

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Development of a Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) Strategy and Implementation Plan in Health Emergencies in Albania

PROJECT:	SOLIDAR – TOGETHER IN HEALTH EMERGENCIES
Category:	National Subcontractor
Corresponding to Outcome:	Outcome 3: Strengthening Community Engagement
Support for Activity:	Output 3.2 The awareness of the population about patients' rights and responsibilities is raised for emergency preparedness and response.
Period of assignment:	25.09.2024 – 30.10.2027

1. BACKGROUND

Albania is a disaster-prone country and occasionally exposed to natural and man-made hazards. Emergency events, such as floods, forest fires, droughts, torrential rains, high snowfalls, heatwaves, landslides, avalanches, earthquakes, and epidemics, are encountered annually. In 2019, Albania experienced a strong earthquake and shortly afterwards, the COVID-19 pandemic hit and put the Albanian healthcare system under considerable pressure, with health services disrupted and many lives lost. Both disasters implied a heavy burden on the country's economy, livelihoods, and human development. The dimension of disasters in Albania are impacted by the level of poverty, state of infrastructure, constructions in risk areas due to fast urbanization, and exploitation of natural resources, such as overuse of forests and riverbanks. The lack of medical emergency supplies and resources during disasters plays a key role, and gaps in coordination between institutions and agencies involved in emergency preparedness and response. Especially, the primary healthcare (PHC) level has limited capacities to respond to a health emergency.

The SOLIDAR project has therefore set itself the goal of: People, including the most vulnerable, have improved access to quality emergency care services managed by a more resilient health emergency system at all levels. The project objectives are: 1) Strengthening the Health Emergency System, 2) Strengthening Emergency Medical Services, and 3) Strengthening Community Engagement. The requested services feed into the third objective.

2. RATIONALE

Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) is a critical component of the response to emergencies, disasters and infectious disease outbreaks. It plays a vital role in health emergency preparedness and response action plans by supporting risk communication and community engagement staff, responders working with national health authorities and other partners in developing, implementing, and monitoring effective action plans. In Albania, there is a significant lack of knowledge about recognizing danger signs and a preference for traditional approaches, particularly in rural and remote areas. The lack of community knowledge about medical emergencies often leads to the use of traditional remedies before seeking professional medical care, resulting in delays in seeking treatment and worsening the patient's condition. Additionally, many people are unaware of the emergency service number (127), indicating a need for better dissemination of information. This lack of awareness about the importance of their health conditions leads many to believe that their health issues are transitory, resulting in delayed or avoided medical care. The absence of a well-structured plan for risk communication during emergencies and engaging communities in



emergencies further exacerbates these issues and highlights the need for a Risk Communication Strategy and Plan for Albania. Identified challenges include resource allocation, raising awareness about the importance of risk communication, effective coordination, and proper use of communication channels, such as social media.

3. ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVE

This assignment's main objective is to develop a comprehensive Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) strategy. This strategy will aim to communicate effectively with the public, engage communities, local partners, and other stakeholders and help prepare and protect individuals, families, and the public's health during the early response to emergencies.

4. ASSIGNMENT SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

To achieve the development of a comprehensive RCCE strategy, the following specific objectives have been set:

- review the analyses project proposal for development of a RCCE strategy and implementation plan, developed by SOLIDAR during the inception phase, and the results of the qualitative research on communication barriers conducted by Together for Life (TFL) aligned with the WHO framework for RCCE development.
- collaborate with SOLIDAR to create effective Behavior Change Campaign messages tailored to various segments of the population,
- develop a detailed implementation plan (including M&E) for engaging local at-risk communities, broader public segments at the local, regional and national levels, and other relevant stakeholders, including health care providers,
- ensure alignment and coordination with local partners, national health authorities, and community leaders to facilitate effective communication and engagement during emergencies, particularly in the planning and implementation phases of the RCCE strategy

5. SCOPE OF WORK

The subcontractor will undertake the following activities

1. *RCCE strategy document development*
 - Situation-Specific Analysis: Analyze the local context, risk levels, and community dynamics to tailor the RCCE plan to specific emergencies (e.g., pandemic, natural disaster, conflict).
 - Incorporate the results of previous work done during the inception phase within the WHO framework for RCCE development, to ensure the strategy is evidence-based.
 - Work with a multidisciplinary team to define the Objectives and Priorities of RCCE Communication, to define and adapt messages and approaches to meet the unique challenges and needs of the affected population.
 - Identify Target Audiences and Communication Channels/ relevant stakeholders such as health authorities, community leaders, NGOs, and the most frequently used communication channels for each target audience.¹

¹ A **community** is a social unit (a group of persons) with a shared socially significant characteristic, such as place, set of norms, culture, religion, values, customs or identity. Communities are usually small with strong personal social ties. In the context of SOLIDAR project, the "communities" are small size localities (municipal units or villages with average populations around 400-600 persons) that share the same place/ geographical location. **Community Engagement** is the process of working collaboratively **with and through groups of people affiliated by geographic proximity, special interest, or similar situations to address issues affecting the well-being of those people** It is a powerful vehicle for bringing about environmental and behavioral changes that will improve the health of the community and its



2. *Message Development: Conduct qualitative research for:*

- Message development/ Tailor messages to the relevant context, audience groups (e.g., healthcare workers, vulnerable populations, public), and type of disaster.

Create and test with target audiences accurate, culturally sensitive **messages** that address misconceptions and promote preventive actions. Use the existing research for communication channels and target audiences. Choose effective communication channels (e.g., radio, social media, community meetings) per type of target audience.

3. *Define, monitor and provide evaluation guidance for the RCCE action plan.*

The implementation plan will facilitate effective RCCE and two-way communication between health authorities and at-risk populations. This plan will cover various types of disasters and emergencies, detailing specific actions for specific target groups, with accent on vulnerable/at risk populations, timeline responsibilities and a stakeholders training program. It will contain but shall not be limited to the:

- Development of a detailed communication plan addressing the different target audiences and implementation timeline that include elements of adaptability, community involvement, and evidence-based communication and ensures coordination of all actors.
- Development of the M&E - Monitoring and Evaluation framework, indicators- including outreach of vulnerable populations, sources of data for indicators;
- Training of stakeholders and partners to jointly implement the defined communication plan. Propose a robust M&E plan that includes indicators, methods, and tools for assessing the impact and effectiveness of RCCE efforts. This plan should ensure continuous improvement through regular feedback and adaptation
- The effective monitoring of the stakeholder's implementation of the RCCE action plan and the provision of quarterly monitoring reports.

Establish mechanisms to assess the impact of RCCE efforts

6. DELIVERABLES

1. RCCE Strategy Document: A RCCE strategy document developed in coordination with SOLIDAR, outlining the overall approach, objectives, and key messages for effective risk communication and community engagement. **Campaign messages** are developed. 15th December 2024.

2. RCCE Implementation, M&E Plan; Mechanism to assess impact defined - 20th February 2025:

3. Training delivered/ Training Report on Capacity Building – 15th April 2025. The report should include participant feedback, lessons learned, and recommendations for future training sessions).

4. Quarterly Monitoring reports of RCCE action plan implementation (Quarterly starting 20th June 2025 till 20th September 2027).



7. APPROACH

The Project will drive reform using a bottom-up and top-down approach, providing advisory services and support at local, regional and national level. This dual approach will ensure a supportive legal environment for project activities, whilst enabling the filtering of practical experience from the ground into the national policy-making processes. This approach will also ensure the sustainability of the Project's activities and enable the scaling up of established new models in other regions of the country.

Through a communication platform, the Project aims to serve as a knowledge and skills building hub where stakeholders can collaborate and coordinate efforts based on standards, best international practices and experiences, and evidence-based methodologies. The platform will utilize the best available instruments to enhance and upgrade stakeholders' understanding, skills and knowledge regarding emergency preparedness and response, and building resilient health systems. The goal is to ensure sustainability and continuous improvement even after the Project support ends. Many of the instruments are built on participatory methods such as workshops, focus groups, exercise drills, surveys, and interviews. These methods will support implementation and gather input and feedback from stakeholders, directed towards monitoring, evaluation and learning, knowledge building and risk management. This is to be included in the feedback mechanism for the national level intervention, assuring a bottom-up to the top approach and exchange, converging all efforts towards the main goal.

The subcontractor will adopt a proactive approach to communicate what is known, what is unknown, and what is being done to gather more information, with the objective of saving lives and minimizing adverse consequences.

LOCATION

Albania - Nationally and regionally coverage.

Table 1: Intervention areas of the SOLIDAR (Territorial Area Coverage Approach)- TACA

Nr.	TACA	Regional Operator	Municipality
1	Fushë-Kruja – Kruja – Kamza – Vora	Tirana	Kruja
			Fushë-Kruja
			Kamza
			Vora
2	Puka - Fushë-Arrëz – Luf – Qelëz – Gjegjan	Shkodra	Puka
			Fushë-Arrëz
3	Velipoja – Dajç	Shkodra	Shkodra
4	Malësia e Madhe	Shkodra	Malësia e Madhe
5	Tepelena – Përmet - Këlcyra	Vlora	Tepelena
			Përmet
			Këlcyra
6	Cërrik – Belsh – Gramsh – Peqin	Elbasan	Gramsh
			Peqin
			Cërrik
			Belsh

8. QUALITY ASSURANCE

The SOLIDAR project is highly committed to ensuring the highest quality of its actions. Therefore, each assignment must aim to ensure the attainment of the best possible quality outcomes. During this assignment, the expert shall apply the following quality measures:



- Apply a methodological approach that is of the highest quality and state-of-the art.
- Effectively communicate with the project staff and community to manage expectations and address any concerns.
- Provide reports to highlight meaningful progress in the different intervention areas; Hold meetings with the SOLIDAR project staff to ensure timely feedback on the course of action and to spot potential changes needed in the actions undertaken.
- Comply with the projects' directives, procurement guidelines and visibility and communication guidelines and rules.
- Receive approval from the SOLIDAR on final products prepared (draft and final documents of the RCCE strategy and implementation plan).

9. SERVICE PERIOD

The assignment will start on 25.09.2024 – 30.10.2027

10. QUALIFICATION AND SELECTION CRITERIA FOR THE ORGANIZATION

Qualification Criteria

The SOLIDAR project seeks to hire registered organizations with experience in Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) strategy development. The candidate organization should have similar experience in public health/ social behaviors research/ assessment in communication /behaviors change in community/ youth education- at least 2 projects in their experience, etc. in the past activities.

11. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

The bidders are invited to submit a proposal that includes:

- **A technical proposal** consisting of a detailed methodology of the assignment with the description of the proposed approach, timeline of proposed activities in view of obtaining the needed deliverables of this assignment.
- **A financial proposal** including a proposed budget, including a breakdown of costs per deliverable of expert fees, number of working days, and all other activity costs.

12. AWARD CRITERIA

The weighted average basis will be applied to evaluate the applicant as below:

AC	Award Criteria	Weighting
	Technical Proposal	70%
AC 1	Approach and methodology for the assignment	20%
AC 2	Work Plan, including proposed timeline	20%
AC 3	Qualification of Personnel: 1. One senior communication expert with a minimum of 5 years of relevant experience in Communication and /or Strategy design and / or implementation of communication strategies and /or journalism and /or other media programs. A higher degree (Master or PhD) in a relevant field such as Communication, Public Health, Emergency Management, Community Engagement, or a related discipline. 2. One senior expert in qualitative research on public health, and/or social sciences/ or risk communication.	20%



	<p>A higher degree (Master or PhD) in relevant field as above and a minimum of 5 years of relevant experience in communication, emergency management, public health, social sciences or /and community engagement, would be a priority and would serve as additional points in the selection.</p> <p>The experts should have the following Skills to address effectively and timely the specific requirements of these assignments:</p> <p>Communication Skills: Ability to proactively communicate what is known, what is unknown, and what is being done to get more information.</p> <p>Community Engagement Skills: Ability to engage with the community and at-risk populations to help alleviate confusion and avoid misunderstandings.</p> <p>Coordination Skills: Ability to coordinate with various stakeholders including humanitarian coordination architecture, development actors, and the private sector.</p>	
AC 4	M& E and Follow up plan for sustainability of the intervention	10%
	Financial Proposal	30%
AC 5	Clarity and coherence of the financial proposal	10%
AC 6	Financial score = lowest price / price of the tender being considered x 100	20%

13. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In order to respond to the objectives of the assignment, the candidate is expected to closely work with the project "SOLIDAR". The project team will provide all the necessary documents and facilitate access to different sources of information, whenever possible.

The SOLIDAR project team will monitor and supervise the selected organization in every step of the process. No action will be taken without the approval of the SOLIDAR Project.

All activities should be conducted according to the requirements and timeline in these Terms of Reference.