

Risk Communication for Community Health Emergencies: A Review of the Mpox Outbreak in Kenya.

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BACKGROUND

- Risk communication is the realtime exchange of information, advice and opinions between experts or officials and people who face the threat to their health or economic or social well being.
- It has to be part of health operations of the incident management system. In times of a pandemic, outbreak or related health crisis, the rural community and rural health workers are potential responders.
- Health professionals must therefore be well equipped to deal with communication needs to the community during such an era.



Source: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites>

OBJECTIVE

- This review assesses Kenya's risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) strategies through the lens of a community health emergency, identifying strengths, challenges and actionable lessons for future outbreaks.

METHODOLOGY

- Key sources include an intra-action review led by Kenya's Ministry of Health.
- WHO, government press releases.
- Reports from partners such as Amref and CDC Kenya.

RESULTS

- **Rapid Partnership-led RCCE Initiatives:** Kenya implemented mass messaging campaigns, press briefings, radio outreach, and distribution of educational materials to curb stigma and misinformation. International partners including CDC Kenya, Amref Health Africa, UNICEF and WHO – played pivotal roles in shaping these efforts
- **Community-led Engagement Strategies:** Community Health Promoters (CHPs), Community-Owned Resource Persons, and trained frontline workers enabled effective contact tracing and public sensitization, particularly among vulnerable sub-populations.
- **Institutional RCCE through Intra-Action Review (IAR):** In December 2024, a multisectoral IAR convened 120 experts across seven response pillars, including risk communication.

COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES



Source: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/sites>

- **Challenges Identified:** Limited isolation infrastructure and PPE shortages impacted the effectiveness of RCCE in clinical settings. Insufficient scale of trained health workers led to misdiagnoses and delayed responses. Persistent misinformation and stigma particularly amid mass gatherings and social influencers posed threats to timely health-seeking behaviors.

CONCLUSION

- Kenya's mpox response illustrates how coordinated RCCE efforts can anchor public health responses during community emergencies.
- Key successes included leveraging community networks, real-time engagement via media, partner collaboration, and iterative planning through IAR.
- However, lasting impact requires investment in specific county health infrastructure, scaling up workforce capacity, and combating misinformation.
- Future strategies should deepen community partnerships, utilize digital tools for RCCE monitoring, and mainstream risk communication within emergency preparedness frameworks

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