Sharing Lessons Learned from WHO

Capacity Building in Risk Communication & Community Engagement

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What is Emergency Risk Communication?

... refers the **real-time exchange of information**, advice and opinions between experts or officials and people who face a threat (hazard) to their survival, health or economic or social well-being. Its ultimate purpose is that **everyone at risk is able to take informed decisions to mitigate the effects of the threat** (hazard) such as a disease outbreak and take protective and preventive action.

... **uses a mix of communication and engagement strategies and tactics**, including but not limited to, media communications, social media, mass awareness campaigns, health promotion, stakeholder engagement, social mobilization and community engagement.

*Working definition derived from the IHR working group on risk communication, 2009*
## Relevant international health frameworks

RCCE has been identified as a cross-cutting priority for WHO’s work on health emergencies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHO Constitution</th>
<th>International Health Regulations, IHR (2005)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health as a human right and a social justice. Informed opinion and active co-operation on the part of the public are of the utmost importance in the improvement of the health of the people.</td>
<td>Risk communication as a core capacity for mitigating the effects and outcomes of health events and emergencies.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Framework</th>
<th>Programme Strategies</th>
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<td>Risk communication is one of five strategies within the PIP Framework.</td>
<td>Outbreak response, GOARN, Humanitarian action Framework, WHO reform for outbreaks and health emergencies. More emphasis on community engagement in response.</td>
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Risk communication systems for emergencies

Internal and partner coordination for ERC

Public communication

Communication engagement with affected communities

Perception, risky behaviours and misinformation
WHO ERC guidance started in 2004

- Communication for behavioural impact (COMBI) (2012)
- EURO – Zika Virus Risk Communication (2017)
WHO Guideline for Emergency Risk Communication (ERC)
Aim to provide evidence-based guidance for:

- building trust and engaging with communities and affected populations
- integrating risk communication into existing national and local emergency preparedness and response structures
- ERC practice (based on the evidence of what worked and what did not work during recent emergencies)
Strong Recommendations

Building trust
Communicating uncertainty
Engaging with community

- Acknowledging uncertainty
- Being transparent
- Speedily dissemination
- Easy-to-understand scientific communication
- Input from public
- Ensuring coordination
- Avoiding conflicting information
- Disseminating through multiple platforms
Strong Recommendations

Integrating ERC in national preparedness and response

- Tailoring information and communication to users’ needs
- Training regularly for ERC, with focus on coordination
- Defining sustained ERC budget
Strong Recommendations

ERC practice

• Planning well in advance, with continuous feedback from affected population
• Developing integrated strategy with social and traditional media
• Not explaining risk in technical terms
• Sharing consistent messages from different sources
• Promoting specific and realistic actions (through messages)
Conditional recommendations

Social media may be used at various levels and adapted for different situations.

There was moderate quality evidence indicating that social media use is a means of:

- creating situational awareness
- monitoring and responding to rumours
- addressing public concerns and reactions; and
- facilitating peer-to-peer communication and local-level responses.
Research priorities and gaps

- Absence of longitudinal studies on trust and communicating uncertainties
- Need of research into impact of digital media
- Lack of studies on effective ways to engage communities
- Insufficient coverage and comparative research across countries, especially of Lower and Middle Income Countries (LMICs)
Research priorities and gaps

Need for research in...

- LMIC settings about governance and leadership and information systems and coordination
- measuring the effect of an intervention
- how best to develop and sustain the capacity in ERC staff
- effective means of establishing sustained funding for ERC
Research priorities and gaps

- non-seismic events with larger sample sizes
- strategies that make a clear connection between increased information during preparation phase and action change
- LMIC settings
- effective feedback loops
- Social media
  - use during the preparation and recovery phases
  - who is reached and who needs other media
  - impact as one part of a multi-modal communication strategy
Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework

- Laboratory & Surveillance
- Regulatory Capacity Building
- Burden of Disease
- Planning for Deployment
- Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Planning

Risk Communications & Community Engagement
Step 1: Training

- Multi-sectoral
  - All responding ministries (local & federal)
  - NGOs, UN, civil society
- Provides common language & approaches
- Uses strengths of each participating organization
- Uses public health threats identified by country
Step 2b: Social Mapping

Identifying social structures prior to an emergency

- Existing Social Science research
- Health Promotion and Village volunteer systems
- Previous issues with health systems
Step 3: Plan writing

- Multi-hazard
- Whole-of-society
- Potential and existing risks
Plan gets tested through

- Table top exercise
- Other national emergency exercises
- An actual emergency
Step 1: Training

Step 2: Capacity mapping

Step 3: Plan writing

Step 4: Plan testing

Step 5: Plan adoption
HEALTH programme

EMERGENCIES

Preparation

Start of Emergency

Initial Response

Opportunity for Control

Crisis & Control

Recovery

Evaluation

Commit to Communications, assess, test and train

Adapt the plan to the response and activate it

Maintain TRUST and foster resilience

Conduct health education and promote agency activity

Evaluate communication and incorporate lessons learned
“Our emergency response can be incredible, but if we don’t communicate well with our public, it will all be in vain. Everything that our emergency responders have done will have been for nothing if we don’t include communication as part of our response”.
Thank you

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