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## STEPS IN DEVELOPING A COMMUNICATION PLAN

Developing a communication plan to influence behaviour change or reinforcement does not have to take long. But it is an essential component of the overall emergency plan. A plan is necessary to ensure greater behavioural impact. It allows you to get the most out of your budget, to measure any changes, to motivate people to achieve intended results – and is just plain good management.

When you develop a behaviour change communication plan, design each step to be as participatory as possible. Participation in all steps of the process allows community representatives to participate in decisions, develops a sense of ownership and helps affected communities achieve a sense of normalcy in their disrupted system.

If an emergency strikes, usually the exact details of a communication plan will have to be outlined - often under pressure and with little time. Here are some essential steps you can follow when developing the details of a communication plan for an emergency.

### Step One

**Bring all stakeholders together:** Work with the various stakeholders together (from a given programme or related sectors at a time, e.g., health and hygiene) from government, UN agencies, NGOs and community representatives as quickly as possible to determine:

- What behaviour results should your communication plan for this programme or sector achieve in the rescue and survival phase; in the recovery phase; and the rehabilitation and development phase of the emergency?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of the different partners?

- How will the plan be funded, implemented, monitored, documented and reported?
- How will the monitoring results be used in the different phases of the emergency?

## Step Two

**Plan and conduct a rapid communication assessment based on an appropriate combination of tools and applying the next steps below. (Please see also Part 3: Tools)**

## Step Three

**Determine your audience/s and define SMART behavioural objectives and results.**

Based on the rapid assessment and on data from any pre-existing communication research, determine who your audience groups are among the affected population. Define the specific desired behavioural objectives or results you would like to achieve from your communication plan. These behavioural results may vary for the different phases of an emergency response. Define behavioural results so that they are:

1. **Specific** in terms of an issue (a behaviour, a skill, knowledge, attitudes), of a specific group and of the geographical location.
2. **Measurable** in such a way that changes in people's behaviour can be measured, either quantitatively or qualitatively.
3. **Achievable** in that the behavioural results correlate to a target that can feasibly be attained by the programme partners with UNICEF and others' support, and that all necessary resources are identified and budgeted.
4. **Relevant** so that the planned behavioural result(s) represent a milestone in the results chain, and will contribute to the achievement of commitments for the emergency response.
5. **Time-bound** in that a time frame has been set within which change is expected to happen.

Keep in mind that behavioural results have to contribute to the overall results - health and nutrition, child protection, education, water and sanitation - in the emergency.

## Step Four

**Based on the specific intended behavioural results, determine the details of the communication plan:**

- Which combination of communication strategies to use: advocacy, BCC, social mobilization?
- Which groups of people to involve as partners, to mobilise, orient or train?
- What specific training needs and orientations are required, for which group/s for the plan to be carried out quickly?

- Which communication activities, main messages and materials? Where can you obtain examples of messages and materials that you can quickly adapt?
- What mix of communication channels (e.g. mass media, interpersonal communication, community media, etc) by which phase of the emergency?
- What is the dissemination plan for the communication messages and materials?
- What is the timeline for communication activities during different phases of the emergency?
- What is the monitoring (including indicators and means of verification), evaluation, documentation and reporting plan?
- What is the total budget?

## Step Five

**When implementing the plan, keep the following in mind:**

- Pre-test messages and materials with representative groups from different affected communities;
- Conduct the training early on, which may include training of interpersonal communicators such as animators, peer educators, health workers, teachers and young people;
- Orient and involve journalists in your efforts;
- Mobilise partners and communities to support and implement the plan.

## Step Six

**Establish a monitoring system**

Manage and monitor communication activities as part of the overall emergency programme monitoring effort. Ideally, use community monitoring systems among affected population groups. Based on the monitoring data, adjust activities and materials accordingly. Programme and service delivery data, such as immunization drop out, decrease in diarrhoea rates, also serve as monitoring information and should be used to modify communication activities or messages.

## Step Seven

**Evaluate and re-plan:** Based on the desired behavioural results, assess outcomes and if possible any behavioural impact. Disseminate results to partners - including affected community members. Determine the need for follow-up and for continued support to shape behaviours, and for communication support in the recovery and rehabilitation phase of an emergency. In evaluating impact, contributions that can be linked to communication efforts should be an integral part of a programme evaluation rather than a separate evaluation of communication initiatives.