**How to give a briefing on the Principles of Community Engagement, Ebola Response DRC (2019)**[[1]](#footnote-1)

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**Background:** The Ebola Response Coordination team and the Office of the Emergency Ebola Response Coordinator for the United Nations have endorsed these Principles as an effort to improve the quality of community engagement prior to and during Response-related technical activities. The Principles of Community Engagement were developed following the [security incidents in Lwemba](https://drive.google.com/file/d/17mbrk4WOvTPHqRf0rCyWW9vg_YhdHRwF/view?usp=sharing) (Sept. 15-16, 2019), where a police officer was attacked and several houses were burned, and in response to community feedback collected by Ebola Response teams and partners, it was deemed necessary to re-affirm the commitment of Response Actors to behave respectfully and in alignment with the values and customs of community members.

**Objective:** By the end of the briefing, the participants should be able to explain the five key community engagement principles and why they are needed. Additionally, they should signal their commitment to the Principles by signing the document[[2]](#footnote-2) in the presence of their peers.

**Who** should organize the session, and who should be invited to participate?

* Communication commissions will take the lead on organizing briefings on the Principles of Community Engagement.
* All Ebola Response team members will be invited to briefing sessions, in groups of 15-30 people.

**When** should sessions be arranged and how long should they last?

* Sessions should be a maximum of one hour, as all Ebola Response actors are busy with technical activities. Be sure it make it clear to all participants invited that the briefings are being organized to improve the quality of the Response, and therefore are in support of their daily activities and should be viewed as an opportunity to strengthen their capacity. **Make every possible effort to cover each Commission and implementing partners by Friday November 22, 2019.**

**What** other information and/or resources will be available?

* The [Principles are currently being translated](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1qDUncsIMpPNoSklwGy0r8Sf5_v58Oxyz4xtcs3tVDjc/edit?usp=sharing) into Lingala, Kinande and Swahili so that community members can also be made aware of the commitments Response Actors have made related to behavior in communities.
* The Principles for Community Engagement will soon be complemented by a Code of Conduct on matters related to “Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Assault.”

**How** should sessions be implemented?

1. Ensure you have flip chart paper, markers and space for 15-20 people.
2. Begin each session by explaining that a discussion will follow on how to engage effectively and respectfully with community members. (Avoid mentioning in the beginning that the session will conclude with a request to commit in writing. When they give their own examples, it will build ownership of the activity and reduces the risk that it will be perceived as something imposed from above or outside).
3. Ask participants for examples of what GOOD community engagement looks like. Don’t provide examples first - allow participants to speak first. Write answers on a flip chart at the front of the room.
4. Ask participants to then give examples of BAD behavior - actions to be avoided. Ask them to pull from their own experience, but **without naming individuals or organizations**.
5. After 20 minutes of examples provided by participants, distribute two copies of the community engagement principles to each participant, and explain that you will now give 10 minutes for participants to read the document.
6. Explain before asking participants to sign that you are aware that they may have other principles they would like to suggest, or changes in wording they would prefer. Suggest that a revised and “localized” version of the Principles may be possible at a later point. Community-created versions are ideal and may also be possible in the future. However, in order to get started and to signal our commitment right now, at this crucial stage of the Response, explain that participants are encouraged strongly to signal their commitment to the principles by signing the sheet.
7. Explain that you have given two pages because one is for them to keep, and one is for the Communication Commission.

**Suggested indicator:** Percentage of Commission Members and implementing-partner staff who have signed the Principles document. Scheduled check-ins: Fridays: Nov. 8, Nov. 15, Nov. 22

**Annex: Examples of what to do and what NOT to do in communities** (this list is still in progress - we compiled response actors and from DRC Red Cross feedback and Social Science Analysis Cell research findings and recommendations).

**What to do:**

1. Always go FIRST to meet with community leaders and Ebola-affected families. Explain what technical actions are about to be executed, and respond to any questions leaders and families may have. If you cannot answer all of the questions, ask a colleague to support you in the discussion.
2. Always remember that people you will interact with in Ebola-affected areas are likely afraid, and possibly grieving. Approach affected families with care, and be sensitive to their difficult and frightening situation.
3. Ask the community leaders what significant/sensitive things have happened recently. Will visibility from a particular agency trigger a negative reaction?
4. Always be gender sensitive - who is affected and needs to be spoken to and by whom?
5. Always be age sensitive - will a Child Protection actor need to be present?
6. Have a member of Psychosocial support with you no matter what the issue in order to have skilled and empathetic communication on hand.

**What NOT to do:**

1. Do not arrive in communities with multiple vehicles when a consolidation in one or two vehicles is possible. (If, for technical purposes, multiple vehicles are necessary, consider stopping at the outskirts of the Ebola-affected area and **arriving first on foot**. After meeting with community leaders and affected family members, it may then be possible to enter with multiple vehicles.
2. Do not enter communities the first time with excessive visible symbols of wealth and privilege like laptops, expensive phones, and/or other high-end technical devices (Ipads, flashy watches, etc.)
3. Do not take photos of community members without asking permission. NEVER take photos of children without asking the permission of a parent.
4. Although the work will sometimes take place in non secured zones, avoid arriving with the military. It has been reported that within communities who have experienced a lot of conflict, the sight of military and arms has created huge resistance and panic.

24/10: Suggestions from Raoul Komanda, Director of Health Promotion, Minister of Health, DRC Government

* Responsabiliser les communautés à s'approprier les activités de la riposte au quotidien
* Prendre en compte les normes sociales des communautés locales dans le processus des interventions de Réponse
* Utiliser et soutenir l'Approche Auto -Promotion Communautaire ( APC ) dans la mise en oeuvre des interventions de la riposte
* Engager et promouvoir un dialogue participatif et inclusif avec les autochtones ( communautés locales )
* Mettre en place les groupes d’auto-support avec les champions tels que les guéris survivants de la MVE

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**Examples from research studies and community feedback:**

* **Example 1 - Acceptance of risk:** Accept a certain level of “risk” to gain acceptance and access. Example: Teams arrived on the site of a burial, which was reportedly an Ebola death. The family was already placing the body in the casket to be buried when response teams showed up and attempted to intervene by stopping all activities (aggressively). As those involved had already been exposed to the risk of transmission, if teams had allowed them to complete their cultural burial practices and asked or offered to support with additional safe practices for the burial, they would have had a better chance of “containing” transmission among those who were exposed, as they were on the same location. Instead, activities were abruptly broken up, and those involved became upset. Some people then left the area, which increased the risk of transmission beyond that circle and increased difficulties to identify contacts for vaccination and surveillance.

* **Example 2 - Seeking permission from homeowners/families (only the family can give permission):** Response teams informed a family that their child had not died of Ebola and so the family who had been waiting for results, began to prepare for her funeral. Shortly after, other teams returned to the house to inform them that the new results reported the child had died from Ebola and asked to both decontaminate the house and conduct an EDS. Frustrated, the family refused and told the response teams to leave. When the family was at the funeral, response teams were told by a “leader” (chef du quartier) to decontaminate the house while the family was away. Under pressure to achieve high percentages of decontamination the teams chose to listen to the leader rather than the house owners. Family members returned from the burial to find their house under decontamination and became violent towards the response teams. Teams should resist any pressure that might be given by managers, leaders or others to disrespect the family wishes. Only the homeowner can make decisions to accept decontamination or not.

1. EERT-approved version of the Principles for Community Engagement [can be found here](https://docs.google.com/document/d/11V05xIrOgMphfTKEJnfOj5clha2JN9RitfZbEtVWApg/edit?usp=sharing) [FR version] [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Commitments to the Principles are voluntary. Ebola Response members (including staff, consultants, technical and financial partners) who do not want to sign should be invited to have a debrief conversation where they can explain their hesitation, which may relate to the content, the form, or the wording (and thus a slightly-revised version, or a version in a different language, may be acceptable to them). There is to be no sanction for not signing the Principles; they function on a social norms approach, with peer-modeling and subtle social pressure as mechanisms for encouraging adhesion. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)