Coordination and Stakeholder Engagement

Module: B6
Module objective

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

- Describe critical considerations for communication coordination for public health emergencies
- List key partners and stakeholders generally active in risk communication for public health emergencies

Why is stakeholder coordination for emergency risk communication so important?

- Nature of a public health emergency
  - Rapidly evolving situation, especially in the first 24-72 hours
  - Chaotic
  - High demand for information
  - Increased anxiety, possible speculation

- Multiple responders are involved
  - Many agencies, organizations, individuals involved in the response
  - Coordination is needed to minimize overlaps and gaps, and ensure that the response is targeted to the most needed as quickly as possible
Critical components of stakeholder coordination

- Identification of key stakeholders, and the lead agency or person
- Agree on Terms of Reference for the coordination team with clear objectives
- Division of roles, tasks and responsibilities within the coordination mechanism
- Agree on working terms in relation to information sharing, tasks, responsibilities, organization of meetings (frequency, venue, etc.)
- Everyone must perceive a benefit from the investment that they to coordinate

Photo: WHO/A.Bhatlasevi
Critical components for communication coordination in a health emergency

General areas of work to be covered within the coordination

- Public communication
- Social mobilization, community engagement, interpersonal communication
- Communication monitoring and evaluation
- Communication research and documentation
- Links to all other sectors or clusters (in humanitarian response)
- Links to information functions (such as situation reports)
Stakeholders for risk communication coordination

- Government – responsible unit/agency
- Other government representatives
- International organizations
- Non-government organizations, volunteer groups
- Civil society groups, religious groups
- Affected communities or their representatives
- Donor organizations
- Private sector
Influential stakeholders on the ground

● **Community-based influential groups**
  – Women's groups
  – Youth groups
  – Teachers' groups
  – Volunteers
  – Religious groups
  – Health workers and volunteers

● **Community leaders**
  – Political leaders
  – Religious leaders
  – Traditional leaders (respected/influential individuals in the community, e.g. village elders)
  – Traditional healers

Photo: WHO/A.Bhatiasevi
Coordination actions at local level

- Obtain information about influential stakeholders from local health and other officials
- Arrange for protocol/courtesy visits to meet them, to start the conversation
- Involve and engage stakeholders in village/community activity, or any decision-making process that would involve/affect their constituency

Photo: WHO/A.Bhatiasevi
Depending on the nature and scale of the event, the coordination for risk communication may be led by the Ministries of Health or by other government bodies:

- e.g. natural disaster with major impact (national disaster mitigation body at the top most government office)
- Infectious disease outbreak with potential international spread like Ebola in West Africa in 2014 (top most government office)
- Natural disaster with limited geographical impact (sub-national authorities)
- Infectious disease outbreak with limited geographical impact (local health authorities)
- Public health aspects of communication is usually coordinated by the Ministry of Health
Priority setting for coordination at the sub-national and national levels - 2

- Support the health authorities to convene stakeholders working on risk communication

- Facilitate/support health authorities to develop a risk communication plan for emergencies (if not already available) and to implement the plan
  - Prioritize activities
  - Identify priority groups
  - Set a timeline
  - Prioritize geographical areas to be covered
  - Identify resources (human and others), and budget for carrying out the activities
Stakeholder coordination at the international level

- Depending on the scale, impact and length of the event, various agencies within the UN structure would assume the responsibility of leading the coordination at the international level.

Reminder

- Stakeholder coordination is essential for emergency risk communication to avoid confusion that could be caused by conflicting messages, and to maximize the use of available resources for effective emergency response.

- For effective coordination, key and influential stakeholders should be identified and consulted early in the process.

- Stakeholder coordination can take place at different levels in an emergency response – local, sub-national, national and international.

Image: https://ngocoordination.org/sites/ngocoordination.org/files/sec1_pic.png