



RCCE ACTION PLAN GUIDANCE

COVID-19 preparedness & response



COVID-19 preparedness and response

Objective

Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) is an essential component of your health emergency preparedness and response action plan.

This tool is designed to support risk communication, community engagement staff and responders working with national health authorities, and other partners to develop, implement and monitor an effective action plan for communicating effectively with the public, engaging with communities, local partners and other stakeholders to help prepare and protect individuals, families and the public's health during early response to COVID-19.

How to use this tool

This guidance can be used to develop an RCCE plan that, once completed, will constitute a basic evidencebased source for engaging and communicating effectively with identified audiences.

The resulting plan will facilitate effective RCCE, two-way communication between health authorities and at-risk populations in response to COVID-19. It includes planning for engagement with and within local at-risk communities, broader segments of the public at the country-level, and other relevant stakeholders (such as health care providers).

There are 3 sections to the RCCE action plan guidance:

1. "The Key Steps" to developing a COVID-19 RCCE plan.
2. A related planning template for countries to fill in related to each step.
3. Seven annexes provide additional guidance and resources: an audience assessment questionnaire, a process for identifying objectives and audiences, a method for identifying key information needs about COVID-19, and a list of sources for existing content and messaging.

Key considerations

- Adapt the elements according to your country needs and situation. Some elements of the action plan guidance may differ between countries, depending upon their risk levels, people's perceptions, needs, local capacities and current situations.

- Revise your action plan according to the situation evolution. Note that your objectives and priorities may change over time depending on the evolution of COVID-19 outbreak (epidemiology) and people's reactions to the response.
- Coordinate and plan together with authorities and partners. To strengthen your preparedness, ensure effectiveness, and avoid duplication, it is important from the start to identify, meet, plan and coordinate with your partners, existing community networks and government counterparts. Remember that communities should play a major role as implementers and leaders in promoting individual and collective behaviour change to prevent and respond to COVID-19.
- Proactively communicate and promote a two-way dialogue with communities, the public and other stakeholders in order to understand risk perceptions, behaviours and existing barriers, specific needs, knowledge gaps and provide the identified communities/groups with accurate information tailored to their circumstances. People have the right to be informed about and understand the health risks that they and their loved ones face. They also have the right to actively participate in the response process. Dialogue must be established with affected populations from the beginning. Make sure that this happens through diverse channels, at all levels and throughout the response.
- Reduce stigma. Regular and proactive communication with the public and at-risk populations can help to reduce stigma, build trust and increase social support and access to basic needs for affected people and their families. Stigma can undermine social cohesion and prompt social isolation of groups, which might contribute to a situation where the virus is more, not less, likely to spread. Accurate information can help alleviate confusion and avoid misunderstandings. The language used in describing the outbreak, its origins, and prevention steps can reduce stigma. See WHO's Guide to preventing and addressing social stigma for more tips (<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/covid19-stigma-guide.pdf>).
- Conduct early and ongoing assessments to identify essential information about at-risk populations and other stakeholders (their perception, knowledge, preferred and accessible communication channels, existing barriers that prevent people to uptake the promoted behaviors...) to develop your plan. Do not assume or take for granted local understandings and perceptions. Qualitative methods such as focus groups and interviews can produce rich, contextual information from a few people. Quantitative methods such as internet or telephone surveys can help characterize larger numbers of people, but with less context. Both approaches can help you systematically ask relevant questions that will shape your intervention strategy. As the threat of COVID-19 evolves, people's knowledge and beliefs will change, so assessments will need to be ongoing to ensure that interventions remain relevant to people at-risk.
- Ensure that all people at-risk of acquiring COVID-19 are identified, reached and involved.

The Process

This exercise would be completed remotely by the INGO HQ through the following steps:

Step 1. Assess and collect Collect existing information and conduct rapid qualitative and/or quantitative assessments to learn about the communities (knowledge, attitudes and perceptions about COVID-19, most at risk population, communication patterns and channels, language, religion, influencers, health services and situation). With your team, analyse and assess the situation.

See [annex 1](#) for example rapid assessment tool.

Step 2. Coordinate Use existing coordination mechanisms or create new ones to engage with RCCE counterparts in partner organizations at all levels of the response: local, regional and national. These include health authorities, ministries and agencies of other government sectors, international organisations (WHO, UNICEF, IFRC, MSF, etc.) NGOs, academia, etc. Develop and maintain an up-to-date contact list of all partners and their focal points. Regular contact with all partners will help avoid duplication and identify potential gaps in the RCCE response.

Step 3. Define Define and prioritize your key RCCE objectives with your team and partners. Review them regularly to ensure they are responding to your priorities as COVID-19 evolves.

See [annex 2](#) for example of objectives.

Step 4. Identify key audiences and influencers Identify target audiences and key influencers. These include policy-makers, influential bloggers or other social media leaders, local leaders, women and youth groups, religious and elders' groups, local and international NGOs health experts and practitioners, volunteers, and people who have real-life experience with COVID-19 (those who have had COVID-19 or their family members have contracted the virus). Match audiences and influencers with channels and partners that reach them.

See [annex 3](#) for questions to guide you on identifying your audiences.

Step 5. Develop RCCE strategy Based on the qualitative analysis' results, your defined key objectives and audiences, develop an RCCE strategy that fits into the country's comprehensive COVID-19 response strategy. Adapt to the local context: focus on messages that are tailored to the relevant national and local context, reflecting key audience questions, perceptions, beliefs and practices.

Define and prioritize your strategic objectives with your team and partners in alignment with the general objectives of the country's COVID-19 response. Review them regularly with partners and community to ensure they are responding to evolving priorities. Work with the different technical groups of the response to ensure alignment, coordination and internal dialogue between RCCE leadership/field staff and other response teams.

Define and describe actions/activities that will contribute to achieve the RCCE objectives. Develop messages, and materials to transmit health protection steps and situation updates in line with World Health Organization's message. Messages and materials should be tailored to reflect audience perceptions and knowledge at the level to which the RCCE products are targeted whether national, regional, or local (see assessment process in Step 1).

While defining the list of activities tailored to your country, simultaneously disseminate recommendations from the World Health Organization and your Ministry of Health. These sources provide accurate information that can mitigate concerns and promote prevention actions, even though they are not tailored to local communities.

Create relevant information, education and communication (IEC) materials tailored for and pre-tested with representatives of audiences for whom they are intended. Pre-testing messages and materials with target audiences ensures that messages are context specific and increases ownership from communities and at-risk populations and other stakeholders. As much as possible IEC materials should contain actions that people can take:

- a. an instruction to follow
- b. a behaviour to adopt
- c. information you can share with friends and family

See [annex 4](#) for template to compile actions required and information needed

See [annex 5](#) for list of sources where existing COVID-19 general information can be found

Step 6. Implement Develop and implement the endorsed RCCE plan with relevant partners to engage with identified audiences and community. This should include capacity building and integration of RCCE counterparts from international, national, regional, local groups, ensuring participation and accountability mechanisms are co-defined. Make sure to identify human, material, and financial resource needs. Define staff and partners who will do the work (number of people required in the team/organizations) and budget according to the resources. Ensure strong and regular supervision and coordination mechanisms. Close monitoring of field work is essential and mechanisms should be defined before starting implementation.

Set up and implement a rumour tracking system to closely watch misinformation and report to relevant technical partners/sectors. Make sure to respond to rumors and misinformation with evidence based guidance so that all rumors can be effectively refuted. Adapt materials, messages and methodologies accordingly with help of the relevant technical group.

See [annex 6](#) for sources of feedback and guidance

Step 7. Monitor Develop a monitoring plan to evaluate how well the objectives of the RCCE plan are being fulfilled. Identify the activities the RCCE team will perform and the outcomes they are designed to achieve with target audiences (communities, at-risk populations, stakeholders, etc.) Establish a baseline (for example, note the level of awareness or knowledge of a community at the time before the RCCE plan is implemented). Measure the impact of the RCCE strategy by monitoring changes in the baseline during and after RCCE strategy activities are implemented.

If minimal or no positive changes are achieved, find where the problems are: check if the activities are fit for purpose, check the content of the narratives, the methodologies, the quality of work conducted by the teams (it is very important to supervise the way team members conduct the activities). Develop checklists to monitor activities and process indicators for every activity.

Planning tool

RCCE objectives What are the objectives of an RCCE (at all levels of the response, including community engagement) focusing on behaviours and actions to support public health interventions and ensure participation and accountability towards at-risk and affected populations and communities? Is there existing evidence/rapid assessment data/KAP supporting the objectives? What are the issues that need to be addressed by the RCCE strategy?	
Audiences Who are the audiences for your activities? Who do you want to communicate with? 1. Primary audience (most at risk / vulnerable population: People in affected neighbourhoods, People in at-risk areas, Migrants, Refugees, Travelers, Schools and school children, Businesses, Caregivers, Elderly, Other.) 2. Secondary audience (people who act as spokespeople or representatives, influencers, agents of change, etc.)	
Actions/Activities How will you engage in two-way communication with the different audiences identified? What are the key suggested interventions?	
RCCE Capacity What capacity do you need on your team to implement the action plan? Develop terms of reference as needed. What materials, job aids and other resources will be required to reach needed capacity?	
Monitoring • How will you monitor whether your RCCE plan is being implemented according to plan?	

• Are you reaching the people you intended to reach with the right information, at the right time? Are they able to reach you? How many people have you reached? • What type of activities have you carried out? • Are there mechanisms in place to receive feedback from population? • How are the actors of the response held accountable to the populations they are serving? (AAP) • Which indicators will you measure on a daily, weekly or monthly basis? • In order to answer these questions: What methods will you use to collect the data? Do you have the tools and capacity to collect the required data?	
Budget Make sure you develop a proper budget for the strategy. When financial resources are tight, plan on implementing the communication strategy in phases, addressing first the highest priority objectives and audiences.	

Annex 1A COVID-19 Rapid Qualitative Assessment Tool

This tool could be adapted for focus group discussions (FGD) or key informant interviews (KII). Participant observation (PO) will as well contribute to the collection of data, and then triangulated with other sources.

ATTENTION: review with partners, adapt and pre-test the questionnaire to your local context

No.	QUESTIONS	Observer takes notes of ANSWERS here. Or using recording of the focus group records answers in detailed notes here
1	1. Location: 2. Sex of the interviewee: 3. Interviewee age: 4. Interviewee occupation: 5. Level of education:	
QUESTIONS ASKED TO THE GROUP BY THE FACILITATOR ABOUT COVID-19 Answers to be created in detailed notes from recording or during the focus group session or interviews.		
2	Have you ever heard about the new coronavirus disease? (If the attendees are unresponsive, facilitator asks clarification question: It is also called COVID-19 Have you heard of that?)	
3	What do you know about the new coronavirus disease? (Facilitator prompts participant responses related to what they know about relationship to disease, government involvement, what they have seen on TV, etc., ensuring that all participants share their understanding.)	
4	What kind of information have you received about the disease? (Facilitator prompts participant responses drawing them out on whether they have heard about protection steps, symptoms, transmission, self-care, risks/complications, etc.)	

No.	QUESTIONS	Observer takes notes of ANSWERS here. Or using recording of the focus group records answers in detailed notes here
5	Where are you getting your information from? (Facilitator prompts participants' responses, drawing out comments about radio, TV, social media, health care workers, family, friends, NGOs, etc. Facilitator can prompt them about any/all of the below depending on time and specifics of participants' responses. ☐ Radio ☐ TV ☐ WhatsApp ☐ Social Media (no WhatsApp) ☐ Health unit/Health care worker ☐ Family members ☐ Friends ☐ Community health workers ☐ Local or national public health (Ministry of Health) ☐ Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers ☐ Other community mobilisers ☐ Community leaders ☐ Religious leaders ☐ Traditional healers ☐ Traditional midwives ☐ Any person from the community ☐ Other : _____)	
6	Are there some people, information sources or channels that you trust more than others to give you good information about the coronavirus? (Facilitator prompts participants' responses, probing on whole range of channels/sources as relevant and why they trust one source more than another, etc.)	
7	What channel is the easiest for you to get information from? (Facilitator can probe the participants on specific channels, programs, when they are able to get to a source, etc.)	

No.	QUESTIONS	Observer takes notes of ANSWERS here. Or using recording of the focus group records answers in detailed notes here
8	How dangerous do you think the new coronavirus is? (Depending on responses, facilitator probes the participants' responses for why they rate the disease as they do.)	
9	Do you think you are at risk of getting sick with the new coronavirus? (Facilitator solicits responses and asks: Why or why not?)	
10	Do you know how the coronavirus is spread? (Depending upon responses, the facilitator prompts for other responses, probing for any of the below:) ☐ Blood transfusion ☐ Droplets from infected people ☐ Airborne ☐ Direct contact with infected people. ☐ Touching contaminated objects/surfaces ☐ Sexual intercourse contact ☐ Contact with contaminated animals ☐ Mosquito bites ☐ Eating contaminated food ☐ Drinking unclean water ☐ Don't know	
11	What are the main symptoms? (Depending upon answers, the facilitator probes for other symptoms including:) ☐ Fever ☐ Cough ☐ Shortness of breath and breathing difficulties ☐ Muscle pain ☐ Headache ☐ Diarrhea ☐ Don't know ☐ No symptoms ☐ Other: _____	

No.	QUESTIONS	Observer takes notes of ANSWERS here. Or using recording of the focus group records answers in detailed notes here
12	Do you know how to prevent becoming sick from the new coronavirus? (Depending on answers, facilitator probes to see if other measures are circulating as prevention steps:) ☐ Sleep under the mosquito net ☐ Wash your hands regularly using hand rub or soap and water ☐ Drink only treated water ☐ Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing ☐ Avoid close contact with anyone who has a fever and cough ☐ Eliminate standing water ☐ Cook meat and eggs well ☐ Avoid unprotected direct contact with live animals and surfaces in contact with animals. ☐ Don't know ☐ Other: _____	
13	What kind of measures have you or your family taken to prevent coronavirus in the recent days? (Depending on answers, facilitator might probe one or more the below:) ☐ Washing hands regularly using hand rub or soap and water ☐ Covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing ☐ Avoid close contact with anyone who has a fever and cough ☐ Eliminate standing water ☐ Cook meat and eggs well ☐ Avoid unprotected direct contact with live animals and surfaces in contact with animals. ☐ Don't know ☐ Others: _____	
14	Do you consider important to take actions to prevent the spread of coronavirus in your community? (Depending on answers the facilitator asks why and what actions they are thinking of.)	

No.	QUESTIONS	Observer takes notes of ANSWERS here. Or using recording of the focus group records answers in detailed notes here
15	What would you do if you or someone from your family gets sick with the new coronavirus? (Depending on answers, facilitator might probe on some of the below:) ☐ I will look for a more experienced relative to advise me on what to do ☐ I would go to the hospital / health unit ☐ I would go to the neighborhood nurse ☐ I would go to buy medicines at the market ☐ I'm going to look for the traditional healer ☐ I would stay in quarantine ☐ Other: _____	
16	What more would you like to know about the disease? (Depending on the answer, facilitator probes to see what kind of material would be helpful (Radio talk shows? Posters?) (Also can probe if they would like more information on any of the below:) ☐ How to protect yourself from the disease? ☐ Symptoms of the new coronavirus disease ☐ How it is transmitted ☐ What to do if you have the symptoms ☐ Most at risk groups ☐ How to treat it ☐ Other: _____	

No.	QUESTIONS	Observer takes notes of ANSWERS here. Or using recording of the focus group records answers in detailed notes here
17	Do you think the coronavirus disease is generating stigma against specific people? To whom? (If yes, facilitator asks: Which group is being discriminated in your community because of corona-virus? The facilitator might probe for specifics:) ☐ Chinese ☐ Asian ☐ Italians ☐ People who have come into contact with those with coronavirus ☐ People who have coronavirus ☐ Survivors of coronavirus ☐ Other, specify	
FACILITATOR NOW ANNOUNCES A SHIFT IN TOPIC AND WHY THEY ARE CHANGING SUBJECTS. "NOW I'D LIKE TO TALK WITH YOU ABOUT A DISEASE THAT IS SIMILAR TO CORONA VIRUS THAT YOU MIGHT BE MORE FAMILIAR WITH, SEASONAL FLU. "		
18	Have you ever been sick with seasonal or regular flu? (Depending on the answer, facilitator might ask if a member of the participants' families have been sick with flu.)	
19	What do you usually do if you have a regular flu? (Depending on response, facilitator probes any of the below:) Have they ever ☐ Done nothing—continue with normal life ☐ Stay at home, to avoid infecting others ☐ Wear a mask ☐ Drink tea until recovery ☐ Seek advice from my neighbors ☐ Seek advice from local healers ☐ Go to the health unit ☐ Other: _____	

Annex 1 COVID-19 Rapid Quantitative Assessment Tool

This tool, which is similar to the questions asked in qualitative form in Annex 1A could be used in an online survey in different social media platforms and hotlines. The combination of qualitative and quantitative versions would allow for breadth and depth and triangulation of results.

ATTENTION: review with partners, adapt and pre-test the questionnaire to your local context

No.	QUESTIONS	Answers
1	Location: Sex of the interviewee: Interviewee age: Interviewee occupation: Level of education:	To be filled in from forms at participant registration.
2	Have you ever heard about the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19)?	Choose one answer : ☐ Yes ☐ No
3	What do you know about the new coronavirus disease? (Only one option)	Choose one best answer: ☐ I don't know anything ☐ It's a virus that can cause a disease ☐ It's a government's programme ☐ It's a TV/radio campaign ☐ Other: _____
4	What kind of information have you received about the disease? (Legends to be added to the questionnaire)	Mark all answers that are true: ☐ How to protect yourself from the disease? ☐ Symptoms of the new coronavirus disease ☐ How it is transmitted ☐ What to do if you have the symptoms ☐ Risks and complications ☐ Other: _____
5	Where did you hear about the new coronavirus from? What channels or sources?	Mark all channels that you heard about the disease from: ☐ Radio ☐ TV ☐ WhatsApp ☐ Social Media (not WhatsApp) ☐ Health unit/Health care worker ☐ Family members ☐ Friends ☐ Community health workers ☐ Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers ☐ Other community mobilisers

No.	QUESTIONS	Answers
		☐ Community leaders ☐ Religious leaders ☐ Traditional healers ☐ Traditional midwives ☐ Any person from the community ☐ Other:_____
6	Which channel/who do you trust the most to receive information related to coronavirus? (one or more options)	Check the best channel for you to receive coronavirus information from: ☐ Radio ☐ TV ☐ WhatsApp ☐ Social Media (no whatsapp) ☐ Health unit/Health care worker ☐ Family members ☐ Friends ☐ Community health workers ☐ Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers ☐ Other community mobilisers ☐ Community leaders ☐ Religious leaders ☐ Traditional healers ☐ Traditional midwives ☐ Any person from the community ☐ Other:_____
7	How dangerous do you think the new coronavirus risk is?	Choose the best answer that matches your belief about the disease: ☐ Very dangerous ☐ More or less dangerous ☐ Is not dangerous ☐ Other:_____
8	Who do you think is at highest risk to get the coronavirus?	Mark all those you think are likely to become sick: ☐ Children under 5 years old ☐ Adolescents up to 15 years old ☐ Youth ☐ Adults ☐ Elderly persons ☐ Pregnant women ☐ Health workers

No.	QUESTIONS	Answers
9	Do you think you are likely to become sick with the new coronavirus ?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know
10	How does the coronavirus spread?	Mark all the ways you think the disease spreads: ☐ Blood transfusion ☐ Droplets from infected people ☐ Airborne ☐ Direct contact with infected people. ☐ Touching contaminated objects/surfaces ☐ Sexual intercourse contact ☐ Contact with contaminated animals ☐ Mosquito bites ☐ Eating contaminated food ☐ Drinking unclean water ☐ Don't know
11	What are the main symptoms?	Mark all the symptoms you think are caused by the new coronavirus: ☐ Fever ☐ Cough ☐ Shortness of breath and breathing difficulties ☐ Muscle pain ☐ Headache ☐ Diarrhea ☐ Don't know ☐ No symptoms ☐ Other: _____
12	Do you know how to prevent it? (One or more options)	Choose all the prevention steps you know about: ☐ Sleep under the mosquito net ☐ Wash your hands regularly using alcohol or soap and water ☐ Drink only treated water ☐ Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing ☐ Avoid close contact with anyone who has a fever and cough ☐ Eliminate standing water ☐ Cook meat and eggs well ☐ Avoid unprotected direct contact with live animals and surfaces in contact with animals ☐ Don't know ☐ Other: _____

No.	QUESTIONS	Answers
13	What have you and your family done to prevent becoming sick with coronavirus in the recent days?	Mark all steps that you have taken: ☐ Washing hands regularly using alcohol-based cleaner or soap / water ☐ Covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing ☐ Avoid close contact with anyone who has a fever and cough ☐ Eliminate standing water ☐ Cook meat and eggs well ☐ Avoid unprotected direct contact with live animals and surfaces in contact with animals. ☐ Don't know ☐ Other: _____
14	Do you consider important to take actions to prevent the spread of coronavirus in your community?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Don't know ☐ Other: _____
15	What to do if you or someone from your family has symptoms of this disease?	Mark all the actions you would take: ☐ I will look for a more experienced relative to advise me on what to do ☐ I will go to the hospital / health unit ☐ I will go to the neighborhood nurse ☐ I will buy medicines at the market ☐ I will look for the traditional healer ☐ I would stay in quarantine ☐ Other: _____
16	What more would you like to know about the disease?	Choose all topics that you would like to know about; ☐ How to protect yourself from the disease? ☐ Symptoms of the new coronavirus disease ☐ How it is transmitted ☐ What to do if you have the symptoms ☐ Most at risk groups ☐ How to treat it ☐ Other: _____
17	Do you think the coronavirus disease is generating stigma against specific people? To whom?	☐ Yes ☐ No

No.	QUESTIONS	Answers
18	(If yes) Which group is being dis-criminated in your community because of coronavirus?	☐ Chinese ☐ Asian ☐ Italians ☐ Other: _____
NOW WE WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT A SIMILAR DISEASE: SEASONAL OR REGULAR FLU, INFLUENZA.		
19	What do you usually do if you have a regular flu?	Mark the 1-2 most typical actions you take: ☐ I have never had the flu ☐ Nothing, I continue with my normal life, after some time the flu goes away ☐ I stay at home, so I don't infect others ☐ I wear a mask ☐ I drink tea until I recover ☐ I seek advice from my neighbors ☐ I seek advice from local healers ☐ I go to the health unit ☐ Other: _____
20	From where/who do you usually receive information on flu and other diseases?	Choose as many channels as you have heard about regular flu from: ☐ Radio ☐ TV ☐ Health unit ☐ Family members ☐ Friends ☐ Community leaders ☐ Religious leaders ☐ Community health workers ☐ Other community mobilisers ☐ Traditional healers ☐ Traditional midwives ☐ Any person from the community ☐ Other: _____

Annex 2. Defining and prioritising your RCCE objectives

What are your RCCE objectives?

Identify your objectives: Consider reviewing all the objectives below. Circle those that apply to your country's current epidemiological situation, the response priorities and public reactions. Note that many of the objectives are interdependent, so broad objectives may require fulfilling some that are more focused. Please add other objectives if needed for your country situation.

Just circle all that apply to your situation:

- To ensure that people have the life-saving information they need to protect themselves and others (from the virus and to reduce its impact on health, social life, and the economy)
- To ensure effective feedback mechanisms are in place and used to ensure two-way
- communication between health/response authorities and communities, the public and stakeholders.
- To ensure that healthcare workers know how to engage with patients and care givers, detect possible cases, communicate with patients about COVID-19, and report to the relevant health authorities and also to protect themselves in context of their exposure to the disease.
- To position country health officials as the main/first trusted source of information about COVID-19.
- To ensure consistency in information and language from all partners and avoid misinformation/rumours.
- To inform the general public how the public health response is being conducted and health authorities are being pro-active in monitoring, detecting, and preventing the spread of COVID-19.
- To ensure participation of and engagement with relevant communities to work out barriers to the implementation and uptake of public health measures.

PRIORITISE YOUR OBJECTIVES: Look at the objectives you have circled and prioritise them in order of their importance in your country. Remember your objectives need to be SMART (specific, measurable, actionable, realistic and time bound).

Review objectives regularly, asking if the communication products and activities you are developing are serving these most important priorities. If they are not, consider expending more energy on high priority objectives or changing your objectives (if circumstances have changed). A phased-in approach to your plan should also be considered.

Annex 3. Defining and prioritising your RCCE audiences and other stakeholders

Who are your audiences, partners and other stakeholders?

Consider the categories of people who must be engaged in order to achieve outbreak control.

- What are the at-risk groups?
- Who are the influencers, gatekeepers, decision makers and practitioners in the different communities that must be engaged to mobilize interventions?
- What other government sectors need to coordinate engagement and communication activities with your health authorities?
- What local partners will need to respond to requests for support?

Under each category, identify specific groups, government units, types of individuals in your country who you will need to engage to achieve your objectives.

Add categories for key audiences, partners, and stakeholders who are important to your country that may not be included in the list below.

- All people at-risk of acquiring COVID-19, for example: elderly, people with underlying health conditions, health care workers, travellers, etc.
- Stakeholders and partners:
 - Key policy-makers (who provide funding or create legislation related to public health)
 - Other relevant government sectors (such as education and transportation)
 - NGO partners (who may have strong relationships with at-risk groups)
 - Community leaders and organizations
 - International organizations
- Health-care providers (e.g. physicians' organizations, hospitals, community health centers)
- Others

Annex 4. Choosing Channels

What channels or engagement strategies can you use to share important information and guidance?

Identify channels and fora that audiences use to seek health information and partners who regularly communicate with these groups.

For example:

Some channels that might reach broad national audiences: mass media, radio listeners club, daily emissions addressing different topics with open mic for public calls, social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook

Policy-makers and influencers might be reached through weekly engagement meetings with religious, administrative, youth, and women's groups.

Individual communities might be reached through theatre performances engagement meetings with women groups, edutainment, H2H activities, youth groups, training of peer educators, etc.

Ensure your health agency has relationships and agreements with relevant partners and access to identified and trusted media channels including:

- Broadcast media: (television and radio)
- Trusted organizations' websites
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Text messages for mobile phones
- Hand-outs and brochures in community and health centers
- Town forums
- Community health boards
- Billboards

Plan to tailor key information and guidance to stakeholders and disseminate it through their preferred channels and trusted partners.

Annex 5. Required actions and information needed

What information or guidance will each stakeholder need to know and accept in order take required steps or actions?

Identify the information or guidance each group will need to know and accept in order to take actions for public health goals to be fulfilled. Fill in the far box on the right. For example if health care providers need to understand the importance for their life and patients' lives to wear protective gear when treating patients with COVID-19-type symptoms, they will need to be aware of the COVID-19 situation in your country (level of risk), COVID-19 symptoms, and understand the severity of the disease. They also need to be trained in how to use protective gear. At the same time supply must ensure protective materials are available.

Add the objectives for each group identified as high priorities and identify the type of information and guidance required. See the first box as an example.

Audiences, stakeholders, partners	Action/Steps Required	Information or guidance needed
Health care providers	Wear protective clothing, masks and gloves to protect themselves from COVID-19 infection. Report cases with COVID-19 symptoms for testing Other....	Needed: awareness of COVID-19 threat and situation in your country, information on COVID-19 prevention equipment, guidance on how to report cases for testing. Information related to perceptions of risk and possible barriers to the uptake of these actions is required to be able to engage with the audiences and negotiate change of practices.
Insert next audience, stakeholder or partner below	Add related actions/steps below	

General content needed by all stakeholders: you are likely to see that many types of content are needed by all groups to:

- Raise awareness of COVID-19 signs, symptoms, and severity.
- Communicate status of COVID-19 in your country and globally.
- Promote understanding of what health officials and partners are doing to prevent spread and reduce disease harms.
- Identify sources of credible, updated information.
- Identify behaviours, perceptions and information needs.
- Increase knowledge of steps to prevent COVID-19 infections.

These general contents should be widely disseminated to all groups and regularly updated.

Annex 6 – List of general information

Obtaining content for communication messages, products, and activities

Much of the general content needed by all stakeholders and specific guidance needed by different groups can be found on WHO's website:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

Make sure to visit the WHO COVID-19 web content often, since it will be regularly updated so you can edit your materials to stay up-to-date.

Below is a list of content needed to fulfil most of your needs for creating messages communication products and activities. As you consider each topic, note whether content is available and where it can be found. Some relevant WHO resources are filled in as examples. This content was developed for global audience and needs adaptation for country and community contexts where relevant and possible.

GENERAL INFORMATION NEEDED BY MOST AUDIENCES ABOUT COVID-19	
Topics for multiple audiences	Location of content
What is COVID-19?	https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses
How is it transmitted?	https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses
What are its symptoms?	https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses
How severe is it?	
How contagious is it?	https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses
How can I prevent becoming infected?	https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses
What is happening now in the COVID-19 outbreak?	
How many cases are there?	Regularly updated information can be found at https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/
Where are the cases occurring?	Regularly updated information can be found at https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/
How many deaths have occurred because of COVID-19?	Regularly updated information can be found at https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/

GENERAL INFORMATION NEEDED BY MOST AUDIENCES ABOUT COVID-19	
What are health authorities and other partners doing to respond to the outbreak? (These topics will need to be continuously updated)	
What international agencies are doing	Regularly updated information can be found at https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/situation-reports/ https://www.unicef.org/stories/novel-coronavirus-outbreak-what-parents-should-know https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/press-release/red-cross-scales-preparedness-global-response-novel-coronavirus-declared-international-health-emergency/
What are your country's national and local health authorities and partners doing?	Seek this information during COVID-19 management meetings or from national situation reports
What important issues are emerging about the outbreak and what needs to be done? These are likely to be controversial because they often have policy implications or focus on overcoming barriers.	
Vaccine development and challenges	https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses
Risks and advice to travellers	https://www.who.int/ith/2019-nCoV_advice_for_international_traffic/en/
Availability of medical supplies and personnel	Seek this information during COVID-19 management meetings or from national situation reports
Capacities of health facilities to meet COVID-19 demand	Seek this information during COVID-19 management meetings or from national situation reports
Specific Content Needed for Varied Stakeholders	
Health care providers	
Laboratory testing for COVID-19	https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/laboratory-guidance WHO has international protocols, but local guidelines and locations need to be communicated as well
Travelers	
Screening protocols at airports and borders Recommended precautions for travelers	

Annex 7 – Sources of feedback and guidance

How can you learn what your audiences and stakeholders are wondering about, worried about, and misunderstand?

Knowing what your audiences don't understand is necessary so your team can respond to those questions. Two other issues require similar activities in which you need to actively "listen" to audiences: what are they worried about and what information do they believe but misunderstand (misinformation, questions, concerns and rumors).

In the same way that those health authorities must identify and address new questions, they must also know about and address worries, questions and rumors. The mechanisms for gathering information about concerns, questions, beliefs and rumors can be the same as those for identifying new stakeholder questions. Some common sources include:

- Media monitoring (traditional news and social media)
- Key informant interviews and focused groups
- Rapid assessments and surveys
- Community leaders and mobilizers
- Partners who are trusted by communities and at-risk groups
- Monitoring radio talk shows
- Tracking calls and content of health "hotlines"
- Feedback mechanisms

Health authorities will want to make use of as many sources as possible to understand their audiences' and stakeholders' understanding of COVID-19.

Identify sources above that the health authority and/or your partners have ready access to. Choose a source or a combination of sources that will yield information about concerns from all your stakeholders. If partners have intelligence on communities or at-risk groups that your health authority lacks, create an agreement to share what you are each learning about questions, beliefs, rumors and concerns.

Reviewing and responding to public/community concerns, misinformation and rumors.

Regularly review the information that you gather about public/community rumors and concerns (daily at the height of an outbreak) to determine:

What rumors or misinformation is circulating? For each rumor, ask:

- Is the misinformation harmful? Will it lead to harmful action? If so, your health authority must address it and correct it.

Are people worried about issues that aren't considered big threats nor realistic risks? Are they not worried about COVID-19 risks that health authorities consider the biggest threats? If so:

- Address public/community worries with respect
- Communicate the factual information that points to more accurate risk perception

Does the monitoring reveal questions that your health agency hasn't answered? If so:

- Find or develop answers, even if questions are unresolved
- Add answers to talking points, post them on the health authority's web site, and disseminate them through social media and other channels
- Monitoring can help you create a relevant Q&A list that, overtime can address a broad range of audience and stakeholder concerns

Identify a staff member or team whose job it is to gather information on stakeholders' questions, concerns, and circulating rumors. Create a checklist from the review questions above and use these to analyse information that is circulating on the sources you are reviewing. Report out high level findings of these analyses in briefings with your emergency leadership, communication coordination meetings, and in communication operation meetings.