**Terms of Reference:**

**Risk Communication and Community Engagement Working Group for COVID-19 – Eastern and Southern Africa Region**

## **Background:**

To improve coordination among partners for COVID-19 response, WHO convened an emergency meeting for partners in Nairobi Kenya in March 2020. The general objective of the meeting was to increase the engagement of regional partners using the WHO Emergency Preparedness and Response (EPR) hubs in Nairobi and Dakar and ultimately trigger the development of effective joint regional partners’ preparedness and response plan to support countries of the Africa region.

It was reaffirmed during the meeting that partners need to step up their support to countries to minimize social and economic impact through multi-sectoral partnerships; enhance coordination for the preparedness and response to COVID-19; and consequently, WHO, as the lead agency for health, to step up its operational and strategic coordination capacity both at sub-regional and country level. One of the key recommendations was to establish four technical working groups (TWG) to enhance coordination on operational and strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation as well as the support to countries on particular aspects of the preparedness and response to COVID-19. The four TWGs are: 1. Case Management; 2. Surveillance; 3. Risk Communication and Community Engagement; 4. Logistics. The RCCE TWG includes a community feedback sub-working group as well as a media sub-working group.

An Intra-Action Review (IAR) conducted by WHO in October 2021 found that the coordination structure (which later included the Strategic Advisory Group [SAG], together with the pre-existing Health Partners’ Group [HPG] had resulted in strong collaboration amongst agencies and partners and that the TWGs had supported joint development of guidance, dissemination and support to countries as well as information sharing as the pandemic evolved[[1]](#footnote-0). Key recommendations from the IAR were that the coordination structure with the TWGs be institutionalised and expanded to address other public health emergencies (PHE) and health components of humanitarian crises; and that the formalised mechanism be introduced to countries. One action point for the RCCE TWG is to revise its Terms of Reference accordingly to encompass this broader role, which took place in February 2022.

The overall objectives of the TWG are to:

* Improve RCCE coordination and collaboration between partners responding to public health emergencies, including COVID-19, and the health components of humanitarian crises in Eastern and Southern Africa.
* Identify and share common approaches for addressing regional RCCE issues and challenges including contextualizing of shared resources and guidance for country level response actions.
* Support compilation and analysis of behavioral insights, community feedback and social science data to support RCCE and cross pillar decision making

Unresolved issues and/or discussions requiring special attention will be referred to the WHO Health Partners Meeting and the Regional Humanitarian Partnerships Team meetings for further guidance.

## **KEY TASKS:**

**Pillar one: Convening/Networking**

* Bring together all actors, including non-traditional humanitarian partners such as faith-based organizations, regional youth networks or CSO networks etc. working on RCCE at the regional presence or operating region level to improve regional level collaboration and coordination of activities.
* Coordinate, liaise and share regular RCCE updates with other regional response pillars, national TWGs and other coordination mechanisms such as ESACREDT TWG, Africa CDC RCCE COP, WHO/AFRO, AIRA and GOARN, Community Feedback Subworking Group and the Media Taskforce.
* Provide updates on key RCCE issues and challenges to the Health Partners Meeting and the Regional Humanitarian Partners Team (RHPT) and the WHO-led Strategic Advisory Group
* Develop/update priorities for the TWG based on the prevailing context and in response to SAG recommendations and RCCE partner requests.
* Strengthen national RCCE TWG/Pillars to respond to COVID-19 and, where relevant, public health emergencies and humanitarian crises and engage them in sharing resources and learning from their experiences
* Liaise with WCAR RCCE TWG to share experiences including lessons learned and best practices on topics of common interest.

**Pillar 2: Knowledge Hub**

* Maintain an updated mapping of regional partners (4W matrix) including location of partner activities.
* Collate and maintain an ESAR repository of relevant resources including RCCE strategies, guidance notes, training materials and tools for regional and country reference and adaptation and disseminate new resources through a monthly partners newsletter.
* Support the compilation and analysis and dissemination of community feedback from the region, including maintenance of the regional Community Feedback dashboard.
* Document and disseminate good lessons learnt and best practice from regional and national TWGs whenever feasible, including showcasing evidence of adaptive decision making based on social science data within RCCE responses to PHE in ESAR.

 **Pillar 3: Capacity hub**

* Map capacity needs and identify opportunities for internal training and capacity building of partners including external training resources and events relevant for partner participation.
* Map capacity needs of national RCCE TWGs and partners and link them to trainings and/or provide technical support in RCCE coordination, community feedback and social science..
* *Facilitate cross-country experience sharing and learning webinars/sessions guided by best practices*
* Engage with the media at regional level to create a network, identify challenges of information responders, provide training on responsible reporting, orientations on technical aspects of the response and guidance on mitigating amplification of rumors and misinformation.
* Identify (and commission reviews) thematic areas for social science research including opportunities for social science training to inform cross-pillar decision making.

**Pillar 4: Behavioral insights**

* Support regional trend analysis of social data (community feedback data, social listening data, social science data) for advocacy and informed decision making
* Drive collective action on behavioural insights, community feedback data and social listening to better support country level responses
* Identify recent and available behavioral data from RCCE partners and other sources for dissemination
* Building on available evidence, identify key RCCE challenges impacting the effectiveness of responses to PHE and health components of humanitarian crises and discuss common approaches to address them
* Strengthen information sharing and collaboration between the regional RCCE TWG and national RCCE TWGs on social science analysis and trends to inform evidence-based decision making at regional and country level

## **MEMBERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIP:**

Membership and participation is open to all agencies/organizations/institutions operating at regional level involved in RCCE response to address PHE. Each participating agency shall nominate a focal person and an alternate, who will provide agency inputs and follow up on agreed actions and deliverables.

## **meeting frequency:**

The RCCE TWG shall hold monthly meetings every fourth Wednesday between 11:00am and 12:30pm. Ad hoc meetings can be convened as necessary while sub working groups will meet as per agreed frequency and as need arises.

## **cochair and coordination:**

**Co-Chair and Coordination:**

The RCCE TWG will be co-chaired by UNICEF and IFRC. The RCCE Collective Service[[2]](#footnote-1) will provide operational and technical support to the day to day management and follow up of TWG activities and actions. This operational and technical support is currently secured until mid-2022.

## **Resources**

All group resources – initially housed on the [READY Initiative](https://community.ready-initiative.org/c/esa-regional-rcce-hub/12) platform –are now being transferred to the global collective service website at <https://www.rcce-collective.net/>.

1. WHO IAR Report and Institutionalisation Concept note [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Collaborative partnership between the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organisation (WHO), with support from the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN), and key stakeholders from the public health and humanitarian sectors

2 | Risk Communication and Community Engagement Collective Service [↑](#footnote-ref-1)