



स्वास्थ्य एवं  
परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय  
MINISTRY OF  
**HEALTH AND  
FAMILY WELFARE**



## **Webinar on Communication Strategies for Vulnerable Populations**

### **Speakers**

Dr. M.K. Kundu, Dr. B Paul

Dr. Monika Saini, Dr. R Basu

### **Moderator**

Dr. Monika Saini

**Date: 15-05-2025 Time: 11.00 AM to 12.00 NOON**

# Communication strategies for vulnerable populations



Every crisis presents with its own unique challenges and will take unexpected twists and turns.

# Vulnerable Populations in Crisis Situations

**Vulnerability** is defined as “The conditions determined by physical, social, economic, and environmental factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets, or systems to the impacts of hazards”.  
(WHO)

Vulnerable populations may include, among others:

- Children
- Pregnant women
- Elderly
- Persons with physical and intellectual disabilities
- Marginalized Population groups (migrants, Indigenous peoples, undocumented persons, displaced persons, those living in poverty and the homeless population)

# Why is it important to address vulnerable population?

- **Increased Risk:** reduced mobility, limited access to resources, and difficulty communicating or understanding instructions.
- **Differential Impact:** disproportionate harm and longer-term consequences. For example, children may experience trauma, separation from their families, and disruptions to their education.
- **Access to Services:** barriers to accessing disaster relief services, including evacuation, shelter, medical care, and psychological support.

# Why is it important to address vulnerable population?

- **Long-Term Needs:** long-term health and social challenges for vulnerable groups, requiring sustained support for recovery and rehabilitation.
- **Ethical Considerations:** protect vulnerable populations and ensure that they receive the necessary assistance during emergencies.
- **Community Resilience:** addressing the needs of vulnerable populations contributes to the overall resilience of a community, as it helps build a more inclusive and equitable disaster response.

# Important to remember.....

- High-risk groups will have specific strengths, such as individual resilience, strong family or peer attachments, preparedness knowledge, and lived experience.
- The vulnerabilities and resiliencies of high-risk groups can change depending on the disaster scenario
- People living in remote areas are also vulnerable during disasters due to poor communication pathways, road access and distance from health services.

# Challenges to Communication with Vulnerable Populations

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Limited Communication Channels / Modalities

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Low Threat Perception

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Varied Group-specific Communication Needs (Linguistic/ Visual)

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Limited Ability to Respond on Their Own (Limited Resources)

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Limited literacy / Comprehending Ability

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Increased Susceptibility

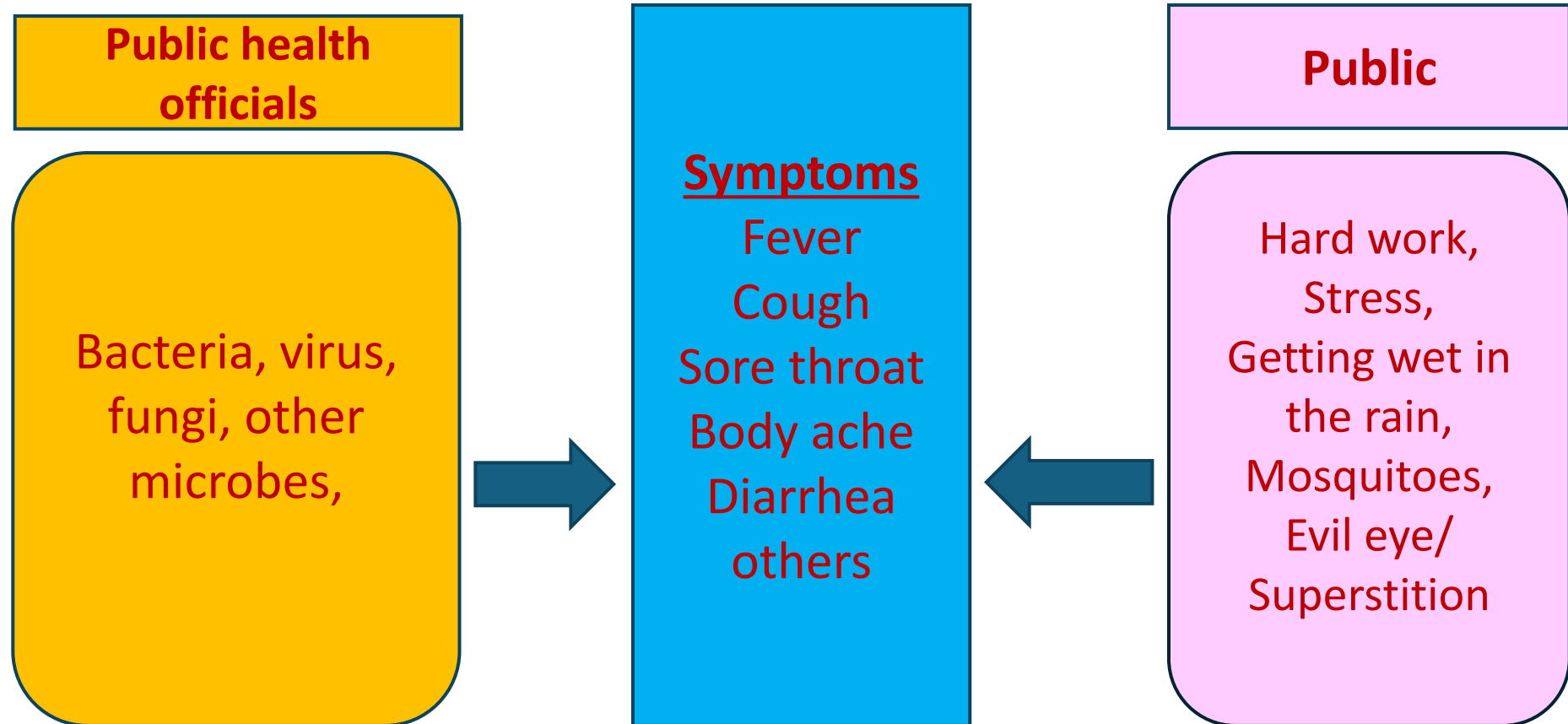
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Lack of Representation at Planning level

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Mistrust and Doubt over Intentions

# Seeing differently



**Scientists respond to facts and people respond to PERCEPTIONS**



# Cycle of Misinformation and Fear in Crisis

## Social Cohesion Weakens

Trust and unity erode



## Crisis Emerges

A sudden event disrupts normalcy



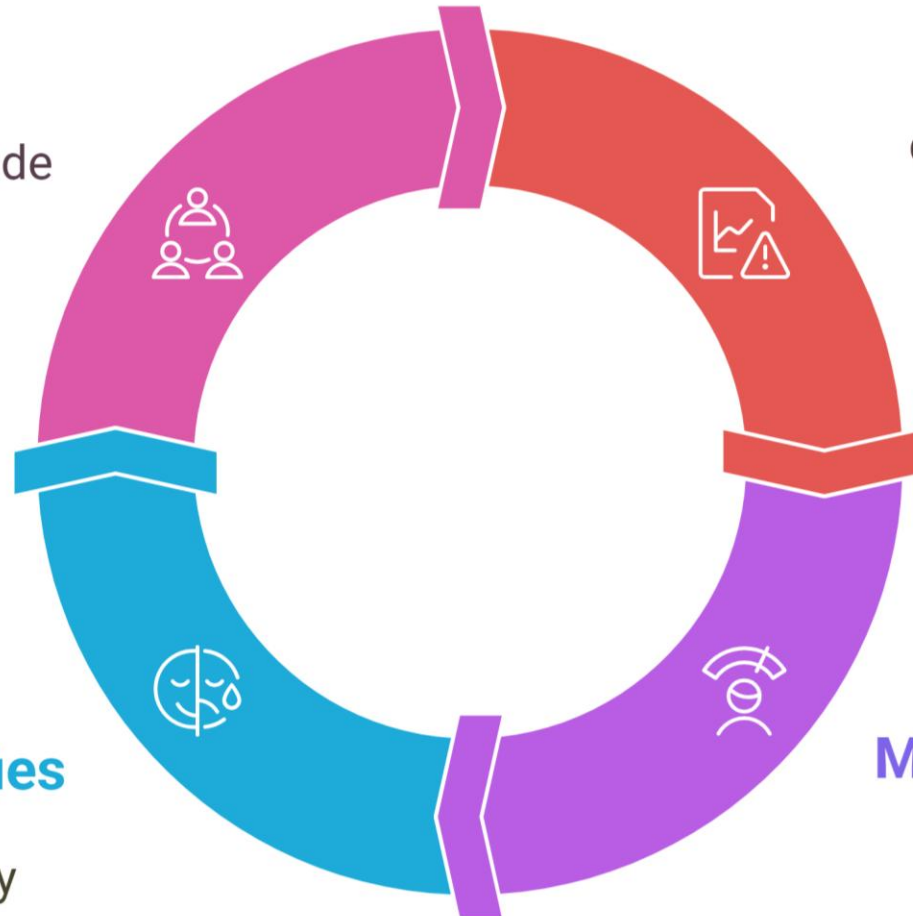
## Misinformation Spreads

False information circulates widely



## Fear Intensifies

Public anxiety and panic rise



# Six Principles of Risk Communication

## First

- Early communication is critical and Initial source of information is important

## Action

- Engage communities in meaningful activities to alleviate anxiety levels

## Right

- Be Accurate. Disseminate existing information. Inform about the efforts underway to seek additional information.

## Respect

- Respectful communication is key during a crisis

## Credible

- Inform only what you know. Disseminate

## Empathetic

- Acknowledge the community's sufferings

# It is important to.....

- Know your community's vulnerable populations
- Transmit clear and concise messages repeatedly
- Deliver messages via multiple information channels and modes of communication
- Mobilize community networks through community engagement



# Planning: Rapid Situational Analysis

- What is the nature of the emergency?
- What problems are being faced right now?

For example, infrastructure damage, services disrupted, areas cut off from emergency assistance

- Who are the most vulnerable and why?
- Identify and locate the vulnerable groups in disaster prone areas
- How do the vulnerable community perceive the risks and the information we are putting out?

# Listen to their fears and concerns



- Observations,
- Surveys
- Key informant interviews
- Focused group interviews

Look at it from their point of view !!!!

- What are the likely information needs of at-risk populations?
- Based on assessment of risks and key concerns, what information would need to be prioritized and communicated to them?
- How will you communicate with affected populations?
- What functioning communication options do you have available that you can use?
- Who can you partner with to help you reach out and communicate with affected populations?

# Develop communication strategies

While developing communication strategies, it is useful to ask

- Is the communication relevant to the situation and to the affected population?
- It is clear and understandable?
- Is it focused on those who are at risk, particularly the ones who are at most risk?

*It is vital to integrate vulnerable communities into a risk management framework and include them in the conversation*

# Prepare a communication Plan

MESSAGE	PARTICIPANT GROUPS	OPTIONS	FORMAT	FREQUENCY
Go to your local evacuation centre now	Coastal populations between Town A and B	Community radio station	Public service announcement	Every two hours until emergency downgraded



# Powerful tool: Community engagement process

**2-way Process**

**Active Social Listening/Assessing Concerns**

**Understanding Social Dynamics**

**Engaging in Planning/Decision making**

**Dialogue with the affected segments.**

**Focus on the Marginalized/vulnerable  
/women/youth/Disabled/Elderly**



**COMMUNITY  
MEETING**

# TACTICS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

For effective community engagement , following shift has to be made:



**Community is in reactive state of mind**



**Help create a receptive state of mind**

**Using messages to communicate**



**Creating two way communication**

**Telling communities/individuals what to do**



**Listening first to concerns to build trust, so that advice can be taken**

**Note: Active listening includes reflecting back ; Talking ‘with’ and not ‘at’ people helps create understanding and connection**

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES



**AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS**



**COMMUNITY TRAININGS**



**LINK CENTRES**



**MOCK DRILLS**



**COMMUNITY BASED MULTHAZARD MAP**

# Barriers & Actions

Barriers	Actions
We don't have enough time and resources to have a risk communication program	Train staff to communicate more effectively
These issues are too difficult for the public to understand	Keep messages simple and pretest before finalizing
Technical decisions should be left in the hands of technical people	Listen to community concerns. Organize multi-stakeholder meeting for developing risk communication plan
Risk communication is not my job	As a public servant, its our responsibility. Integrate communication with your job.



# Why are pregnant women vulnerable?

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**Physiological and Emotional sensitivity:** Pregnancy often heightens anxiety and concern about health.

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**Information-seeking behavior:** Pregnant individuals often seek information actively, especially from trusted sources.



COMMUNICATION  
STRATEGIES FOR PERSONS  
WITH DISABILITIES

- Disabilities encompass a wide range of physical, sensory, cognitive, and psychological conditions, each presenting unique communication challenges.

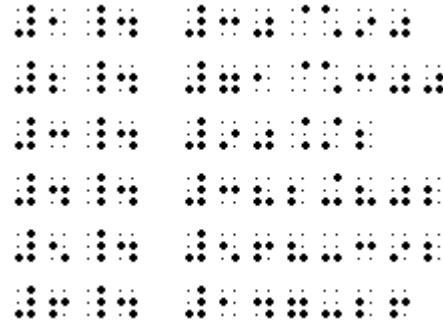


- Effective communication with persons with disabilities requires empathy, adaptability, and a commitment to individualized strategies.

# Communication Strategies for Persons with Disabilities

- **Tailored Messaging:**

Clear, simple, and culturally appropriate language to ensure accessibility



- **Multi-Channel Communication**

Assistive technology tools, AAC devices, Emergency alerts etc.





# Communication Strategies for Persons with Disabilities

- **Trusted Messengers**

Disability advocates, healthcare professionals, and caregivers



- **Active Listening and Empathy**

Recognizing that individuals with disabilities are diverse and have unique needs

# Communication Strategies for Persons with Disabilities

- **Inclusive Emergency Planning**

Designed with accessibility, ensuring that emergency alerts are available in multiple formats



# **Important consideration while communicating with People with Disabilities**

- Don't speak loudly
- Be Patient
- Speak Directly
- Use straightforward language
- Adjust communication style
- Breakdown complex information
- Use non-verbal cues
- Don't use patronizing voice
- Understanding different disabilities



# Effective Communication Strategies

Clarity and simplicity

Empathy and reassurance

Transparency

Tailored messaging

Multiple channels







গ্রামীন স্বাস্থ্য এবং পুষ্টি দিবস  
(VHND)  
স্থান:- মধুবন গ্রাম পঞ্চায়েত।  
তারিখ:-  
০৮-কানুনমালা প্রা. স্বাস্থ্য কেন্দ্র





# Why Are Migrants a Vulnerable Group for Risk Communication?

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**Language barriers**

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**Legal and administrative obstacles**

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**Low trust in authorities**

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**Fear of deportation or discrimination**

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**Limited healthcare access**

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**Cultural differences in health beliefs and behaviors**





# Effective Communication Strategies for migrants

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**A. Language and Format**

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**B. Partnerships and Trusted Messengers**

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**C. Community Engagement**

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**D. Legal and Rights-Based Messaging**



Why Are children a Vulnerable Group for Risk Communication?



# Effective Communication Strategies for children

## Age-Appropriate Language

- Young children (3–7): Use stories, puppets, and cartoons.
- Middle childhood (8–12): Use concrete examples and cause-effect logic.
- Teens (13–18): Allow for critical thinking, discussion, and active participation.

## Visual and Interactive Tools

- Infographics, comics, videos, and mobile games are effective mediums. Role-playing or simulation games help children understand protective behaviors.

## Emotionally Sensitive Messaging

- Validate emotions like fear or sadness. Avoid overly graphic or frightening images. Use a calm, positive tone and highlight steps they can take.

## Involve Trusted Adults

# Best Practices

Involve

in participatory risk education (e.g., drawing evacuation maps, making posters).

Conduct

evaluation studies to assess understanding and emotional responses.

Ensure

inclusive materials for children with disabilities or non-native language speakers.

# Participatory Risk reduction



# Take home messages



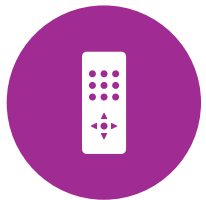
Contextualise  
vulnerable  
group according  
to type of  
disaster



Identify risk  
perception  
levels



Focus on the  
message  
content, modes  
of delivery,  
frequency



Use multiple  
channels/mode  
s



Partner with  
stakeholders



Community  
Engagement is  
the key

**Thank you**