

# PLANNING STRATEGIC BEHAVIOR CHANGE COMMUNICATION (BCC) FOR PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

## PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework and guidance to planners for developing country-specific behavior change communication (BCC) strategies for pandemic influenza. These strategies address communication objectives, target groups, desired actions, types of messages, possible channels, and approaches to communication planning and implementation in support of controlling pandemic influenza.

## SCOPE

1. The approaches and content reflected here support the strategies and recommendations of the World Health Organization and other international health partners as reflected in documents produced to date on pandemic influenza.<sup>1</sup> Because the actual course of disease for a pandemic of influenza cannot be predicted with certainty, and because the effectiveness of some interventions is still being determined by international health authorities, some of the actions and supporting communication strategies proposed in this document are subject to change.
2. This strategy is directed to the country level: it proposes actions and types of communication for different actors within a given country rather than at global or regional level.
3. The strategy primarily addresses communication within the community, as opposed to within the health system or between different types of health personnel. Separate documents prepared by WHO and other partners exist that clarify the actions needed by health workers and health program managers.
4. This strategy outlines broad actions to be taken by different actors to limit the transmission of pandemic influenza and care for those who are affected. Generic messages to support these behaviors are currently under development. However, both the specific behaviors and the exact wording for such messages must be elaborated and carefully pre-tested and adapted at country level (see below).
5. While the strategy focuses on communication activities needed during a local outbreak, advance preparation is needed to ensure that those activities take place in a coherent and effective fashion. Therefore, the strategy includes communications that are needed during three phases:
  - a. pre-pandemic preparedness;
  - b. rapid roll-out at scale once a local outbreak is confirmed; and
  - c. response actions needed during a local outbreak (local response).

While additional or modified communication is likely to be needed between “waves” of local outbreaks, there is insufficient information at this time on which to base such communication.

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<sup>1</sup> Including “Responding to the AI pandemic threat: WHO recommended strategic actions [http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/influenza/WHO\\_CDS\\_CSR\\_GIP\\_05\\_8-EN.pdf](http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/influenza/WHO_CDS_CSR_GIP_05_8-EN.pdf) (The WHO is set to release new Pandemic Influenza Guidance in April 2009)

6. While this document addresses planning of behavior change communication, this is not to suggest that it be used exclusively by communication specialists. Given the complexity of pandemic influenza, it is vital that communication specialists work closely with medical personnel and epidemiologists to ensure that the correct actions are supported through communication and that the messages remain technically correct.
7. A major attribute of this strategy is that it is global and generic. The approaches outlined here require adaptation to country context and circumstances, based on more specific definition of different target groups and understanding of knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and practices of the various target audiences. Local data relevant to knowledge, attitudes, practices, and behavior are needed to inform each country's messages and materials.

## AREAS REQUIRING ADAPTATION AT COUNTRY AND LOCAL LEVEL

This document proposes broad strategies and communication activities, with the intent that country planners will adapt the concepts presented here in several ways. These include the following:

- **Identify specific actions to be taken by particular target groups.** Behavior change communication seeks to promote appropriate behaviors on the part of specific target groups through the strategic use of communication. The particular actions and the target groups most appropriate to take these actions will vary across countries. For the purposes of this document, several actions and corresponding target groups are proposed in broad terms. Countries will, however, need to prioritize the **few, key actions** that are most likely to have positive impact on controlling pandemic influenza within their own context. They will also need to stipulate as specifically as possible the target groups that should take these actions. Materials available from the World Health Organization and the Humanitarian Pandemic Preparedness (H2P) Initiative provide essential technical information to guide these efforts.
- **Decide upon credible sources of information, appropriate channels, and formats for disseminating messages.** These are likely to vary widely across countries and even within countries, depending upon how different segments of the population access and use information. For example, there may be substantial disparities between urban and rural areas regarding access to mass media. Interpersonal communication from trusted sources is likely to be important in most countries, but the specific face-to-face communication channels will vary depending upon social and health structures. In most countries, it will be important to identify popular and trusted personalities to serve as sources of information in addition to the official government spokespersons. It may also be a challenge to ensure that different government ministries and agencies convey uniform and consistent information to the public. Countries will need to determine the channels, types and formats of materials, and influential or trusted sources of information that will be the most effective to disseminate messages to different target groups.
- **Determine content and wording of key messages.** The exact content of messages will need to be adapted to each country's specific procedures, plans, and directives for pandemic influenza. However, messages based exclusively on technical content are unlikely to be fully effective; they also need to address local perceptions of risk and disease transmission and an understanding of the perceived consequences (both positive and negative), as well as provide emotional incentives for audiences to

take the actions promoted by the messages. In some countries, formative research will be available to inform the design of messages. Messages must subsequently be pre-tested to determine comprehension, acceptability, identification, and likelihood to incite action. In other countries where research findings will not be available, it will be particularly important to conduct rigorous pre-testing with intended target groups to assure that messages are understood and accepted. A bottom-up approach to message development, in which messages are first tested with communities before being shared and approved by stakeholders, may be more productive and efficient than a top-down approach. A special challenge in pre-testing messages related to pandemic influenza is that an understanding of the gravity of a future, severe threat must be established without provoking panic among pre-test participants.

## **DEFINING COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES**

For communication to be effective, especially at a time of crisis, confusion, and uncertainty, it will be important for countries to reach consensus on the objectives of their communication – before an outbreak occurs. On a generic level, these objectives may include the following. They, too, are subject to country-by-country differences, depending upon the social and health context.

Communication messages and activities will have the following objectives:

- encourage leaders at national, district, and community level to prepare for pandemic influenza, and to devote resources to these efforts
- prevent transmission of disease, including encouraging compliance with decisions related to social distancing and other non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs)
- promote appropriate care of the sick
- promote self-protective behaviors
- support appropriate feeding and nutritional practices
- minimize disruption to existing health services so they can be effective for those in greatest need
- minimize social disruption and panic
- clarify sources for accurate information and resources for assistance
- mobilize community health responders to help manage the effects of a local outbreak.

## **TARGET GROUPS**

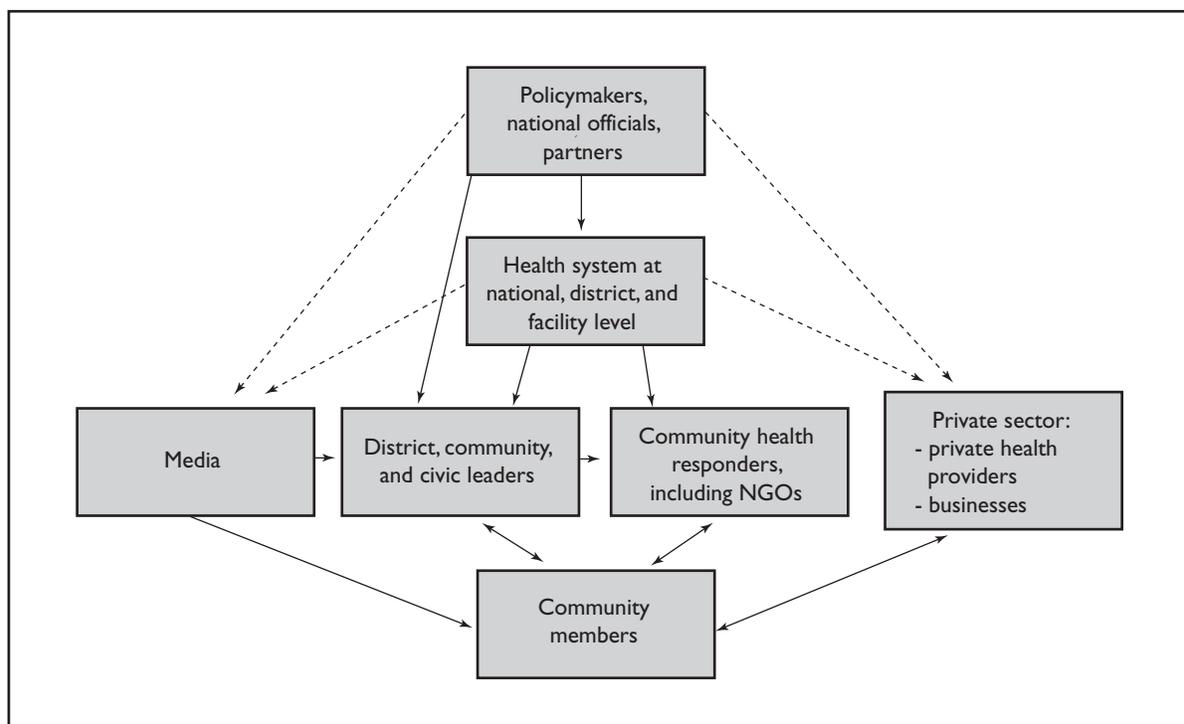
In broad terms, several target groups will need to be engaged in order for effective communication to be provided during a local outbreak of pandemic flu. The people who, ultimately, are likely to be most affected by pandemic influenza are community members. Preparing all other groups should lead up to effective communication in the community.

The different target groups, and the relationships among them, are depicted schematically in Figure 1 and include the following:

- community members and households
- community health responders (CHRs), such as community health workers, health extension workers, or other volunteers and the nongovernmental groups with which they are affiliated
- civic, district, community, and religious leaders at multiple levels
- health officials and other program heads at national and district level
- senior-level decision-makers, policymakers, and possibly members of partner organizations
- the media, which will be critical for rapid dissemination of accurate information when social distancing measures are in effect
- the private sector, including private health care providers, and private businesses or companies.

As indicated in Figure 1, clear lines of information flow and authority exist between some groups but may be less well defined among others. In some cases, for example, policy-makers and media or private sector, the lines of communication may be less clear and may not carry authority. Where communities are involved, it is critical to establish and maintain two-way information flows, with district and community leaders and the media providing communities up-to-date information on pandemic risk and recommended actions, while community members, in return, communicate their needs and capacity to respond back to their leaders. This underscores the importance of pre-pandemic planning and the need to provide a variety of options for information dissemination.

**Figure 1. Key target groups and flow of information**



## KEY ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Outbreak preparedness and response for any epidemic disease involves a complex set of actions that entail epidemiology, planning and coordination, supplies/logistics management, financial and human resource management, and communication. As indicated in Table 1 on the following page, several categories of communication are needed to support the control of pandemic influenza. Building capacity in these areas will add value to a country's preparation for and response to other hazards and emergencies.

- **Advocacy:** to engage senior government decision makers to take the threat of a pandemic seriously and allocate attention and resources to preparedness, and to convince community leaders to begin planning and preparing for a pandemic outbreak. Additional advocacy efforts may be needed to convince non-traditional partners such as private sector organizations and businesses that they have a stake in preparing for a pandemic and contributing to its management. Advocacy activities are most effective when implemented before the threat is present in a community.
- **Formative research and message testing** to understand audience perceptions of risk and feasibility of protective behaviors; prepare/adapt messages and materials needed for different audiences and test them for comprehension and acceptability. In addition, Demographic and Health Surveys, carried out in many countries, contain useful descriptive information about households and community members and can help inform the design of actionable messages and identify the most effective channels for communication.
- **Planning and coordination** to support/facilitate improved communication planning and coordination among key partner, government, and NGO stakeholders.
- **Risk communication training** at higher levels, to build the capability of governmental and civil society leaders and spokespersons on how to most effectively present information to the public to reassure them, minimize anxiety, and stimulate performance of desired action; at community level, orientation on risk communication can identify and map the equipment and resources available to reach and mobilize communities to address the situation.
- **Interpersonal communication training** for community leaders, community health workers and volunteers: effective interpersonal communication skills for interacting with families and communities.
- **Community mobilization** to support the recruitment and organization of community groups to begin pandemic preparedness planning together.
- **Media orientation** to train journalists on key facts pertaining to pandemic influenza; build their capacity to effectively communicate these facts without causing unnecessary panic; create better coordination with government spokespersons; and obtain their commitment to provide responsible reporting.
- **Mass media campaign** to reach target groups. Once health specialists and community-level first-line communication responders have been prepared, the media campaign can proceed.

**Table 1. Types of communication and relevant target groups to involve**

Type of communication	Key target groups to involve
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Policy makers, national officials, partners, first responders</li></ul>
Formative research and message testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Community members</li></ul>
Planning and coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Policy makers, national officials, partners</li><li>First responders</li><li>Health officials</li><li>District, community, and civic leaders</li></ul>
Risk communication training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Policymakers, national officials</li><li>Health officials</li><li>District, community, and civic leaders</li></ul>
Interpersonal communication training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>District, community, and civic leaders</li><li>Community health workers and responders</li></ul>
Orientation of media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Mass media (TV, radio, print media, electronic media)</li></ul>
Community mobilization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Community members</li><li>NGOs</li></ul>
Media campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Media</li><li>Policy makers, national officials</li><li>Other trusted spokespersons</li></ul>

## PROMOTING DESIRED BEHAVIORS AMONG SELECTED TARGET GROUPS

BCC messages and materials are a key means to promote the adoption of desired actions and behaviors. An important starting point is to define “**who** needs to do **what**,” that is, what actions does a given target group need to take? The tables on the following pages provide a draft and can serve as a point of departure for defining key messages that are appropriate for specific target groups. These tables deliberately do not address the actions of health workers, as their actions are treated in detail in other documents on clinical practice.

The Humanitarian Pandemic Preparedness (H2P) Initiative and its partners have worked closely with the WHO and others to develop a range of planning documents and communication materials. As these documents continue to evolve and additional resource materials are made available, readers are advised to check the H2P website.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The H2P Website (<http://pandemicpreparedness.org>) is scheduled to be launched in April 2009

## **SUGGESTED RESOURCE MATERIALS**

- Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response: Guidance and Templates for Country and District Planning (March 28, 2009). Available on the H2P Website
- Drawing Attention to Pandemic Influenza through Advocacy. March 2009. Available at: <http://avianflu.aed.org/globalpreparedness.htm>
- Global Preparedness for Pandemic Flu – Advocacy Kit. Available at: <http://avianflu.aed.org/globalpreparedness.htm>
- “Spreading the Word: Preventive Messages about Flu.” Training module for community health responders. Available on the H2P Website or on the CORE Group website ([www.coregroup.org/h2p](http://www.coregroup.org/h2p))

## DESIRED ACTIONS BY TARGET GROUPS

The following tables propose actions to be taken by different target groups and are intended to serve as the basis for developing corresponding messages for each group. These tables are intended to serve as a starting point for further discussion and adaptation, rather than being used “as is.”

### Target Group: *Policymakers, decision-makers, national officials, and development partners (e.g., WHO, UNICEF)*

	<b>Desired actions by this target group that messages to this target group should support</b>	<b>Possible materials or channels to reach this group</b>
<b>Pre-pandemic</b>	Develop plan of action and budget for pandemic flu response, if not already done, and secure resources for implementation.	Leaflets, Powerpoint presentations, FAQs, meetings
	Define roles and responsibilities, including communication team with designated spokesperson to communicate with media	Leaflet, brochure
	Develop and pre-test key messages for community	Pre-testing guide
	Identify and seek cooperation of credible public figures (popular, trusted personalities) to serve as messengers of key information to community	Leaflets, FAQs, talking points, meetings
	Orient media on pandemic influenza: key concepts and messages, reliable sources of information, designated spokespersons, importance of accurate and timely reporting	Information sheets, FAQs, meetings
	Build skills in risk communication	Short training courses, Powerpoint presentations; guidance on mapping communication resources
	Conduct exercise(s) to test the response and revise plans as needed	Protocol for exercise
	Initiate contact with private sector, including businesses, to solicit the potential contributions they can make in event of epidemic	FAQs, information sheet, leaflet for businesses
<b>When local outbreak confirmed</b>	Contact district and community leaders to apprise them of situation, reinforce understanding of key concepts and appropriate actions, disseminate key messages	FAQs, local planning booklet, meetings, phone calls, electronic media
<b>During local outbreak</b>	Organize rapid response and issue appropriate guidelines	Guidelines
	Mobilize resources to affected areas in timely way, including inputs from private sector	
	Communicate clearly and frequently with media and other channels	Examples of press releases
	Monitor community and media response	

**Target Group: *District, community, and civic leaders***

	<b>Desired action by target group that messages into this group should support</b>	<b>Possible materials or channels to reach this group</b>
<b>Pre-pandemic</b>	Obtain orientation/training on pandemic influenza, including personal hygiene measures, when and why to implement social distancing measures (NPIs), authorization process for implementing NPIs, process to initiate them; build skills in risk communication regarding pandemic flu	Training curriculum; official government guidelines, FAQs, talking points
	Define roles and responsibilities, including communication team with designated spokesperson to communicate with media and/or community	Local planning booklet
	Develop plan of action in event of epidemic, including implementing NPIs community mobilization and schedule for communicating with different segments of community	Local planning booklet; official government guidelines, FAQs, talking points
	Draft plans to organize volunteer networks, succession plans, and potential actions for burial, civil unrest, etc.	Local planning booklet
<b>When local outbreak confirmed</b>	Orient communities to the risks of pandemic influenza and the key actions that they should take	Local planning booklet
	Coordinate with health officials to rapidly train and activate volunteer networks	Training curriculum for CHRs; local plan booklet; FAQs
	Begin to implement volunteer networks, succession plans, and actions for burial and civil unrest	Local planning booklet
<b>During local outbreak</b>	Implement social distancing (NPIs) and other needed steps in a timely manner in order to reduce excess mortality	Local planning booklet, brochure or leaflet summarizing key points of NPI
	Coordinate with health leaders to monitor action of volunteer networks	
	Maintain regular contact with health authorities for updates on epidemic status and recommended actions and to provide feedback from community	Meetings, telephone, email
	Communicate clearly and frequently with media and community, including NGOs and FBOs, about status of epidemic	Examples of press releases
	Coordinate inputs and support from private sector, including businesses and NGOs	

**Target Group: Media (radio, TV, print journalism)**

	<b>Desired action by target group that messages to this group should support</b>	<b>Possible materials or channels to reach this group</b>
<b>Pre-pandemic</b>	Appoint lead reporters for pandemic influenza and obtain orientation on the subject, including on relevant policies/strategies, technical issues and messages, main spokespersons, available resources, and other aspects of the disease	Fact sheets, FAQs, list of key messages; list of key contacts in medical community; sample agenda for orientation seminar
	Agree to report responsibly, including disseminating accurate information and minimizing social disruption	
<b>When local outbreak confirmed</b>	Seek information from community leaders and health officials on situation and initiate reporting. Provide information on appropriate actions for community.	Fact sheets, FAQs
<b>During local outbreak</b>	Seek information frequently from reliable sources about status and recommended actions	Fact sheets, FAQs; list of key messages; list of key contacts in medical and disaster management community
	Report accurately and constructively on status of situation and recommended actions	Press releases and dispatches knowledgeable authorities (government, scientific institutions, international health officials)

**Target Group: *Community Health Responders (CHRs), such as community health workers, health extension workers, NGO staff and volunteers***

	<b>Desired action by target group that messages to this group should support</b>	<b>Possible materials or channels to reach this group</b>
<b>Pre-pandemic</b>	Coordinate with local community leaders and health officials to develop plan for responding to local outbreak	Local planning booklet
	Obtain general orientation on pandemic influenza, including significance of WHO phases and chains of communication.	Local planning booklet
<b>When local outbreak confirmed</b>	Obtain training on pandemic influenza with emphasis on interpersonal communication regarding personal hygiene, social distancing measures, home care of patients for common illnesses, and when to seek care from health facilities	Draft curriculum; emphasis on interpersonal communication
<b>During local outbreak</b>	Visit households in community regularly to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• communicate key messages</li> <li>• provide guidance on accurate sources of information</li> <li>• support home-based care of patients</li> <li>• promote adoption of social distancing measures</li> <li>• provide updates on situation</li> <li>• obtain feedback from community members</li> </ul>	Information sheet; FAQs; job aids on home-based care
	Meet with supervisors regularly to provide feedback from the community, obtain additional technical support and information on status of the outbreak, revise activities and approaches as appropriate	

**Target Group: *Community members***

	<b>Desired action by target group that messages to this group should support</b>	<b>Possible materials or channels to reach this group</b>
<b>Pre-pandemic</b>	Practice personal hygiene to reduce transmission of diseases	CHRs, community leaders, health personnel, mass media, leaflets
<b>When local outbreak confirmed</b>	Become familiar with key aspects of pandemic flu, including preventing transmission (personal hygiene and social distancing measures), and rationale and importance of home-based care of patients when possible	CHRs, community leaders, mass media, health personnel, leaflets
	Seek information from reliable and accurate sources.	CHRs, community leaders, mass media, health personnel, leaflets
<b>During local outbreak</b>	Adopt and adhere to social distancing measures and related actions (such as limited movement) as recommended by health and civic leaders, including staying in place	CHRs, mass Leaflets, mass media, talking points from CHRs
	Provide appropriate care for patients at home unless they are severely ill	CHRs, leaflets, mass media
	Seek information from reliable and accurate sources.	CHRs, leaflets, mass media

**Target Group: *Private sector health providers and businesses*** [to be developed if thought appropriate]

	<b>Desired action by target group that messages to this group should support</b>	<b>Possible materials or channels to reach this group</b>
<b>Pre-pandemic</b>	Identify essential services (i.e. power; water; private medical care) that should continue during a local outbreak of pandemic influenza	Checklist, Planning Booklet, Brochure
	Draft and approve Mutual Aid agreements between private sector and government institutions that allow for the use of private sector commodities and resources during an emergency with an agreed compensation upon recovery	Brochure, FAQs, Planning Booklet
<b>When local outbreak confirmed outbreak</b>	Initiate contact with government health and emergency response officials to review terms of agreements and coordinate actions.	Personal communication between senior government and private sector leaders
<b>During local outbreak</b>	Enact Mutual Aid agreements to allocate resources where needed to mitigate the impact of a local outbreak.	Mutual Aid Planning Booklet