

**How can the Pandemic
Centre communicate
information about the
pandemic effectively to the
public and stakeholders?**

By Thomas Hukahu

Introduction

- When Covid-19 entered the Pacific at the start of 2020, it was a time of debate
- Most debates, even from educated people, were not based on good science, good journalism and good scholarship (no fact-checking tactics were used, or credible sources sought)

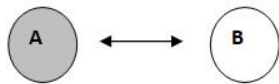
Body 1: What is communication

- Communication: the transmission or exchange of information, knowledge or ideas, by means of speech, writing, mechanical or electronic media (Oxford English Dictionary, 2019)
- *Communicare* (Latin): means to ‘share with’, ‘to share out’, ‘make generally accessible’, or ‘discuss together’ (van Ruler, 2018)

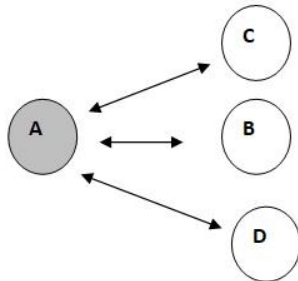
Body 2: Old media and new media

- The traditional media: conversation, speech, books, newspaper, telegraph, telephone, TV
- The new media: computers, internet, apps, social media, tablets, smart phones (potential of one-to-very-many communication is available here)

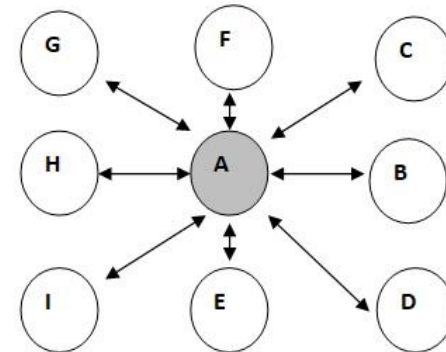
One-to-one



One-to-many



One-to-very-many



Body 3: Fake news is serious

- Fake news is not novel, nor are conspiracy theories
- After getting fake news, people in some developing countries drank chlorine, cow urine or hot water in the hope of curing Covid-19
- Some governments are strict with this: In Singapore a website owner spreading fake news about the vaccine used was to be taken to court
- To stop the spread of misleading information, people must be trained to identify and recognise fake news
- Do not tolerate people who spread false information
- Swamp the landscape with accurate information

Body 4: How states manage it

- In Adelaide and South Australia, the state, the authorities were active and did better than those in the eastern states. People were compliant too
- Measures include closing night clubs and restaurants, and closing borders in mid 2020
- In New Zealand, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was very strict. Her government aimed to 'inform and educate' and acted on 'the best available science and health advice'
- In PNG, it was chaotic. People were not getting the correct information and were unsure

Body 5: The website of NCC

Niupela Pasin

PAPUA NEW GUINEA
JOINT AGENCY TASK FORCE
NATIONAL CONTROL CENTRE FOR COVID-19
As established under the National Pandemic Act 2020

3rd Floor Morauta Haus, Waigani, National Capital District

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Papua New Guinea COVID-19 Statistics

As of 6th October 2022

Total Cases	45,091
New Cases	24
Active Cases	108
Deaths	668
Recovered	44,315
People Tested	249,149
People Vaccinated	348,938
Total Delta Cases	741

Stay up to date with the latest information on COVID-19 in Papua New Guinea

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Members of the public are advised that the National Control Centre (NCC) Call Centre can now be accessed by email. For all your queries please email to the following address:
hotline@covid19.info.gov.pg We will do our best to respond to your email within 24-48 hours. Thank you.

PNG Coronavirus Toll Free Number: 1800 200

Suggestions 1-4

- The Pandemic Centre (NCC) must have a clear communication plan and communicate, not react
- The NCC must communicate regularly (using local material), during crisis and even in post-crisis
- Use multiple platforms, including social media (Remember the potential of one-to-very-many, and interact using 'new media' with text, photo and videos)
- Communicate simply in English

Suggestions 5-8

- Communicate in local languages (many people in PNG do not speak English, and are illiterate)
- Engage people who are 'experts' (know how to engage the public on new media)
- Urge Prime Minister and Health Minister to be in the lead team (Remember the NZ example)
- Do not tolerate fake news: Penalise offenders (Singapore: Website owner spreading fake news about vaccine used was to be prosecuted)

Conclusion

- PNG is not ready for the next pandemic: Deputy Pandemic Controller
- The start of 2020 was a time of debate
- Most debates were not based on good science, good journalism and good scholarship
- NCC must work closely with the Prime Minister and Minister of Health and other authorities and learn upgrade their strategies
- NCC must engage experts to use 'new media' to better engage with the public

References

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The End

Thank you!