

# Breakthrough ACTION Leads Risk Communication Training for Press Members

The press has a key role to play before and during health emergencies; however, this role can become counterproductive if they do not follow ethical principles for collecting, processing, and disseminating information. In this context, Breakthrough ACTION, in collaboration with the National Agency for Health Security (ANSS) and the National Health Promotion Service (SNPS), trained 50 journalists in Conakry, Guinea to familiarize them with the principles of risk communication. The training was also designed to help the media comply with government guidelines for disseminating information during emergencies.

The Guinean health system is currently threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic, a deadly virus that appeared in Wuhan, China in late 2019. At the time of this training in March 2020, the country had just recorded its first confirmed case of COVID-19 and all health service stakeholders were on alert. Fear and anxiety were on the minds of many Guineans. They had painful memories of the Ebola virus epidemic that killed thousands of people, and the stigma of that outbreak. During the first days and months of the Ebola outbreak, Guinea drew attention because of its disorganized communication approach, which, ultimately, had disastrous consequences. The Breakthrough ACTION workshop helped to avoid a similar outcome by providing a framework to organize and manage the dissemination of information, a key concern for ANSS and the Ministry of Health.

During the risk communication workshop, journalists participated in the following activities:

- Developed an action plan for each media outlet
- Made a commitment to abide by the official procedures put in place by the ANSS and the SNPS
- Subscribed to the ANSS WhatsApp platform to facilitate access to reliable sources of information.

The training demonstrated the importance of involving the press at all stages of the response to a health emergency. The more the press is trained to work before and during health emergencies, the better they can communicate accurate information to the public. The press must be considered an integral part of, and a strong link in, the pandemic response.

*“This training has given me a better understanding of risk communication and how to avoid information processing failures from now on.”*


—Ibrahima Bah, Radio Fottèn Golè

*“I recognize that in the past I was quick to disseminate information about the pandemic without taking the time to cross-check it. With this training, I will now seek information from official sources.”*

—Sory Bangoura, Espace FM

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