



Concept Note

Regional Workshop: Strengthening Risk Communications for Health Emergencies in the GMS

The Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases (APSED) is the common strategic framework for WHO member states of the Asia-Pacific region to strengthen regional and core capacities to effectively detect, prepare for and respond to threats posed by emerging infectious diseases (EIDs) and public health emergencies. APSED was first launched in 2005 and reviewed in 2010 and subsequently, focus areas were expanded from 5 to 8 (Surveillance Risk Assessment and Response; Laboratories; Zoonoses; Infection Prevention and Control; Risk Communication; Public Health Emergency Preparedness; Regional Preparedness, Alert and Response; and Monitoring and Evaluation). APSED relies on a systems approach to build capacity and preparedness.

APSED is still highly relevant as the region is still vulnerable to EIDs and public health emergencies and the focus areas are still appropriate after years of implementing the strategy.

Although overall in the GMS, there has been improvement in APSED implementation, progress in specific focus areas and in individual countries varies significantly.

One area with variable demonstrated progress is Risk Communications (RC).

Risk communications for public health emergencies encompass a broad range of communication capacities required during the preparedness, response and recovery phases of a serious public health event. Risk communication activities are particularly important in supporting the management of any acute public health event, especially at an early stage when decisive action has to be taken in the context of uncertainty. Effective risk communications also make a fundamental contribution to the management of emerging diseases and other public health threats by informing decision-making, encouraging positive behavior change and maintaining public trust.

Risk communications includes three interlinked components: health emergency communications; operation communications; and behavior change communications and these in turn have underlying sub-components.

Reviews of risk communications¹ have identified key issues and problem areas in implementing effective Risk Communications including: lack of clear understanding of the components; variable approaches to RC with often a non-centralized focus and short term horizons, only aimed at dealing with the immediate emergency or outbreak; lack of appreciation of RC as a cross cutting issue with close links to surveillance and risk assessment; and the need to include non-outbreak events (such as natural disasters,

¹ APSED Technical Papers. WHO. 2010.

food contamination, bioterrorism etc.) as health threats and this requires cross jurisdiction coordination with other departments within governments.

The regional workshop is an opportunity to review the status of risk communications in GMS countries according to JEE recommendations and to identify key issues in maintaining and strengthening RC capacities and formulation of functional RC plans to deal with both health emergencies and day-to-day routine health communication.

General Objective of the Regional Workshop:

To assess implementation aspects of the APSED III Risk Communications focus area for GMS countries to enable improved national and regional communication structures and organization to respond to health threats.

Specific Objectives:

- To review progress and identify requirements to improve Risk Communications planning and system integration in each GMS country according to JEE recommendations to effectively implement APSED III
- To assess optimal approaches to maintaining and strengthening risk communications capabilities and institutional capacity
- To exchange country experiences in formulating risk communications strategies, coordination mechanisms and risk communication tools
- To identify key risk communications concepts, frameworks and infrastructure requirements that can enhance existing RC structures and processes each GMS country.
- To develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for the existing risk communication mechanism and planning according to JEE recommendation.

Expected outcomes:

- Agreement and understanding of key risk communications concepts and a framework to ensure common best practices in risk communications
- Agreement on strategies to enhance structural and coordination mechanisms for risk communications
- Identification of relevant best practice and experiences in risk communications from GMS countries
- Agreement and understanding of necessary longer term and more strategic approaches and M& E framework and key indicators for Risk Communications in GMS countries

Deliverables:

Workshop report and supporting documents

Presentations:

Country presentations on status of Risk Communications planning and organization and on specific RC topics

Venue and date:

12-13 September 2019. Venue: Xieng Khouang COECCO Hotel, Phonsavan, Xieng Khouang Province, Lao PDR

Participants:

Lao provincial and central staff

Cambodia

Myanmar

Vietnam

Thailand

China

Others: Development partners for Risk Communication and APSED implementation

Who should attend:

Staff involved in: health education and information, communicable disease control, public health/strategic communications, media relations, surveillance and response, health promotion.

AGENDA

Day One:	12 September	
8:00 – 8:30	Registration: Organizers: DCDC, Ministry of Health, Lao PDR	
Opening Session:	Hosts: Department of Communicable Disease Control, Ministry of Health, Lao PDR	
8:30 – 9:15	Welcome	<i>Director of Xieng Khouang Provincial Health Office</i>
	Introduction and objectives of the regional workshop	<i>Dr. Rattanaxay Phetsouvanh, Director General, DCDC, MOH, Lao PDR</i>
	Opening Remarks: Health Security and Risk Communications	<i>Dr. Founkham Rattanavong, Deputy Director General, Department of Planning and Cooperation, MOH</i>
	Opening Remarks: Cambodia	<i>Dr. Teng Srey, Deputy Director, Department of Communicable Disease Control (CDC), Ministry of Health, Cambodia</i>
	Opening Remarks: China	<i>Dr. Fan Ding, Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention</i>

Opening Remarks: Myanmar	<i>Dr. Khin Khin Gyi, Deputy Director (CEU), Department of Public Health, MOH, Myanmar</i>
Opening Remarks: Thailand	<i>Dr. Pahurat Taisuwan, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand</i>
Opening Remarks: Vietnam	<i>Dr. Nguyen Thi Bich Thuy, Division of Communicable Diseases, General Department of Preventive Medicine, MOH, Vietnam</i>
Official opening of the workshop:	<i>Governor of Xieng Khouang Province</i>
Group photo and coffee	

Session 2: The context of Risk Communications

Chairperson:	Dr. Teng Srey, Cambodia	
Co-chair:	Dr. Pahurat Taisuwan, Thailand	
9:45 – 10:15	ADB investment in Risk Communications	<i>Dr. Kyi Thar, ADB</i>
	Risk Communications links with other APSED Focus Areas	<i>Lauren O'Connor, WPRO</i> <i>Ben Duncan, WHO, Lao PDR</i>
	Key concepts and principles of Risk Communications for health emergencies	

Session 3: Overview of the current Risk Communications situation in GMS countries

Chairperson:	Dr Rattanaxay Phetsouvanh, Lao	
Co-chair:	Dr Aung Myat Htay, Myanmar	
10:15 – 11:15	Country presentations	
	Cambodia	<i>Dr. Teng Srey, DCDC Cambodia</i>
	China	<i>Dr. Fan Ding, CCDCP, China</i>
	Lao PDR	<i>Visith Khamlusa, Director, Centre for Communication and Education for Health, MOH, Lao PDR</i>
	Myanmar	<i>Dr. Khin Khin Gyi, Department of Public Health MOH, Myanmar</i>
	Thailand	<i>Dr. Pahurat Taisuwan, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand</i>
	Vietnam	<i>Dr. Nguyen Thi Bich Thuy, GDPM, MOH, Vietnam</i>

Session 4: Communicating risk in health emergencies

Chairperson:	Dr. Kyi Thar, ADB	
Co-chair:	Dr. Founkham Rattanavong, MOH, Lao PDR	
11:15 – 12:15	Risk communications: sharing experiences and examples in the GMS: Case studies	
	Communicating risk in a vaccine derived polio outbreak in Lao PDR: 2016	<i>Dr. Kongmany Southalack, NCLE</i>

Dengue outbreaks in Lao PDR in 2019 and the role of the Emergency Operations Centre

Dr. Viengsavanh Kitthiphong, DCDC

Risk Communications during the H7 N9 outbreak in China: 2013

Dr. Fan Ding

12.15 – 1.30

Lunch

Session 5: Strengthening Risk Communications capacity in the region

Chairperson: Dr. Nguyen Thi Bich Thuy, Vietnam

Co-chair: Dr. Ma Huilai, China

1.30 – 3.00

Risk Assessment and Risk Communication: Overlapping synergies

Lauren O'Connor, WPRO

How can we institutionalize Risk Communications capacity ?

Dr. Pahurat Taisuwan, MPH, Thailand

Reinforcing Risk Communications beyond public health emergencies

Vanly Lorkhuangming, WHO, Lao PDR

3.00 – 3.15

Coffee break

3.15 – 4.15

Key needs and gaps in health emergency communications

Panel discussion

*Moderator: Ben Duncan
WHO, Lao PDR*

4.15 – 5:00

Panel: Dr Teng Srey, Dr Pahurat Taisuwan, Dr Fan Ding, Dr Rattanaxay Phetsouvanh, Dr Khin Khin Gyi

Plenary discussion

6.30 – 9:00

Key needs and gaps in health emergency communications

Welcome dinner

Day Two: 13 September

8:30 – 9:00

Recap and follow up of Day One issues

Session 6: Groupwork

9:00 – 10:15

Maintaining and strengthening Risk Communications capabilities and institutional capacity

Outline of Group Tasks

Groups

Group 1: Barriers/challenges for Risk Communications

Group 2: Use of Social Media for Two Way Communication

Group 3: Communication and Coordination Across Government

Group 4: Strengthening the links between Risk Assessment and Risk Communication

10.15 – 10.30

Coffee break

10.30 – 12.00

Groupwork continues

12.00 – 1.30

Lunch

1.30 – 3.00

Groupwork: Presentations

Findings and recommendations from work groups

3.00 – 3.15

Coffee break

3.15 – 4:30

Identified improvements to Risk Communications
structures and processes in the GMS

Recommendations

4:30

Close of workshop