COVID-19 – NOVEL (new) CORONAVIRUS:

KEY TIPS AND DISCUSSION POINTS

For community workers, volunteers and community networks

During an epidemic, there are often confusion and rumours about the disease. People will get a lot of different information from media, friends, family, social media, organizations or other sources. Some of these sources may give conflicting information.

What happens when people have too much information about a problem that makes it difficult to identify a solution?

- People might become fearful and mistrust health recommendations. They might resist and deny the situation.

- This can lead to people not using medical help and ignore life-saving health advice or escape measures (i.e quarantine) put in place by authorities and health services to prevent spread of the disease.

- Misunderstandings about the disease can lead people to refuse help from health workers. They may even make threats or use violence.

- Fearful people might start mistreating people who have or seem to be sick. This can happen even when they are cured already due to a lack of knowledge about effectiveness of treatment.

Field staff, volunteers and community members are in the best place to build trust with communities and community leaders. Therefore, it is important to listen to people and respond to their questions, fears and misinformation with fact-checked information that is useful to them.

Social mobilizers, community workers and volunteers have an important role in providing timely and actionable health information, so people know how to protect themselves and stay healthy. They can then feel they have the right skills to help reduce risks and prevent the spread of COVID-19

Content of this guide:

STEP 1: HOW TO ENGAGE - Simple tips for interacting with communities.
STEP 2: **ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS**
Key guidance for community discussions, including addressing stigma and xenophobia.
STEP 3: WHAT TO SAY - Essential knowledge to share with communities and Frequently Asked Questions that can guide your discussion. See Annex 1 (page 4)

STEP 1: HOW TO ENGAGE

This section provides a list of key tips and information which can be shared with communities. It is intended as guidance and **should be adapted by national staff. It should be kept up-to-date.**

- Explain **who you are, which organisation you come from and what you do** in the community. This can include:
  - o We work to share accurate information about the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and its symptoms. We also work to share what people can do to protect themselves and their communities from it.
  - o To do this, the teams reach out to community members in several ways, such as radio, SMS message, posters, billboards, face-to-face visits, and community meetings.
  - o **Introduce yourself and show empathy**: We understand you are all worried about this new disease. We are here to help you understand it and make sure you know what you can do to protect yourself and others.

- **Understand what people are saying**: Listen first to what people have to say about the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19), before sharing what you know. We might also need to collect information to better understand the community and its concerns, so that we can adapt our activities and information to better meet their needs. The activities can be adapted to what you need most

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FOUR THINGS ABOUT MYTHS AND RUMOURS
1. Myths and rumours often occur when people do not have enough accurate information and understanding about a disease. They can occur when there are strong cultural beliefs surrounding the disease or prevention measures.
2. Myths or rumours can also happen when contradictory messages are coming from different sources
3. Myths and rumours can increase fear among communities, which can unfortunately keep individuals, households and communities from practicing the correct prevention and control practices
4. This means that providing accurate information to increase knowledge and understanding about transmission of the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) becomes important. This can change the myth or misconception.

- **Encourage awareness and action:** Information shared with communities should use simple words and language (don't use acronyms or 'foreign language terms') and include practical advice people can put into action. For example:
  - ✔ an instruction to follow (e.g. if you get sick, seek medical care at hospital xyz),
  - ✔ a behaviour to adopt (e.g. wash your hands frequently to protect yourself and others from getting sick...) and
  - ✔ information they can share with friends and family (such as where and when to access services, e.g. treatment is free of charge and available at health facilities XXX).

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✔ information that addresses <u>myths and misconceptions</u> that are recorded in the community (e.g. it is safe to receive a package from china as coronaviruses do not survive long on objects).

- **Do not only tell people what to do** but engage people in a conversation - first listen, to understand key concerns and questions. Ask people what they already know, want and need to know about COVID-19, Involve them in designing and delivering health activities, because they are more likely to trust you and the information you share, and play an active role in prevention measures.

- Explain few, clear and simple messages to the community (including families/care givers, local leaders) in the language they prefer and avoiding technical terms (i.e transmission, spreading is easier to understand)

- Make sure everybody has understood your information. Ask questions to understand levels of understanding

- **Get peers and leaders to talk**: People are more likely to pay attention to information from people they already know, trust and whom they feel are concerned about their wellbeing.

REMEMBER
- Be honest when you don't know something and tell the community that you will try and find out and come back to them
- Do not attach race or location to this disease e.g the Chinese virus
- Do not refer to people as cases or victims. Talk about people who have or are being treated for COVID-19.
- Do not repeat rumours!
- Talk positively about preventive and treatment measures. For most people, they can safely recover from this disease.

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STEP 2: ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

Begin by learning more about people's concerns and what questions they have. Make sure to answer questions.

REMEMBER - all answers to these questions and explanations and about the novel coronavirus are on page 4.

Key guiding questions for starting a dialogue with people and communities (translate and adapt to local context).

- What have you heard about this new coronavirus disease (COVID-19)?
- What information would you like to know about the new coronavirus?
- Do you know what the symptoms are?
- Do you know what to do if someone in your family or community gets sick with cold-like symptoms?
- Would you be afraid of someone who has the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19)?
- Do you know how to prevent yourself and your loved ones from contracting the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19)?
- Do people in your community wash their hands regularly? If yes, why? And if no, why not?
- Do people in your community keep a safe distance (i.e 1 meter – 3 feet from another person) and cover their mouths with a tissue or elbow when sneezing? If yes, why? And if no, why not?
- Do members of your household open windows and doors to let fresh air in and thoroughly clean surfaces to kills germs?
- Do you think there is a group/or person in your community who is responsible for spreading the virus (to check stigmatizing attitudes)? If people refer to Chinese people and/or Asian people, ask an additional question. Why do you think these people are spreading the virus in your community?

STEP 3: WHAT TO SAY?

Make sure to update this part of the document based on new questions, misunderstandings of community members and new health information.

What is the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19)?
- Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses found in both animals and humans. Some infect people and are known to cause illness ranging from a cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). (use local names for these diseases)
- The new coronavirus and its disease (COVID-19) is a new strain of coronavirus first found in Wuhan, China in December 2019.
- There are still some things we don't know about the virus, but researchers are working hard to find out how to prevent and cure it.

How dangerous is it?
- For most people, coronavirus is mild and similar to a cold (runny nose, fever, sore throat, cough and shortness of breath);
- It can be more severe for some persons and can lead to pneumonia or breathing difficulties.
  - For example, older people, and people with weak immune system or existing illnesses (such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart or lung disease) appear to be more vulnerable to becoming severely ill with the virus.
- The disease can lead to death, but this is rare.

How does someone get the virus?
- A healthy person can get the virus from an infected person. The virus spreads through direct contact with 'drops' of saliva containing the virus. These fluids come out of the nose or mouth.
  - For example, when an infected person coughs or sneezes, these droplets can enter the eyes, nose or mouth of another person or
  - If an infected person sneezes and coughs into their hands and touch another person or a surface
  - When a person touches surfaces and objects that are contaminated by those droplets. It is not yet known if and how long the virus lasts on surfaces, but alcohol-based hand gel can kill it.
- The new coronavirus is usually transmitted through **close contact** with an infected person, for example, when caring for them. "Close contact" means physically touching them, touching items they have used or coughed on, or spending a lot of time within 1 metre of them while they are sick.

What can I do to protect myself and my family?
Here are five precautions you and your family can take to avoid infection:

1.

1. **Wash your hands frequently** using soap and water. If soap is not available, alcohol-based hand gel may be used to wash away germs.

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2.   **When coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth or nose with your bent elbow. or a tissue** Try to not sneeze and cough into your hands because then you will spread the virus with your hands. Throw the tissue into a bin. If you cough/sneeze into your hand, don't touch anything and immediately wash your hands with soap and water.

3.   **Avoid close contact** with anyone who is coughing, sneezing, or sick. Keep at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance and encourage them to go to a nearby healthcare center.

4.   **Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth**. Hands touch many things which can be contaminated with the virus.

5.   **Go to the doctor** if you have a fever, cough or feel that it is difficult to breathe. This is the best way to look after yourself and stop the infection spreading to your family and others. Make sure to first call the doctor and let them know your symptoms so you don't infect other people.

Coughs/sneeze into your bent elbow or a tissue to stop spreading the germs.

REMEMBER: older people and people with health issues are more likely to get sick. We need to protect them and stop spreading germs!

What should I do if a family member or I have symptoms?

●   Seek medical care early if you or your family member has a fever, cough or difficulty breathing.
●   Call your doctor or health provider before coming to the clinic. You should also call if you have travelled to an area where the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19)has been reported, or if you have been in close contact with someone with who has travelled from one of these areas and has symptoms.

REMEMBER - If an infected person does not go to the health centre or ask for help they may be at higher risks of becoming very ill and spreading the virus.

You can find more information on the WHO site (in several languages) https://www.epi-win.com/

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Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19

Is the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) very contagious/ is it easy to get the virus?
Coronavirus is harder to catch than you think. It takes close, direct contact with a sick person (or with objects and surfaces the person has used) to become infected with the virus. Many of the people who get the disease are caregivers and family members caring for a sick person without personal protective equipment.

Can I get the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) by talking to someone or sitting next to them?
You are very unlikely to catch the virus by talking to people, walking in the street or shopping in the market or another crowded space. Being nearby a person generally doesn't spread the virus. There is no change you will get the virus if you have not travelled to the affected countries recently or have not been in contact with a person who is sick with coronavirus.

Are there any specific medicines to prevent or treat the new coronavirus?
The disease can be treated, and many people have already recovered from it. While there is no specific medicine recommended, those infected with the virus should receive care to relieve and treat symptoms. Those with severe illness should get care in a hospital.

Is there a vaccine?
There is no vaccine yet because this is a new virus. It takes time to develop a new vaccine that is efficient and safe. Researchers are working on it.

Does having a COVID-19 patient in a hospital in my country put all people at risk?
Hospitals are prepared to care for patients with infectious diseases. Having a patient of the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in a hospital means they will receive the right treatment to help them get healthy and prevent the disease from spreading.

Should we avoid people coming from China?
We should use the same protective measures with any person (no matter the nationality, origin, etc) who may be sick and have symptoms similar to a cold (runny nose, fever, sore throat, cough and short-ness of breath). These include washing hands often with water and soap or alcohol-based hand gel to wash the germs off hands; keeping a distance from anyone who is coughing, sneezing, or sick (at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance and encouraging them to go to a nearby healthcare center.

Should we avoid Chinese food?
The new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is not spread by eating Chinese food. It is safe to eat any fully cooked food in a hygienic and clean environment.

How can I keep my child safe?
It is important to teach your children to wash their hands regularly with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitiser. You should also teach them to cough/sneeze into their bent elbow or into a tissue and put the tissue directly into the garbage and wash their hands right after. Keep windows open at home and on public transport so the air circulates and carries germs away!

Do I need a mask to protect myself against COVID-19?
No, the best thing you can do to protect yourself from the new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is to simply wash your hands well and often.
- If you're healthy, you only need to wear a mask if you are taking care of a person that might have COVID-19.
- If you are sneezing or coughing often, you should wear a mask so that you don't spread the virus through coughing or sneezing around other people or onto surfaces.

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