

Annex VI



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY


Standard Operating Procedure

How To Engage And Involve Stakeholders



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

Standard Operating Procedure How to Engage and Involve Stakeholders

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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) and related World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, and the World Animal Health Organization's (OIE) instruments on veterinary Public Health and environmental frameworks, and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in the area of infectious disease outbreaks and epidemics.

Risk communication comprises the standardized, continuous and timely flow of information on hazards between all relevant stakeholders and via mediators to the public to build up knowledge and to enable them to take informed decisions in order to protect their health.

Crisis communication is initiated when there is an emergency. It aims at clear and easy-to-understand information aimed at mitigating the impact of an outbreak and includes efforts to change beliefs and to avoid adverse behaviour.

Risk and crisis communication is based on trust and therefore needs to 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 CP crisis management structure shall establish capacity to conduct effective and efficient risk communication in 'peace time' and crisis communication in times of emergencies.

Purpose of the SOP

Community engagement is the process by which organizations and individuals use a shared vision to build long-term relationships for the benefit of the community. The purpose of this SOP is to describe processes for involving and engaging stakeholders before, during, and after emergency events.

Scope of the SOP

- List the steps needed to engage and involve stakeholders; and
- Provide guidance on partners to include in engagement efforts.

Target audience

This document is relevant for:

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

General Principles

Engagement and involvement of stakeholders is:

- Purposeful;
- Inclusive;
- Timely;
- Transparent; and
- Respectful

Stakeholder Engagement Process

- Step 1:** **Brainstorm** – Identify the purpose of engagement, and potential partners;
- Step 2:** **Prioritize** – Reach a consensus on primary issues and objectives;
- Step 3:** **Plan** – Assess existing relationships, resources; and potential constraints;

- Step 4:** **Prepare** – Evaluate capacities and competencies among stakeholders;
- Step 5:** **Support** – Address and overcome potential barriers to engagement and involvement;
- Step 6:** **Engage** – Build two-way communications with potential stakeholders; activate plans; move forward on objectives and goals; and
- Step 7:** **Evaluate** – Ensure stakeholders are involved and assured of the quality of efforts and collaboration associated with their involvement.

Stakeholder Engagement Approaches

Inform

- Educate stakeholders through initial outreach; and
- Share relevant information

This can be done through:

- Correspondence
- Telephone
- Media releases
- Public forums
- Print materials
- Word of mouth

Consult:

- Ask questions of stakeholders; and
- Get feedback and use the information to inform internal decision-making.

This can be done through:

- Public meetings
- Telephone
- Feedback and discussions
- Surveys

Involve:

- Collaborate directly with stakeholders to reach a consensus on objectives, capacities, and processes; and
- Learn from stakeholders about their concerns and intentions.

This can be done through:

- Participatory meetings

- Consultative processes
- Workshops

Collaborate:

- Agree upon a mutually workable and acceptable plan of action;
- Negotiate and make mutual decisions regarding engagement processes;

This can be done through:

- Activate relationships
- Seek input from stakeholders
- Integrate activities

Empower:

- Delegate decision-making processes into the hands of stakeholders; and
- Support the achievement of goal through stakeholder contributions.

This can be accomplished through:

- Incorporate stakeholders into governance apparatus;
- Capacity building

Strategies for Success in Stakeholder Engagement

- Commit to action
- Effectively manage time and resources
- Map appropriate stakeholders
- Get the right stakeholders to the table
- Agree upon the rules of engagement
- Plan the engagement and manage expectations
- Use consistent and appropriate messages
- Act with transparency and accountability
- Learn from others
- Use the information you collect
- Be focused and flexible
- Listen and be respectful
- Maintain the right to disagree without judgment or hostility.

Courtesy: Australian Government Department of Health