

**Module 4:**  
**IHR Risk Communication Capacity:**  
**Listening through Dialogue**

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# Risk communication in practice

<b>Old Model:</b>	One-way communication to inform
<b>New Model:</b>	Two-way communications to dialogue
<b>Old Objective:</b>	Warn of risk
<b>New Objective:</b>	Partnership to co- manage risk

# Yellow fever: Paraguay, 2008

- 5 February 2008: five cases of jungle yellow fever are confirmed in Paraguay
- Health Authority: “*the greatest risk that we face is the reurbanization of yellow fever: focus blockade and vaccination*” (Última Hora/6 Feb.).



# Yellow fever: Paraguay, 2008

## What happened?

- The “First Announcement” was confusing.
- The confusion triggered the crisis.
- Lack of preparedness
- Failure to designate official spokespersons prior to the outbreak.
- Situation eased with the naming of official spokespersons.



## Yellow fever: Paraguay, 2008

- Don't over-reassure: New situation jeopardizes effective communication: "*Asunción is not at risk of infection, but people continue to clamor for vaccination;*" (Vice Minister of Health, 8 Feb. ABC Color).
- This contradictory information led to growing popular demand for vaccination, a situation that was exacerbated by a campaign of public pressure during the electoral season



# Yellow fever: Paraguay, 2008

That same day, ABC Color reported:

- ***Health Authorities today changed the diagnosis of a patient who was admitted and died last week. It was a young man who had been admitted with symptoms compatible with yellow fever and dengue. Hours later, the government announced that he had died of hepatitis B. Today, the report was reviewed and it was announced that yellow fever was the cause of death ... The young man is a native of Laurelty.***

## Yellow fever: Paraguay, 2008

- *“Laurelty was stricken with despair after the death of two of its residents in a single day, both apparently from suspected yellow fever. (Última Hora/13 Feb.)”*
- *“Residents of Laurelty block the road between San Lorenzo and Luque. Some 500 people demand that all residents in the area be vaccinated. The demonstrators demand a visit by the Minister of Health. Ministry staff launched an immunization effort this morning. The operation was overwhelmed by masses of citizens desperately seeking vaccination.” (ABC Color/13 Feb.)*

# Yellow fever: Paraguay, 2008



Paraguay attempts to calm the panic unleashed by the yellow fever outbreak 7/2/08

*"We want to end the panic that was unleashed. We ask the press to calm the population"*, said Vice Minister of Health, Antonio Barrios.

Diario El País

"BBC wonders whether Paraguay is experiencing an epidemic or psychosis 21/2/08

"Is this really an epidemic, or instead, a 'collective psychosis,' as many are calling it?"



Fear grows as more cases of yellow fever emerge 8/2/08

While the Ministry of Public Health tries to calm the population's fears about a possible epidemic outbreak of yellow fever, citizens' concerns rise.



In Paraguay, the yellow fever panic has overwhelmed vaccination centers

Other lessons learned:

Weaknesses in the identification of communication channels to listen and deal directly with the public, listen to their opinions and concerns, and at the same time revamping messages to respond their questions. Example: Call Centers



# Listening: Factors to consider

**Perceptions**

**Beliefs**

**Trust in the source**

**Information sources**

**Socioeconomic status**

**Policy**

**Culture**

**Education**



# Listening through dialogue

## IHR Risk Communication Capacity:

### Listening through Dialogue

1. Gather and assess existing community cultural, language and socio-economic profiles
2. Adopt listening/dialogue templates and tools for use in emergencies
3. Ensure an efficient information gathering system is in place and plan to reflect its findings into decision making processes