

## Annex IV




EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

# Standard Operating Procedure How To Disseminate Continuous Information On Hazards



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

**Standard Operating Procedure  
How to Disseminate Continuous Information on Hazards**

	<b>EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY</b>	<b>EAC/HEALTH/OH</b>	
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Authors	-- Members of the Technical Working Group (TWG) Risk and Crisis Communications (RCC) Sub-Working Group -- Suzanne Kerba, RCC Consultant, Paris France		
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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 (SOPs). 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

This SOP describes the nature and processes of information dissemination during risk and crisis situations. The dissemination of information, before, during and after a crisis is a critical aspect of preparedness and response. For guidance on preparing key messages, kindly visit the SOP “How to Develop Key Messages.”

### Scope of the SOP

This SOP is intended to provide guidance on how to disseminate continuous information to people at risk and affected populations before, during, and after crises.

### 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

### Stages of Risk and Crisis Communications

There are five basic stages of risk and crisis communications:

- **Pre-crisis** – directed to public and response communities to provide messages, alerts, warnings, and guidance;
- **Event risk management** – directed to public and affected groups to reduce uncertainty, mitigate effects and increase self-efficacy;
- **Maintenance** – continues communications efforts from lessons learned, including updates;
- **Resolution** – provides updates and new information on the state of events; and
- **Evaluation** – directed to response agencies and communities to build on new understandings and document lessons learned.

### Actions to Take at Different Stages (steps to be followed)

- **Pre-crisis** – Build alliances with stakeholders (policymakers, media, community leaders, response personnel and other relevant groups); and establish mechanisms for coordination
- **Event risk management** – Inform people of risk, using plain language, and using appropriate communications channels;
- **Maintenance** – Provide necessary updates, responding to public feedback, and empowering decision-making;
- **Resolution** – Examine strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT), maintain preventive measures, persuade the public to support policy and resource allocation; and
- **Evaluation** – Review communications plan performance; document lessons learned, determine specific actions to improve the dissemination plan.

## Dissemination Channels

- **Interpersonal (face-to-face)**
  - Professional to patient; service provider to client; informal conversations
- **Group delivery (meetings)**
  - Small public and/or private gatherings
- **Public communications**
  - Presentations to larger audiences and gatherings
- **Organizational communications**
  - Discussions between stakeholders and partners, often through organizational messages, websites, and publications
- **Contemporary media**
  - Newspapers, print materials, broadcast media
- **Social media**
  - Twitter, Facebook, SMS, YouTube
- **Social Groups**
  - Religious;
  - Community groups (women; youth; elderly)
  - Traditional and cultural

## WHO Communications Continuum

### Increase awareness:

- Disseminate messages that are simple, easy to recall and repeat;
- Use traditional media and social media;
- Widen the reach of social media by designing messages that can be shared by other organizations and networks;
- Leverage credible sources to increase acceptance of messages;

### Support understanding:

- Create a connection to the health issue at personal and community levels;
- Show the health issue's effect on potentially impacted audiences;
- Create a sense of urgency to prompt decisions and action;
- Direct media attention to a relatable incident or story;
- Highlight threats that are close to home by highlighting community members who have experienced or are susceptible to the risk.
- Consider the target audiences' perspective

### Promote the knowledge of solutions:

- Use messages that describe desired actions;
- Explain where to find information and resources to support actions;
- Consider which sources the target audiences support and consider credible;
- Use interpersonal communications channels to enhance education and learning of proactive skills;
- Encourage interactive communications with target audiences;
- Considerations
  - Different learning styles;
  - Varying education and literacy levels;
  - Complexity of information
- Workshops

### Instill the confidence to act:

- Have a clear call to action; using a step-by-step description if possible;
- Teach skills, beginning with achievable goals and graduate to more complex tasks once mastery is perceived or gained;
- Create opportunities for audiences to practice the skills they learn
- Ensure that audiences have a feeling of control and self-efficacy; and
- Show that individual actions will make a difference.