Choosing Communication Channels

Some messages will not be appropriate for every channel of communication. Messages should be created with consideration of audience needs and **intervention activity.**

Understanding the behaviors, knowledge, aspirations, and feelings of an audience can help identify messages and activities that resonate and motivate behavior change. It also informs the selection of approaches and delivery channels to which audiences are more likely to respond for the desired changes to occur.

What Is a Communication Channel?

A communication channel is a medium or method used to deliver a message to the intended audience. A variety of communication channels exist, and examples include:
- **Mass media,** such as television, radio (including community radio) and newspapers
- **Community engagement**, also known as social mobilization with two-way participation that fosters community ownership, such as community dialogues, listening groups or action planning
- **Print media**, such as posters, flyers and leaflets
- **Social and digital media,** such as mobile phones, applications and social media
- **Inter-Personal Communication**, such as door-to-door visits, phone lines and discussion groups

Different channels are appropriate for different audiences, and the choice of channel will depend on the audience being targeted, the messages being delivered and the context of the emergency. Using a variety of channels or a channel mix, is recommended so that messages can be reinforced through multiple sources.

Tool: Choosing the Appropriate Communication Channel

Channel	In an outbreak context, this channel is most appropriate for…
Community Engagement	- Engaging communities - Promoting discussion and reflection among communities about the issues or regarding the adoption of complex prevention practices (ex. changes to burial practices, mixing chlorine solutions) - Modeling behaviors - Communicating with low literacy and/or hard-to-reach audiences
Mass Media	- Raising awareness across audiences (informing and educating) - Modeling behaviors - Reducing stigma and taboos - Communicating with low literacy audiences - Obtaining wide regional and national reach - Rapid and/or frequent information sharing
Print Media	- Supporting other communication channels - Providing more detailed information on a particular topic that individuals can look through at home - Providing information about personal and confidential issues - Engaging with policy and decision makers

Social & Digital Media	- Obtaining a large reach (if Internet is widely available and accessible) - Promoting discussions through chat rooms or email exchanges - Providing information about personal and confidential issues
Interpersonal Communication	- Creating a two-way communication process with the audience - Engaging community members and creating community action plans - Promoting discussion, reflection and challenging dominant norms - Informing and educating (increase knowledge) - Imparting skills - Discussing sensitive topics