

## ABOUT THIS IMPLEMENTATION KIT

In the wake of Ebola and in the throes of the Zika outbreak, more focus than ever is on the importance of strong and resilient<sup>1</sup> health systems that serve and promote the well-being of individuals, households and communities. Engaging in social and behavior change communication (SBCC) preparedness efforts as part of strengthening a health system, and certainly prior to a critical incident, can bolster a health system's ability to respond to an emergency public health crisis. SBCC ensures that relevant stakeholders from different institutions are identified, understand their roles and can quickly engage together to solve a problem. They ensure that structures among various agencies and feedback loops – from communities to policymakers, managers and service providers – are established in advance to allow for a successful coordination of effort. These and other initiatives can contribute to an overall transformation of health systems, allowing them to function well and respond to emergencies when necessary.

### What Is the Purpose of This I-Kit?

The purpose of the **Social and Behavior Change Communication for Emergency Preparedness Implementation Kit** (hereafter referred to as “the I-Kit”) is to provide a set of key considerations for SBCC activities in emergency situations.

During emergencies, coordinated, clear and credible communication aids in minimizing resulting health, social and economic costs. However, the uncertainty that characterizes emergencies typically fuels fear and panic among communities, and spreads misconceptions and rumors that affect people's ability to appropriately respond to the emergency.

Communication is crucial to addressing the behavioral and social aspects of health risks that precede and follow an emergency, and as such must be integrated into the response agenda from the outset. It is critical to ensure that communication efforts are harmonized, relevant, timely, financially supported and aligned among all of the preparedness technical teams. A strong and united voice heard through various sources can determine whether an emergency spirals out of control or is brought into check as soon as possible.

A well-coordinated, timely and strategic communication strategy and implementation plan can manage people's

<sup>1</sup> Kruk, M. E., Myers, M., Varpilah, S. T., & Dahn, B. T. (2015). What is a resilient health system? Lessons from Ebola. *The Lancet*, 385 (9980), 1910-1912.

### A Word on Terminology

There are several terms related to emergency planning and communication used throughout this kit that are important to understand.

**Emergency Preparedness:** a continuous process of planning, organizing, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating and taking corrective action to ensure effective coordination during a response.

**Emergency Response Plan:** specifies the actions taken in the initial hours and days of an emergency to reduce human and economic losses. A communication plan is a crucial component of the overall response plan.

**SBCC Implementation Plan:** specifies critical steps and procedures for responding to an emergency to ensure communication through the proper channels to reduce anxiety, fear, panic and spread of rumors.

**SBCC Strategy:** the guidance document that defines key program components for communication activities prior to, during and after an emergency.

The following terms are all used to refer to an acute and dangerous situation that happens suddenly, and/or unexpectedly, and needs fast action in order to avoid harmful consequences:

- Emergency
- Outbreak
- Crisis

The following terms are used interchangeably to refer to communication related activities and messages that support the response to an emergency:

- Communication response
- SBCC strategy

The following terms are used to describe work with communities to achieve individual and/or collective change and the broad spectrum of activities undertaken to support communities in determining and improving their own health and well-being.

- Social mobilization
- Community mobilization
- Community engagement

For definitions of technical terms, see the **Glossary**.

expectations during an emergency and assist response efforts. Affected communities can be engaged and supported to make the required changes, rumors can be detected early and barriers to desired behaviors can be identified and addressed promptly.

It is our hope that by completing the exercises presented in this I-Kit, national governments will be better prepared to manage serious public health events. In completing this I-Kit, users will gain an understanding of the key considerations for an SBCC emergency preparedness plan and the foundation of an SBCC strategy, one of the key documents for an emergency communication response.

## What Is an SBCC Strategy and Why Is It Important?

An SBCC strategy is the document that defines key program components for communication activities prior to, during and after the emergency. The following important elements are established by the strategy:

- **Intended Audiences:** The audiences being targeted by the communication activities.
- **Behavioral Communication Objectives:** The changes that the intended audiences are expected to make in their behaviors and the expected changes in the factors that influence behaviors such as knowledge, attitudes and perceptions.
- **Indicators:** The amount of change expected in the intended audiences in a given period of time.
- **Key Messages:** Information that needs to be provided to the intended audiences to persuade them to make the desired changes.
- **Communication Channels:** The media used to reach the intended audiences with the key messages.
- **Implementation Plan:** A description of planned activities and when they are to be implemented.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:** A separate document that details how to monitor the progress of SBCC activities and to evaluate their outcome.

This I-Kit provides a framework for emergency communication planning. In preparing for potential emergencies, technical teams should use these tools and resources to ensure that the elements necessary for a communication response are firmly in place well in advance.

## What Does This I-Kit Contain?

This I-Kit provides essential information and tools for responding to an outbreak using an SBCC approach. It presents a series of nine units, each accompanied by exercise worksheets to help link the SBCC theory to practice.

Each unit builds on the one prior, and they all combine to provide key information for developing an SBCC strategy. It is not essential, however, to work through the I-Kit from start to finish. Users can choose to focus on specific aspects for which they need support in their emergency communication response. The nine units and corresponding worksheets are outlined in the I-Kit Site Navigator.

The worksheets in each section are typically followed by a completed example. The completed examples will likely include information about an emergency that, during an actual event, might not be immediately available. This was done to illustrate the full range of information to inform a strategic communication response.

## When to Use This I-Kit

Emergencies are acute events that characteristically take populations by surprise and, most likely, spread fear and anxiety. Examples of emergencies that this I-Kit can be used for include:

- **Outbreaks of diseases** such as Ebola, Zika, polio, measles, cholera, avian influenza and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).
- **Public health problems that follow natural disasters** such as earthquakes, floods, droughts, hurricanes and tsunamis – for example, lack of hygiene and sanitation, cholera, measles and malnutrition.

This I-Kit should ideally be used during the preparedness phase of a public health emergency. Countries and locations considered prone to emergencies could use this I-Kit to ensure that communication is integrated into the overall preparedness strategy. Other countries can use this I-Kit as part of a risk assessment and preparedness plan for possible emergencies. Some of the guidance in the I-Kit (e.g., **Unit 3: Communication Mobilization**) can be adapted for a country-level plan, where appropriate.

Please also consider that many of these tools are designed for the preparedness phase but some should be used at the onset of an emergency. For instance, the I-Kit includes tools to assess a community mobilization response at the community-level as the emergency is unfolding. Consider adapting and including these and other tools in country-level emergency preparedness plans.

Finally, this I-Kit is flexible enough to allow for changes as the emergency evolves, and can help build a plan of action during an outbreak and recovery stages. It should be used even once an emergency occurs to support the communication response through all phases of the crisis.

**SBCC recognizes that emergencies evolve**, and therefore the guidance provided here is intended to inform iterative and responsive implementation. Although the I-Kit supports planning and preparedness, it should also be referred to during and following the emergency. It is flexible enough to allow for changes as the emergency evolves, and can help build a plan of action during an outbreak and recovery stages. It should therefore be used even once an emergency occurs to support the communication response through all phases of the crisis.

## Who Is the Audience for This I-Kit?

This I-Kit may be used by a variety of local, national and international stakeholders and actors who are involved in the development, execution and/or review of the communication preparedness and response to an emergency. This I-Kit advocates for partnerships and stakeholder collaboration to maximize efficiency and minimize waste. It should be used in a coordinated fashion with relevant partners to harmonize emergency response efforts. Examples of people and organizations who could benefit from this I-Kit include:

- **Officials, policy makers and leaders in ministries and other government entities whose countries are affected (or are likely to be affected) by an emergency.** The I-Kit can help them identify their country's communication needs for responding to an emergency and develop preparedness and response plans that integrate SBCC.
- **Health communication experts**, such as people working in health promotion and communication for development, in Ministries and national or international organizations, who have to respond to an actual or anticipated emergency.
- **Designated national emergency communication and social mobilization personnel** can use this I-Kit to support the development of an effective communication preparedness and response plan.
- **Communication and media stakeholders in government, and in national or international organizations**, who wish to understand how their efforts can support the overall emergency preparedness and response.
- **National and international health communication trainers and consultants** who need to develop inclusive and participatory national communication strategies, orient stakeholders on developing strategies and/or train stakeholders on how to develop and implement strategies for communication preparedness and response in emergencies.

## How Should This I-Kit Be Used?

This I-Kit can be used in a couple of different ways, depending on the needs of each country.

- **If there is already an emergency preparedness communication plan drafted or in place**, countries can use the I-Kit guide and tools, including checklists, to perform a quality check, fill in content gaps, and focus on the sections and tools that are most relevant to their emergency communication needs, in any stage of the emergency preparedness, onset and so on.
- **If countries have not started developing an emergency preparedness communication plan yet**, they can go through this guide, section by section, and use the guidance and tools to develop a solid framework for a plan

When using the I-Kit, it is highly recommended that the majority of the worksheets be filled out through a participatory process involving a variety of national and local level stakeholders in emergency health communication. These stakeholders can include some of those identified in the Stakeholder Identification worksheet in **Unit 1**.