EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

Standard Operating Procedure

How To Engage And Involve Stakeholders

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1.0 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) (hereafter referred to as the Contingency Plan) was designed to strengthen governance in managing the risk and the response to infectious disease outbreaks. It is oriented towards different key international standards, such as the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), which supports efforts between countries, international organizations, and public and private stakeholders, to promote global health security as an international priority. The development of the Contingency Plan was guided by 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, including the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in the area of infectious disease outbreaks and epidemics.

The analysis of the EVD epidemic clearly demonstrated the importance of rapid, clear and efficient risk and crisis communication, and of tailoring communication to impacted communities in ways that respected their cultural and social backgrounds.

Risk communication comprises the standardized, continuous and timely flow of relevant information to help people personally assess the risks they face and make informed decisions about how to protect themselves. Crisis communication kicks in when there is an emergency. It aims at delivering clear and easy-to-understand information designed to mitigate the impact of an outbreak or disaster.

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 Contingency Plan crisis management structure shall establish capacity to conduct effective and efficient risk communication in 'peace time' and crisis communication in times of emergencies.

2.0 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.

3.0 Scope of the SOP

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

4.0 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

5.0 General Principles

Engagement and involvement of stakeholders is:

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

6.0 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.

7.0 Stakeholder Engagement Approaches

Inform:

- Educate stakeholders through initial outreach; and
- Share relevant information through:
    - Word of mouth
    - Correspondence
    - Telephone
    - Print materials
    - Media releases
    - Public forums

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

through:
- ○ Activating relationships
- ○ Seeking input from stakeholders
- ○ Integrating 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:
- ○ Incorporating 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