

Regional Communication Training and Planning Workshop (TADs, HPAI & zoonoses)

Tunis, Tunisia
11-13 November 2009

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Research-based communication planning for animal health: *some basic principles*



Animal Health Communication

-is actually a new 'animal'
- animal health communication as a discipline has only just begun to organise itself, like public health communication did 2 decades ago
- but with increase in zoonoses, TADs, EIDs and worldwide impacts/spread, there is a clear URGENT need to build the discipline along with a critical mass of animal health communicators across the globe/region/country



Introduction

- Until recently approach to communication has been to package information for identified 'targets' with a view to changing their knowledge, attitudes and practices.
- This 'top-down' approach to communication has been criticised because it is patronising, fails to take cognisance of social reality, and most importantly, it often fails to produce the desired behaviour/social change.



Introduction Contd

- Simply passing information on to people without a proper understanding of their social reality, and without addressing the factors that are likely to militate against social change is futile.



What do we mean by “Communication”?

- Many possible definitions.....and ALL different!!!
- One possible definition:

"Communication (for development) is the use of communication processes, techniques and media to help people towards a full awareness of their situation and their options for change, to resolve conflicts, to help people plan actions for change and sustainable development, to help people acquire the knowledge and skills they need to improve their condition and that of society, and to improve the effectiveness of institutions." (Restrepo-Estrada & Fraser 1998:63)



When properly planned, communication can...

- Encourage the support of decision-makers
- Promote multi-level participation (including most vulnerable groups of society: elderly, children, PLWHA, widows, disabled)
- Foster community-wide mobilisation
- Facilitate knowledge sharing and change attitudes, behaviour and lifestyles
- Improve learning and training and spread information rapidly and effectively
- Support better planning, programme management and coordination



In sum,

- A communication strategy can provide the guiding framework and road map to keep the practitioners on track focused on the final destination or outcome that the communication inputs hope to achieve.



Communication strategy

Usually involves 4 distinct but harmonized elements:

- Programme Communication – to inform and empower
- Advocacy – to influence policy and political agendas
- Social Mobilization – to build consensus and expand partnerships
- Capacity Building – to strengthen and sustain the gains



What do we mean by 'strategic communication for animal health'?

- Relies heavily on disease situation/risk assessment in region/country/zone
- Depends on animal health services available as well as financial & human resources
- Caters to both "the wider public" and specific 'clients': hence both public health and animal health mandate.



AHC strategy, and components:

- In normal situation/"peace time":
 - Prevention
 - Preparedness
- In an outbreak situation:
 - Response
 - Recovery



Twin-Track strategies for zoonoses, TADs, EIDs

Directed at:

- Public Education and Participation
- Behavior Change Communication

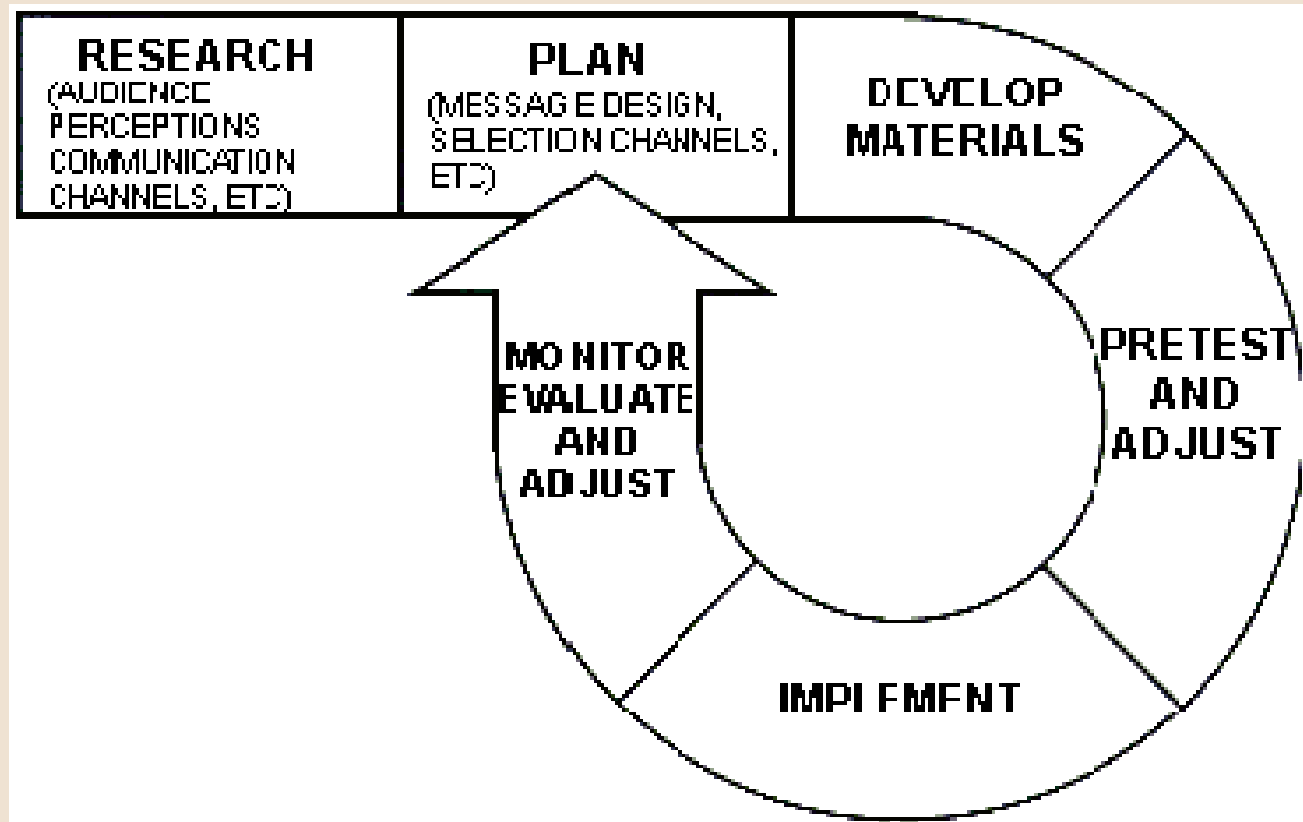
During an outbreak – intensify communications





Main elements of communication planning

- Ideally, a communication process (for participatory planning) is done with people in the target area and should lead to a mutual agreement on the action to be taken, broken down into a series of clearly defined stages.



Effective participatory communication is a continuous process (FAO, 2006).



Phase 1: First things first

- Define key problems/communication issues guided by programme
- Keep open mind
- Research will fine-tune the issues

Research

Can be either qualitative, quantitative or combination.

- a. Secondary data analysis (epi data, socio-economics, livelihoods assessments, communication, etc.)
- a. Communication research
 - The institutional framework
 - The communication framework & environment
 - The situation analysis:
 - Explore the problems (direct and distant causes, consequences, measures taken towards solving problems, information lacking)
 - Study the context of the activity
 - Analyse possible stakeholders (institutional, target groups, influence groups, etc.)
- c. Compilation of data





Outcomes of Phase I:

- A list of themes or issues to be communicated
- An understanding of the *context* within which the communication takes place
- An identification of possible partners or allies for building the communication process

2. From research to planning

- Identification, prioritisation and in-depth analysis of *communication problems* and diagnosis of what causes the gap between existing and desired behaviour
- Define the communication objectives
- Opt for an inclusive process: to ensure ownership over data, results and planning process to follow
- Select the target groups and conduct the “audience segmentation” (differentiation according to gender specificity, ethnic groups, languages, age groups etc.).





Phase II : Planning

1. Designing a strategy or plan to respond to each of the communication issues that have been identified in Phase One. Including:
 - definition of activities and tools (media)
 - identification of the specific approaches and tools that will be applied to address the specific communication issue
 - address implementation issues around capacity building, production and subcontracting of communication materials, timing of activities, definition of indicators to measure impact and budget.

Planning ctd

- Developing a **communication plan for each target audience** is made, identifying the channels to be used, the materials to be produced, by whom, and when
- **Message design:** deciding, on the basis of the audience research, how a message should be presented to that audience
- **Production of materials and their pre-testing.** Materials should always be produced as a draft
- **Training of field agents** on how to use materials and back them up properly





Phase II ends with:

- A research-based overarching communication strategy or plan that includes: decisions on methodologies or approaches to address each issue (function); tools; capacity development plan; plans for production and field-testing of materials (products); time-frame and budget and evaluation framework with indicators



Communication planning, in sum:

- **Determine the most appropriate communication approaches and strategies required to reach all different stakeholders.**

Note: It is not about the messages but about the best strategies to reach the intended audiences

Phase III: Implementation

- implementation through production and use of the materials, behaviour change activities, etc.
- capacity building programme roll out
- monitoring & evaluation





some considerations.....



Frontline communicators

- Who are the communicators? They can be the project proponents and/or project stakeholders.
 - Implementation usually involves capacity building since in most situations there is a dearth of trained communication people to implement any communication strategy.



Channels

- There range of communication methods and channels are wide ranging: mass media (radio and television), community radio, popular theatre, songs, story tellers, pamphlets and audio visual materials, group work, multi-stakeholder consultations, interactive video, internet (and more).
 - Media combinations are important – when a person sees or hears an item on radio or television and then sees the same subject in print, it gains in importance and reinforces the possibility of adaptation to the new idea.

Monitoring and evaluation:

- Information resulting from monitoring is fed back into ongoing activities
- Message design and materials are revised, repeatedly if necessary, to reflect the needs being revealed by the ongoing monitoring and evaluation and until such time as the communication work is being generally appreciated and understood
- Final evaluation: impact achieved, problems encountered, lessons learned





Institutional, financial and policy considerations

1. Institutional arrangements:

- important to put together a mix of organizations - government, NGO, donor, private sector – each playing a different role in planning and implementation.
- Roles & responsibilities outlined from beginning, same accounts for source of funding



Institutional, financial and policy considerations (ctd)

2. Contracting out to media houses:

- Capacities in MoAs to produce materials usually limited
- Time and budget must always be set aside to allow for this production.



Institutional, financial and policy considerations (ctd)

3. Product versus process: confusion between a communication product and the entire communication process.
4. Communication is not the magic bullet: can solve communication-related problems but not replace the provision of services.



Lessons learned

- *Focusing on content, not channels*
- *Focus on best strategies to reach target audiences rather than “best messages”*
- *Making a distinction between emergency diseases and development-oriented health problems*
- *work through field-level organisations, civil society, religious groups*
- *see target audiences as stakeholders, active participants in the change process*



Lessons learned (ctd)

- High level political commitment and buy-in to importance of communication overall and the strategy in particular is crucial
- invest in capacity building in strategic communication in order to build strong team within MoA/VS.
- engage the private sector in communication process
- facilitate inter-sectoral collaboration (including inter-ministerial and at all levels)



Lessons learned

- Develop clear chain of command within MoA/VS, especially useful in case of outbreaks.
- Develop integrated national communication strategies, in the interest of collaboration at all levels.



In Conclusion...

Communication should be seen as an integral component of the overall technical strategy.

While it cannot replace the provision of services, it can influence behaviour and ensure the availability and uptake of those services.



Thank you!





Action Plan – Internal Audiences

	What needs to be in place?	What needs to be changed or strengthened?	What are the barriers?	What data or info is needed?	What is the best way of bringing about that change?		By when? 3 months / 6 months
LEVELS					Program Action	Communication Action	
National							
Provincial							
Community							



Action Plan – External Audiences

What behavior needs to change?	Who is the audience?	What are the barriers?	What data or info is needed?	What is the best way of bringing about that change?		By when? 3 months / 6 months
				Program Action	Communication Action	