

Module 3:
IHR Risk Communication Capacity:
**Information Dissemination including Media
Relations**

Risk Communication

- 1970s – risk issues emerged as central themes
- Investigations of risk perception and the role communication plays increased
- 3 main risk communication models:
 - Psychometric: key differences in risk perception between experts and the lay public
 - Socio-political: risk messages exist in a socio-political context and how they are received is determined by people's relation to power
 - Cultural: messages are interpreted through cultural frames of reference

Risk Communication

Old Model: One-way communication to inform

New Model: Two-way communication to dialogue

Old Objective: Warn of risk

New Objective: Partnership to co-manage risk

Risk Communication

Key variables in the public's tolerance of risk:

- Perception of authorities concern
- Whether or not impacts of problem are shared equitably
- Voluntary or coerced
- Manmade or natural
- Information sharing by authorities
- Responsiveness of decision making
- Trustworthiness of those in charge

Risk Communication

Key variables in the public's tolerance of risk:

- Trustworthiness of those in charge

Components of trust:

- motives, honesty, competence

Relative importance of openness, credibility and fairness 4X that of competence

Case Study: Pandemic flu H1N1 2009 - 2010

- **Early 2009**, the flu affects 60% of residents of La Gloria, Veracruz, Mexico, located near a pig farm that annually raises about one million of these animals.
- **In late February**, Mexico authorities detected an unusual increase in influenza-like illness. " late Flu season."
- April 21. Authorities in Mexico received the result of the samples sent to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of USA and Winnipeg (Canada), which **tested positive for swine flu** and was quickly associated with increased late-Flu .

Case Study: Pandemic Flu H1N1 2009 -2010



- **April 23**, Health Secretary Jose Angel Cordova, make a public announcements in the night: "We are dealing with a new influenza virus which is a respiratory epidemic (**although it is controllable**)"
- High attention to national and international media.
- **April 24**, after an expert meeting called by the Health Secretary and given the uncertain potential effect to the public health, the Mexican President invoked emergency powers.

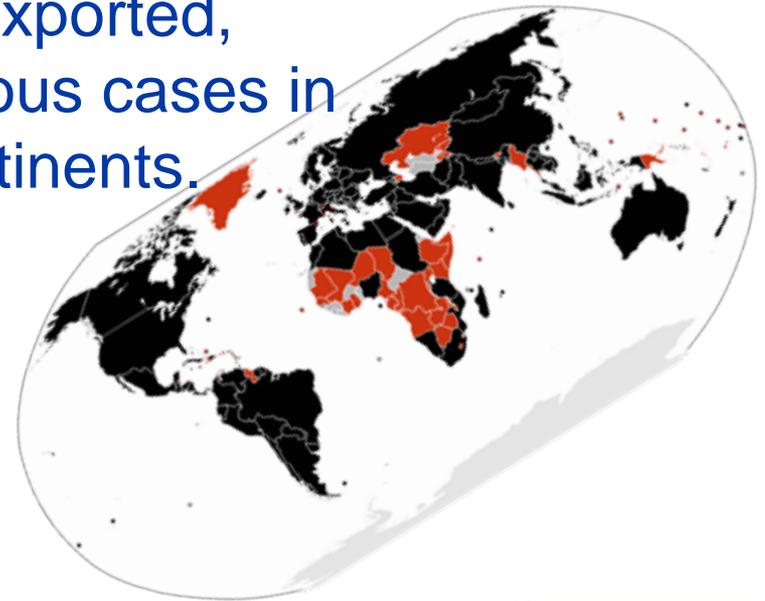
Case Study: Pandemic Flu H1N1 2009 -2010

- The world was alerted on a new influenza virus
- April 25, 2009, WHO maintains the alert: phase 3
- April 27, 2009, WHO raises the alert: phase 4
- April 29, 2009, WHO raises to phase 5
- April 30, 2009 World Health Organization (WHO) decided to call this disease FLU A (H1N1).
- June 11, 2009, measure was adopted to declare alert phase 6 pandemic



Case Study: Pandemic Flu H1N1 2009 -2010

- A month after first cases were detected in Veracruz, Mexico, the epidemic spread to several Mexican states, the United States and Canada and then exported, with the appearance of numerous cases in other countries in different continents.



Case Study:

Pandemic H1N1 2009 México

Response was based on early adaptation of a preparedness plan for pandemic influenza.

Communication strategy:

There were established two daily press conferences by the Health Secretary (epidemic evolution, number of cases and deaths, health guidelines).

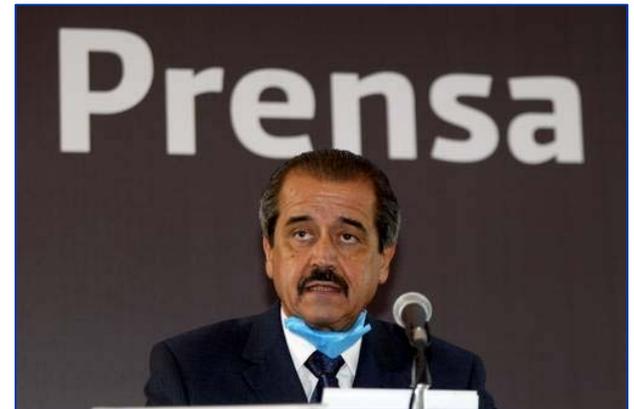
- April 24 to May 6, social distancing measures were announced to mitigate impacts and reduce transmission in Mexico City, Mexico State and San Luis Potosi.
- President Calderón declared an emergency that granted him the power to suspend public acts and to enact the quarantine.

President Felipe Calderón within his own press conferences in the official residence of Los Pinos. made the announcement of the need to use surgical masks.



Case study: Pandemic H1N1 2009 México

- Occasional discrepancies between the recommendations of official and academic sources. Use of surgical masks
- The participation of the Health Secretary as spokesman demonstrated high-level leadership.
- Clear and transparent communication was important because Mexico was entering the midterm elections, and some politicians made the assumption that the outbreak was false to distract the Mexican.



Case study: Pandemic H1N1 2009 México

- Intensive media campaign to inform people about the flu, to promote personal and environmental hygiene, requesting that sick people seek medical care, to stay at home and implement social distancing measures.
- Social mobilization through a multifaceted outreach campaign, use of visuals and an icon of the message previously developed and tested, Promi.



Case study: Pandemic H1N1 2009 México

- May 4, 2009, President Calderón announced the gradual resumption of student and production activities of the country, asking for the maintenance of hygienic care.
- Among the many lessons learned in Mexico and other countries of the Region of the Americas is that the preparation paid off.



Developing Messages

**NGO
PARTNERS**

MEDIA

VICTIMS

Who is your audience?

**TRADING
PARTNERS**

**HEALTH
WORKERS**

POLITICIANS

**OTHER
MINISTRIES**

Developing Messages

**RISK
ASSESSMENT?**

**ECONOMIC
IMPACT?**

**DECISION
MAKING?**

**What do your audiences
need or want to know?**

**WHAT
NEXT?**

**FAIR AND
EQUAL?**

**ACCOUNT-
ABILITY**

INFORMATION?

Developing Messages

Are the messages understandable?

- Eg. Avoid jargon and technical language

Are the messages complete, honest and open?

- Eg. Acknowledge uncertainty
- Eg. Acknowledge mistakes

Are the messages respectful of concerns?

- Concerns about their health
- Concerns about fairness
- Concerns about the future

Are the messages sensitive to cultural practices?

Do the messages express empathy for victims

Information Dissemination

IHR Risk Communication Capacity: Information dissemination and media relations

1. Identify spokespersons and ensure risk communication training
2. Adopt risk communication message development templates and tools
3. Integrate communication channels to provide hard to reach groups with useful information