, video or other media or informational product has been made possible with the support of xxx (insert name) donor organization under the yyy (insert name) program/project. The content, views and opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and may not reflect the views of the xxx (state name) donor."

3. The Coalition shall enjoy the copyright to the deliverables obtained within the framework of the grant, but it shall also recognize the right of the donor organization to reproduce, publish or otherwise use the results of the intellectual activities carried out by the Coalition within the framework of the given project, preferring the practice of being informed about such an intention in advance and making references to the Coalition.

**Logos of donor organizations shall not be used in the following cases:**

1. in the course of internal correspondence,
2. In situations where potential confusion may arise that the given project is directly implemented by the donor organization, for example, on the business cards of donor's staff,
3. In situations not directly related to the funded project.

**Public events**

At public events, the Coalition's banner shall be placed visibly in the venue/hall, which shall bear the Coalition's logo, its name in Armenian and English, phone number, website address, and links to its social media pages. A project banner may also be posted if requested and available by the donor. If the holding of a public event is funded by a donor organization, the donor's banner may be displayed upon its written or oral request, as provided for in the grant agreement between the Coalition and the donor.

**Activities in Multi-Member Formats**

The Coalition can create intellectual products by acting as a member of some collective entities (a consortium, an alliance, an initiative, etc.). In this case, the Coalition shall prefer the following branding policy.

1. The publication's title page or header shall bear the full names of the authoring organization (or organizations) and the respective donor organization and their official logos in equal sizes.

2. The acknowledgements section at the end of the publication shall state:

"This publication, video or other media or informational release has been made possible with the support of xxx (insert name) donor organization under the yyy (insert name) program/project. The content, views and opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and may not reflect the views of the xxx (state name) donor."

3. The organization that is the direct author of the material shall hold a copyright to the results obtained within the framework of the grant, but it shall also recognize the right of the donor organization to reproduce, publish or otherwise use the results of the intellectual activities carried out by the organization within the framework of the given project, preferring the practice of being informed about such an intention in advance and inclusion of references thereto.

### **Coalition's Publication Dissemination Procedure**

Coalition's publications – survey and research reports and analyses – shall be disseminated based on Coalition's priorities and aimed at maximizing awareness among the project's target groups and audiences.

The publications, prepared by the Coalition shall be distributed in the following directions:

- Libraries,
- State bodies,
- International organizations,
- Partner CSOs,
- Any other institution, working in the areas, covered by the publication.

The electronic version of the publications shall be posted on the official website of the Organization and shall be distributed by the PR officer among the staff and members of the Coalition, as well as through social media.

## **Communication in Crisis Situations**

Crisis communication planning involves specifying a toolkit for situations that have not yet occurred. The Coalition considers situations that may harm the Coalition's activities or harm the Coalition's reputation as crises. In every crisis situation, regardless of their scope, namely large or small, the Coalition shall clarify the answers to the following questions within the framework of this strategy:

- What are we going to say?

In any situation, the Coalition shall observe the rules of transparent and honest communication. The members of the Coalition shall agree that hiding is a wrong decision, and admitting one's mistakes and apologizing, if necessary, constitute a wiser option.

- How shall we talk about the problem to ensure the right approach in such a situation?

In crisis situations, the General Assembly of the Coalition shall approve the text of the comment or clarification to be published. The Coalition shall recognize that crisis situations need to be responded to quickly and reliably.

- Who is the best speaker in crisis situations?

In crisis situations, the members of the Coalition shall refuse to provide information or express an opinion to third parties or mass media, without first discussing the situation at the level of the General Assembly of the Coalition. The position agreed on by the General Assembly of the Coalition, which is subject to publication, shall be presented by the Coordinator of the Coalition. As per the specificity of the situation, another person may be appointed to act as the speaker by the decision of the General Assembly. Before giving any commentary to outsiders or stakeholder organizations, the members of the Coalition must inform the Coordinator first.

- When will we communicate about the situation and provide comments?

The Coalition shall make a public statement about the situation after a coordinated agreement over the statement with the staff and member organizations of the Coalition and after the adoption of the decision on who shall act as a speaker.

- How often shall updates be provided?

If additional clarifications are periodically needed during the crisis, the Coalition shall decide how many times to come up with public clarifications and comments based on the specific developments as per the unfolding of a specific case. The goal should be to deliver the Coalition's message to the target audiences clearly and without any manipulations.

- Which communication means/channels shall be used for more effective communication with the audience?

In crisis situations, the Coalition shall primarily disseminate information through its own channels (website, pages on social media platforms), also using traditional media channels, if

necessary. The Coalition shall deem a post-crisis evaluation exercise a priority and have lessons learned from the crisis management. The Coalition's staff and members shall evaluate the work done during the crisis, emphasize the positive and negative steps taken and their effectiveness, and also discuss the actions to be taken, should similar situations arise in the future.

Should the targeting of the Coalition Coordinator give rise to a crisis situation, all Coalition members shall issue a written statement.

## **Review Procedure**

This document shall be approved by the staff of the Coalition and all member organizations and shall be revised or amended upon the recommendation of the Coalition's Communication Coordinator and as a result of a discussion within the framework of the General Assembly, convened based on the decision made at a discussion with the Coalition's Coordinator.

## **Appendix 1**

### Media Coverage Invitation Template

Logo/s

Invitation for coverage

Title

Date

Invitation letter text

Disclaimer /if available/

Contact details

## **Appendix 2**

Logo/s

Press Release

Title

Date

Press release text

Disclaimer /if available/

Contacts