

[HANDOUT 14] Responding to rumours & misinformation

DOs

Acknowledge confusion and fears. Reassure people that their fear is real and normal.

Address the rumour. Give useful, verified and timely information and advice.

Work with community influencers. Try to engage trusted members of the community.

Communicate and engage early and transparently. Rumours can fade out, or grow.

Tell the community they are part of the solution. Remember that epidemics start and end in the community.

DON'Ts

Stay silent/ignore the rumour. Silence increases ambiguity and confusion, and shows that you are not listening.

Simply dismiss or deny a rumour. Denial does not eliminate ambiguity and may increase it.

Denigrate a person who believes a rumour. Belittling or insulting someone is not helpful or effective.

Attack those who started the rumour. You risk throwing more fuel onto the fire.

Provide only technical facts. People have reasons to be anxious, or simply in denial. Try to understand why they behave the way they do.