

## Annex III



**EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY**


## **Standard Operating Procedure**

## **How To Develop Key Messages**



Speaking with **'One Voice'** for a common goal

## Standard Operating Procedure How to Develop Key Messages

	<b>EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY</b>	<b>EAC/HEALTH/OH</b>	
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## Background

The East African Community (EAC) Regional Contingency Plan for Epidemics Due to Communicable Diseases, Conditions and Other Events of Public Health Concern (2018 – 2023) was designed to strengthen governance in managing the risk and the response to infectious disease outbreaks. It is oriented towards different key international tools, such as the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), which serves to:

- Align efforts between countries, international organizations, and public and private stakeholders;
- Accelerate progress towards a world which is safe and secure from infectious disease threats; and
- Promote global health security as an international priority.

Additional contributions to the contingency plan include the International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005) and related World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, and veterinary service guidance from the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in the area of infectious disease outbreaks and epidemics.

Risk communication refers to the real-time exchange of information, guidance, and advice between experts and people facing threats to their health, economic or social wellbeing. It enables the public to gain knowledge and to make informed decisions.

Crisis communications are initiated when there is an emergency. They provide clear and easy-to-understand information, delivered within a narrow time constraint, aimed at mitigating the impact of an outbreak or hazard.

Risk and crisis communications are based on trust and therefore follow a 'One Voice' approach. Risk and crisis communication exercised by the crisis management structure will be guided by the 'Risk and Crisis Communication Strategy for the EAC Region' and will be implemented according to standard operating procedures. The Contingency Plan crisis management structure shall establish capacity to conduct effective and efficient risk communications when there is no immediate threat, and to conduct crisis communications in times of emergencies.

## Purpose of the SOP

The purpose of the SOP is to describe how to develop accurate and effective key messages to help people at risk and those faced with emergencies make informed decisions to mitigate the effects of a threat or hazard, and in doing so, take protective and preventive action.

## Scope of the SOP

- Provide guidance on content and prioritisation of key messages;
- List the steps needed to develop and compose key messages; and
- Define the expected outputs of key messages.

## Target audience

This document is relevant for:

- Risk and Crisis Communications (RCC) structures within EAC and Partner States
- External support personnel deployed to perform communications functions

## Goals of Key Messages

- To provide information, advice, and guidance to key audiences to prompt action that will protect the health of individuals, families, communities, and regions;
- To share timely, accurate information about a risk or hazard;
- To promote risk-reduction behaviors and practices;
- To reduce and dispel rumours;
- To ensure consistency, continuity and accuracy in risk and crisis communications;
- To increase trust between the public and EAC and Partner States in advance of and during a crisis or emergency.

## Communication Standards

Effective key messages are:

- **Concise** – Short and to the point;
- **Strategic** – Define, differentiate, and address risks and actions;
- **Compelling** – Include meaningful information to drive action;

- **Relevant** – Appropriate to the situation and audience;
- **Understandable** – Use plain language; avoid jargon and acronyms;
- **Memorable** – Easy to remember and repeat;
- **Accessible** –Delivered through effective channels, and respectful of the culture, of target audiences.
- **Actionable** – Give audiences steps they can take to mitigate risk, encourage self-efficacy, and support community engagement; and
- **Accurate:** Factual

## Process of Developing Key Messages

- Step 1:** Identify the issue or situation to be addressed.
- Step 2:** Identify the affected communities and people.
- Step 3:** Review relevant documents, including emergency guidelines and background materials.
- Step 4:** Conduct a rapid assessment on social/cultural/behavioral attitudes of the affected communities
- Step 4:** Identify key audiences and appropriate channels to reach them.
- Step 5:** Conduct brainstorming sessions with technical experts and relevant stakeholders (including those people involved in the approval process) to establish and prioritise the communications goals and audiences to be addressed by the key messages.
- Step 6:** Identify messaging needs, and determine the nature of the key messages:
- a. Long-term risk messages;
  - b. Messages designed to support specific issues, emergencies or situations; and
  - c. Combinations of long-term risk communications messaging, and specific crisis emergency messaging
- Step 7:** Draft key messages and pretest them.
- Step 8:** Align audience, channel, and communication objectives in each set of key messages as the messages are being developed.
- Step 9:** Consider the needs and concerns of target audiences for key messages.
- Step 10:** Tailor key messages to audiences based on situational awareness and factors motivating and influencing behavior change – including level of risk and potential impact of the event.
- Step 11:** Over time, routinely revisit the key messages to ensure they continue to be relevant, accurate and should reflect the most recent updates available.

## 2. Development Tasks:

- Step 1:** Identify the top three priority key messages for each identified audience, in order of importance, based upon knowledge gained through brainstorming sessions and the information collection process.
- Step 2:** Apply the 27/9/3 rule.
- 27 = the number of words of each message.
  - 9 = the number of broadcast seconds likely given to a key message.
  - 3 = the average number of messages within a press release or official statement that will receive media coverage.
- Step 3:** Identify top three overarching messages, aligned with the needs of each audience, using communications goals as a guideline. It is likely that multiple sets of key messages will be required, each targeted to specific audiences.
- Step 4:** Compile top three overarching messages in a draft document, using the Message Mapping Tool (Annex 1). Follow the instructions on the tool to create 12 messages – three primary key messages, followed by three supporting messages for each primary message. Repeat this task as necessary to develop key messages targeted at individual audiences.
- Step 5:** Pretest the key messages among technical teams and target audiences, and update accordingly.
- Step 6:** Solicit necessary approvals from leadership and technical clearance chain. There are likely to be multiple revisions and updates to DRAFT key message documents.
- Step 7:** Refine and update key messages based on changing circumstances, new information and as requested by leadership and technical staff, following the naming conventions referenced in the section **Version Control and Naming Conventions** in this SOP.
- Step 8:** Deliver the approved key messages, marked FINAL, to personnel authorized to speak on behalf of Partner States and the EAC.

## 3. Version Control and Naming Conventions

- Draft key messages must be created based upon approved procedures and templates.
- Draft key message documents must include identification as key and topic (disease or event) name, version identifier, date, and the word DRAFT. (Example: Key\_RVF\_v1\_15Oct2018\_DRAFT)

- Superseded key message documents must be removed from circulation and, when possible, be marked with the date and initials of the person updating the document status.
- Once review, revision, and authorization processes are complete, remove the word DRAFT and include the word FINAL in the name of the final, approved key message document.
- Approved key messages must be retained in a non-editable format (such as PDF) and be accessible for use by Partner States as reference materials.
- Key messages may require frequent updating, depending on the nature and scope of the event or emergency.

*(Please note that version control and naming conventions may not necessarily follow a particular sequence but rather reference points for one developing a message to ensure all versions are marked to avoid confusion)*

## 4. Key Message Dissemination

All media activity, including questions arising from the distribution or release of key messages, shall be directed to personnel authorized to communicate on behalf of Partner States and the EAC.



**EAC Risk and Crisis Communication Message Mapping Development Tool (Annex 1)**

<b>Key Message (Fact 1)</b>	<b>Key Message (Fact 2)</b>	<b>Key Message (Fact 3)</b>
<i>Support Message</i>	<i>Support Message</i>	<i>Support Message</i>
<i>Support Message</i>	<i>New Message to Support Fact 2</i>	<i>New Message to Support Fact 3</i>
<i>New Message to Support Fact 1</i>	<i>New Message to Support Fact 2</i>	<i>New Message to Support Fact 3</i>

**Objectives and Metrics:**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Measures</b>
To protect the health of individuals, families, communities, and regions through the dissemination of accurate information	• Audience response
Consistent and accurate communication between partners and the public.	
Timely provision of technical and logistical support through accurate communications	