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# Mekong Delta Tabletop Exercise: Risk Communication during an Emerging Disease Outbreak

Event overview and introductions

# Agenda overview



## Day 1

Introductions & Welcome

Risk Communication for Public Health Emergencies

Exercise #1

## Day 2

Review of Day 1

Exercise #2

Exercise #3

Conclusion

# International Biological Threat Reduction



***Innovative solutions for countering biological threats globally***

- Promote the responsible use of biological agents, equipment, and expertise globally.
- Strengthen capacities to safely, securely, and responsibly detect, handle, and control dangerous biological agents.
- Improve understanding and management of the risks associated with accidental and deliberate misuse of biological agents.





## Please share with your fellow participants:

- Your name, rank/title, country, position, expertise
- Your expectations from the exercise

# Overview of Exercises



## Step-by-step approach to scenario

- We provide the scenario in parts, from start to finish
- You will work in your country group to answer questions
- One member of your group will share answers to larger group

**We value the expertise you bring to this exercise!**

## Open and honest communication

- **No “right” or “wrong” answers**
- Respect fellow participants
- Cell phones will need to be turned off or on silent
- No photographs, video or audio recordings
- Meals and breaks will be provided throughout
- Table facilitators will keep exercise on schedule
- **Please let us know if you have questions or concerns**

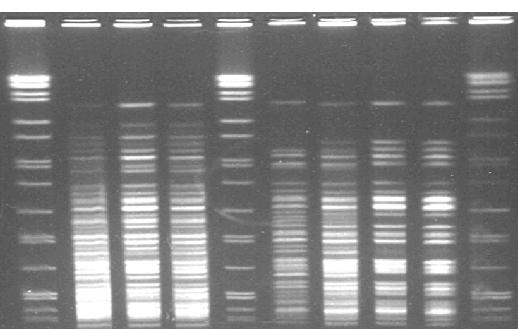
**Your active participation  
is the key to a successful exercise**

# How this information will be used



**Recommendations on improving communication  
during emergencies**

**Your input will not be identified on an individual basis**



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# Risk Communication for Public Health Emergencies

**Mekong Delta Exercise  
January 2014**

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# Role of risk communication during public health emergencies



## During an emergency, people act unpredictably

- Emotions make it difficult to listen and to react

## Risk communication tools help by ensuring

- People listen to the message
- People react appropriately to help—not hurt emergency

## Audience may include

- Public (not in this class)
- Agencies involved in preparedness & response

# Three keys to risk communication



## Know the goal

- Pre-determined outcome of the communication
- How the audience responds with a decision or action

## Know the audience

- Do not make assumptions
- Understand audience background knowledge
- Trust, empathize, & interactively engage
- Use existing communication plan to know whom to contact

## Know the message

- Clear, concise, timely, frequent
- Develop, practice main messages *before* emergency
- Validate that the audience received & understands the message

# Successful risk communication



## GOALS FOR YOUR AUDIENCE

### Make best decisions possible

### Act within time constraints

### Accept imperfect choices

## HOW YOU CAN SUCCEED

Know your end goal

Listen to your audience

Remember perception = Reality

Use clear, concise messages

Trust each other

Be proactive, avoid reactive

Provide timely, frequent messages

Empathize with each other

Discuss uncertainty

# Risk communication in your daily work



## Quick Activity

Write down example of using risk communication in your daily work ( 5 min.)

Share your example with your table (5 min.)

Table spokesperson can share examples with group



## International Health Regulations (WHO) Capacity

- Communicating effectively in ways that save lives and limit the negative impacts of a public health emergency

## Key Activities and Deliverables

- ★ Strategic risk communication framework for public health emergencies
- ★ Tools and methods for risk communications
- ★ Training and competence programs
- ★ Standards and norms for appropriate risk communication
- ★ Strengthen multidisciplinary networks of technical expertise for risk comm capacity building and operational response

# Exercise objectives



- 1. Delineate communication protocols among animal and human health laboratories & agencies**
- 2. Identify strengths & opportunities to improve risk communication protocols**
- 3. Practice risk communication: develop interagency messages in an outbreak**

# Exercise 1: Communication Protocols



Exercise 1 : Describing communication among agencies and health professionals during an outbreak of an unknown agent.

Please use the large sheets of paper on your table to draw communication pathways at each step for Scenarios 1-3.

For each drawing, please include :

- Name of the agency or type of professional (doctor, veterinarian) reporting a disease
- Name of the agency to whom it is reported
- Mechanism for communication (phone, email, other)
- Timeline for both reporting and response.

At the end of each section, we will have you pick a spokesperson from your table to share information with the group.

Day 2



## Review from day 1

# Role of risk communication during public health emergencies



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- Trust each other

### Act within time constraints

- Be proactive, avoid reactive
- Provide timely, frequent messages

### Accept imperfect choices

- Empathize with each other
- Discuss uncertainty

# Exercise 2: Developing messages



Using the communication maps from yesterday, please draft a message for the reporting and response along each pathway.

- Keep in mind the principles of risk communication
  - Know your audience
  - Know your goal
  - Know your message

Make sure to listen to each other and discuss what works and what was not helpful each message.

Two spokespersons will share an example from your messages at the end of the scenario to the larger group. We will talk about what challenges you found in writing these messages as a large group.

# Exercise 3: Cross-border communication



## Exercise 3

Imagine that this event has been occurring in a border province in your country.

Please use the handout to draw out communication pathways across borders to report an unknown agent in these scenarios.

In your small group, develop a message from your country to the neighboring country and the response back to your country.

Spokesperson will share the pathways and examples of messages with the group

# Conclusion



**As a small table/country, decide what were the 3 strengths in your messages or in your communication protocols**

**As a small table, decide what 3 things you would recommend to improve communication between animal and human health sectors, between two countries, within one agency during an emerging disease outbreak**

- Consider whether new policies or changes to policies are needed
- Consider if any advanced risk communication training is needed at the agency or the professional level.

**Please elect a spokesperson to share with the larger group.**