



Step - by - Step: Engaging Communities during COVID-19

Welcome!

Lessons learned from past outbreaks, such as Zika and Ebola demonstrate the need to ensure that communities own the emergency response, empower community feedback and participation, and advance strategies based on the strengths and needs of those affected.

This user-friendly guide will help advance meaningful community engagement to address the effects of COVID19 on the health and well-being of communities, and could be adapted for use in child protection, education, gender-based violence, or other programming needs. The guide provides step-by-step options for engaging key community change agents and groups remotely, and/or in combination with safe social distancing practice and protection. The contents are adapted from the Save the Children Field Guide, [How to Mobilize Communities for Health and Social Change¹](#), fostering community collective action to organize, explore, plan and act together for improved health at the individual, household, and community level. It can be used by program managers and field staff in governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and can be adapted to the country context and to the evolving COVID-19 situation.

Who are the actors?

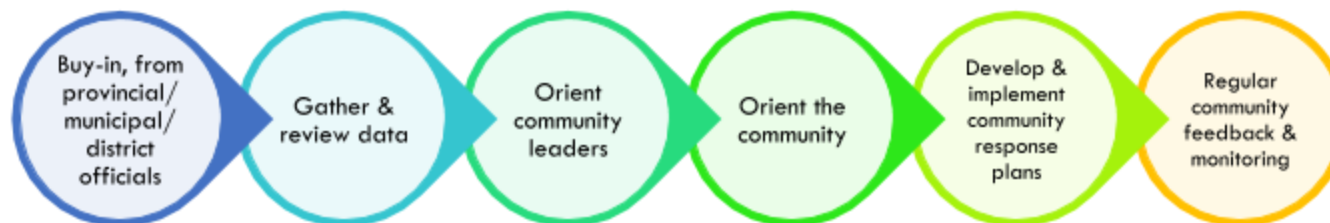
1. Program Team:	2. Mobilizing Officials:	3. Community Partners:	4. Broader Community:
Those working with the community through provincial or municipal leaders, to support implementing CE, for example members of an NGO.	Provincial, municipal or district officials who, during traditional CE, work closely with the community partners to drive CE; however, during the COVID19 emergency they may not be as available to lead this process. If this is the case, if possible, they should co-lead this process with the program team.	Existing community groups/ platforms that already carry out community engagement, preferably for COVID19, with communities, like Community Health Workers, Care Groups, and/or health, water, development, or other community committees. Whenever possible, also include membership or support from key trusted formal and traditional leaders and those that represent marginalized groups.	The community at a larger scale.

¹ How to Mobilize Communities for Health and Social Change, Health Communication Partnership, 2003.

Key Considerations:

1. **Representation and ownership by vulnerable and most affected:** it is important to ensure representation and ownership of this process by communities and different community groups, especially those who normally may not have a voice in their community, like women and youth, and those most affected by COVID19, like the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions. Ensure they are engaged in all activities with communities, as much as possible, and consider them when doing assessments, defining communication channels, and developing activities.
2. **Use remote technologies whenever possible:** because this form of CE does not encourage face-to-face engagement, it encourages using remote technologies. Therefore consider budgeting for and seeking subsidies for using radio, internet or cellular service, or other communications channels. When doing any activities face-to-face, follow recommended safety protocols
3. **Use two-way communication technologies:** when using remote technologies, use those that allow for two-way communication so that community members can ask questions, comment, share concerns and opinions.
4. **Training or experience in CE:** this approach implies that the mobilizing officials are trained on, or already have experience with CE. Otherwise, it will be important to carry out an online training of this process with mobilizing officials.
5. **Timing:** time to carry out the following process will depend on the program, expectation by leadership and communities, the scale and number of communities, and availability of team members to carry out this process with communities.
6. **Collecting Data:** there is a difference in collecting data in steps 2 and 5. In step 2, data collected is for the program team and the mobilizing officials to better understand the communities with which they are working, and key information on COVID19 for that community. In step 5 communities are making sense of the data collected in step 2, plus further assessment to inform the identification of their own issues in adopting COVID 19 preventive behaviors and how they will address them in their community response plans.
7. **Live document:** we will continually update and modify this document and the tools within due to the changing context and continued learnings. With that, we welcome you sharing your experiences in carrying out remote community engagement – using this document or other approaches, what you’ve learned, and any tools you would like to share to increase the exchange of information.

The overall process as laid out below can be modified according to the country context:



Step by Step Table:

Step	Purpose	How	Communication options	Tools
<p>Step 1: Obtain buy-in and support from provincial, municipal, and/or district officials</p>	<p>Identify and build a list of community leaders and information</p>	<p>1.1. Identify a list of municipal/district officials with which to meet</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Identify key officials. Because of the emergency situation, identify who is essential to enable engagement with community leaders in the quickest yet most appropriate manner Create phone tree of municipal, district, and ward officials, as well as leaders and key stakeholders, including faith-based leaders, CHWs, women’s group leaders, existing community groups. Continue to grow and curate this list Develop a schedule for reaching out to officials from provincial, down to district level 	<p>Gather contact information using phone or emails</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to set up and use a phone tree Phone tree samples of community leaders Sample Schedule for meeting with leaders
	<p>Engage government officials</p>	<p>[Carried out by program team]</p> <p>1.2. Meet with provincial / municipal / district officials to discuss how to engage communities for COVID 19 prevention, and to gain their buy in/support</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Explain and answer questions they may have on the remote CE objectives and process Confirm support and buy in from these leaders Ask officials to reach out to community leaders with you <p>[Carried out by program team]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In person if government allows, ensuring adherence to government and organizational safety protocols Telephone or video if meeting in person is not allowed or deemed too risky, and if officials have access to these technologies; use phone, WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype, Facebook Live, Instagram Live or other platforms most commonly used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talking points when meeting with municipal officials Talking points for officials when discussing with community leaders Contact list of community leaders and platforms Digital Platforms for Community Engagement tool Basic information on COVID19 Community Dialogues Safety Protocols

<p>Step 2: Gather and review data about the community for decision making</p>	<p>Identify barriers, facilitators to adopting preventive behaviors</p> <p>Determine digital technology options and who in communities uses them and where people are getting information</p>	<p>2.1 Collect existing data from government, I/NGO, other (RCCE) partners, and other sources on:</p> <p>COVID 19 knowledge, attitudes, practices Information on community perceptions, barriers and facilitators to adopting COVID prevention behaviors, and accessing health services Internet and phone usage data</p> <p>*Share information with leaders and communities to inform development of community response plans; this is also shared back with officials and partners</p> <p><i>[Carried out by program team with support of mobilizing officials]</i></p> <p>2.2 Collect and review data to better understand the communities and for decision-making. Identify:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trusted sources of information (e.g. CHW, MOH) • Preferred and most used communication channels (e.g. radio, social media, newspaper) • Which audiences are using which communication channels (e.g., women use CHW; youth use social media, men use radio etc.) <p><i>[Carried out by program team with support of mobilizing officials]</i></p>	<p>Information can be collected through online searches, email, phone calls to partners</p> <p>Information could be collected through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus group discussions via phone and/or video conferencing when feasible and if communities have access, using WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype, Facebook Live, Instagram Live • Key informant interviews via phone and/or video calls when feasible and if communities have access, using Zoom, Skype, Facebook Live, Instagram Live • Polls and surveys via WhatsApp group chats, Facebook chat groups, Facebook pages, Instagram, social media platforms, SMS, email, webpage • Call – in community radio shows, with questions aired, and respondents call in and answer or respond via SMS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool to learn about communities • Mobile penetration and internet usage data: World Bank, GSMA, Stat counter • READY RCCE Toolkit section on rapid assessment • Body Mapping Tool Dr. Fiona Zandt and Dr Suzanne Barrett • Digital Platforms for Community Engagement tool • Using SMS and IVR Surveys during COVID-19 (Breakthrough ACTION) • Review data for decision making using rapid needs assessment, HC3 emergency iKit tools
<p>Step 3: Orient community leaders and existing community</p>	<p>Make formal contact with community leaders to gain their support to work with communities</p>	<p>3.1 Orient community leaders</p> <p>a. Add to and finalize phone tree with contact information created in step 1 and include members from community groups and platforms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In person if government allows, ensuring adherence to government and organizational safety protocols • Telephone or video if meeting in person is not allowed or too risky, and if community leaders have access to these 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to set up and use a phone tree (AAUW) • Phone book and phone tree template • Meeting schedule/plan

<p>groups to engage communities remotely</p>	<p>Engage and partner with existing community groups and platforms to carry out remote CE together</p> <p>Collect community contact information to create discussion groups</p>	<p>b. Develop a plan and schedule for orienting community leaders and existing community groups</p> <p>c. Conduct orientation meeting with leaders to share data from Step 2, discuss collaborating with them and to link with existing community groups or platforms and activities for the COVID-19 response</p> <p><i>[Carried out by program team with support of mobilizing officials]</i></p> <p>3.2 Reach out to and partner with existing community groups to plan how to work together (e.g. CHW, Care Groups, health, water, development committees or other community platforms)</p> <p><i>[Carried out by program team supported by mobilizing officials, community leaders]</i></p>	<p>technologies; use phone, WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype, Facebook Live, Instagram Live or other platforms most commonly used</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive community radio, where program staff share information on the radio, with live questions and comments from leaders shared by calling in, SMS, or using social media • Informational videos, pre-recorded and shared through DVD's, online, or other means (note: will need to develop an option for community leaders to reach out with follow-up questions and comments) <p>Same as above, minus "informational videos"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for, talking points and sample agenda for meeting with Community Leaders • Basic information on COVID19 • Digital Platforms for Community Engagement tool • Toolkit for Community Radio stations (Internews) • Community Radio Toolkit (Radio Regen) • How to set up and use a phone tree (AAUW) • Phone book and phone tree template • Talking points for communicating with existing community groups/platforms • Basic information on COVID19
<p>Step 4: Orient community on remote CE process and COVID-19 basics</p>	<p>Share information on the remote CE objective and process and how to work with them to lead Covid 19 prevention</p> <p>Build trust and listen to concerns shared by communities</p>	<p>4.1 Plan to orient broader communities</p> <p>a. Plan a series of community orientation meetings through various communication channels to reach as many community members as possible</p> <p>b. Community leaders reach out to community to request they participate in at least one orientation meeting</p> <p><i>[Carried out by mobilizing officials with Community Partners and support from program team]</i></p> <p>4.2 Orient broader community on planned remote CE activities and COVID-19 basics, reaching as many people and audience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-person if government allows, ensuring adherence to government and organizational safety protocols • Telephone and/or WhatsApp groups if meeting in person is not allowed • Interactive community radio, community leaders can invite community members to save the date and participate in orientation meetings, community members can comment via phone, SMS, social media • Social media to share information on the meeting and comment in chat box or chatbots • SMS to share information and for communities to ask questions/comment • In-person: same as above (refer to Community Dialogues Safety Protocols) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to set up and use a phone tree (AAUW) • Phone book and phone tree template • Orientation meeting checklist and sample agenda • Guidance on discussion groups and cascading information • Session plan template • Basic information on COVID19 • Community Dialogues Safety Protocols • Digital Platforms for Community Engagement tool • Tips for engaging communities in low resource settings

		<p>groups as possible by using multiple communication channels to provide an overview on COVID19, remote CE, and address questions and concerns</p> <p>[Carried out by mobilizing officials with Community Partners with support by program team]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone or video call if in-person meeting is not allowed or too risky, and if communities have access to these technologies; using Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp, Facebook Live, Instagram Live. • Interactive community radio, where mobilizing officials share information on the radio, and communities ask questions and comment by calling in or using SMS, social media chats; can also pre-record the conversation with community leaders to share with broader community 	
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<p>Step 5: Develop and implement community response plans</p>	<p>Develop and implement simple community response plans</p>	<p>5.1 Facilitate a series of discussions with community groups* for communities to understand their issues around COVID19 and how they will address them:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Create a community map to identify community assets, vulnerabilities, resources and risks Identify high transmission areas at hh, community, services levels (i.e. markets, family celebrations, funerals and religious gatherings) and how to address these Prioritize the issues to address. Identify barriers and facilitators, and misinformation to adopting COVID-19 preventive behaviors Identify root causes of barriers <p>*The number of community groups engaged will depend on a team's ability to facilitate and manage discussions, to analyze information from these discussions, and the ability to cascade information</p> <p>[Carried out by mobilizing officials with Community Partners and support from program team]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet in person: same as above • Use telephone call or video call for group discussions: same as above • Use interactive community radio, where program staff lead a radio show(s) discussing high transmission areas, barriers, facilitators, and communities comment and ask questions by calling in or using SMS, social media chats; • Use social media, chatbots to collect information • Use SMS to collect information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to set up and use a phone tree (AAUW) • Phone book and phone tree template • Develop and Validate Community Map Tool • Virtual Transect Walk • Basic information on COVID19 • Community Dialogues Safety Protocols • Rapid Needs Assessment tool HC3 • Identifying issues, prioritizing and root causes tool • Miro tool for group information sharing • Digital Platforms for Community Engagement tool
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		<p>5.3 Share community plans with larger community members to adapt and validate plans as needed</p> <p>[Carried out by Community Partners with support from program team]</p>	Same as above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to set up and use a phone tree (AAUW) • Phone book and phone tree template • Digital Platforms for Community Engagement tool
		<p>5.4 Work together to carry out activities in the response plans, working with leaders, partners, government, and I/NGO's</p> <p>[Carried out by Community Partners with support from mobilizing leaders and program team]</p>	This will depend on the activities, but could use a combination of the different communication options mentioned throughout, while following government and organizational guidance for face – to – face interactions	
<p>Step 6: Ensure regular community feedback and monitoring</p>	<p>Collect and address rumors, concerns, stigma and misinformation within communities</p> <p>Ensure communities are receiving up to date information</p> <p>Assess communities' feedback mechanisms</p>	<p>6.1 Identify and respond to concerns, rumors, stigma and misinformation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct regular discussions with communities on COVID-19 and related community concerns, misinformation, and rumors in the community • Capture examples of concerns, rumors and misinformation and address them with correct information • Share information from communities to partners, government and organizations 	Same as 4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 Rumor Tracking Guidance Document for Field Team (Breakthrough ACTION) • Rumor/Misinformation Tracking Approach (Breakthrough ACTION) • Rumor Categorization Tool (Adapted from CDAC Network's Rumor has it: A practice guide to working with rumours, 2017) • Rumor Log Tool (Adapted from the CDAC Network's Rumor has it: A practice guide to working with rumours, 2017) • Myth Busters (WHO) • Other tools for conducting these dialogue sessions

	Demonstrate to communities that progress is being made	[Carried out by Community Partners with support from mobilizing officials and program team]		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Platforms for Community Engagement tool
		<p>6.2 Share community data generated from monitoring systems such as care groups or CHW logs back with communities.</p> <p>a. Create a virtual community bulletin board to capture and share information</p> <p>b. Create systems for monitoring and sharing information/lessons across different communities and back with your organization</p>	Same as 4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tool for communities to measure progress and use a virtual community bulletin board, with sample indicators • Digital Platforms for Community Engagement tool
		[Carried out by Community Partners with support from mobilizing officials and program team]		

KEY COVID-19 Resources:

[COVID19 Communication Network](#)

[READY Initiative Website](#)

[Compass COVID-19 Tools for Social Behavior Change](#)

[Core Group Resource Library](#)

[CDAC COVID-19 Resource Portal](#)

[IFRC Community Engagement Hub -COVID-19 Resources](#)

[COVID-19 West and Central Africa tools for Community Engagement](#)