



Team Communication Charter

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1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Humble Smile Foundation consists of a wonderful international and multicultural team. Our team members work from anywhere in the world and use various channels to communicate. Communication is a crucial component in our work in order to deliver efficient outcomes with high qualitative values.

Based on a small internal 'research', this guide is intended to reflect Humble Smile Team's communication culture, in which everyone can find him or herself.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY COMMUNICATION?

We recognize communication as a two-way process. Communication includes written, graphic and spoken content, attitudes, and behaviours. It requires listening, responding, creating space for the other to respond and much more.

PURPOSE OF THIS CHARTER

All team members of Humble Smile Foundation are expected to use this Team Communication Charter for internal communication as well as towards stakeholders (e.g. to partners, students, and other parties). The charter should be used as *guidelines*, rather than as strict written rules.

Objectives of the Team Communication Charter:

- To safeguard a comfortable work environment for all employees in which each team member feels comfortable to speak, share thoughts, and bring up ideas.
- To ensure clear communication and to prevent miscommunications.
- To encourage development of our work, drive forward innovative ideas, and support the realisation of these ideas – both on team and individual levels.
- To promote efficiency and effectiveness of everyone's work hours.

2. OUR HUMBLE VOICE

Our personality should shine through each way we communicate. Whether it's through email, call, or face-to-face.

At the same time there should be a [consistency in our Humble Voice](#). This defines who we are as Humble Smile Foundation, how we communicate internally as a team, and externally to our stakeholders.

This statement from our Strategic Plan is our core purpose and focus:

[“\[We\] focus on collaboration as well as on the development, testing, and promotion of innovative models that support communities in achieving healthy lifestyles. All of these efforts are part of our vision for a humble planet in which each community can live with dignity in healthy and hygienic living conditions.”](#)

This statement should be at the heart of everything we communicate, and a starting point for thinking about our communication.

[Our Humble Voice:](#)

- Humble Smile Foundation, our place of work, is a first-person plural entity, so we use 'we', 'us', and 'our' when referring to Humble Smile as an organization and the team, and 'you' when addressing the reader.
- Avoid using 3rd-person personal pronouns (he, his, she, him, it, they, them, their). True example: *“I just spoke with the foreign minister of Guinea-Bissau. He asked them to make a letter addressed to her talking about this humanitarian action”* – as the minister is female, who asked who to write to whom?
- We use Great British English as our standard grammar and language.
- Our communication culture is direct, clear, transparent and to the point. We say straight what we think and mean, while we remain respectful towards others.
- We take cultural differences into consideration when communicating with others.
- We communicate with the following values: *Respect, Professionalism, Integrity, and Clarity*.
- We avoid jargon to ensure all team members and external parties understand the message.
- Our e-mail message is recognizable by Verdana fonts size 12/medium, and by a universal signature (see next page).

Your Name
Your Position



Phone: +00 000 00 00 000
E-mail: firstname@humblesmile.org
WSite: www.humblesmile.org
Social: [Facebook](#) [Instagram](#)
Video: [Watch what we do!](#)
[#GoHumbleGiveSmiles](#)
[#ResponsibleDentistry](#)

FOR EXAMPLE:

Dr. Tessa Waldhart
Creative Officer / Project Manager



Phone: +43 699 17 333 911
E-mail: tessa@humblesmile.org
WSite: www.humblesmile.org
Social: [Facebook](#) [Instagram](#)
Video: [Watch what we do!](#)
[#GoHumbleGiveSmiles](#)
[#ResponsibleDentistry](#)

3. EMAILS

We rely on emails. We all work from different places with different time zones. While emails help us getting our work done, they also generate work – and sometimes even more work. So while the usage of email is intrinsic to our modern workplace, there lies a tendency of misuse.

10 Golden Tips for Best E-mail Practices¹:

1. Respect Recipients' Time

This is the fundamental rule. As the message sender, the onus is on YOU to minimize the time your email will take to process. Even if it means taking more time at your end before sending.

2. Short or Slow is not Rude

Given the email load we're all facing, it's OK if replies take a while coming and if they don't give detailed responses to all your questions. Short emails are not rude. Less is more.

3. Celebrate Clarity

Start with a subject line that clearly labels the topic. For example, "Invoice" will be more difficult to track than "Jim's invoice August 19". Use crisp, muddle-free sentences. If the email has to be longer than five sentences, make sure the first provides the basic reason for writing. Try to keep the emails short and to the point, while ensuring a clear message. Avoid strange fonts.

4. Realize Readability

Sometimes long emails are unavoidable and they main contain many questions. Use bullet points or enumerations and headers to ease readability where appropriate. Use @[name] to specifically respond or address someone in the 'To' or 'CC' address field. Sometimes your email is clearer when you respond to someone's message and questions by writing in his/her email under your email by using different colour.

5. Slash Surplus CC's

Do not copy anyone 'just in case'. For every recipient you add, you are dramatically multiplying total response time. Anyone copied in to an email should be getting something from it. Anyone in CC means 'For your

¹ Based on: Medium.com. 'The Email Charter: an idea worth spreading'. Feb 5 2019, and: The University of Leicester Internal Communications Guidelines, 2019.

information'. If action is required from someone, include him or her in the 'To' address field. When there are multiple recipients, please don't default to 'Reply All'. Maybe you only need to CC a couple of people on the original thread. Or none.

6. Tighten the Thread

Some emails depend for their meaning on context. Which means it's usually right to include the thread being responded to. Before sending, cut what's not relevant. Do not start a new thread unless it's a completely new topic.

7. Take Your Time or Take Immediate Action

While some emails require immediate response, or at least preferably the same day, other emails require more time to take action. In case no immediate action or response is required, aim to answer within 3 days or write the sender when you will respond if the action requires more than 3 days. When you are the sender and you request action from the recipients, state clearly by whom and by when. When an immediate short response is required, consider using WhatsApp.

8. Cut Countless Responses

You don't need to reply to every e-mail, especially not to those that are themselves clear responses. An email saying "Thanks for your note. I'm in." does not need you to reply "Great." That just cost someone another 30 seconds.

9. Consider a Call

Consider whether email is the best medium for your communication. Could you get more out of a face-to-face conversation, consider Google Hangouts/Meet or a WhatsApp call!

10. Disconnect!

If we all agreed to spend less time doing email, we'd all get less email! Consider calendaring half-days at work where you can't go online to promote efficient working on all of your other tasks.

4. WHATSAPP

WhatsApp is everywhere and almost everyone is using it. It's a very simple tool for communication, and with the launch of WhatsApp Web, it has become even easier for us to use. WhatsApp has the personal touch that email doesn't have. Since we all work from different places, WhatsApp is a great invention to develop and maintain relationships, even with your colleagues.

The Do's of WhatsApp:

1. Build Relationships

Working from home can be a challenge, especially when you hardly see your colleagues in real life. WhatsApp offers a great platform to build and maintain relations with your co-workers, and sometimes even with partners from the field. However, keep in mind that some people like to keep work and privacy separated. So use the App wisely, especially when communicating with external parties.

2. Respect Each Other's Private Time

We all work on different days from different time zones. Keep the hours of the person you're sending your message to into consideration. Does your colleague have a free day? Ask yourself how urgent your question/message is.

3. Use the Humble WhatsApp Groups

The purpose of WhatsApp groups is to discuss similar topics with certain people of your team. For example, the WhatsApp group "Humble Smile Foundation" consist of all HSF team members and may be used to share pictures, stories, and videos for marketing purposes, as well as for topics that are relevant for the *entire* team. Sometimes partners may join a WhatsApp group too. In these cases, be aware of possible sensitive internal information that is not supposed to be read or known externally.

4. Communicate in the Field

Whether you are on a project, networking, or for any other reason, WhatsApp is an ideal tool to communicate with your colleagues and partners in the field – e.g. updates regarding schedule or time of meeting.

5. Quick Questions and Answer

When you don't want to spam someone's email inbox with a simple and short question that only needs one or few short answers, WhatsApp is the answer. Quick questions through WhatsApp are highly encouraged, because it encourages teamwork and work efficiency.

6. Consider an Email

Is your question longer? Does it require more context? Do you expect an elaborative answer? Or is the topic possibly relevant to follow up in the future? Then writing an email might be more appropriate. See also Chapter 3 regarding the use of emails.

7. Consider a Call

While WhatsApp is a wonderful platform for more personal communication, nothing is as effective as (video) calls – except of personal/offline meetings. Suggest a call when the topic requires more extended and in-depth discussion. See Chapter 6.

8. Share Photos and Videos

Share relevant pictures and videos with your co-workers through WhatsApp if you have a question that needs clarification with a picture, to keep them updated about the fieldwork, or any other reason.

Visuals for marketing purposes (e.g. social media) should be sent in the highest possible resolution by email or online file-sharing (Google Drive or WeTransfer). See chapter below 5. Visuals for details.

5. VISUALS

Visuals, such as pictures, videos, quotes or other media formats illustrate a story and provide information. The purpose of visuals is to showcase our work in social media and other external communication tools to keep our stakeholders and (potential partners) up to date. Therefore, appealing and high-quality visuals are crucial.

Respect & Ethics

- Before you capture somebody, make sure to get this person's permit to capture him/her. Show the person the visual afterwards to see if he/she agrees with it.
- Obtain parental consent when capturing children in a picture.
- Respect people that you capture and approach them in the most respectful way.

Sharing visuals

- Visuals shall be shared by e-mail (tessa@humblesmile.org) to ensure the highest resolution.
- WeTransfer or Google Drive is used when file size is too big for an email attachment.
- When receiving pictures from partners or field staff, ensure you receive these pictures through e-mail, WeTransfer or Google Drive
- Remember: WhatsApp compresses the files and with it the resolution therefore the pictures are not really useful
- If you are not sure about your selection of visuals, send your suggestions via WhatsApp to Tessa *for discussion only*.
- When sending the pictures, always fill out and attach the document *Project Manager Image Template Apr '21.docx*

1. Photos

- To be taken with a high-resolution camera (smartphone cameras nowadays also have very good resolution)
- The recommended resolution is 1080 x 1920 pixels
- The minimum resolution is 600 x 1067 pixels
- A good photo inspires, educates and/or captivates a viewer, easily triggering powerful emotions
- Make sure to balance your pictures in terms of gender, age, etc...
- Take horizontal and vertical photos.
- Take group and individual photos, from far and from close distances.
- Combine photos in which people pose, with lively and spontaneous ones.

2. Videos

- Videos may be used internally to get a quick update of a field project and/or to share with the public.
- A general motto for the length: „The shorter the better!“
 - o For Instagram the max. length is 1min
 - o For a more profound video clip 3-6 min are acceptable (for example a project video, an interview)
- Make sure to limit all noises when filming
- If you interview a person, control the speed of talking; better slower, less words and more understandable than long and fast spoken sentences.
- Always think about the core message you want to transmit to the viewer.
- Consult with Tessa whether a horizontal or vertical video is expected.
Generally said, vertical videos are useful for Facebook- and Instagram Stories. For YouTube horizontal videos work better.

3. Quote pictures

- Share impressive, intriguing, and interesting quotes from a child, a teacher, a CHW or any other person involved somehow in our projects
- Quotes are useful and should reflect our mission and vision statements.

4. References

- Indicate the location where the visual was taken or quote came from
- Write down the purpose or message of the visual
- Ensure you know the names of the people in the pictures, videos, or from the quote, as in our #VoicesFromOurCommunities Campaign for example.

6. VIDEO CALLS

Video calls are one of the most vital and engaging ways we have of getting across information. Calls are useful to discuss topics in-depth, brainstorm, motivate, update and to talk about sensitive personal topics. At the same time, they demand time from someone's work schedule.

Calls take place:

- When topics need more elaborative discussion
- When someone has the need for personal and/or sensitive talk
- To hear and discuss updates with co-workers
- To discuss updates regarding projects with partners
- To establish (initial) relationships with new partners
- With video in order to see the non-verbal communication

TEAM MEETINGS

Regular team meetings often include many agenda items and several participants. As a meeting should take about 30 mins and never exceed 45 mins, each person should strive to be prepared, on-point, brief and clear. There is no need for excess language and background – we will all be very impressed by succinct messages that can be elaborated on as required by the participants.

CHANNELS

At Humble Smile Foundation we have various channels that we use. When to use which channel?

Hangouts Meet – First preference. It is used for team meetings and when setting up a meeting with partners. Use Google Calendar to set up the meeting and to create the Hangouts Meet ID.

Skype – Used when other party is not familiar with Hangouts Meet or in case of technical difficulties when using Hangouts Meet.

WhatsApp – Used between one-on-one calls between colleagues or with partners in other countries that need to be quickly reached. WhatsApp is also a good option when a call is required with a person that is not with his/her laptop or computer.

FaceTime – Option for iPhone users.

7. CALENDARS & SCHEDULES

In order to help team members to work together, the following suggestions for use of Google Calendars are proposed:

1. Workdays & Work Hours

Keep your team members up to date about your working days and hours. Do you work only during particular days and hours? Then these are the days and hours your colleagues expect your availability. Especially regarding part-time staff: Are you changing your workdays and/or hours? Update your team members! We respect your schedule and expect this in return for our planning as well.

2. Vacation Days

We value everyone's leisure time and the need for a vacation. Update the management at least a month in advance when you are planning a vacation. Update your team members maximum 2 weeks in advance. Don't forget to update your calendar. Ensure the 'out of office' mode is on and that you have indicated when you are back in 'office'.

3. Arranging Meetings

All meetings should be arranged using Google Calendar. When organising a meeting, check availability of the participants of the meeting.

4. Responding to Meeting Requests

When you receive a meeting request, you should accept, reject or suggest a more suitable time as soon as possible in order to help the person arranging the meeting. Don't ignore the request when you are not able to join the meeting.

8. REPORTING

Sometimes you will be asked to submit a report about an event such as an initiative, campaign, project, call, meeting etc; or you may decide that a report is the best way to update the team about a complex or significant issue.

Reports should be one or two pages, simple and easy to read and understand.

Reports should include the following points:

- Topic
- Recipients
- Date
- Author
- Recommendation
- Background
- Discussion/ key points/ overview/ comments/ governance alignment/ resource consideration/ legal & regulatory/ risks
- Pictures
- Next steps
- Attachments/ links

MONTHLY REPORTS

Monthly reports are shared with the team before the team meeting begins, preferably a day in advance. These update reports enable the team meetings to focus on discussing problems, risks, strategies, etc. These reports are useful for writing the quarterly reports.

QUARTERLY REPORTS

Humble Smile's activities are becoming increasingly noticed by professionals, companies, students, consumers, and other NGOs. The quarterly reports will only be used internally to keep track of all our developments and to ensure your work will be communicated to our governing board and stakeholders.

Simple guidelines

- **Deadlines:** January 5, April 5th, July 5th, October 4th (2021), January 4th (2022), etc.
- **Send your report to:** Darren (darren@humblesmile.org) and Leoni (leoni@humblesmile.org)
- **Lengths:** 2 pages maximum (adjust font size and margins to reach page limit if needed)
- **Format:** Word and PDF
- **File name:** [name][year-last 2 digits][months – CAPS first letter of each month], *For example:* LeoniGroot20JFM
- Follow the Team Communications Charter, additionally:

- **Use names** when you write about people, places or events. Avoid outdated, indirect and incomplete references like “this officer”, “the abovementioned person”, “official 1”, “that location”, “this program”, “his idea”, “the project”, “this village”, “the school”, “they” etc.
 - Use short, straightforward sentences, don’t repeat information
 - **Be as clear and specific as possible**
 - **Stick to observable/tangible facts and** quantify where possible (x children were reached through.... X women were trained by...)
 - Use bullet style: 1 bullet per topic
- **Project status:** Provide a visualisation of the project’s status by filling out the table under **1. Projects** (see next page). Apply the relevant colour under Project Status in the table on the next page.

Project Status	Meaning of Project Status - Explanation and examples
On Track	Project timeline on track, smooth partnership collaborations, reach and impact according to expectations. Project status is healthy.
Potential risks	External factors that <i>may</i> influence the project: partner experiencing unexpected issues, changes in community, governmental changes etc. Project is on track, but precaution is required.
Risks/delays	External factors that directly influence the schedule of the project due to partner, community, government, resources. Action is required.
Issues	External factors that directly affect the project (beyond the schedule) and intended impact due to partner, community, government, resource problems. Immediate and urgent action is required.
Halted	Project paused

Template

The template of the Quarterly Reports can be found in the Annex.

9. EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION

While this charter is created to give Humble Smile team members guidelines for internal communication, many of the points are relevant for external communications (communicating with stakeholders such as partners, supporters, dental students, etc.) as well.

4 notes on external communication:

1. Emails, Calls, WhatsApp, and Calendars

- See the relevant guidelines in the previous chapters.
- Use your Humble Voice.
- Better Safe Than Sorry – Ask your colleague for advice on how to communicate a certain issue with a stakeholder. Even if you are only 1% unsure: we don't want to lose a valuable connection.

2. Communications Guide

The Communications Guide is updated on a monthly basis. Ensure that you use the latest version for your external communications. Update Darren when you notice a mistake or missing information in the document.

3. Social Media

Do you want to post or share something about Humble Smile Foundation through your own personal social media channels? Great! The more shares, the more people HSF reaches. Remember: use your Humble Voice and ensure the information you share is correct. That's why there is an updated Communications Guide in place (see point above). And, hashtag away - our key #s are: #GoHumbleGiveSmiles #ResponsibleDentistry

4. Website

humblesmile.org contains a plethora of information that can readily be shared with, and easily downloaded by, external parties - including images, logotype, reports, scientific literature, applications, training material, guidelines and the Communication Guide.

10. ETHICAL HELPFUL TERMS

Oftentimes, we do not pay attention to how much power our language has. In order to make sure we use appropriate language that is most respectful of the communities we are working with, here are some alternatives for common terms. The goal of using the right terms when communicating is to preserve the dignity of populations, be empathetic, just, kind, and ensure fairness.

1. **Informal Settlement** - An informal settlement is a type of housing area that is built without proper legal authorization or formal planning by the government or other entities. These settlements are often referred to as "slums, favelas, etc." but this terminology is derogatory and is not to be used.
2. **Low-Income/Middle-Income country/ies** - Use the term Low-Income Countries (LIC) and Middle-Income Countries (MIC) instead of saying "third world." The term "third world" implies a hierarchy that puts higher income countries on a pedestal.
3. **Working with/Standing in Solidarity with** - Use these phrases instead of "working for/helping/saving/giving." These emphasize both the autonomy of all individuals involved and highlights the fact that the project is a collaborative effort, rather than reducing the agency of local individuals involved in the project.
4. **Participant/Stakeholder/Community Partner** - Use these terms instead of using the term "beneficiary." Beneficiary implies that a person is receiving assistance passively, even though these participants are actively engaged in the projects at hand.
5. **Survivor** - Use the term survivor instead of the term "victim." This once again reduces the autonomy and agency of the individual who may have experienced hardship.
6. **Underrepresented** - use the term underrepresented instead of the term vulnerable. The term vulnerable implies weakness and can be perceived as derogatory.
7. **Women's Financial Empowerment** - when using the term "empowerment," it is important to be specific. Simply saying "women's empowerment" implies that you hold the power to empower others when really empowerment is a

self-driven journey. Saying women's **financial** empowerment illustrates that specific tools are being offered to facilitate women's empowerment.

8. **Disabled** - Use the term disabled instead of the terms "handicapped" or "special needs." These terms imply weakness and can be perceived as derogatory.
9. **Low literacy** - Use the term low literacy instead of the term "illiterate." The term low literacy recognizes that reading and writing are learned skills that can be improved upon, while the term "illiterate" implies that literacy is binary.
10. **Artificial** - Use this term instead of "manmade." There has been a shift away from using gendered words.
11. **Humanity** - Use this term instead of "mankind."
12. **Human Resource** - Use this term instead of "manpower."

11. LAST BUT NOT LEAST

This document is written to encourage efficient and effective communication to benefit team efforts that lead to improved outcomes of our work. Some final important notes:

1. Dare to Listen!

Support and protect a safe and comfortable environment where questions, ideas, and comments may be raised, and where everyone feels they are being heard and understood. Listen to your fellow team members and show that you understood what the other said. Furthermore, give everyone space to speak. If someone is silent, this does not necessarily mean that he or she does not want to speak.

2. Dare to Ask and Dare to Share

Dare to raise questions, dare to give your critique, and dare to share ideas. Suggest a call with one or more colleagues if you think this might help your work. Above all, don't be afraid to share negative news. We all know life is not always a bed of roses – neither is our work.

3. Provide Feedback and Encourage your Co-workers.

Motivate your co-workers in their work. Provide compliments, while remaining critical. Help your colleague to get the best out of him/her.

4. Be Clear and Transparent while Being Respectful

A direct and open communication culture encourages clarity and transparency. Be to the point. At the same time take cultural differences into consideration.

5. Be Gender Sensitive

Use pronouns and references to gender according to how the other person wants to be approached and referred to.

6. Use Humour and Make a Joke

While we aim for professional and serious communication that is respectful and honest, we also want to hear your jokes! That's where personality shines through our communication.

ANNEX 1

Project Manager Quarterly Report Template

[months] [year], [name]

Reporting period:

Date:

Author:

1. Field & Collaborative Projects

Project name	Project Status	Past Quarter: Key points and updates

Risks, help needed, recommendations, or links

-

Next Quarter

-

2. Partnerships: Key points and updates on project partnerships

Past Quarter

-

Next Quarter

-

3. Funding: Key points and updates on funding/ CSR

Past Quarter

-

Next Quarter

-

4. Resources: Key points and updates on resource development

Past Quarter

-

Next Quarter

-

5. Administration: Key points and updates on office/ staff/ admin

Past Quarter

-

Next Quarter

-

Pictures

(A selection of pictures about topics referred to in the report including a very short caption for informative purposes. Original photos should always be sent to tessa@humblesmile.org)