



EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

ONE HEALTH

Regional Risk and Crisis Communication Strategy (2018/2019 - 2022/2023)

One People. One Destiny



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(2018/2019 - 2022/2023)



Implemented by:

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

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Foreword

The East African Community (EAC) is one of the fastest growing regional economic blocs in the world. We are blessed with incredible resources, Partner States who are committed to working together, and a future that is bright with opportunity. At the same time, the EAC is also a region that faces unique threats and challenges, including environmental and health risks that impact both humans and animals.

In recent years, EAC Partner States and other African nations have faced extraordinary burdens from outbreaks of infectious disease. In West Africa, more than 11,000 people died during the 2014-2016 outbreak of Ebola disease. Today, in neighboring Democratic Republic of the Congo, valiant efforts are underway to contain yet another outbreak of Ebola. The application of a culturally adapted risk and crisis communications strategy in West Africa proved to be a "game-changer" during the 2014-2016 Ebola response. Accurate information, tailored to meet the needs of affected people and communities, helped prevent additional Ebola infections and reduced the spread of disease. As a result of successes in West Africa, risk and crisis communication techniques are a key part of the current Ebola response in the DRC.

The EAC One Health Regional Risk and Crisis Communication Strategy is intended to support the development and application of best practices in regional risk and crisis communication. The EAC Development Strategy 2016/2017 – 2020/2021 calls for the "development of guidelines, frameworks, and initiatives

to strengthen health promotion and the prevention of communicable and non-communicable disease." The EAC One Health Regional Risk and Crisis Communications Strategy and its accompanying standard operating procedures are designed to support a regional response to threats faced throughout EAC Partner States. Infectious diseases know no borders. When one of us is at risk, we are all at risk.

The EAC is not alone in integrating a risk and crisis communications strategy into broader policy initiatives. Risk communication is a core capacity of the International Health Regulations (2005), and one of five strategies within the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework. I am therefore pleased to present the EAC One Health Regional Risk and Crisis Communications Strategy as part of the EAC Secretariat's goal of improving the health of the population in the East African Community.

On behalf of the EAC Secretariat, I urge Partner States to actively embrace a regional approach to risk and crisis communications. Improving preparedness and response to risks and threats throughout the EAC will require the action and involvement of all.



Hon. Christophe Bazivamo
Deputy Secretary General
(Productive and Social Sectors)
East African Community

Acknowledgement

On behalf of the Department of Health, the East African Community Secretariat gratefully acknowledges the Health Sectoral Council of Ministers, who guided and made the decision to have this task accomplished.

Without the immense support and guidance of the Technical Working Group on Communicable and Non-communicable Diseases, it would be not have been possible to develop this strategy.

To ensure fidelity to the One Health approach, the EAC departments of Health, Agriculture and Food Security, Trade, Tourism and Wildlife management and that of Corporate Communications generously provided support and guidance. As a result of their contribution, the strategy reflects broad consensus and accurate information. .

In addition, special thanks also go to the 'Support to Pandemic Preparedness project of the EAC Region,' financed by German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), which provided technical and financial support for the strategy development process.

Last, but not least, we gratefully acknowledge the contributions and expertise provided by the RCC Sub group tasked with the development of the strategy: Dr Lionel Nyabongo (Republic of Burundi); Mr. Edward Olem, Mr. Wycliff Matini, and Mr. Keria O. Mantina (Republic of Kenya); Mr. Djuma Nsanzimana (Republic of Rwanda); Ms. Mary D. Obat, Ms. Gloria Chepkorir, and Mr. Koang Chang Pal (Republic of South Sudan); Dr Janneth Mghamba, Dr Kaini M. Kamwela, and Mr. Juma Mohammed Juma (United Republic of Tanzania); Mr. Tabley Bakyaite, Dr Gerald Mutungi, Ms. Vivian Serwanjja, Mr. Kenneth Magomu, and Ms. Judith Natukunda, (Republic of Uganda); Mr. Florian Mutabazi (EAC Secretariat), Mr. Kenneth Byoona (PanPrep) and Ms Suzanne Kerba (Lead Consultant).

Executive Summary

Introduction

Risk and crisis communication aims to enable people to take informed decisions and to behave in a manner that is suited to reducing a risk and mitigating its impact. Accordingly, risk communication – in contrast to crisis communication – is an ongoing process. It comprises the standardized, continuous, targeted and timely exchange of information and knowledge between all relevant stakeholders. Risk communication is a long-term strategic effort, which involves stakeholder engagement at every step.

Nearly 30,000 people were infected with the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), and more than 11,000 of them died, during the epidemic in West Africa in 2014/2016. While the East African Community (EAC) region was not affected by this outbreak, there were important lessons to learn, including the importance of culturally adapted risk and crisis communication as an important means of preventing outbreaks and of mitigating the impacts of the epidemic. A key lesson learned in West African is that effective risk and crisis communications initiatives demand trained personnel to be effective. The value of risk and crisis communication in previous outbreak responses demonstrates clearly that developing capacity for risk and crisis communications is well worth the investment in time and resources.

The Review of the National and Regional Responses to Public Health, Trade and Social-Economic Impacts of the Outbreak of Bird Flu in Uganda and the EAC Region, the definitive report of the response to the Bird Flu outbreak in Uganda in 2017, again showed the importance of rapid, clear and efficient risk and crisis communication.

Up to 70 % of infectious diseases that are identified in humans are zoonoses: diseases that can be transmitted between animals and humans either directly, through vectors such as mosquitoes, or via food and feed. Therefore, the fight against infectious diseases needs a multi-disciplinary “One Health” management approach to be effective. “One Health” recognizes the interplay between factors related to people, animals and the environment, involves all stakeholders that are affected by or can contribute to preventing outbreaks and/or mitigating the impact of infectious diseases of public health concern. The “One Health” approach also promotes closer cooperation between disparate sectors and disciplines.

Situational Analysis

In the past, the EAC Secretariat has not had a risk and crisis communication strategy in place. Thus, the Secretariat is not staffed, equipped or able to continuously monitor and disseminate timely and accurate information regarding cross-border hazards, risks, and crises in the EAC region. Information related to potential health risks is typically exchanged informally and randomly between individual Partner States, rather than in a coordinated and standardized manner. Roles between the regional and national levels are not clear, which has the potential to cause confusion and impact the important relationships between the Secretariat and Partner States.

However, the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community endows the Secretariat with the “responsibility of promoting and disseminating information on the Community to stakeholders, the general public, and the international community” (source: Article 71.1(f). Article 118 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community provides for “joint action towards the prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases and to control pandemics and epidemics.”

In early 2019, National Consultations on the Draft EAC Regional One Health Risk and Crisis Communication Strategy were conducted in each Partner State. As part of these consultations, the Joint External Evaluation (JEE) tool was used to assess risk communication capacity in each Partner State. Results from the JEE showed that risk and crisis communication capacity in all EAC Partner States does not yet meet standards set by the International Health Regulations (IHR), although there have been efforts to integrate risk and crisis communication into multi-hazard plans in some sectors, and to have guidelines for its implementation.

Rationale for developing a ‘One Health’ Risk and Crisis Communications Strategy

The EAC Secretariat has an advisory and coordinating role for the EAC Partner States in the area of Pandemic Preparedness. With this in mind, the Secretariat and Partner States acknowledge the need for a regional risk and crisis communication (RCC) strategy and for corresponding standard operating procedures (SOPs).

The EAC Development Strategy 2016/17 – 2020/21 requires the “development of guidelines, frameworks and initiatives to strengthen health promotion and the prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases” and the “development and implementation of a comprehensive programme for continuous and in-depth sensitization, including initiatives to promote mutual trust....”

The “East African Community Regional Contingency Plan for Epidemics Due to Communicable Diseases, Conditions and Other Events of Public Health Concern 2018-2023” plan (hereafter referred to as the Contingency Plan) also highlights the importance of a coordinated regional RCC strategy to address hazards and related health risks of common concern across Partner States. This is reflected in the Contingency Plan’s emergency response structure (Chart on page 20).

Following the recommendations of East African experts who served in the Ebola response in West Africa, the “**15th Ordinary Meeting of the EAC Sectoral Council of Ministers of Health**” in November 2017 approved the expansion of the existing EAC Technical Working Group on communicable and non-communicable diseases to include risk and crisis communication (RCC) experts (EAC/Health/15SCM/Decision5). The EAC Partner States were notified of the decision and, in line with the One Health approach, nominated a total of seven (7) RCC experts (one from each Partner State, including Zanzibar) from different sectors.

Purpose

The purpose of the five-year regional RCC strategy (2019-2023) is to: Establish risk and crisis communication in the EAC region as a tool for prevention of and response to disease outbreaks of public health concern; guide the EAC Secretariat in its mandate to communicate hazards and risks of public health concern promptly following a One Health approach; and provide a framework for national risk and crisis communications strategies.

Scope

The EAC region is prone to outbreaks of infectious diseases and is also experiencing a steady increase in non-infectious diseases, such as cancer, cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes.

Accordingly, the strategy, which has its focus on communicable diseases, also applies to hazards that can cause or aggravate non-communicable diseases and other events of public health importance.

Risk and crisis communications before and during these outbreaks has been uneven, as the value of communications and community engagement has been historically under-appreciated and is therefore also under-funded. Against this backdrop, the regional One Health risk and crisis communications strategy (hereafter referred to as “the regional RCC Strategy”) supports preparedness for mitigation of and response to cross-border public health threats and events with the potential for regional and international spread. The strategy applies to the functions, operations, and resources necessary for the EAC Secretariat to work alongside Partner States to continuously monitor and disseminate information about cross-border risks associated with diseases, conditions and events of public health concern.

Target audiences

Risk and crisis communication, in line with the EAC’s mandate as a regional economic community, is directed toward two primary target audiences. Internal partners are: government health ministries and institutions and agencies in the EAC Partner States; government ministries and agencies in the EAC Partner States relevant to the ‘One Health’ approach; emergency preparedness and response agencies leadership and policymakers within Partner States; and development and strategic partners. External partners are: relevant stakeholders in the region and beyond in line with the One Health approach; media and communications personnel (national, regional, supra-regional); community, religious and other opinion leaders; and private sector and civil society.

Overall Objective

The EAC Regional One Health Regional Risk and Crisis Communications Strategy will contribute to the success of comprehensive and responsible risk management with the goal of minimizing risks, preventing harm, and responding effectively to risks and crises within the EAC region.

Methodology used to develop the RCC Strategy

The TWG RCC sub-working group finalised both the present risk and crisis communications strategy and associated SOPs in a series of face-to-face and virtual meetings that involved representatives from the EAC Secretariat and from EAC Partner States. This strategy passed through country consultations and validation before its submission by the EAC Secretariat to the Sectoral Council of Ministers of Health for approval.

The strategy process also included the development of five (5) Standard Operating Procedures. The SOPs address: 1) How to generate and gain approval for a press release; 2) How to disseminate continuous information on hazards during peacetime and on risks during and after a crisis; 3) How to engage and involve stakeholders in risk communication endeavors; 4) How to manage rumors; and 5) How to develop key messages.

Guiding Principles

The regional RCC Strategy is based on shared values and guided by the following principles: accuracy, timeliness, clarity, transparency, independence, responsiveness, respect, inclusiveness, and responsibility.

RCC Communications and Public Awareness instruments

As part of the strategy, risk communication will focus on the real-time exchange of information, advice, and opinions associated with potential risk –to give people the information they need to make informed decisions about responding to a risk or an impending emergency. Crisis Communication will focus on real-time exchange of information, advice, and opinions during an emergency event. Community Engagement will focus on building two-way collaboration and communication with people at risk to create effective and acceptable solutions to solve common problems. Stakeholder engagement will focus on involving people who are affected by a risk or who can contribute to preventing or mitigating harm associated with a particular risk.

Institutionalising RCC at the EAC Secretariat

Institutionalising RCC at the EAC Secretariat will be anchored under the Department of Health, which will facilitate quick access to and flow of health-related risk and crisis information. The establishment of a One Health Desk within the EAC organizational structure supports the integration of key stakeholders into preparedness and response initiatives. RCC execution would then be done in liaison and close cooperation with EAC Communications department, as the RCC strategy demands alignment with the EAC communications strategy at all times. Tasks performed under RCC will support the EAC spokesperson in developing key messages; coordinating risk and crisis communications initiatives with the emergency RCC team; producing and distributing media materials; monitoring print, broadcast, and social media and responding to requests and concerns; conducting rumour management activities; and working alongside the crisis management team.

The EAC Secretariat shall apply the “One Voice” principle to support the use of uniform and standardized language and messaging and to ensure consistency across multiple information outlets – including designated spokespersons from the EAC and Partner States.

Risk communications channels

The EAC Secretariat shall use an assortment of channels when disseminating information, these will include among others: print and broadcast media; electronic media; and mass awareness initiatives, such as public meetings.

The EAC Secretariat shall oversee overall coordination of the implementation of the EAC RCC Strategy. With this in mind, the EAC Secretariat shall enhance the capacity and competence of risk and crisis communications through financial support and professional trainings. The EAC shall put in place sufficient human resources to conduct professional, sustained, and ongoing risk communications.

Acronyms

CD	Communicable diseases
GIZ	German International Development Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH)
EAC	East African Community
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
GOARN	Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network
IHR	International Health Regulations
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation
JEE	Joint External Evaluation
MoH	Ministry of Health
NaPHRT	National Public Health Rapid Response Teams
NCD	Non-communicable diseases
NEPCCC	National Epidemic Prevention and Control Coordination Committee
PanPrep	Support to Pandemic Preparedness in the EAC Region project
PHE	Public Health Emergency
PHEOC	Public Health Emergency Operation Center
PIP	Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework
RCC	Risk and crisis communication
RHCC	Rwanda Health Communication Centre
RRCCO	Regional Risk/Crisis Communications Officer
RRCCT	Regional Risk/Crisis Communications Team
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TWG	Technical Working Group
WHO	World Health Organization

Definitions

Hazard	A source of potential damage, harm or adverse health effects on individuals and populations
Risk	The probability that exposure to a hazard will provoke a negative consequence.
Crisis	An unstable or crucial time or state of affairs in which a decisive change, with the possibility of a highly undesirable outcome, is impending. A crisis is characterized by three elements: threat, surprise, and short response time.
Disaster	The serious disruption in the functioning of a community or society, causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses, which exceed the ability of the affected community to cope using its own resources.
Emergency	The state in which normal procedures are suspended and extraordinary measures are taken to avert a disaster.
Risk communication	Prompt exchange of relevant information in an attempt to help people to personally assess the risks that they face and make informed decisions about how to protect themselves.
Crisis communication	The prompt exchange of relevant information during a crisis, aimed at informing and changing the behavior of a target group in a way that contributes to minimizing a risk and reducing/mitigating its impact/effect.
One Health Approach	A disease management approach that involves stakeholders from different sectors and areas of society who are affected by an outbreak of infectious diseases or other event that poses a threat to public health, or who can contribute to minimizing the risk and/or mitigating its impact/effects.
One Voice Principle	The use of uniform and standardized language and messaging to ensure consistency in communications across multiple information outlets – including designated spokespersons from the EAC and respective Partner States.
Risk assessment	The process of identifying a hazard, carefully analyzing its potential consequences, and prioritizing elements of response.
External target audience	Organizations and individuals, such as media outlets and regional stakeholders, which are unaffiliated with the EAC Secretariat yet require accurate and timely information regarding regional issues of concern
Internal target audience	Stakeholders within or closely associated with the EAC Secretariat, who have access to official organizational information generally not distributed to the public.
Zoonoses	Any disease or infection that is naturally transmissible between animals and humans.
Regional Contingency Plan	East African Community Regional Contingency Plan for Epidemics Due to Communicable Diseases, Conditions and Other Events of Public Health Concern 2018-2023
Joint External Evaluation (JEE)	A voluntary, collaborative, and multisectoral process to assess country capacities to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to public health risks.
International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005)	An agreement between WHO Member States to work together for global health security. Through IHR, countries have agreed to build their capacities to detect, assess and report public health events. WHO plays the coordinating role in IHR and, together with partners, helps countries build capacities.

“The main lesson is that we need to be prepared. We need to have risk and crisis communication strategies in place and constantly reviewed. Community mobilisation and engagement was one of the pillars of the Ebola response in Liberia and proved to be a valuable and cost-effective intervention. Through such engagement, communities set up monitoring systems which resulted in an increase in safe burials, prompt notification of suspected cases, early health care seeking behaviours and eventually contributed to the control of the epidemic.”

Liliane Luwaga

Ugandan risk communication expert working in Liberia during the Ebola outbreak

“I think the biggest lesson from what happened in Sierra Leone is that the power to control an outbreak is in the hands of the local people. That’s the key. Without the people in that country, the people in that community, the people in that village or district, you can’t do anything. The reason the West African outbreak went out of control is because the people who owned the problem at the time didn’t do much about it. All they needed was a push to know what to do, and they could then control the outbreak.”

Rebecca Apolot from Uganda

Field epidemiologist and public health officer deployed to Sierra Leone between October 2014 and April 2015

(Quotations are taken from the report of the November 2017 regional conference “What East African experts learned from fighting the Ebola epidemic in West Africa” which took place in Nairobi. In this report, experts recognized the importance of good communications with communities, but also described often-frustrating experiences of inappropriate risk communication messages, and the lack of clear strategies, coordination and governance structures for communication.)

1.0 Introduction

“Health crises can have an impact far beyond the actual threat to health. They generate fear and uncertainty and can influence political, economic and cultural forces that are likely to do the most damage. Too often in the past such damage has been made much worse by poor communication.”

(World Health Organization, 2007).

Risk and crisis communication aims to enable people to take informed decisions and to behave in a manner that is suited to reducing a risk and mitigating its impact. While risk communication aims at preventing hazards – such as an infectious pathogen or Aflatoxin, a toxin produced by certain fungi – from causing harm, crisis communication kicks in to mitigate the impact when damage has occurred. Accordingly, risk communication – in contrast to crisis communication – is an ongoing process. It comprises the standardized, continuous, targeted and timely exchange of information and knowledge between all relevant stakeholders. Risk communication is a long-term strategic effort, which involves stakeholder engagement at every step.

While risk communication aims at preventing hazards before they occur, crisis communication kicks in to mitigate the impact after damage from a particular hazard has already occurred. Crisis communication is the prompt exchange of relevant information in a crisis with the goal of informing and changing the behavior of a target group in a way that contributes to minimizing a risk and reducing/mitigating its impact/effect.

Accordingly, risk communication – in contrast to crisis communication – is an ongoing process. It comprises the standardized, continuous, targeted and timely exchange of information and knowledge between all relevant stakeholders and to people facing hazards or events that could seriously jeopardize individual or public health.

Nearly 30,000 people were infected with the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), and more than 11,000 of them died, during the epidemic in West Africa in 2014/2016. While the East African Community (EAC) region was not affected by this outbreak, there were important lessons to learn, including the importance of **culturally adapted risk and crisis communication** as an important means of preventing outbreaks and of mitigating the impacts of the epidemic.

During a conference in Nairobi in November 2017, East African health experts who were deployed to West Africa to assist in the fight against Ebola emphasized that risk communication played an important role in bringing the epidemic under control. Prior to the implementation of effective risk communications strategies, people at risk in the affected countries responded to the threat in ways that contributed to and even accelerated the spread of Ebola disease. Once effective strategies for risk communication and community engagement had been employed, it became clear that culturally appropriate risk communications were vital in delivering accurate information, reducing misinformation, and stopping rumors that circulated around the Ebola disease. This, in turn, supported a more effective response and recovery.

The Review of the National and Regional Responses to Public Health, Trade and Social-Economic Impacts of the Outbreak of Bird Flu in Uganda and the EAC Region, the definitive report of the response to the Bird Flu outbreak in Uganda in 2017, again showed the importance of rapid, clear and efficient risk and crisis communication. The report also highlighted the necessity of involving all relevant disciplines and of tailoring communications to specific populations based upon their economic, cultural and social backgrounds. A key lesson learned in West African is that effective risk and crisis communications initiatives demand trained personnel to be effective. The value of risk and crisis communication in previous outbreak responses demonstrates clearly that developing capacity for risk and crisis communications is well worth the investment in time and resources.

Up to 70 % of infectious diseases that are identified in humans are zoonoses: diseases that can be transmitted between animals and humans either directly, through vectors such as mosquitoes, or via food and feed. Therefore, the fight against infectious diseases needs a multi-disciplinary “One Health” management approach to be effective. “One Health” recognizes the interplay between factors related to people, animals and the environment, involves all stakeholders that are affected by or can contribute to preventing outbreaks and/or mitigating the impact of infectious diseases of public health concern. The “One Health” approach also promotes closer cooperation between disparate sectors and disciplines.

2.0 Situation analysis

In the past, the EAC Secretariat has not had a risk and crisis communication strategy in place. Thus, the Secretariat is not staffed, equipped or able to continuously monitor and disseminate timely and accurate information regarding cross-border hazards, risks and crises in the EAC region. Information related to potential health risks is typically exchanged informally and randomly between individual Partner States, rather than in a coordinated and standardized manner. Roles between the regional and national levels are not clear, which has the potential to cause confusion and impact the important relationships between the Secretariat and Partner States.

However, the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community endows the Secretariat with the “responsibility of promoting and disseminating information on the Community to stakeholders, the general public, and the international community” (source: Article 71.1(f). Article 118 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community provides for “joint action towards the prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases and to control pandemics and epidemics.”

Risk communication is also a key part of international health frameworks for communicating risk in

health emergencies, including the Constitution of WHO, which states: “Health is a human right and part of social justice. Informed opinion and active cooperation on the part of the public are of the utmost importance in the improvement in the health of the people.”

Risk Communications is one of eight core capacities listed by the International Health Regulations (IHR) for mitigating the effects and outcomes of health events and emergencies. It is one of five strategies within the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework and a key part of regional and programme strategies, including outbreak response, the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN), the humanitarian action framework, and WHO’s reform for outbreaks and health emergencies.

2.1 Partner State Situational Analysis

In early 2018, National Consultations on the Draft EAC Regional One Health Risk and Crisis Communication Strategy were conducted in each Partner State. As part of these consultations, the JEE tool was used to assess risk communication capacity in each Partner State. The table below reflects findings from each mission.

RCC Analysis in Partner States	
Republic of Burundi 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal communication to the IEC service provided by the Multisectoral Coordination Committee for Public Health Emergencies • Communication between stakeholders and response organizations occurs at the national level by the Ministry of Health and the National Platform for Coordination and Disaster Management • Spokesperson for the Ministry of Health and the Fight against AIDS is responsible for communication • No existing multi-risk and multisectoral risk communication strategic plan • No budget line for risk communication in case of public health emergencies • Lack of sufficient training for risk communications staff
Republic of Kenya 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries both have coordination units for communication. • Risk communication is integrated in in the draft National Disaster Response Plan with specific plans in priority sectors. • The Ministry of Health has draft guidelines on risk communication at the national level • Dedicated communications staffing is uneven throughout ministries • There is lack of knowledge and capacity of risk communication principles and its role in preparedness, response and recovery as articulated under the IHR (2005)

3.0 Rationale for developing a ‘One Health’ Risk and Crisis Communications Strategy

<p>Republic of Rwanda 2018</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a national communication platform that includes all government institutions, and which is overseen by the Office of the Government Spokesperson (OGS). • The Rwanda Health Communication Center leads activities related to communication and health promotion. • The multisectoral National Epidemic Prevention and Control Coordination Committee is in place with communication personnel. • Permanent staff report public health emergencies at central level • There is no multi-hazard risk communication plan.
<p>Republic of South Sudan 2017</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent department responsible for risk communications at the Ministry of Health • Risk communication is incorporated in some disease-specific preparedness and response plans (e.g. cholera and polio) • Some partners support the risk communication activities of the Ministry of Health during emergencies. • No national multi-hazard risk communication strategy or plan • Low capacity at national and sub-national level structures to effectively implement risk communication.
<p>United Republic of Tanzania 2016</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government of Tanzania has a national multi-hazard risk communication plan in place – the Tanzania Disaster Communication Strategy (TDCS). • The TDCS is linked and complementary to the multisectoral Tanzania Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan. • The TDCS applies the One Health approach. The animal health sector was involved in the development of the TDCS. • For the health sector, the National Communication Guidelines for Public Health Risks and Emergencies has been drafted and outlines principles and strategies, including roles and responsibilities for implementation at national and subnational levels. • The communications unit of the Ministry of Health coordinates queries and responses associated with health risks. • Health promotion section coordinates public education and awareness for positive behaviour change. • Newly established PHEOC lacks dedicated staff for risk communication.
<p>Republic of Uganda 2017</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk communication activities are coordinated internally through the National Emergency Coordination Committee (NECC) in the OPM, and the multisectoral and multi-disciplinary NTF within MoH and MAAIF. • Shared communication plans and agreements between the response agencies. • The Uganda Media Centre is the designated media centre for risk communication during emergencies and outbreaks. • Risk communication is coordinated among civil society organisations, the private sector, and international stakeholders. • A communication team dedicated to media and social media outreach addresses rumours and misinformation.

The EAC Secretariat has an advisory and coordinating role for the EAC Partner States in the area of Pandemic Preparedness. With this in mind, the Secretariat and Partner States acknowledge the need for a regional risk and crisis communication (RCC) strategy and for corresponding standard operating procedures (SOPs).

The EAC Development Strategy 2016/17 – 2020/21 requires the “development of guidelines, frameworks and initiatives to strengthen health promotion and the prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable diseases” and the “development and implementation of a comprehensive programme for continuous and in-depth sensitization, including initiatives to promote mutual trust...”

The Contingency Plan also highlights the importance of a coordinated regional RCC strategy to address hazards and related health risks of common concern across Partner States. This is reflected in the Contingency Plan's emergency response structure (Chart 1, page 20).

The "Support to Pandemic Preparedness in the EAC region" (PanPrep) project, which is implemented by GIZ on behalf of the Government of Germany, assists the EAC Secretariat in improving risk and crisis communications, both at the regional level and between the regional and the national levels. This is reflected in the 2nd field of activity, which aims at 1) developing a regional RCC strategy that reflects the One Health approach; and 2) creating corresponding SOPs to put the strategy into practice. Indicator 2 of the project's results matrix reads:

"The EAC Secretariat communicates health risks of interest to the general public efficiently and promptly to all key actors in the partner countries, in line with the international standards of the regional risk and communication strategy."

Following the recommendations of East African experts who served in the Ebola response in West Africa, the "15th Ordinary Meeting of the EAC Sectoral Council of Ministers of Health" in November 2017 approved the expansion of the existing EAC Technical Working Group on communicable and non-communicable diseases to include risk and crisis communication (RCC) experts (EAC/Health/15SCM/Decision5). The EAC Partner States were notified of the decision and, in line with the One Health approach, nominated a total of seven (7) RCC experts (one from each Partner State including Zanzibar) from different sectors. This participatory approach takes into account that some Partner States have national communication strategies and robust communication methods in place. These Partner States contribute valuable information and experience to the regional development process.

4.0 Purpose

The purpose of the five-year regional RCC strategy (2019-2023) is to:

- Establish risk and crisis communication in the EAC region as a tool for prevention of and response to disease outbreaks of public health concern;
- Guide the EAC Secretariat to communicate hazards and risks of public health concern promptly to all relevant stakeholders in line with its regional mandate and in a standardized and efficient manner following a One Health approach; and
- Provide a framework for national risk and crisis communications strategies.

5.0 Scope

The EAC region is prone to outbreaks of infectious diseases and is also experiencing a steady increase in non-communicable diseases, such as cancer, cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes. Accordingly, the strategy, which has its focus on communicable diseases, also applies to hazards that can cause or aggravate non-communicable diseases and other events of public health importance.

In the past two years, the EAC has been challenged by outbreaks of Ebola, Rift Valley, Marburg, Dengue and Crimean Congo hemorrhagic fevers, avian influenza (bird flu), Chikungunya, Cholera, among others. These pathogens are endemic in the region. The outbreaks threaten the lives and livelihoods of the people and the regional economy as a whole. The spread of infectious diseases is promoted by climate change, migration and transboundary trade, which is facilitated by the EAC common market, by tourism, by an ever-closer interface between animals and humans.

Risk and crisis communications before and during these outbreaks has been uneven, as the value of communications and community engagement has been historically under-appreciated and is therefore also under-funded. Against this backdrop, the regional One Health risk and crisis communications strategy (hereafter referred to as "the regional RCC Strategy") supports preparedness for mitigation of and response to cross-border public health threats with the potential for regional and international spread. The strategy applies to the functions, operations, and resources necessary for the EAC Secretariat to work alongside Partner States to continuously monitor and disseminate information about cross-border risks associated with diseases, conditions and events of public health concern.

The strategy builds upon best practices and lessons learned from previous outbreaks in the region and beyond. It complements the East African Community Communications Policy and Strategy and is in line with relevant EAC policies and strategies.

6.0 Target audiences

Relationships between Partner States and the EAC Secretariat are sustainable and strong, and the EAC Contingency Plan reflects a collaborative approach to preparedness and response. In addition to the support of EAC and Partner State leadership, effective risk and crisis communications initiatives require the active participation, support, advocacy and backing of all segments of society. Therefore, it is vitally important to boost the engagement and contribution of all target audiences.

Risk and crisis communication, in line with the EAC's mandate as a regional economic community, is directed at the following target audiences:

6.1 Internal

- Government health ministries and institutions and agencies in the EAC Partner States;
- Government ministries and agencies in the EAC Partner States relevant to the 'One Health' approach;
- Emergency preparedness and response entities;
- Leadership and policymakers within Partner States; and
- Development and strategic partners.

6.2 External

- Relevant stakeholders in the region and beyond in line with the One Health approach;
- Media and communications personnel (national, regional, supra-regional);
- Community and religious and other opinion leaders in line with the One Health approach;
- Private sector; and
- Civil society.

7.0 EAC One Health Regional RCC strategy objectives

The regional RCC strategy has been developed to provide a regional framework and support the EAC Secretariat in its advisory and consulting role in pandemic preparedness for the Partner States with the following objectives:

7.1 Main Objective

Contribute to the success of comprehensive and responsible risk management through risk and crisis communication with the goal of minimizing risks, preventing harm, and responding effectively to risks and crises within the EAC region.

7.2 Specific Objective

1. Serve as a roadmap and reference point for the EAC Partner States establishing state-of-the-art and culturally sensitive risk and crisis communication;
2. Clarify the relationship between the EAC Secretariat and Partner States in the context of risk and crisis communications;
3. Facilitate cross-border information exchange and knowledge sharing among Partner States, the EAC Secretariat and beyond;
4. Promptly notify all relevant stakeholders about

possible health-related risks, new findings and work results in an open and transparent way, based on facts and independent scientific evidence and guidance;

5. Strengthen public confidence in the EAC Secretariat as a coordinating and advisory body for the EAC Partner States in health-related matters;
6. Empower the people in the EAC region and beyond to make informed decisions by enabling them to understand and personally assess the risks that they face;
7. Actively involve different interest groups with diverse communication measures and dialogue formats through risk communication, in addition to supporting media outreach and the public relations efforts of the EAC Secretariat; and
8. Consider different value concepts, subjective risk perception and acceptance of risks for society and the individual target groups in risk and crisis communication.

8.0 Methodology used to develop the RCC Strategy

The strategy development process followed the EAC rules and guidelines and was done through a participatory and consultative process.

In April 2018, an extraordinary meeting of the extended RCC TWG took place in Moshi, Tanzania. Activities at the meeting started the process of integrating newly nominated members into the existing TWG on CD & NCD, and established a multi-disciplinary RCC TWG sub-working group tasked with developing a regional RCC strategy and corresponding SOPs and to assist in testing them under conditions of use. The sub-working group was composed of professional communications experts from the EAC Secretariat and all EAC Partner States, as well as other stakeholders representing different sectors of society. These stakeholders represented human, animal and environmental health, agriculture, trade and tourism, community leadership, and policymaking. The broad spectrum of skills and experiences within the group reflected the One Health approach to attain optimal health for people, animals, and the environment.

In May 2018, an RCC stakeholder meeting kicked off risk and crisis communication in the context of One Health and Pandemic Preparedness in the EAC region. The meeting widened the range of people involved in risk and crisis communication in the EAC region, and raised awareness for RCC among stakeholders beyond governmental institutions. The event also facilitated the development of a common understanding of RCC and introduced the participants to the

concept of risk and crisis communication in the One Health context. The meeting also served to extend the TWG sub-working group on RCC by three experts from different sectors of society that represent trade associations, communities, and the media.

In July 2018, the RCC sub-working group met in Entebbe, Uganda, and started to develop the RCC strategy. Participants discussed the integration of the One Health approach, came up with the strategy outline, scope, objectives and principles to guide the strategy. They also prioritised the following five (5) SOPs to facilitate operationalization of the strategy:

1. How to develop key messages
2. How to generate and gain approval for a press release
3. How to manage rumors
4. How to engage and involve stakeholders in risk communication endeavors
5. How to disseminate continuous information on hazards during peacetime and on risks during and after a crisis

The TWG RCC sub-working group finalised both the present risk and crisis communications strategy and associated SOPs in a series of face-to-face and virtual meetings that involved representatives from the EAC Secretariat and from EAC Partner States. This draft passed through country consultations before it was submitted by the EAC Secretariat to the Sectoral Council of Ministers of Health for approval.

The strategy is in alignment with the regional and international legal policy framework of the EAC Contingency Plan related to a multi-sectoral response to a public health event at a regional level. It is an evolving document that will be tested under real-life conditions in a field simulation exercise in June 2019 and subject to revision as necessary. WHO recommends that risk and crisis communications plans and strategies be tested every two years, either through implementation during an actual outbreak or through simulation exercises.

9.0 Guiding Principles

The regional RCC Strategy is based on shared values and guided by the following principles:

Principle	Description
Accuracy	EAC risk and crisis communications shall always be accurate and factual.
Timeliness	EAC risk and crisis communications materials and activities shall be developed and delivered at a time when information is needed and relevant. Risk communications efforts are ongoing and thus require sustained attention, established structures, and sufficient funding to maintain timeliness and accuracy.
Clarity	EAC risk and crisis communications shall be delivered in plain language, using short sentences and avoiding jargon. Where information is technical in nature, supporting explanatory information will be provided. Materials associated with risks will be developed and provided in different languages and alternative formats (e.g. illustrations for low-literacy populations) as needed to support awareness and community engagement.
Transparency	EAC risk and crisis communications shall be honest and open, ensuring that the rationale for outreach is clearly stated.
Independence	EAC risk communications shall be trustworthy and reliable, independent from vested interests.
Responsiveness	EAC risk and crisis initiatives shall be responsive and adapted to the needs, concerns and feedback of target audiences and in line with the EAC's regional mandate.
Respect	EAC risk and crisis communications initiatives shall respect the cultures, ideals, and opinions expressed between Partner States, the EAC Secretariat and relevant target audiences.
Inclusiveness	In line with its regional mandate, EAC risk and crisis communications initiatives shall seek to engage with the broadest sections of affected communities, including high-risk and vulnerable populations.
Responsibility	Information shared through EAC risk and crisis communications initiatives shall be responsible, acknowledging and respecting privacy and security concerns.

The regional RCC strategy acknowledges that public perceptions of risk are highly variable. People are less concerned about health risks that are voluntary, familiar, and/or chronic. They are more concerned about health risks that are involuntary, unfamiliar, and uncontrollable.

The strategy also acknowledges the necessity of dealing with uncertainty. It is not always possible to clearly define a risk, especially when it is newly emerging and a risk assessment has not been completed. The EAC Secretariat shall communicate openly about risk and uncertainty.

Example: A smoker might be aware of the risk to health that he/she is taking by smoking and might accept this risk, even after carefully weighing the consequences.

Perception of risk is rooted in the subconscious, influenced by culture and emotions, and not always expressed verbally. Risk communications seek to share information and build trust by honoring audience perceptions and seeking effective solutions that resonate with communities at risk.

The regional RCC strategy will be monitored and evaluated based on the guiding principle of continuous improvement.

10.0 RCC Communications and Public Awareness instruments

10.1 Risk Communication

Risk communication refers to the real-time exchange of information, advice and opinions between experts or officials and people who face a hazard or threat to their survival, health, or economic or social wellbeing. Its ultimate purpose is to ensure that everyone at risk is able to make informed decisions and take protective and preventive action to minimize the effects of the hazard or threat, such as a pathogen or harmful chemical substance. Risk communication is a long-term strategic effort, which involves stakeholder participation at every step.

Risk communication may focus on the imminent threat of an extreme event – to give people the information they need to make informed decisions about an impending emergency. However, risk communication also focuses on building awareness of the long-term potential for harm associated with a specific hazard.

Example: When maize, corn or nuts are not harvested and stored carefully, aflatoxins – a family of toxins produced by certain fungi – may develop. When an animal consumes aflatoxins through its feed, the toxin accumulates in the animal's fatty body tissues. The toxin is passed on to the animal's offspring and also to people who eat the fat or meat, or drink the milk, of the infected animal. Likewise, a mother who eats corn or grain that contain aflatoxins may pass it on via breast milk to her baby, putting the baby at risk. As aflatoxins are invisible to the naked eye and are poisonous carcinogens, consumers can only protect themselves when they know and understand the health risks.

The regional RCC strategy recognizes that risk communications require a long-term approach. Social science research and learning theory support the fact that people need to hear or see a message multiple times before they understand or accept it. Thus, risk (and crisis) communications are a sustained and ongoing activity throughout every stage of prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery.

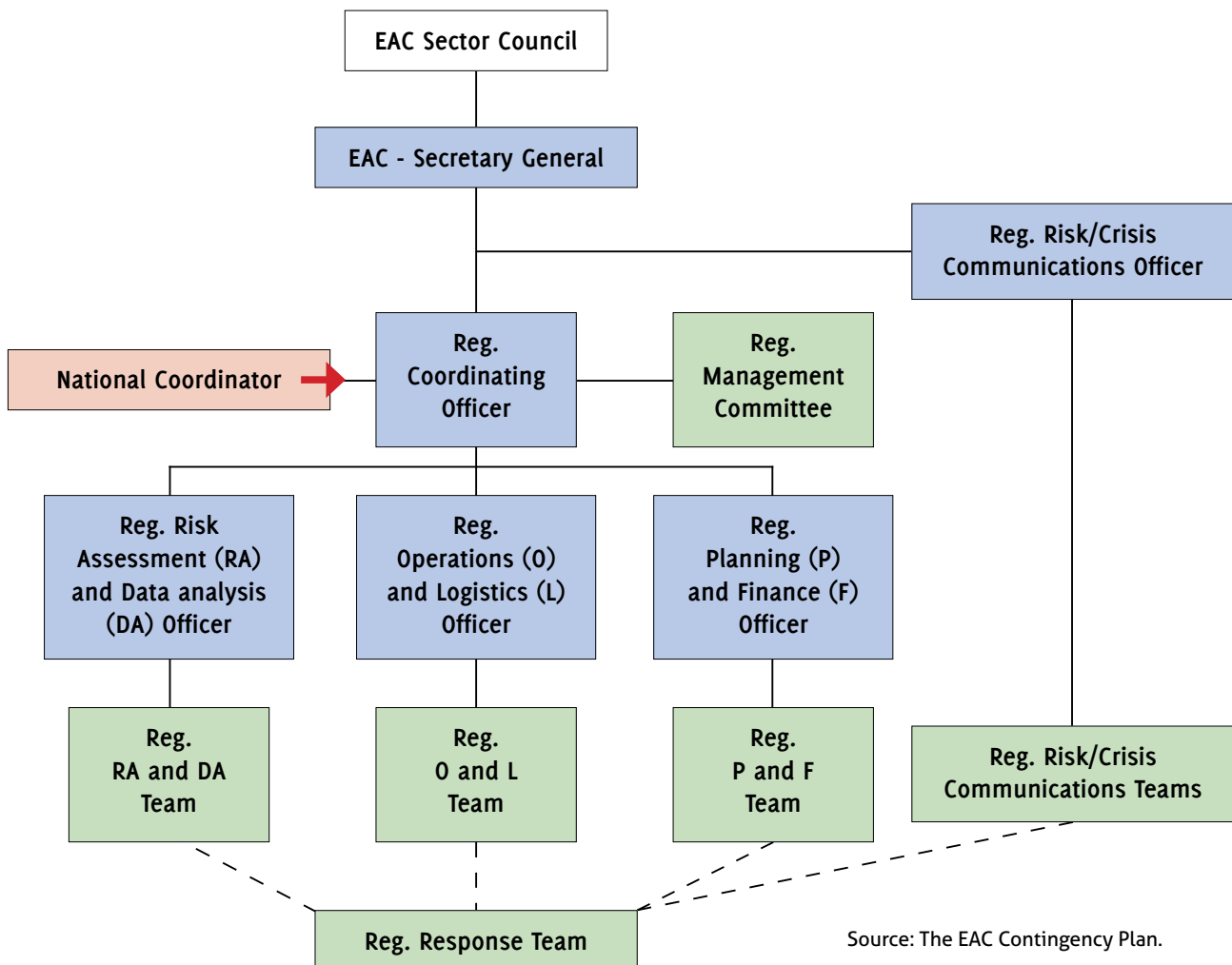
10.2 Crisis Communication

Crisis communication is the real-time exchange of information, advice, and opinions during an emergency event. Lessons learned from the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa highlighted the importance of rapid, clear, and efficient communications, involving relevant stakeholders and using targeted, culturally appropriate messages.

Example: Lack of awareness breeds panic and fear, and one of the biggest challenges for responders involved in the ongoing Ebola epidemic in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is the behavior of uninformed citizens in affected areas. In one case, family members on motorbikes abducted Ebola patients from a hospital and took them to a prayer meeting with 50 other people. This simple act potentially exposed everyone at the prayer meeting to the deadly virus. Targeted, culturally appropriate risk and crisis communication are required to help people understand their risks, and take steps to protect themselves and their loved ones. Armed with information and understanding about the risks of Ebola, the family members of the Ebola patients may have made different choices, allowing the patients to remain in medical facilities, continue care, and avoid exposing other people to disease.

With regard to timeliness, the EAC Secretariat shall develop a timeline/emergency cascade jointly with the Partner States. Annex I provides a structure for a timeline.

The regional RCC strategy recognizes that robust crisis communications build upon a solid foundation of strong risk communications initiatives. Regional risk and crisis communication features in the EAC's Crisis Management Structure as depicted in the following organizational chart.



Source: The EAC Contingency Plan.

The EAC Secretary General is in charge of initiating the decision-making process as articulated in the Regional Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response section of the EAC Contingency Plan. In case of an emergency, the EAC risk and crisis communications unit will become part of the emergency structure. The regional RCC strategy will follow timelines and activities in alignment with National Public Health Rapid Response Teams and Partner State risk and crisis communications teams.

10.3 Community Engagement

Community engagement is the process of building two-way collaboration and communication with people at risk to create effective and acceptable solutions to solve common problems. Building relationships with affected communities supports

buy-in and strengthens trust and partnership. Community engagement also supports improved levels of acceptance and ownership of problems and solutions. The regional RCC strategy includes community engagement as a key tactic of effective risk communications, as it supports the integration of local and external knowledge into response initiatives. To this end, the EAC Secretariat will liaise closely with religious and community leaders in preparedness and response training activities.

In the context of community engagement, the regional RCC strategy embraces the core values of the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2):

- Those who are affected by a decision and actions have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

- The public’s contribution will influence the decision or action that impacts them.
- Sustainable decisions and actions will be promoted by recognizing and communicating the needs of all stakeholders.

10.4 Stakeholder engagement

In line with the One Health approach, stakeholder engagement is the process of involving people who are affected by a risk or who can contribute to preventing or mitigating harm from it. Stakeholders influence the implementation of decisions made in case of an impending risk or during an emergency. The regional RCC strategy includes stakeholder engagement as a key tactic of effective risk communications. Important stakeholders in risk and crisis communications; for purposes of this document, they have been listed as a separate group. Activities associated with stakeholder engagement include:

- Communicate and work with stakeholders to meet their needs/expectations and foster engagement.
- Seek stakeholder input and guidance during planning phases: Ensure their buy-in and acceptance, and manage their expectations;
- Address stakeholder concerns: Listen to stakeholders, respond in a timely manner, and integrate their concerns into decision-making.

11.0 Institutionalising RCC at the EAC Secretariat

A risk and crisis communications at the EAC Secretariat is anchored in the Department of Health and will serve to facilitate quick access to and flow of health-related risk and crisis information. The establishment of a One Health Desk within the EAC organizational structure supports the integration of key stakeholders into preparedness and response initiatives. Therefore RCC would likewise be established under the Office of the Principal Health Officer. RCC execution would then be done in close cooperation with EAC Communications department, as the RCC strategy demands alignment with the EAC communications strategy at all times.

In an emergency situation, the unit would transition into the EAC’s Crisis Management Structure as shown in Graph 1. In an emergency, the regional RCC Officer would respond directly to the EAC Secretary General to facilitate quick decisions and effective cooperation with the EAC Partner States. The RCC Officer would be in charge of the emergency RCC team, made up of additional EAC RCC staff members and national RCC teams.

11.1 Necessary human resources

It is necessary that funding allocated towards the development and deployment of risk and crisis communications provides resources for training of personnel and ongoing full-time operations. Until RCC is fully established in the EAC, the RCC team should include one (1) Principal RCC Officer; at least one (1) skilled support person/deputy; and an intern. The RCC Officer would liaise with relevant stakeholders and the media. The deputy would be in charge of continuously monitoring CD and NCD hazards and risks reported by public health laboratories, the regional Centers of Excellence in health, the East African Health Research Community, other health research centers and institutions, and international health organisations. The intern would support RCC tasks as required, manage organizational tasks related to implementing RCC, and establish and maintain media lists. Together with the RCC Officer, the deputy would be in charge of responding to requests from stakeholders and the general public.

In an emergency, additional RCC professionals will be needed on site to meet the increased demand for timely and accurate information. The professionals should be recruited and trained in “peacetime” – before an actual emergency emerges. Tasks performed by these communications response specialists include:

- Function as support spokesperson in close cooperation with the regional RCC Officer;
- Coordinate risk and crisis communications initiatives with the emergency RCC team;
- Collaborate with triage response team;
- Produce and distribute media materials in close collaboration with the regional and national emergency RCC teams;
- Monitor print, broadcast, and social media and respond to requests and concerns;
- Conduct rumour management through active, two-way engagement with stakeholders and the public; and
- Work alongside the crisis management team.

11.2 Financial resources

Risk and crisis communication is a significant long-term investment that yields results. The budget of the RCC unit should cover the following items, and allow for additional funding as required:

- Salaries;
- Infrastructure (e.g. office, equipment, technology);
- Funds to implement RCC (e.g. monitoring, printing of products, establishment and maintenance of a website and ongoing social media presence, press

briefings, translation of information into traditional EAC languages, financing of broadcast placements and awareness campaigns); and

- Monitoring of results and outcomes

The EAC Secretariat, in collaboration with Partner States and other stakeholders, shall endeavor to ensure that sufficient resources – including staffing, skills, and financial support – are provided to achieve the strategy’s objectives.

11.3 The “One Voice” principle

The “One Voice” principle supports the use of uniform and standardized language and messaging to ensure consistency across multiple information outlets – including designated spokespersons from the EAC and Partner States.

The EAC Secretariat shall apply the “One Voice” principle in its risk and crisis communications. The Secretariat shall coordinate messages with the respective ministries and agencies in the Partner States to assure consistency, accuracy and alignment of official messages throughout the region.

11.4 Risk communications channels

The term “channels” is used to describe strategies the EAC Secretariat may use to disseminate risk and crisis communications to the target audiences. Channels may include broadcast outlets, mass awareness initiatives, and other means of communicating with target audiences. The regional RCC strategy supports the EAC Communication Policy in calling for the creation of capacity to identify appropriate audiences, determine the best ways to communicate with them, and implement outreach tailored to their needs. An effective dissemination system, using the most appropriate channels, is critical to delivering and amplifying messages associated with risk and crisis communications. Channels shall be strategically chosen to maximize efficiency and promote responsible stewardship of funding.

The EAC Secretariat shall leverage the following channels, and other streams based upon the identification of their value in the context of preparedness and response.

11.5 Media relations

The EAC RCC team shall invest in developing proactive relationships with media outlets before the emergence of a crisis. Selected media representatives who can amplify messages and serve as multipliers shall be trained on topics related to CDs & NCDs, with an emphasis on preparedness and response.

The EAC Secretariat shall use press briefings to interact directly with the media on issues of high relevance and urgency.

11.6 Print and broadcast media

The EAC Communications Policy and Strategy recognizes that media companies throughout the region generally focus on audiences in their respective Partner States and do not necessarily provide regional coverage. The regional RCC strategy supports the agenda of creating a partnership programme that places national media channels at the center of the regional RCC strategy.

Printed publications are well suited for reaching specific target audiences with tailored and culturally appropriate messages. Press releases are still state-of-the-art instruments to provide accurate information, with opinions and advice, to audiences. The EAC Secretariat shall publish press releases when a hazard or risk is relevant for more than one Partner State. Input for health-related press releases on hazards and risks shall come from various EAC Departments in line with the One Health approach. Press releases may be translated into different regional languages, as necessary.

Radio is best suited to approach broad audiences, including people who are unable to read or write. Radio can also provide comprehensive and in-depth information across different language groups and cultures. The EAC Secretariat shall closely engage with broadcast media to provide risk and crisis communications with emphasis on citizens in hard-to-reach areas. People with special needs, such as those who are physically disabled or visually impaired, will be included in media outreach as appropriate, in collaboration with support personnel such as caregivers and sign-language interpreters.

11.7 Electronic media

The term “electronic media” is used to describe online activities (including social media and internet connectivity), along with SMS functionality.

A dedicated website is critical to provide relevant information for all interested parties – including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for the lay public and scientific guidance for health professionals. However, a website is only as good as the state of its maintenance. It is mandatory that the website exist as an up-to-date reliable source of information; daily maintenance is required.

Social media and SMS platforms are gaining importance as mechanisms of dissemination for risk and crisis communications messaging. They are useful

tools for the delivery of risk and emergency information, and also valuable for collecting feedback and establishing two-way communications between the EAC Secretariat, Partner States, and intended audiences. Two-way communications are integral parts of community engagement and building trust.

Social media is now being used around the world to communicate and manage risks and crises, including by providing official updates, encouraging protective behavior, increasing awareness, and guiding public attention to mitigation advice. Failure to include social media expertise in the strategy will dilute the effectiveness of risk and crisis communications across all other platforms, as external sources would then control the online narrative. Sharing consistent key messages associated with risk and crisis communications across multiple platforms and channels serves the 'One Voice' approach to sharing information.

The risk and crisis communications strategy requires the development of standardized regulations and processes, and the application of brand identity that clearly identifies the source of messaging. EAC Communications and the risk and crisis communications team should develop and utilize such criteria as part of the stated objective to maintain alignment and collaboration throughout communications. These guidelines should be applied consistently with strategies deployed through other communications channels. Key aspects include:

- Website and content development, including provisions for user testing;
- The establishment and deployment of dedicated social media accounts across platforms as a way to disseminate and collect information; and
- The creation of subscription functionality to SMS functions (including WhatsApp) to collect followers and quickly disseminate information to target audiences, including the identification of possible collaboration ITC partners (e.g. mobile phone providers).

11.8 Mass awareness initiatives

The EAC Secretariat shall conduct face-to-face and small group communications, including public gatherings, town hall meetings, speeches and conferences, on topics associated with hazards, risks and crises. The development of professional and targeted materials associated with outreach is a critical element of group initiatives, and activities include:

- Health promotion
- Social mobilization
- Community engagement

Educational tools must be created and tailored to

specific risk and crisis agendas. This is not a one-size-fits-all activity, as all regional risks are unique, and accurate and timely content associated with specific risks must be promptly developed and available for dissemination. The EAC Secretariat must provide for the development of educational materials alongside the development of key messages and target audiences. Educational materials must be accessible to target audiences and available in a variety of formats and languages, strategically distributed as appropriate. Educational information and materials should also be available on dedicated websites and through social media postings.

Ongoing situational analysis will inform the content of evolving educational materials, geographical distribution targets, and necessary updates. Print materials should be made available as widely as possible within target zones, leveraging community leadership and opinion leaders to enhance trust and distribution. The EAC Secretariat will work with and through Partner State agencies to reach targeted communities.

11.9 Risk communication training of EAC Experts

While RCC officers shall serve as the primary liaisons for the media, and technical issues related to hazards, relevant experts within the EAC Secretariat shall also be required to communicate information about risks and crises. The effective delivery of messages depends largely on the communications skills of this expert. Therefore, the EAC Secretariat shall invest in the professional training of selected experts in risk and crisis communication on a regular basis.

11.10 Developing key messages

Risk and crisis communications are only as effective as the quality of the content they carry with them. The regional RCC strategy calls for the contribution and involvement of professional communicators to develop effective messages and build capacity for risk and crisis communications message creation within the EAC. Training conducted by professional communicators will support the development of skilled staff and, by extension, quality RCC messages targeted at appropriate audiences.

11.11 Rumour management

Rumours are defined as unsubstantiated information transmitted from one person to others. They are often plausible, associated with news and information available to the public, and they often spread widely. The regional RCC strategy calls for training and capacity building in skills associated with rumour management.

These include:

- Ongoing maintenance of a designated online and social media presence;
- Development of social media monitoring and response capabilities; and
- Continuing activities to build and maintain trust within communities.

12.0 EAC roles and responsibilities

12.1 EAC Secretariat

The EAC Secretariat shall oversee overall coordination of the implementation of the EAC RCC Strategy. With this in mind, the EAC Secretariat shall enhance the capacity and competence of risk and crisis communications through financial support and professional trainings. The EAC shall put in place sufficient human resources to conduct professional, sustained, and ongoing risk communications.

The EAC Secretariat will undertake the following RCC activities:

- Continuously monitor and respond to potential hazards and related risks which are relevant for more than one Partner State;
- Collect and analyse information associated with potential hazards and risks from Partner States, EAC organs and other international agencies, and disseminate it in alignment with the One Health approach;
- Disseminate information about risks to relevant stakeholders through RCC processes to be developed in alignment with international standards;
- Engage regional media to disseminate information about potential risks;
- Liaise with regional and international experts through regular meetings and teleconferences;
- Support Partner States in disseminating ongoing information about potential cross-border risks and hazards;
- Support Partner States through capacity building to support the development of robust risk and crisis communications mechanisms and well-trained risk and crisis communications experts; and
- Support Partner States in risk and crisis communications in emergency situations on request.

12.2 EAC organs and institutions

In addition to working closely with regional preparedness and response entities and the EAC Secretariat, EAC organs and institutions will support risk and crisis communications targeted at their stakeholders

and the communities they serve. These communications shall be in alignment with the regional RCC strategy.

12.3 Ministries responsible for EAC Affairs (MEACA)

The mandate of the MEACA is to coordinate the implementation of EAC policies and programmes within the Partner States. The MEACA also serve to link the Secretariat and the Partner States. MEACA will therefore play a vital role during collecting, sharing and dissemination of information in both 'peace time and crisis time' for both the EAC Secretariat and National level. Thus, the MEACA will be key partners in while implementing strategic risk and crisis communications efforts targeted at stakeholders in their respective Partner states.

12.4 Partner States

The successful implementation of the strategy depends upon consistent and collaborative communications between the EAC Secretariat and Partner States.

Partner States shall promptly notify the EAC Secretariat about hazards, risks, emergencies or outbreaks within their borders that have the potential for spread to other Partner States. Relevant Partner States ministries shall exchange information and/or organise joint meetings to discuss prevention and mitigation measures in case of cross-border or trans-boundary risks or threats. The EAC Secretariat shall be available to coordinate such meetings.

12.5 RCC staffing roles and responsibilities

During times of crisis, the EAC Secretariat is expected to increase human and financial resources to staff to perform risk and crisis communications tasks associated with the EAC crisis management structure as articulated in the EAC Contingency Plan (Chapter 12.2). The crisis management structure in the EAC Contingency Plan calls for the creation of a Regional Risk/Crisis Communications Team to provide continuous, coordinated, and culturally appropriate risk and crisis communications. The EAC RCC team shall include RCC staff from the Partner States with the following roles and responsibilities and cooperate closely with RCC specialists from other regional and international organisations:

Communications command and control

- Directs the release of public information
- Coordinates with stakeholders and partners
- Knows incident-specific policy, science and situation

Content and material development

- Prepares key messages
- Collaborates with technical experts to create situation-specific material
- Tests messages to ensure situational and cultural appropriateness and relevance

Media response

- Liaises with the triage response team
- Supports the spokesperson
- Develops and distributes media materials
- Monitors print, broadcast, and social media
- Collaborates with the crisis management team

Public information

- Manages hotlines, websites, and social media accounts
- Is trained in online engagement and rumour management

Partner and stakeholder information

- Manages pre-arranged information agreements between Partner States and external response stakeholders
- Solicits feedback and monitors EAC preparedness and response systems
- Organizes official meetings between RCC stakeholders

12.6 EAC risk and crisis communication training

Quality training is a key element of ensuring that risk and crisis communications are conducted efficiently and effectively across Partner States. The One Health approach must be integrated into risk and crisis communications lesson plans and curriculum materials. The EAC Secretariat shall designate appropriate funding and resources to train risk and crisis communicators in the following areas:

- Risk and crisis communication training (including development of press releases)
- Spokesperson training and orientation
- Message development
- Community engagement
- Social media and online reputation management
- Rumour management

12.7 Required RCC resources

This section gives a rough overview on resources necessary for establishing risk and crisis communi-

cation at the regional level in the EAC. Detailed information on the necessary operational steps for the regional RCC strategy is provided in **Annex IV**.

- Professional staff
- Infrastructure, including office equipment and supplies, and IT support
- Regular training and skill building
- Media coverage monitoring and tracking system
- Public notification systems (SMS, loudspeakers, etc.)
- Dedicated websites and skilled and accessible IT maintenance personnel
- Access to video-equipped conference room for press briefings
- Telephone hotlines
- Dedicated social media accounts, with ongoing monitoring and engagement
- Dedicated email accounts with the ability to send and receive mail, with ongoing monitoring and engagement
- Forms and tools for evaluating and documenting success

13.0 Effective implementation of the regional RCC strategy

Priority area: Advocate for risk and crisis communication to become a priority across Partner States, with a strong institutional basis for implementation.

Strategic action: Provide a framework for RCC collaboration and coordination among EAC Partner States:

- Establish and operationalize a RCC unit at the EAC Secretariat;
- Develop a roadmap for implementation; and
- Assist Partner States to develop sub-regional Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and/or adapt them to regional SOPs including MoUs for cross-border RCC initiatives.

Strategic action: Support the integration of RCC into EAC Partner States policies, plans, and programmes:

- Mobilize resources and coordinate integration activities;
- Assist in the harmonization of RCC strategies across all EAC Partner States; and
- Align institutional structures between the EAC Secretariat and Partner States to accommodate RCC and avoid duplication of effort.

Strategic action: Support the development of RCC capacity in the EAC Region:

- Establish a regional RCC Center of Excellence for RCC research and training development;
- Promote the use of modern technology, including websites, SMS, and social media;
- Create a network of relevant RCC stakeholders;
- Ensure the involvement of community and traditional and other opinion leaders;
- Develop an RCC capacity development plan for the EAC region.

Priority area: Reduce risk through ongoing RCC initiatives in the EAC:

Strategic Action: Communicate information about risks and hazards at all times:

- Nurture relationships with regional media;
- Conduct regular EAC RCC press briefings; and
- Develop and monitor interactive social media presence for EAC RCC.

14.0 Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

A robust M&E framework supports the tracking and performance of specific activities and sets benchmarks for the assessment of results. M&E processes identify actions taken by different stakeholders and determine ways to improve mechanisms and results. Through performance indicators, the EAC Secretariat and Partner States will be able to track progress and systematically determine the quality of risk and crisis communications activities. The EAC shall establish and maintain a review framework to continually assess the effectiveness and performance of the regional RCC strategy.

The monitoring and evaluation framework will track the progress of the stated strategy objectives.

The EAC Secretariat shall establish a monitoring framework to define criteria for prioritization, estab-

lish targets for key performance indicators and track specific outputs from EAC RCC initiatives. The regional RCC Strategy M&E framework shall be based on the application of SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, results-focused, and time-specific) evaluation processes, using the following benchmarks:

- Audience reach
- Quality and effectiveness
- Uptake and use
- Indicators by channel (publications, websites, social media, etc.)

The attached project-planning matrix (**Annex IV**) identifies specific activities associated with the EAC strategy and its evaluation process. For purposes of this document, the definitions of each M&E component are as follows:

- *Output indicators:*
 - *Accurate and timely risk and crisis communications projects*
 - *Appropriate and well-coordinated communications between the EAC Secretariat and Partner States*
 - *Means of verification:* The baseline and methodology guiding evaluators to assess and confirm the effectiveness of a specific activity.
 - *Outcome indicator:* Markers of change and/or progress on the results of the application of activities associated with the risk communications Strategy.
 - *Entity responsible:* Assignment of activity to an individual stakeholder or group. The assignment of responsibilities shall be decided at the outset.

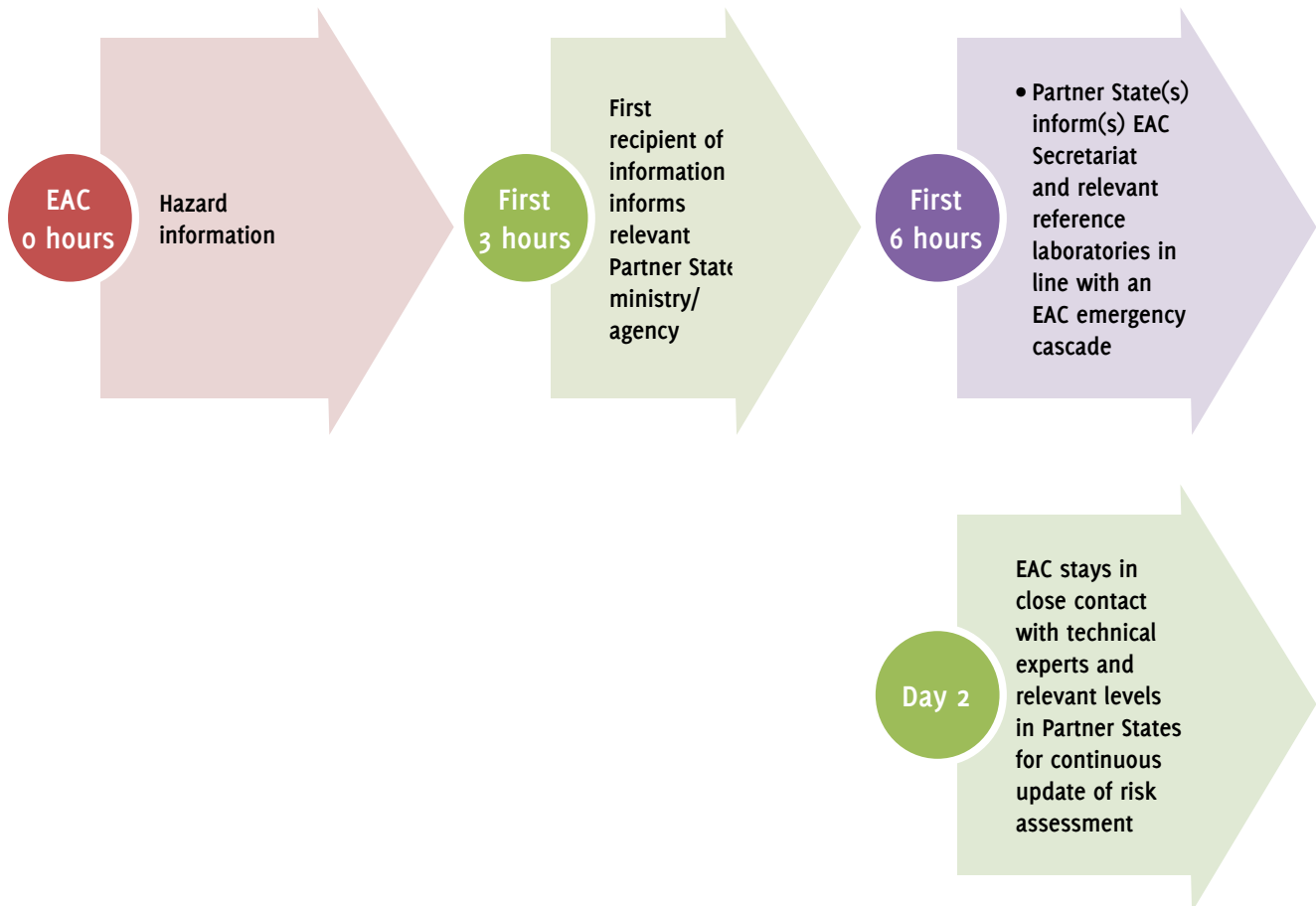
Overarching assumptions associated with M&E include:

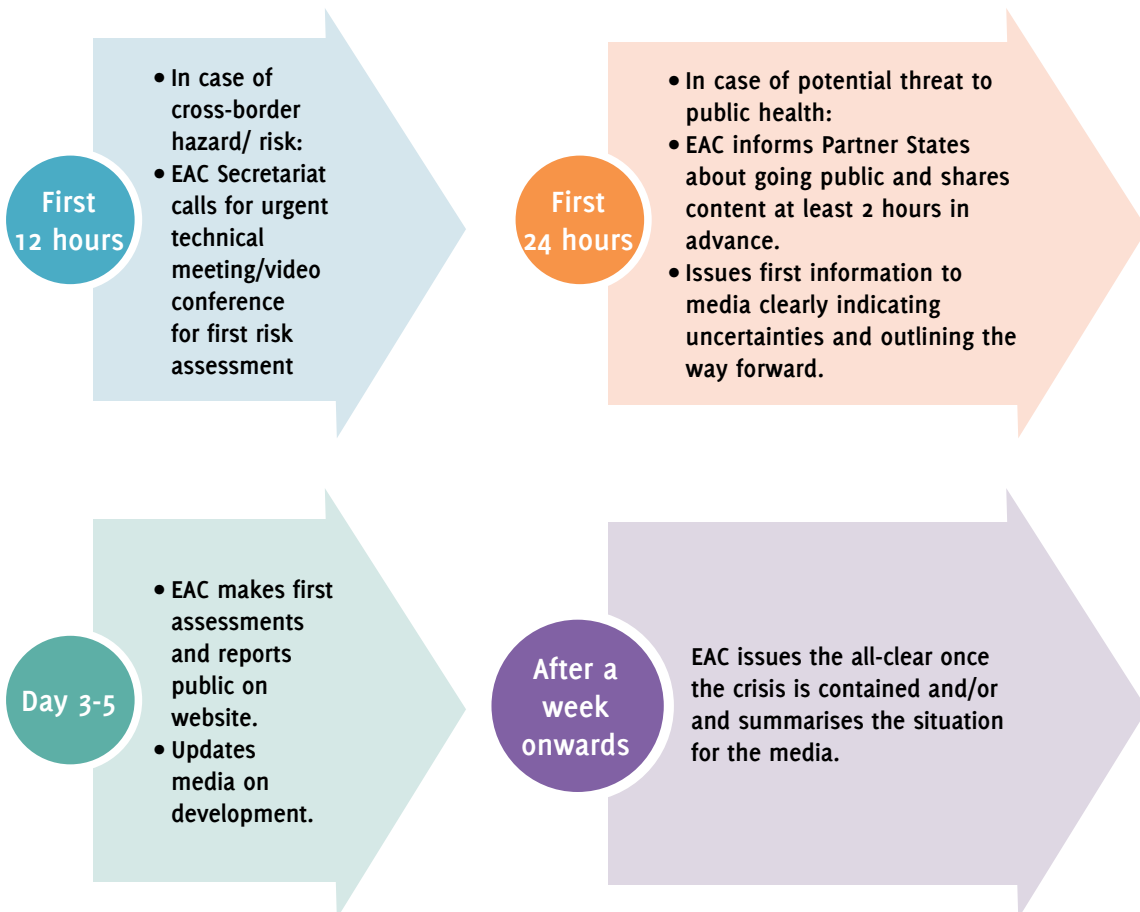
- Coordination of Partner States must exist or take place for the strategy to be successful;
- Resources allocated to RCC are sufficient to appropriately provide for personnel, training, and associated RCC activities as described in the RCC Strategy; and
- Indicators shall be independent, factual, plausible, and objectively verifiable.

Annex I: A possible timeline for crisis communication/an EAC emergency cascade:

0 hours	First 3 hours	First 6 hours	First 12 hours	First 24 hours	Day 2	Day 3-5
Hazard information	<p>First recipient of information informs relevant Partner State ministry/ agency</p> <p>Partner State(s) EAC Secretariat and relevant reference laboratories in line with an EAC emergency cascade</p>	<p>In case of cross-border hazard/ risk:</p> <p>EAC Secretariat calls for urgent technical meeting/video conference for first risk assessment</p>	<p>In case of potential threat to public health:</p> <p>EAC informs Partner States about going public and shares content at least 2 hours in advance.</p> <p>Issues first information to media clearly indicating uncertainties and outlining the way forward.</p>	<p>EAC stays in close contact with technical experts and relevant levels in Partner States for continuous update of risk assessment</p> <p>EAC issues more detailed media update, calls press conference, establishes hotline or utilizes other suitable "channels", as necessary</p>	<p>EAC makes first assessments and reports public on website.</p> <p>Updates media on development.</p> <p>Drafts FAQs to answer most urgent questions of consumers in a standardized manner and with "One Voice".</p>	<p>EAC issues the all-clear once the crisis is contained and/or and summarises the situation for the media.</p>
Hazard information from media						
Hazard information from the ground						
Hazard information from other sources						

A possible timeline for crisis communication/an EAC emergency cascade:





Annex II: Operationalisation of the EAC Risk and Crisis Communication Strategy (Short-Term 2019-2020)

Timeline of EAC RCC Strategy Implementation -- Short-term (2019-2020)

Start Date:

TBD

Short-term 2019-2020		Responsibility	Budget US \$
Program activities			
Create RCC structure	Establish the RCC function in the EAC Secretariat structure		
Gather information	Develop framework for information collection and dissemination	EAC Secretariat, Partner States	
Foundational Staffing	Recruit RCC Unit Leader	Evaluate	
Support Staffing	Develop RCC expert database	Evaluate/add RCC exp	
Build relationships	Liaise with stakeholders	Evaluate and revise as necessary	
Internal communication	Establish, maintain and use a mechanism for data sharing within EAC and between EAC and Partner States		
	Analyze and summarize RCC information to share with select sta	Review processes and content	
	Establish a risk/hazard monitoring function	Review and update	
Media communication	Create and maintain media distribution list	Conduct media info sessions	
Online presence	Establish a regional website, with interactive desig	Expand online presence	
Preparedness	Monitor trends in risk	Collaborate with Partner State RCC teams	
Materials development	Establish parameters for response activation	Coordinate skills	
Distribution channels	Develop standardized materials associated with identified ri	Monitor and update as necessary	
Social media outreach	Identify potential communications channels	Consistently monitor and respond	
	Initiate social media strategy		
Test	Test the strength and design of RCC functionality and relationships annually	EAC Secretariat, Partner States	

Annex III: Operationalisation of the EAC Risk and Crisis Communication Strategy (Mid-Term 2021-2022)

Timeline of EAC RCC Strategy Implementation -- Mid-term (2021-2022)

Start Date: TBD

	Mid-term 2020-2022	Responsibility	Budget US \$
Program activities			
Integrate RCC structure	Further integrate RCC structure into EAC processes and regional emergency operations activities		
Gather information	Test and evaluate framework for information collection and dissemination	EAC Secretariat, Partner States	
Foundational Staffing	Evaluate RCC staffing	EAC Secretariat, Partner States	
Support Staffing	Review and update database	EAC Secretariat, Partner States	
Maintain relationships	Liaise with stakeholders		
Internal communication	Maintain, strengthen and use the mechanism for data sharing within EAC and between EAC and Partner States		
	Analyse and summarize information to share with select stakeho		
	Review and adapt processes and content		
	Test and strengthen risk/hazard monitoring fu		
	Evaluate functionality		
Media communication	Maintain and update media distribution list		
Online presence	Cultivate media contacts		
	Evaluate functionality and user experience	EAC Secretariat	
Preparedness	Maintain timely updates	EAC Secretariat, Partner States	
Materials development	Monitor trends in risk	EAC Secretariat	
Distribution channels	Review parameters for response activation		
Social media outreach	Update bank of RCC materials associated with identified ri		
	Test audience acceptance rate		
	Incorporate and improve		
	Review and update communications channel		
	Update and strengthen		
	Monitor and revise as necessary		
	Increase social media preser		
	Ensure alignment with website and other outreach		
	Consistently monitor and respond		
	Test the strength and design of RCC functionality and relationships and revise as necessary		
Test		EAC Secretariat, Partner States	

Annex IV: Operationalisation of the EAC Risk and Crisis Communication Strategy (Long-Term 2023-2024)

Timeline of EAC RCC Strategy Implementation -- Long-term (2023-2024)

Start Date: TBD

Program activities	Long-term 2023-2024	Responsibility	Budget US \$
Test RCC structure	Conduct test of RCC processes and materials development through a simulation exercise	EAC Secretariat, Partner States	
Gather information	Test and enhance framework for information collection and dissemination		
Foundational Staffing	Determine additional staffing needs	EAC Secretariat, Partner States	
Support Staffing	Cultivate RCC experts	EAC Secretariat, Partner States	
Maintain relationships	Liaise with stakeholders		
Internal communication	Test and strengthen and use the mechanism for data sharing within EAC and between EAC and Partner States		
	Analyse and summarize information to share with select stakeho		
	Test and strengthen risk/hazard monitoring fu		
Media communication	Maintain and update media distribution list		
Online presence	Maintain timely updates	EAC Secretariat	
Preparedness	Test monitoring process	EAC Secretariat, Partner States	
Materials development	Update bank of RCC materials associated with identified ri	EAC Secretariat	
Distribution channels	Review and update communications channels	EAC Secretariat	
Social media outreach	Increase social media preser	EAC Secretariat	
Test	Ensure that RCC is included in simulation exercises	EAC Secretariat, Partner States	

Annex V: Proposed M&E Framework

Objective 1: Facilitate cross-border risk-related information exchange and knowledge sharing among Partner States and the EAC Secretariat;						
Activity	Output Indicator	Means of verification	Outcome Indicator	Means of verification	Person Responsible	
Advocacy for RCC: Launch the Strategy	Launch event	Report	High level support for RCC	Calendar of activities with RCC	EAC Secretariat	
Sensitise the EAC Secretariat on the RCC strategy	Number of staff sensitized	Report	Number of staff incorporating RCC in their activities	Calendar of activities with RCC	EAC Secretariat	
Hold orientation meetings for EAC Partner States about the Strategy and SOPs	Number of departments oriented	Report	Number of departments incorporating RCC in their activities	Calendar of activities with RCC	EAC Secretariat	
Hold stakeholder meetings within the Partner States	Number of Partner States with RCC meetings	Report	Number of Partner States aligning RCC with the Regional strategy	Partner States RCC strategies aligned to the Regional strategy	EAC Secretariat	
Capacity building: Train EAC Staff on RCC	Number of staff trained	Report	Number of staff able to implement RCC	RCC institutionalised and implemented at EAC Secretariat	EAC Secretariat	
Develop forums for information exchange						
RCC regional experts network (scientists, technical experts, laboratory experts); liaise with existing networks (Public Health Laboratory Network; EAIDSNet) and selected institutions (East African Health Research Community, Eastern, Central, Southern Africa Health Community)	No of networks established	Reports Membership	Regular information exchange	Reports	EAC Secretariat	

Proposed M&E Framework

Objective 2: Clarify the relationship between the EAC Secretariat and Partner States in the context of risk and crisis communications					
Assist to adapt regional and national strategies	Number of Partner States with aligned RCC strategies	Aligned RCC Strategies	Information exchange on RCC in the region	Reports Activities executed	EAC Secretariat and Partner States
Orient staff on Strategy, guidelines, SOPs and protocols	Number of staff oriented	Report	Number of staff applying RCC concepts	Reports	EAC Secretariat and Partner States
Monitor if guidelines, SOPs and protocols are being observed	Monitoring of RCC	Monitoring reports			Monitoring of RCC
Objective 3: Prevent harm, minimize risks, and respond effectively to risks and crises within the EAC region					
Monitor relevant sources with the objective of detecting hazards and potential risks early	Monitoring of RCC	Monitoring reports			
Develop key messages	Number of Messages developed No of Public Health emergency issues addressed	Reports	Number of risk https://www.ippmedia.com/en/news/deluge-disease-outbreaks-haunt-eac-region s and emergency episodes addressed	Reports	EAC Secretariat and Partner States
Continuously disseminate relevant information to defined target groups according to their needs	Number of Press releases issued	Press releases	Number of media houses covering the events	Media reports	EAC Secretariat and Partner States
Objective 4: Support the delivery of timely, accurate and helpful information to the public, partners, media and other stakeholders at all times, in an effort to build awareness and support people at risk in making informed decisions about their health, safety, and security.					
Engage the media	Number of journalists engaged	Reports	Number of media reports	Media reports	EAC Secretariat
Involve and engage stakeholders	Number of stakeholders engaged	Reports	Contributions from stakeholders during RCC implementation	Reports	EAC Secretariat

Annex VI: Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

- 1. How to generate and gain approval for a press release**
- 2. How to develop key messages**
- 3. How to disseminate continuous information on hazards**
- 4. How to manage rumours**
- 5. How to engage and involve stakeholders**

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