

32 Communicating with the community

OVERVIEW



To avoid the spread of diseases and epidemics, it is important to teach individuals in your community how to protect themselves and maintain healthy practices.

To do this, you need to know how to communicate health messages to the community.

How to communicate

When communicating health messages to your community, it is important to use different forms and methods of communication depending on the programme, target group and number of available volunteers. Below are a number of different ways to communicate:

Written materials – Leaflets, one-page flyers, newsletters, etc. (all of these are very useful if the target groups are able to read).

Visual methods – Pictures, drawings and symbols can be used as an effective communication method for people who are not able to read too well.

Oral communication – Short talks with people in the community, house-to-house visits, storytelling or combining a lecture with some entertainment are all very effective ways of communicating with small groups.

One-to-one communication – Talking directly to people, counselling and education by peers/friends can influence people to change their behaviours.

Media – Using mass media such as radio and television or printed media such as newspapers to give messages to many people at the same time can be a very effective way for you to design good and suitable messages for your community.

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Group discussion – Interactive discussion sessions and short lectures can be used with a small group, especially with those who are preparing/starting to change behaviour.

Peer education – Peers (people of similar age and background) are often very effective relays for communicating messages on how to live healthily. Peer education can be done in neighbourhoods, schools, youth clubs, work places and religious institutions.

Role-play – Acting out a simple scenario on a topic is a fun and effective way to get people participating and communicating key health messages. Remember that some people may be shy about performing in front of others and that this should be respected.

School-based learning – Teachers can play an important role in influencing their students to change behaviour and in communicating key messages to them.

Religious institutions – Religious leaders and institutions can also play a significant role in influencing community participation and promoting good health practices.

Adult learning – Use interactive methods to promote discussion among adults, such as real-life examples and illustrations. Tell stories about how people can help their families and others.