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IPDC THE INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION

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Agenda item:
**IPDC'S EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR MEDIA DEVELOPMENT
IN EBOLA-AFFECTED COUNTRIES
(LIBERIA, GUINEA, SIERRA LEONE)**

INFORMATION NOTE

SUMMARY CONTENT OF DOCUMENT

This document presents the background for UN's action in Ebola-affected countries, recalls the crucial role played by media in public health emergency situations, analyzes IPDC's intervention capacity in the strategic field of media development and calls for further action to support media in this region.

IPDC'S EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR MEDIA DEVELOPMENT IN EBOLA-AFFECTED COUNTRIES (LIBERIA, GUINEA, SIERRA LEONE)

1. Background
2. Media development for emergency communication, public information and long-term development communication
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1. BACKGROUND

The current outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease – which is centered in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea – is an international public health emergency. The WHO roadmap for responding to the outbreak, released on 28 August 2014, serves as the basis for the global response. The outbreak has consequences for the people of the affected countries: on their livelihoods, societies and economies, and their governance, security and political stability. There are five strategic objectives and 13 mission critical actions in the WHO Roadmap (see Chart 1).

5 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES (STEPP) & 13 MISSION CRITICAL ACTIONS

1. STOP the outbreak

1. Identify and Trace people with Ebola
2. Safe and Dignified Burials

2. TREAT the infected

3. Care for Persons with Ebola and Infection Control
4. Medical Care for Responders

3. ENSURE essential services

5. Provision of Food Security and Nutrition
6. Access to Basic (including non-Ebola Health) services
7. Cash Incentives for Workers
8. Recovery and Economy

4. PRESERVE stability

9. Reliable supplies of materials and equipment
10. Transport and Fuel
11. Social Mobilization and Community Engagement
12. Messaging

5. PREVENT outbreaks in countries currently unaffected

13. Multi-faceted approach to strengthen preparedness of all countries to rapidly detect and respond to an Ebola exposure, especially those sharing land borders with areas of active transmission and those with international transportation hubs

SO 4 and mission critical actions 11 (Social Mobilization and Community Engagement) and 12 (Messaging) make specific mention of media-related action. Expected results under this objective and related actions have been identified as follows¹:

- Ensure at-risk populations in affected districts are reached with Ebola preventive messages through structured social mobilization strategies
- Support scale-up of social mobilization interventions to outside districts and border zones.
- Reinforce training of community mobilizers, including teachers, community and religious leaders, in outreach techniques and messaging around the care and prevention of Ebola
- Increase public awareness and social mobilization initiatives through local radio/ television broadcasts; door-to-door campaigns; and cellphone messaging, promoting responsible behaviors, dispel rumors, and reduce stigma.
- Support the design, printing and distribution of Ebola prevention materials targeting women and girls and young people, translated into local languages through mobile public announcement systems, including use of taxi, and traditional communication channels.
- Support intensified information, education and communication of women, girls and young people, through regular broadcasting of Ebola prevention messages via national and local radio and TV.

¹ UN Ebola virus disease outbreak. Overview of needs and requirements, compiled by OCHA in collaboration with WHO, UN partners agencies and other key responders.

2. MEDIA DEVELOPMENT FOR EMERGENCY COMMUNICATION, PUBLIC INFORMATION AND LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNICATION

The role that media play in emergency situations such as the current outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease is crucial. Without proper information, citizens are left to their own judgment of the situation. This can be fatal and it has been the case in remote villages of affected countries, where misinformation and mistrust of information sources initially led to subjective interpretations of the causes and consequences of the disease.

The media roles can be multiple during such an emergency, such as:

- Disseminating accurate news and related information for decision-making about prevention, provision of care, material and psychological support for those who lose relatives, general allocation of resources around Ebola.
- Building trust around official, reliable information sources.
- Providing educational and empowering content, including social marketing.
- Exposing corruption around Ebola aid and failures in policy.
- Combating stigma and promoting cultural adaptation.
- Giving voice (in local languages) to stakeholders – the populations, medical personnel, etc.

Within this context, support can be given through many different kinds of interventions to enable or strengthen such roles:

- (A range of) capacity increases amongst journalists and journalism schools,
- Financial support for media costs, especially in the case of community media.

As regards media in neighboring countries, or other countries that emerge as places at risk, the roles are similar.

Media's effective contribution to countering the spread of Ebola and mitigating the impact is not only an end in itself, but can also enable the media to emerge stronger after the crisis. In this way, crisis communication support can also contribute to IPDC's interests in communication development in the longer view.

3. IPDC's INTERVENTION CAPACITY IN AFFECTED COUNTRIES

For several decades IPDC has been supporting media development in countries that are currently hit by the Ebola crisis (Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone). Strategic projects and partners could therefore be rapidly identified and upscaled, through stimulating bottom-up project proposals, in order to effectively respond to current Ebola communication needs, contributing to the achievement of all UN strategic objectives, but most particularly to SO 4 and mission critical actions 11 (Social Mobilization and Community Engagement) and 12 (Messaging). For a list of past media development interventions by IPDC, see annex 1.

Interventions could build on past IPDC efforts and rely on partners that are well known to the Programme as well as new stakeholders that play an active role in the current environment. While UNESCO does not currently have dedicated personnel on the spot in the affected countries to directly deliver on activities, the nature of IPDC's work provides a modality that can compensate. By this is meant IPDC's demand-driven and grassroots-up model of media development, whereby independent organizations compete for funding and, if awarded an IPDC grant, are themselves directly responsible for implementation, with UNESCO officials providing back-stopping, oversight and adequate implementation reporting.

In line with IPDC objectives and UNESCO 37 C/5 expected results, emergency assistance could be provided around the following expected results:

Short-term results:

1. Media professionals acquire knowledge and skills on reporting in emergency situations and provide more reliable and appropriate information on the Ebola crisis to their audiences;
2. Community media are empowered to facilitate distance education initiatives and collaborate with the teaching community to reach students during the crisis.
3. Media professionals are trained about safety protocols to report in Ebola-affected zones and apply protocols properly while conducting their duties.
4. Community media covering affected regions have the appropriate infrastructure (including generators and transmitters) to reach their audiences and convey information during the crisis.
5. UN Country teams in affected countries fully grasp the importance of developing solid communication components in their emergency assistance projects and ensure that media development activities are part of wider emergency-response initiatives.

Mid-term results:

6. Guidelines on reporting Ebola are developed, made available in local languages, and disseminated among professional organizations and media in the affected zones.

Long-term results:

7. Communication/journalism students are trained to report in emergency situations and are equipped with knowledge and skills to conduct their duties during current and future crisis;

An amount of US\$300,000 has been requested through the UNESCO intersectoral response to Ebola and is currently under consideration. This amount would allow the setting up of a special emergency fund that could be made available for an initial, urgent and strategic intervention in affected countries. A complimentary step could be earmarking from the Special Account, an amount of \$75 000 (enabling the support of one project each, in the three affected countries), and stimulating the (late) submission of urgent project proposals in time for consideration at the March 2015 meeting of the IPDC Bureau. The eligible countries would be Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea; however, if the outbreak expands to other countries, these would also be eligible to receive the support outlined in this document.

4. CONCLUSION

The IPDC, by proving assistance and response to the Ebola crisis, has an opportunity to demonstrate responsiveness and operational capacity to intervene promptly. Through small but highly strategic financial support, building on three decades of media development experience in these countries, IPDC can reinforce its reliability as a development partner, particularly in emergency situations.

5. COUNCIL ACTION

The Council, having discussed this document, may wish to:

- Request IPDC Secretariat to prepare, in partnership with other UN agencies and relevant stakeholders on the ground, a medium-scale project for the consideration of the next IPDC Bureau meeting in March 2015, and to identify potential donors for Funds in Trust funding.
- Encourage the preparation and submission of projects coming from the Ebola-affected countries or related to the crisis for consideration of the next IPDC Bureau meeting.