WHO
Emergency Risk Communication
International health agreements
Module B1

World Health Organization
Module objectives

By the end of this module, you should be able to

● Define risk communication

● List the five components of WHO's integrated model for emergency risk communication

● List the guiding principles for risk communication practice

● List at least two international frameworks that oblige and/or support countries to build national risk communication capacities
What is risk communication?

Working definition derived from the IHR working group on risk communication, 2009

- **Risk Communication(s)** refers to 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.

- Risk Communication 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.
1. **WHO Constitution** – 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.

2. **International Health Regulations, IHR (2005)** – Risk communication as a core capacity for mitigating the effects and outcomes of health events and emergencies.

3. **Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP) Framework** – Risk communication is one of five strategies within the PIP Framework.

IHR (2005)

INTERNATIONAL HEALTH REGULATIONS (IHR)
– from policy to people’s health security

What are the IHR?
The IHR are legally binding and help countries work together to protect lives threatened by the spread of diseases and other health risks, including radiation and chemical hazards.

5 reasons why the IHR matter

1. HEALTH THREATS HAVE NO BORDERS
   The IHR strengthen countries’ abilities to control diseases that cross borders at ports, airports, and ground crossings.

2. TRAVEL AND TRADE ARE MADE SAFER
   The IHR promote trade and tourism in countries and prevent economic damage.

3. GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY IS ENHANCED
   The IHR establish an early warning system not only for diseases but for anything that threatens human health and livelihoods.

4. DAILY THREATS ARE KEPT UNDER CONTROL
   The IHR guide countries to detect, assess, and respond to threats and inform other countries quickly.

5. ALL SECTORS BENEFIT
   The IHR prepare all sectors for potential emergencies through coordination and information sharing.

Until all sectors are on board with the IHR, no country is ready

www.euro.who.int/ihr
IHR core capacity requirements (national, intermediate and local)

Annex 1

8 Core Capacities
- Legislation and Policy
- Coordination
- Surveillance
- Response
- Preparedness
- Risk communication
- Human Resources
- Laboratory

Potential hazards
- Infectious diseases
- Zoonotic events
- Food safety
- Chemical events
- Radiological events

Events at Points of Entry

- In order to implement the IHR, a focus was given to IHR core capacities and potential hazards

- Country readiness to implement the IHR is measured against these core capacities

- Risk communication is an essential component of an effective response to public health emergencies
Pandemic Influenza Preparedness framework

- Landmark, innovative public health arrangement **to increase global preparedness to respond to pandemic influenza**
- Focus is on increasing equity of access to lifesaving measures
- Brings together Member States, industry, other key stakeholders, and WHO

**Two objectives on equal footing:**
- Improve sharing of influenza viruses with the potential to cause a pandemic among humans
- Achieve more predictable, efficient, and equitable access to benefits arising from the sharing of viruses, notably vaccines and antiviral medicines
Benefit sharing

- PIP Framework benefit-sharing system provides:
  - Equitable access to vaccines
  - Surveillance and risk assessment information
  - Technical assistance
  - Support to strengthen national pandemic influenza response capacities

Annual payments from manufacturers to WHO are used to strengthen preparedness and response capacities in countries in need (e.g., lab and surveillance, risk communications, regulatory capacities)
PIP risk communication project produces:

1. Guidelines and tools, including learning materials such as this course

2. Direct support for countries to assess and strengthen their national capacities –
   a. Governments: strategies, plans, training, simulation exercises
   b. Journalists: Training on how to cover health emergencies, epidemics and pandemics

3. Emergency deployments to countries for emergency risk communication assistance
An integrated model for emergency risk communication

Adapted from new IHR external assessment tool – WHO

Risk communication Systems

- Dynamic listening and rumour management
- Communication engagement with affected communities
- Public communication
- Internal & partner communication & coordination
- Strategies, plans, SOPs, structures, resources, and simulation exercises to test systems

Mechanisms at national, local, international levels with stakeholders (health care workers, NGOs, volunteers, civil society, etc.)

Media and social media surveillance, partner, stakeholder, community feedback, emergency anthropology KAP studies, other social science tools

Directly or through influencers, including awareness campaigns, community radio, interpersonal communication, using existing community engagement mechanisms

Media, social media, web, IEC materials, social mobilization, etc.
Guiding principles for risk communication best practice

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Create and maintain trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Acknowledge and communicate even in uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Coordinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Be transparent &amp; fast with the first and all communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Be proactive in public communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Involve and engage those affected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Use integrated approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Build national capacity, support national ownership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Trust

- Building and maintaining TRUST is fundamental
- With TRUST, the public health advice given during an emergency will be taken seriously

2. Uncertainty

- In emergencies, risk communication occurs in a complex, shifting environment where information is incomplete.

- Risk communication must recognize that information and advice can shift as the emergency evolves.

3. Coordination

- Proactive internal communication and coordination with partners before, during and after an emergency is crucial to ensure effective, consistent and trustworthy risk communication that addresses both information and public concerns.

During emergencies, communication related activities has to be fast, frequent and sustainable.

First announcement frames the risk and addresses concerns.

Communication must include what is known and what is not yet known.

5. Proactive communication

- All public communication, including media outreach and via other preferred channels to the affected populations and stakeholders (even with incomplete info) prevents rumours, misinformation while demonstrating transparency and sincerity.
6. Involvement & engagement

- Community engagement is not an option. Communities must be at the heart of any health emergency response.

7. Integration of approaches

- All components of risk communication are brought together for effective Emergency Risk Communication (media and social media, social mobilization, health promotion and community engagement)

image source: http://www.eavi.eu/joomla/images/stories/Media_Literacy/MediaLiter.jpg
8. National capacity strengthening

- Strengthening policies, plans, trained personnel, platforms, processes, etc. of key stakeholders, including government, NGOs, civil society, journalists and other key national and international players is key to preparedness for effective risk communication for health emergencies.
Existing WHO guidance on risk communication for health emergencies

- Communication for behavioural impact (COMBI)
  http://www.who.int/ihr/publications/combi_toolkit_outbreaks/en/

- Effective Media Communication during Public Health Emergencies

- Outbreak Communication. Best practices for communicating with the public during an outbreak

- WHO outbreak communication planning guide

- Effective Communications Participant Handbook
  http://www.who.int/risk-communication/training/who-effective-communications-handbook-en.pdf?ua=1