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Risk Communication and Community Engagement

The importance of internal coordination for effective risk communication

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# What is the impact of RCCE?

Risk communication

People understand the risks they face, make informed decisions about how to mitigate risks and how to take preventive and protective measures.

Community engagement

People and communities are empowered and confident to co-create preparedness and response practices that are acceptable and workable for them.

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The RCCE Competency Framework
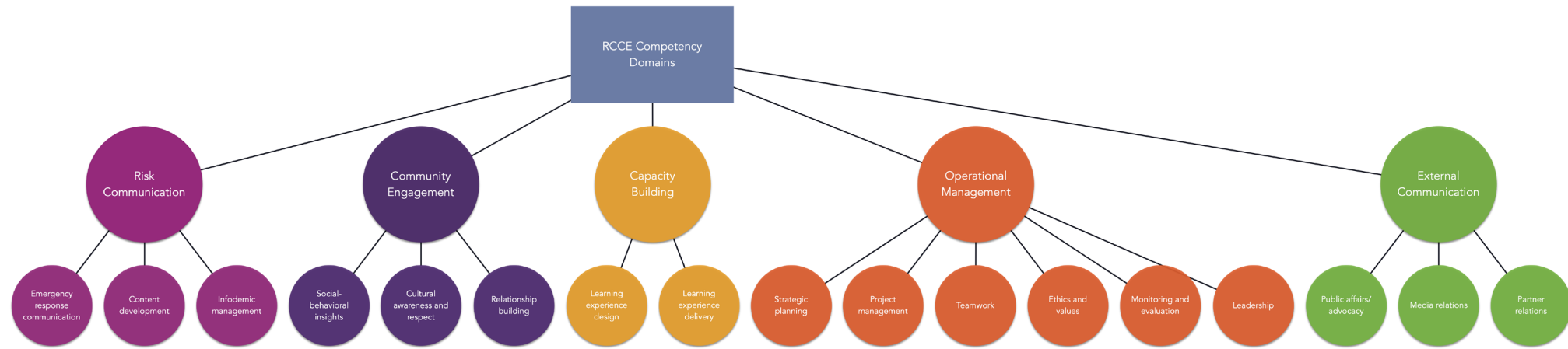
Five subject areas

- Strategic risk communication
- Community engagement
- Capacity building
- Operational management
- External communications

The RCCE Competency Framework, p2

Subject area A: Strategic risk communication

A1.2: Drive the operational integration of risk communication into emergency preparedness and response structures.

A.1.3: Liaise with other technical teams, e.g., community engagement, health promotion, epidemiology, surveillance, infection prevention and control and others, to inform risk communication interventions.

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Internal communication and coordination

Domain 4: Emergency response communication

D1.1 – Coordinate and manage resources (people, budget and tools) needed for each pillar of the RCCE framework and deliver RCCE activities within agreed-upon objectives, processes, deadlines and in line with priorities.

"Information must be timely, sound and robust."

Working document: *Lessons learned from the 2011 outbreak of Shiga toxin-producing Escherichia coli (STEC) O104: H4 in sprouted seeds*

Internal communications considerations

One Health situational analysis

- Rapidly evolving nature of the pandemic emergency
- Complexity and volume of RCCE messages and interventions

  - Human messages and interventions
  - Animal messages and interventions
  - Policy messages

- High level of concern among the general public (context)
- Message channels to reach intended audiences
- Addressing misinformation, rumours and disbelief

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Internal coordination within One Health

Questions to ask

- Who is the sentinel?
  Animal first or human first?

- **Animal solution = culling flocks**
- **Human solution = risk communication**

- Do we have a joint communications system for handling a pandemic influenza crisis?

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Who is part of internal RCCE coordination?
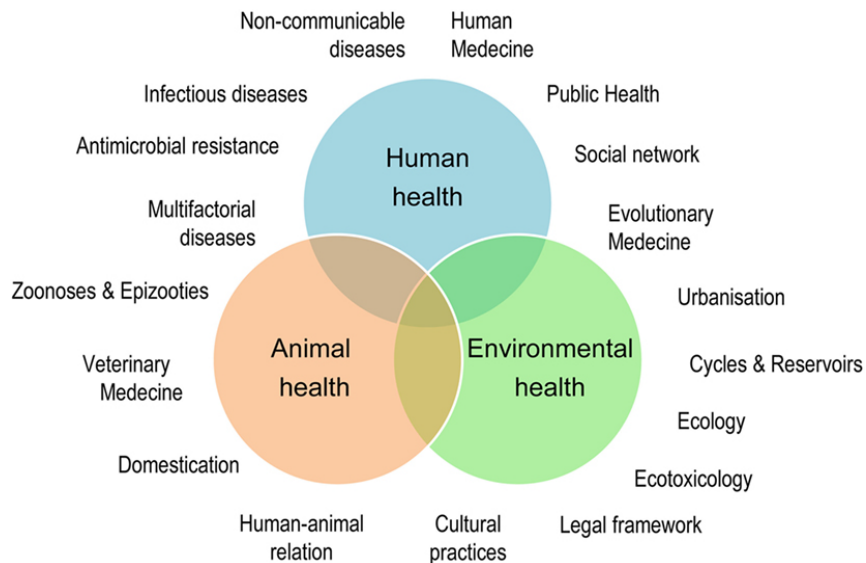
Experts and authorities

- Risk communication practitioners
- Ministries of Health, Agriculture, veterinary services
- Emergency response teams
- Epidemiologists
- Policymakers

- **Most important: Communities at risk**

Internal coordination within One Health

Preparedness

- Develop and test a One Health RCCE communication strategy
- Establish a 'one voice' approach, in which trained and designated spokespersons from human, animal and environmental health sectors have frameworks in place to ensure consistency, accuracy and alignment of official communications across multiple agencies
- Build relationships with communities across all sectors to build trust and lay the groundwork for response activities
- Collect social-behavioral data and use the data to inform RCCE interventions
- Develop and share educational influenza prevention messages and materials, informed by social-behavioral data

Internal coordination within One Health

Response

- Launch response activities in alignment with the RCCE plan
- Make an announcement early, even if the facts are not yet clear or complete:

  'The situation is uncertain, and we share your concern.'

  'This situation is evolving. There is much we do not know.'

  'We are seeking answers, and we will keep you updated as new information becomes available.'

Addressing uncertainty

Build trust

- **Express empathy** – reinforcing to the public that their concern is valid and shared as a HUMAN experience;
- **Proclaim uncertainty** – reinforcing to the public that they should expect for things to change; and
- **Voice transparency** – reinforcing to the public that experts and authorities will be open and honest and share accurate information as it becomes available.

What do we need to improve?

Considerations

- The development of risk communication guidance and SOPs, learning experiences and exercise guidelines and procedures
- The exchange of communication strategies and messages (if, possible prior to the release to the public)
- The sharing of intelligence about risk groups
- The sharing of results of focus groups, KAP surveys and other research activities
- The sharing of evaluation and lessons-learned outcomes
- **The evaluation of communications messages and strategies**

- Conference report: *Lessons learned for public health from the Ebola outbreak in West Africa – how to improve preparedness and response in the EU for future outbreaks – 12-14 October 2015*

Where are we now?

Considerations

- Are we prioritizing "coordinated efforts" as they relate to pandemic influenza?
- Is there a model for internal coordination between sectors?
- How can "health practitioners" use communications to reach the general public "in a harmonised and prompt way"?
- What needs to happen for policymakers, responders and communities to build on the lessons learned from previous outbreaks?
- What is the role of PAHO and WHO as we all move ahead on pandemic preparedness and response?

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Gracias!
Obrigada!
Thank you!

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