

# Guidance for Effective Local Communication Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)



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Communication for Development



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# INTRODUCTION

**As communicators how can we respond effectively to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) epidemic? How can we support our communities to cope and protect themselves? This is the challenge facing us all.**

This guide aims to provide some support in planning and delivering effective communications on the local level. It is for us all – the small community organisations as well as the larger NGOs, faith-based leaders and groups as well as media actors, officials and a wide range of other people who in varied walks of life are 'communicators'.

In the face of this global pandemic we need to work together, on the international as well as the local level to save lives and build our communities' resilience to cope. This pandemic will end, but it will be a hard road we travel.

To support our communication there are a range of initiatives and organisations producing resources, and in this guide, we aim to highlight some of the best of these, and also to share other trusted sources where more resources and information can be found.

This is mainly in English initially, but we want to work with others to build up the body of support guidance and resources in many other languages. Some initial mapping of these in Arabic, Spanish and French can be found at the end of this guide.

We know that effective communication needs to be thought through and contextual and in this guide we want to explore how this is best done strategically, using the communication for

development strategic cycle of research, design, implementation and reflection.

There is no time in this emergency for weak communication. What we produce needs to be clear and impactful from the start, and that requires good planning.

# KNOWING AND COMMUNICATING THE FACTS ABOUT CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Misinformation and rumour will kill people, so its imperative that as communicators we use trusted sources for our information and check and recheck new information.

With today's technology mercifully we can quickly search and find relevant information online, the challenge is ensuring that this is the correct and accurate information. There is now a plethora of sources and voices online that can be bewildering, and so we want to highlight the ones we believe are the best sources for us as communicators around the world.



The key international sources of information on the pandemic is the World Health Organisation, and other UN agencies such as UNICEF. There are also a set of international and national organisation that are respected authorities in health promotion, these include Johns Hopkins University and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the USA, and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. The national health services of various countries are also good online sources for information and resources, for example Public Health England.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> **World Health Organisation (WHO):** the primary global source for information on Coronavirus (COVID-19). <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019> Coronavirus Advice for the Public: <https://www.who.int/es/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public> / **Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center (JHU):** A resource portal to help advance the understanding of

the virus, inform the public, and brief policymakers in order to guide a response, improve care, and save lives. <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/> **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):** major portal for coronavirus information and resources. US focused but applicable information. [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html?CDC\\_AA\\_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavi](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fcoronavi)

By accessing these sources, as a complement to national information that is being produced by governments and trusted organisations, we as communicators are arming ourselves with the facts.

These are not easy facts – there is a complexity of medical information and an ever-changing situation as this new disease is gradually becoming more understood. It is a very new disease, only arising in December 2019, and in the scramble to research vaccines and testing there is a situation of rapid learning and tension in the medical realm – and this is impacting on people.

Such medical challenges mean policymakers have been struggling to make important decisions – about issues such as when to bring in a 'lockdown' and how quickly to respond to the emergency.

For ordinary people this sense of the unknown is also alarming and contributes to fears and panic.

In this context effective communication is needed to clearly and calmly present the facts and to allay people's fears as much as possible. This is particularly true for children, who need comforting, and for vulnerable groups such as the elderly.

## THE PANDEMIC'S TIMELINE AND COMMUNICATION PHASES

Everyone around the world is part of this situation and we all need good communication about what the disease is and how it will progress. Communicating about how it will end and how our communities will overcome it is essential for morale.

The scientists' epidemiology knowledge about how pandemics work, plus the progression of Coronavirus from its rise in China to its flourishing in Korea, Italy, Spain and UK and US and moving forward to all continents – is showing that it has a lifespan and timeline. Effective communication needs to track this timeline in each country; from the stage of awaiting and

preparation, to the stage of the disease starting, then its surge with massive numbers of infections and death rates, and then its decline and finally its ends.

No-one yet knows the full details of this timing but as communicators we know that these are stages that each require specific types of communication.

Stage 1 - Awaiting: For places awaiting the first signs of the pandemic authorities and citizens should be preparing, and the communication need is for early preventative awareness-raising; because early prevention actions such as social distancing are being proved to be massively important in 'flattening the curve' of infection – meaning a society

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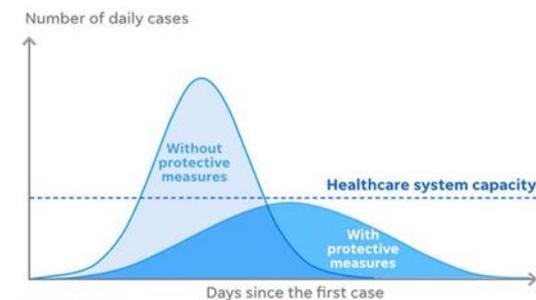
[s%2Findex.html](#) / **Public Health England (PHE)**: Information for the public on the outbreak of coronavirus and information about the virus and its symptoms. UK

focused but applicable information. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

working together to halt the rapid progress of the pandemic.

### Flattening the curve

Mitigation efforts can help to reduce the number of daily cases and to reduce the pressure on the healthcare system



SOURCE: CDC

Prevention methods include 'social distancing', when everyone keeps at least 1-2 meters apart, so as not to infect or be infected - and in this way the spread of the disease is slowed. Slowing the disease is vital in order to help health services cope. So, the message is not just one of 'don't get infected' but its also about 'help your health service' and 'save lives'.

Stage 2 – Increase: When the disease is starting and there are a small but growing number of infections and some deaths the communication challenge is to engage people to take the situation seriously enough to participate in national mitigating protective measures like 'lockdowns,' when ordinary life is put on pause as the majority stay at home. For countries who have acted too slowly in bringing in these measures thus far the impact has been severe.

Now it is more understood what needs to happen and for countries such as those in Africa who have had more time to prepare it is hoped that the curve will be able to be flattened in a way that was not possible in Europe.

In this stage there is a combination of fear and disregard and a lot of misinformation. People need good communicators urgently here for public awareness and for mobilising around a collective message to act quickly and stay indoors.

Stage 3 – Surge: As the disease surges everyone is impacted, and as communicators we have a challenge here to act safely for our own security and also to be effective in helping others by communicating assurance and mutual aid, and even in the dark times optimism for an end to this phase.

The choice of communication channels at each stage is key, and will be explored later in the this guide, but it is clear that at a time of extreme social distancing, lockdown and crisis in delivering healthcare to a surging number of critically ill people it is vital that 'safe' communication practices are prioritised, and social media offers important options here.

Stage 4 - Decline: Infection rates have slowly started to fall in China and elsewhere after some months (this is a long crisis; we must be prepared) and it is universally hoped that gradually all countries will enter the final phase of the decline and end of the pandemic.

In this phase communication that reminds people of the need to stay vigilant in being safe will be important because a slacking off of social distancing could have the reverse effect of extending the pandemic in some places. We all need communication that helps us to stay strong, to maintain appropriate behaviours but at the same time to plan for 'normal' to return.

This pandemic is unprecedented in living memory around the world and the trauma of the situation cannot be underestimated. Mental health issues for everyone are a key concern, and as communicators we have added pressures to ensure we are effective in order to save lives and help people. For this is a communication crisis. Naturally it is a medical crisis at the core, but the response is a communication response – in the absence of medical cure or vaccine the medicine is our communication. Awareness-raising, encouraging,

mobilisation community mutual aid – these are all communication imperatives. We are needing to learn and apply the best practice of communication theories and approaches, and to build our collective capacity to be strong for our communities.

This is a significant pressure and we should explore ways to support one another, through networking with each other, building our capacity in emergency communication, and through sharing our work for instance. The range of initial resources that have been mapped for this

guide on the international level will soon be matched by an explosion of local and national content that we create – and we can help each other by sharing the best of this with each other communicators so that the expense and challenge of production in these challenging times can be lessened, and so we can be inspired unencouraged.

## WHERE COMMUNICATORS CAN ACCESS SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

There are a number of key organisations and initiatives that are focused on resourcing us as communicators; these include the Communication Initiative, Compass for SBCC, CDAC, C4D Network and others. These are mainly operating on

the international level to support communicators around the world. There are also many regional and national support initiatives that exist and which it is important to share knowledge about so communicators can access their support. This is an urgent need.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> **Communication Initiative (CI):** the main knowledge portal for research and resources in social and behaviour change communications. Key source for COVID-19 communication resources and strategy. <https://www.comminit.com/global/category/sites/global/> / **Compass:** Providing articles, tools, and project examples for social and behaviour change related to Coronavirus. <https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/trending-topics/covid-19-resources-social-and-behavior-change/> / **CDC:** Communication resources; including video, fact sheets, and posters and more. [Multi language] <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/communication-resources.html> / **Resources for Those Responding to COVID-19 (CDAC):** Providing latest guidance, messaging, advice and resources.

<http://www.cdacnetwork.org/i/20200316224410-9m4ud/> / **Covering COVID-19: Reports, Resources and Tools (GMFD):** <https://gfmd.info/reporting-on-covid-19-resources-and-tools/> / **SOS:** Short, imaged-based resources designed to support locations with weaker health systems; Infographic posters, PowerPoint presentations and videos [Multi language]. <https://pandemic.internationalosos.com/2019-ncov/ncov-education-and-communication/> / **European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control:** communication resources including leaflets, infographics, videos and FAQ. <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/novel-coronavirus-china> / **Rapid Response Toolbox for Coronavirus (Medical Mission Institute Wurzburg):** This is a large resource database with a new section for COVID-19, with many resources including for

Humanitarian organisations are now increasingly focusing on 'risk communication and community engagement (RCCE)' as part of their work, and as part of this they seek to support and engage a wide range of local influencers and communicators. Such organisations include the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), UNHCR, IOM and others. They are producing a range of resources for communicators in many languages as well as useful guidance for communicators.

Media support organisations are also focused on aiding communicators on all levels, from the community media sector to national broadcasters and owners. Media development organisations such as Internews, BBC Media Action and GMFD are mobilising to support local media and

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communicators. [\[Multi language\]  
https://www.medbox.org/toolbox/5E6EA419CA7A4](https://www.medbox.org/toolbox/5E6EA419CA7A4)

**3 The Role of Media in Containing COVID-19 and Saving Lives (IFRC, WHO, BBCMA, Internews):** 170 journalists from around the world attended the webinar and asked questions about how to avoid creating fear or stigmatizing affected people, dealing with rumours and disinformation, and communicating prevention measures. (Webinar recording). <https://internews.org/updates/webinar-role-media-covering-covid-19-outbreak>

**4 Factchecking - Initiative (International Coronavirus Fact-Checking Collaboration):** A [global collaboration of fact-checking organisations](https://knightcenter.utexas.edu/blog/00-21648-coronavirus-fact-checking-collaboration-brings-together-91-organizations-40-countries-) is working to disprove rumours about COVID-19., 90+ fact-checking organisations from 40 countries have joined the [CoronaVirusFacts Alliance](https://knightcenter.utexas.edu/blog/00-21648-coronavirus-fact-checking-collaboration-brings-together-91-organizations-40-countries-). <https://knightcenter.utexas.edu/blog/00-21648-coronavirus-fact-checking-collaboration-brings-together-91-organizations-40-countries-> **/Fact-**

other communicators and they are producing valuable resources and guidance.<sup>3</sup> There are also a range of organisations focusing on 'fact checking' and helping communicators combat dangerous rumours and misinformation.<sup>4</sup>

The head of WHO has called the conspiracy theories and inaccuracies spread via social media primarily around Coronavirus (COVID-19) an 'info-demic' that is undermining response.<sup>5</sup> A massive need in any community is to correct this misinformation and to give people confidence in what they are being told. Supporting our local media to be accurate is a vital part of response.

**Checking Tools (Poynters):** International Fact-Checking Network, you can see how misinformation circles the globe. Check out the [IFCN's #CoronaVirusFacts Alliance database](https://www.factcheck.org/) of 1,000+ fact-checks from more than 45 countries./ **Factchecking - MediaWise Fact Checkers (Poynter):** MediaWise's teen fact-checkers are debunking viral social media posts and teaching as they go. Follow [MediaWise on Instagram](https://www.mediawise.org/) to debunk hoaxes or conspiracies online. <https://www.poynter.org/mediawise/>

<sup>5</sup> WHO Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus : "People must have access to accurate information to protect themselves and others." He said misinformation around the new strain, 2019-nCoV, "causes confusion and spreads fear to the general public. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-51429400>

# KEY CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) COMMUNICATION MESSAGES

In confronting the pandemic every country has its own set of factors – with communities relating to communication in different ways according to their own contexts, traditions and norms. So in developing key messages around prevention and protection against Coronavirus it is important to balance local contextually understanding with the core health promotion contents.

The pandemic does present us all with a common set of health realities – we are all facing the same pandemic, so there are a set of common messages at the core of what we need to communicate.

This common base make sharing and accessing relevant resources and materials more applicable that is normally the case; however, it is still important that every message is contextually appropriate.

The key messages that every community anywhere in the world needs to receive are about prevention and protection.

Prevention includes messages about understanding the disease, in order to be able to then behave appropriately in the context of the disease – for instance how to capture a cough in a sleeve, and why to self-isolate if showing symptoms.

Handwashing messaging and information about changing norms such as handshaking or collective worship are central messages; and highly challenging.

Protection includes messages about both self-protection and the protection of health services and of others to ‘flatten the curve’ and reduce infections, radically reducing

death rates in the process. ‘Social distancing’ is the core concept here and the challenge is going to be to sustain people’s engagement in the continued need for it.



After weeks of ‘lockdown’ people will be needing very impactful communication to keep up their commitment to this essential strategy.

Other key messaging is about mobilising all of us to be of help to one another, to support those in isolation, and to find inventive ways to ensure basic needs of food and shelter are met for many neighbours; as the whole fabric of social interactions and structures temporarily change. With many households ‘self-isolating’ because of a sickness there is a pressing need for neighbourhood initiative to help isolated people to access food and necessary supplies such as medicines. These initiatives have been evident in countries that have started to bear the impact of the pandemic middle stages; the challenge as communicators is to find

effective ways to be a support in these contexts.

#viralkindness

**Hello!** if you are self-isolating, I can help.

My name is .....

I live locally at .....

My phone number is .....

If you are self-isolating due to COVID-19, I can help with:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Picking up shopping   | <input type="checkbox"/> Posting mail    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A friendly phone call | <input type="checkbox"/> Urgent supplies |

Just call or text me and I'll do my best to help you (for free!)

Coronavirus is contagious. Please take every precaution to ensure you are spreading only kindness. Avoid physical contact (2m distance). Wash your hands regularly. Items should be left on your doorstep.

Abbeyfield

via Becky Wass

An Example of a Mutual Aid Notice for Letterboxes in the Neighbourhood, UK

What will this mutual aid need look like in our communities and how in the context of 'social distancing' can people not fall

## HOW COMMUNICATORS CAN SUPPORT COMMUNITIES

There is a significant psychological need for effective communication in the context of collective trauma and of the likely situation of many families experiencing loss and grief. Communication that can ease this or provide support is necessary through creative communications and coordination; for example, the coordination of telephone support or counselling providing online.

<sup>6</sup> **Mental Health Considerations during COVID-19 Outbreak (WHO):**  
[https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af\\_10\\_](https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_10_)  
**Addressing Mental Health and Psychosocial Aspects of COVID-19 (IASC):**  
[https://www.communityengagementhub.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/03/MHPSS-COVID19-Briefing-Note-FINAL\\_24-February-2020.pdf](https://www.communityengagementhub.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/03/MHPSS-COVID19-Briefing-Note-FINAL_24-February-2020.pdf)

through the cracks and be forgotten. No one must be forgotten, it's an imperative that we support each other – and finding ways to communicate this need and this responding help is a communication challenge. We can learn from each other in this, for example learning from some of the ways that people are communicating already in 'locked down' communities – such as through volunteers coordination via Facebook WhatsApp and then dropping of notes at each neighbourhood home giving help options.

As communicators we have a role to play in helping our communities understand the options and to advise and support them in using the communication technologies.<sup>6</sup>

Children need to be comforted as well as occupied during weeks of 'lockdown' in many places. A great deal of entertainment and of teaching and home learning is now being practiced online, and this can be replicated wherever we are as the technologies are increasingly simple and accessible; for example, using zoom.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> **Zoom home conferencing:** Support during the COVID-19 pandemic.  
<https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/covid19.html>

Communicators are starting to be creative in the face of these situations and resources are being produced such as online books are being developed to be read with children to allay their fears about the pandemic such as the marvellous 'nurse dotty' book that has been made free to download by the author.<sup>8</sup>



'Dave the Dog is Worried About Coronavirus' – Example of a Children's Illustrated Book

People need support, comfort and connection. This is a major challenge for communicators and also an area of great potential innovation. With social media and other communication routes there will be ways that fit each community for keeping and building 'connection'. In the UK and elsewhere observers have noted the rise in mutual aid and community spirit, as neighbours help each other much more than was the case before the pandemic. Increased connection can arise when people are not rushing around in their daily

lives but rather when they are forced by circumstance to be still; in this there are new ways to find each other for example social media has produced an explosion of online events – from family gatherings to cyber-meals and quiz nights and fitness session and online classes.<sup>9</sup>

There are also the socio-economic impacts of reduced or lost incomes which in some communities will be incredibly hard. In this situation what is our role as communicators and how can we support our communities?

Communicating options for homebased income generation is one potential area, and one that international organisations need to prioritise as part of the humanitarian effort. With the gig economy and homeworking what are the options for people who have even the basic connection. And how can mobile connectivity be maintained and provided for communities where normally it is high cost and based on airtime cards. With so much necessity for digitally enabled communications for employment as well as knowledge and connection it is vital that mobile companies make connection freely available for this pandemic period<sup>10</sup>.

There are many different people that need support through this pandemic. Marginalised people and disabled people are particularly vulnerable, and refugee and displaced people urgently need humanitarian help, which includes considerable 'risk communication and community engagement'. It is almost inconceivable what the human need is at

<sup>8</sup> **Dave the Dog is Worried about Coronavirus (Nurse Dotty Books):**  
<https://c4d.org/nurse-dotty-books-dave-the-dog-is-worried-about-coronavirus>

<sup>9</sup> **Rise in digital community support amid coronavirus outbreak:**  
<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/rise-in-digital->

[community-support-amid-coronavirus-outbreak/ar-BB11gPJ0](https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/rise-in-digital-community-support-amid-coronavirus-outbreak/ar-BB11gPJ0)

<sup>10</sup> **How can the gig economy survive in times of COVID-19?**  
<https://www.cnbc.com/news/east-africa/2020/03/20/how-can-the-gig-economy-survive-in-times-of-covid-19/>

this time. We as communicators in these settings need urgent help and support to communicate the key messages of social distancing and good health WASH practices in spite of the conditions. What can be done to help in these situations?

## COMMUNICATION ROUTES, CHANNELS AND METHODS

When considering what are the most appropriate channels and routes to use for our communication it's not 'business as usual' and many of the usual channels are not longer appropriate. Social media<sup>11</sup> is in ascendancy in this context, but what else is usable?

Dialogue methods with group and community meetings is not viable or safe, and one-to-one communication can only be done safely at a two-meter distances if at all. Broadcasters may be suspended or running with minimal staffing and newspapers may be on pause.

National broadcasters are tending to be viewed as 'key workers' in countries which are already experiencing the pandemic, but local community broadcasters and

media may be in a more fragile and unsupported context.

However, where possible community media needs to be protected and resourced because it is a powerful route for community connection – for sharing vital health information, as well as updating people about the situation, and then building social connection and mutual aid.<sup>12</sup>

In the preparation and early phases of the pandemic in some countries the full range of edutainment and other formats of

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<sup>11</sup> **Resources for Social Media Communication & Tips for Using Social Media for COVID Response (IFRC):** Valuable brief guide on using social media; plus, much social media content and templates from IFRC. [[Multi language](#)]. <https://www.communityengagementhub.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/03/Tips-on-using-social-media-for-COVID-19-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> **Coronavirus Resources for Community Radio:** With coronavirus fears spreading, many community radio stations are scrambling to address the programming, news and volunteer needs they face. Here are resources gathered by US National Federation of Community Broadcasters. <https://nfcfb.org/coronavirus-resources-for-community-radio/>

communication for development are being used by communicators.

In many cases governments have been providing public service announcements via state broadcasters and in public spaces, and this needs to continue throughout the pandemic timeline in each country.

However local communicators also play a vital role in keeping communication flowing – whether it is for awareness raising, for community aid response or for morale lifting.

In the context of the pandemic there is now more chance for non-professional communicators to be more active and more heard. Music and audio such as podcasting are powerful routes that can continue to be of service as these can be produced from home in many ways.

Songs are being produced around the world for Coronavirus (COVID-19) awareness raising. In some places these have been done before lockdowns<sup>13</sup> as

part of initial awareness-raising productions, and in others it is individual



Media Against COVID

'creators' at home producing the songs; some of which may be for awareness raising and some are pure frustrated self-expression. Platforms such as Soundcloud make sharing audio – whether voice or music – accessible to everybody.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> **Choir Against Coronavirus:** The Ndlovu Youth Choir in South Africa is making waves on social media with a song preaching preventive measures for coronavirus. <https://c4d.org/bbc-african-artists-are-creating-catchy-songs-to-promote-awareness-about-coronavirus>

<sup>14</sup> **Audio Podcasts - on Coronavirus and COVID-19 (SoundCloud):** podcasts focusing on the disease are mainly under 'Coronavirus' rather than COVID-19, with more music under COVID. 500+ uploads of content. [Multi language] <https://soundcloud.com/search?q=coron>

[avirus / Audio podcast - Voices from the coronavirus pandemic, in Italy, New York, and the high seas \(Stat News, Mar 12, 2020\):](#) <https://soundcloud.com/readout-loud/episode-102-voices-from-the-coronavirus-pandemic-in-italy-new-york-and-the-high-seas> / **Music – COVID-19 Freestyle (SoundCloud):** is the site for a huge amount of original content (rap freestyle and other styles) produced by home musicians in many languages. It's not strictly public education, it is primarily self-expression. 500+ uploads of content. [Multi language] <https://soundcloud.com/search?q=covid>

# LEARNING AND PLANNING FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

## So, in summary, what do we need to do to be effective communicators in this pandemic?

As communicators we need to do three main things: We need to be communicating well about what Coronavirus (COVID-19) is and how everybody needs to take precautions not to contract the disease – this is public health communication. We need to be communicating to help people to rapidly adapt to new ways of behaving in the context of the pandemic; specifically, through social distancing, and self-isolation- this is social and behaviour change (SBCC) communication. We need to be communicating to help people to look after each other, supporting those who are in need and acting together safely for the good of the community – this is community mobilising communication. We need to be helping our media to be more

informed and accurate in the context of Coronavirus (COVID-19), because the media (both traditional media and social media) are a powerful communication route; and essential for countering misinformation and for lessening fear – this is media development. In some context we may also be needing to advocate toward authority for essential services and actions to be taken if they are not being delivered rapidly enough is a major task, but where necessary it vital.

So being well informed about these approaches is really important as it will aid our effectiveness.<sup>15</sup> There are a range of online trainings available to build-up this knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> **Key C4D Theories & Frameworks:** There are a number of useful theories and frameworks that can help us in our planning. Diffusion of Innovations: Good for thinking through how change can happen, such as changing habits of socialising - to practice 'social distancing'. Thinking about who can be influential 'early adopters', and then who may be early followers, and quickly how to build majority following and how to understand and respond to 'resistors'. Socio-Ecological Model (The 'Onion'): Use the 'SEM' to be clear about who you need to reach and what communication routes work best to reach them, also good for identifying influencers in your community. Social Norms Theory:

Think about embedded expectations and beliefs; thinking through incentives for change as well as 'sanctions' or pressures, such as legal sanctions and social sanctions. Audience Theories: Thinking about varied approaches and strategies to reach and engage different age groups and different groups in society, through social marketing methods such as 'segmentation,' and through frameworks such as the Lifecycle Approach.

<sup>16</sup> <https://c4d.org/c4d-learning>

e.g. **Self-study module: Communication is Aid** (CDAC and the Humanitarian Leadership Academy)  
[https://c4d.org/learning\\_opp/self-study-](https://c4d.org/learning_opp/self-study-)

How can we do this? We can continually resource ourselves to be effective in meeting these needs by learning from what others have done and experienced. As the pandemic has developed important lessons are being learnt and passed on, for example: China, which first experienced this new disease Coronavirus (COVID-19), has provided medical and other lessons to other countries such as Italy where the pandemic surged; Italy in turn has provided valuable lessons to other countries as they have started to be severely impacted by the pandemic. Lessons about effective communication are every bit as important as lessons about the medical side of the pandemic, because it is rapidly changing behaviour that will lessen the infections; and this is vital while the world works towards a vaccine that is not yet fully

developed. We can learn from the resources that have been produced about powerful communication strategies and approaches in this Coronavirus (COVID-19) context and risk/emergency communication more broadly. We can learn from the actions and materials that other communicators have been producing, learning what works well as is having good results and what communication is less relevant in this context. Consider and adapt these lessons for your own context, as every place is different, but many lessons will be relevant to your situation.

# COMMUNICATION PLANNING USING THE STRATEGIC CYCLE

A clear and robust communication for development (C4D) plan follows the steps of a strategy communication cycle is the best way to plan, as it is ensuring that essential aspects of the plan are not missed out. There are six key areas; these are research, message development, design options, production, dissemination, and reflection.

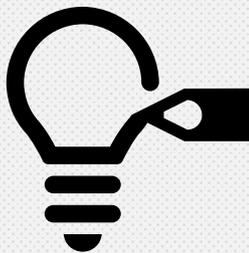
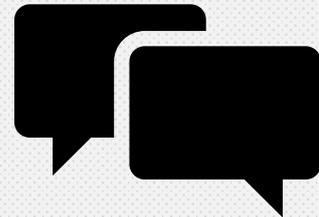


- **Research:**

It is essential to have an accurate understanding about your context, who are the people you need to reach, what is the key information that people need to know, and what and how are people receiving media and other communication generally in their daily lives.

- **Message development:**

The research informs us about the context, so that we can then be clear about the right messages that are important to deliver. Some messages are mainly factual – for example the public health messages about what Coronavirus (COVID-19) is, what the symptoms are and how people need to protect themselves from transmission – while other messages may be more about behaviour and attitudes and beliefs, and these 'social norms' messages require hard thought to develop well.

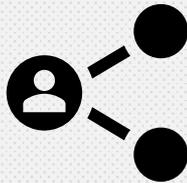
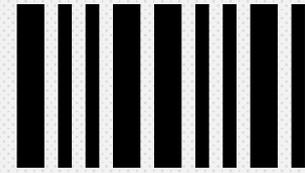


- **Design options:**

Knowing what messages are needed and what communication routes different people use informs us about the best routes for reaching them; communication may be 'mass' i.e. directed at everyone, as well as 'midi and micro' and 'targeted' to specific target groups. Options are broad – covering print and broadcast radio and TV, digital and public space communication - however interpersonal communications are discouraged in this context of Coronavirus (COVID-19) due to the need for social distancing.

- **Production:**

Producing impactful communications in this time of emergency is challenging, particularly if many businesses such as printers and recording studios may be closing, however there are ways to produce the necessary audio and visual and text content, particularly using some of the newer online tools.



- **Dissemination**

Getting the right message out to the right people using the right communication routes is the core challenge, and in a time of crisis this may not be as easy as it normally is due to disruption of systems such as newspaper production and sales. It is important to plan for effective dissemination of your communications, in ways that do not leave out segments of people; older people for example who may not have access to social media or rural communities who rely on radio and word of mouth.

- **Reflection:**

It is vital to be effective in our communications around COVID-19 response so monitoring and evaluating what we are doing is essential; what works well, what less so, what do people say they need and are we giving it to them? It is important to have feedback from people who we seek to reach with our communication in order to ensure our communication is being effective in combating Coronavirus (COVID-19) and helping communities to respond with resilience.



# CREDITS

This guidance has been produced by the C4D Network, a global network of communication professionals, and it is available for download on the C4D Network site ([www.c4d.org](http://www.c4d.org)). It is accompanying by a Mapping document providing links to a wide range of resources; also available for download from the site.

Both of these are available free to use by any individuals or institutions who are active in communication response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It is shared via Creative Commons license. Users are encouraged to disseminate this guidance and the mapping further to local partners and community actors.

The C4D Network would welcome feedback about this toolkit to help improve it, and users are also encouraged to share with us further resources and examples of communication action and materials (in any language), with the Network via the email [covid19response@c4d.org](mailto:covid19response@c4d.org).

These resources and case studies will be shared widely, including with partner organisations who are curating global libraries of relevant communication resources.

Thank you.

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