

INNOVATIVE MODELS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

SHOW AND TELL HIGHLIGHTS REPORT #2

JANUARY 16, 2019



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MSF’s Displacement Unit organises a series of informal gatherings for humanitarian innovators based in Nairobi called “Show and Tell”. This open forum aims to showcase specific initiatives that are relevant to technical problem solvers in the sector. The gatherings are kept purposely small and are geared at gaining insight on technical solutions – products and services – from the Nairobi’s humanitarian community. The initiatives presented describe tangible and thought provoking field operations innovation.

WHY COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND WHY THIS GATHERING?

Humanitarian organizations face today new situations that challenge operations and their proximity to the communities they serve. These challenges are related for example, to the reappearance of eradicated diseases, unexpected outbreak patterns, and increased limitation of physical access to vulnerable populations. New models of communication and engagement are needed to parallel these operational challenges and opportunities like the unmatched global access to information and technology. Looking for non-traditional individuals and approaches is key to achieve efficient responses and promote ownership and empowerment.

In the current stage of global budget reduction and increasing number and length of crises, the multiplication of response actors, and a revolutionary change in power dynamics and decision making lines in humanitarian emergency response is expected. Humanitarian organizations must remain open to ideas from national partners and civil groups, to inspire and help develop new programmatic capacities and a user centred attitude, if they are to keep their impact and relevance across the emerging contexts of humanitarian response.

- **Health promotion in challenging emergencies – an introduction**
Habiba Ali Amin, Project Medical Responsible MSF OCBA Somalia mission
- **Behaviour change approach to community engagement**
Charles Orora, Social and Behaviour Change Communication Coordinator, Population Services Kenya
- **Multimedia feedback about services for refugees**
Joseph Kyobe, Regional growth lead Kuja Kuka (online)
- **Empowerment training as a prevention of sexual violence, Kenya**
Nancy Akoth, Empowerment Training Program and Micheal Osore, Field Coordinator, Ujamaa
- **A community led response to disease outbreak through film**
Mordecai Odera, Programmes Director, FilmAid International
- **Managing patient journeys and engagement through SMS**
Sathy Rajasekharan, Chief Innovation Officer, Jacaranda Health
- **Social and media habits of urban refugees in Kenya**
Hassan Ibrahim, Independent consultant

HEALTH PROMOTION IN CHALLENGING EMERGENCIES - INTRODUCTION

HABIBA ALI AMIN, PROJECT MEDICAL RESPONSIBLE MSF OCBA SOMALIA

Project description

“What could we have done differently to better involve the community, proactively preventing outbreaks from making operations so complex?” In this presentation, Habiba set the tone by introducing a well-known and challenging context of MSF interventions where community engagement is often very difficult to carry out. The project dates back to 2011, when MSF provided secondary health care in the famine in Somalia to 400.000 internally displaced persons, divided over 5 camps from different clans. The team had three main priorities: malnutrition, measles and cholera outbreaks. In all of these activities, and in particular regarding outbreaks, health promotion and community engagement is fundamental. The team developed two strategies to pass health promotion messages while dealing with very tight security, small team and poor literacy of the community: mobile clinic team verbal communication and graphic communication depicting messages on a water tank visited by most of the community.



MULTIMEDIA FEEDBACK ABOUT SERVICES FOR REFUGEES

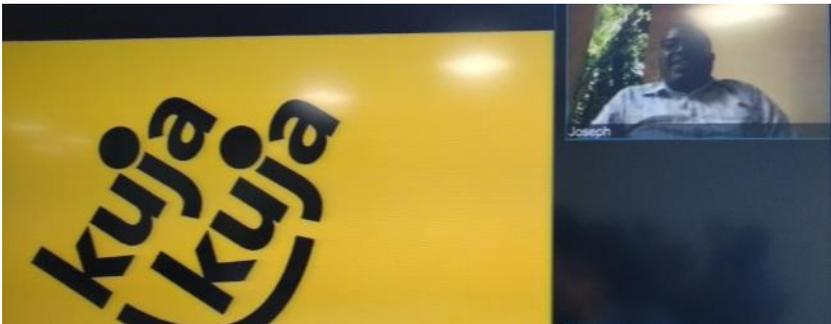
JOSEPH KYOBE, REGIONAL GROWTH LEAD KUJA KUKA (ONLINE)

Project description

Kuja Kuja is a real time feedback system developed by the American Refugee Committee that allows organizations to improve their products on a continuous basis with input from their customers. A project in Mahama refugee camp, Rwanda was given as an example, where every day, a team of over 50 community agents visits the community to ask feedback – in different languages - on the provided WASH services. The responses about satisfaction and ideas on how to improve are displayed directly in a dashboard and map, both of open access to the public. This information is processed weekly by an innovation team who incorporates ideas into operational programming. In the near future, Kuja Kuja is exploring how data can be entered using different approaches and technologies to increase participation. Currently a ‘self-swipe’ is being tested, where people can enter their answers on a tablet, located at a central point in the camp.

What we learned

- Kuja Kuja can be expanded in different contexts of technology penetration and literacy, as well as to the evaluation of different services in a humanitarian situation.
- It is important to share the changes made based on the received feedback back to the community, letting people know that they are heard and their feedback is valued is as much part of engagement as asking for feedback.
- The feedback dashboard will be launched soon at the webpage www.kujakuja.com



BEHAVIOUR CHANGE APPROACH TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

CHARLES ORORA, SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE COMMUNICATION
COORDINATOR, POPULATION SERVICES KENYA

Project description

Behaviour change theory, applied to communication is a helpful tool to understand communities and to design appropriate approaches of community engagement. The achievement of operational objectives through community engagement should be regarded as a process where a holistic, multimedia and multiphase approach of communication is designed. This process is iterative and includes tailored messages in each phase and level. Where we tend to focus a lot on individual / household level, the social ecological model describes the different layers that should be included in to reach behaviour change. Layers include individual, their interpersonal relationships, support organizations community and public policy. Understanding the extent of pre-existing knowledge about a certain topic, as well as the aid historical background and perceptions at each layer is key for a successful tailoring of different messages. Preventively, through routine interventions and key informants, a knowledge database can be developed by organizations.

What we learned

- There are widely available evidence-based techniques and tools to understand the ecology of communities, how information is shared and captured and who the real influencers are.
- In the humanitarian setting, doing an extensive assessment is hard. Work should be done prior to an emergency to ensure the organization is ready and informed about the most adequate approaches for each community.



EMPOWERMENT TRAINING AS A PREVENTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

NANCY AKOTH, EMPOWERMENT TRAINING PROGRAM, UJAMAA

MICHEAL OSORE, FIELD COORDINATOR, UJAMAA

Project description

Ujamaa’s work extends to Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Malawi where they carry out specifically tailored training for school girls and boys, aiming to prevent sexual violence amongst children between 8 and 16 years old. The primary focus of the training is the prevention of sexual violence through techniques that include situational awareness, assertiveness and negotiation, bystanders intervention skills and finally physical defence. Ujamaa recently extended the modules with a component of aftercare. Curriculums are always adjusted to a specific context of the location and type of violence, following a thorough needs assessment. Ujamaa is physically present in the community neighbourhoods it operated with wellness centres providing referral, counselling and peer support services. Through these centres, school drop outs can be reached and the community can be engaged with the programs taught in schools.

What we learned

- The holistic approach provided by Ujamaa tackles a problem at its root while simultaneously dealing with the causes at different levels of the community.
- The engagement of different layers of the community with a very targeted focus works effectively to improve attitudes towards violence against women, to create ownership, proudness with which violence reduction is in the hands of the community.



A COMMUNITY LED RESPONSE TO DISEASE OUTBREAK THROUGH FILM

MORDECAI ODERA, PROGRAMMES DIRECTOR, FILMAID INTERNATIONAL

Project description

Film Aid creates multimedia solutions in collaboration with communities and organizations in humanitarian emergency contexts. People from the community are at the core of the process from its inception, defining existing perception, needs, practices and preferences, and they are “assets” in the production of content: actors, script writers and technicians. The partnering organisation provides the technical information and sometimes a space for filming, e.g. a hospital ward when it concerns a health related topic. Dramatization has proven to be the best practice in most contexts, sometimes accompanied by a professional, like a doctor, who adds to the story. Different screenings formats have been explored that include mobile cinema and mobile kits (television, flash disk and speakers) given to the community to enjoy over a longer period of time. FilmAid has developed experience in carrying out evaluations to monitor the change of knowledge by the community.

What we learned

- Film is an appealing and very effective channel through which to pass on key messages e.g. for outbreak prevention. FilmAid demonstrates how the required capacity can be developed within “emergency timeframes”.
- Messages and formats created and owned by a community are very effective and sustainable way to empower a community to contribute to organizations’ operational objectives, on the short and long-term.



MANAGING PATIENT JOURNEYS AND ENGAGEMENT THROUGH SMS

SATHY RAJASEKHARAN, CHIEF INNOVATION OFFICER, JACARANDA HEALTH

Project description

Jacaranda Health primarily operates in Kenya with a focus on maternal and newborn health. Driving Jacaranda's work - 18 beds hospital - is the concern that the number of maternal deaths in Kenya is not decreasing, despite the increased number of mothers giving birth in hospitals. The required quality of care in medical institutions requires attention to issues such as, women not seeking medical help at the right time. An important component of Jacaranda Health is a two way SMS information system where messages about service satisfaction, pre-, post- and antenatal care information and health concerns are exchanged. The system was developed iteratively and following evidence created through applied research about the preferences of women (and partners) regarding content and timing of communication. A strategy based on timing and continuity is effective to build trust amongst the receivers and women who do not want intimidation by health providers. Yearly, 1500 women are being added to the service.

What we learned

- The focus on innovative solutions must not deter humanitarian organizations to adopt solutions that have been already implemented elsewhere. Key is the capacity to adapt an intervention following the discovery of new facts from "learn by doing".
- Building trust with the right channel and timing can make a single message effective for different types of users.



SOCIAL AND MEDIA HABITS OF URBAN REFUGEES IN KENYA

HASSAN IBRAHIM, INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT

Project description

The Facebook-funded research project 'Social Media as a Lifeline' (Jan 2018) aimed to investigate how urban refugees use social media and included: Home survey to refugees of different countries of origin in Nairobi, and data analysis of the top 3 conversations held by refugees over the course of three weeks. WhatsApp was the most commonly used media (80%). In this platform, refugees are part of large conversation groups and have different patterns of communication according to countries of origin. 90 of 100 completed the study, mostly refugees between 35 and 40 years old from Somalia and the Great Lakes. Findings included information on community support mechanisms such as engagement with police authorities in WhatsApp to hand in sought persons as a prevention of civil unrest in certain neighbourhoods; and difference between male and female refugee choice of paths. The participation of refugees required a continuous interaction with the researchers and different strategies to gain and keep trust about the work being carried out.

What we learned

- Social media users are diverse and use channels for different purposes. Social media based strategies need to accommodate for that diversity. Also, refugees' access to social media is determined by political decisions about access to other, indirect assets (e.g. mobile money).
- Existing social networks develop strong coping mechanisms to deal with shared challenges. Gaining insight on trust mechanisms and real time concerns helps humanitarian organizations improve their services.



INNOVATIVE MODELS OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

KEY MESSAGES

The participant presentations were very diverse but all reflected basic principles: presence in neighbourhoods because of differences, community roles as assets, do it iterative approach, use of trusted formats. The group was challenged to think of using these principles in the context of MSF malnutrition and outbreak responses during the Somalia malnutrition crisis in 2013 to assist 400.000 internally displaced persons. Due to very tight security circumstances interventions in Somalia required the coordination of a “thin team” with reduced physical access to the population, to respond alone, to simultaneous outbreaks (cholera, measles) from centralized locations. In such challenges contexts operations must often rely on translators and key informants who impede a clear relationship building with populations.

In order to guide the “Good ideas, shared practices” discussion, a few points were raised to challenge the participants to think together about how innovative services like the ones presented can be deployed in a context where e.g. organizations do not have physical access to populations. The group further reflected and shared experiences about effective scale up and monitoring of services within emergency timeframes, ways to create ownership by communities beyond training and mistakes often carried out by our organizations. In the end of the session, participants shared a round of thoughts about regional, global and technological trends that will affect our work in the future.



“The enemy of scale is to think of scale”

When defining community engagement solutions, start with a small group of people proposing feedback and consequent changes on a particular idea. This iterative approach is more likely to provide better and faster understanding of success than a lengthy planning process involving many voices and targeting many people. This, independently of whether the particular idea emerges from a pre-selected tool or from a thorough consultation of the audience. A clear focus in mind will allow the teams to start immediately engaging with the community around a tangible solution. Later on, building in a feedback system beyond satisfaction surveys, will allow projects and communities to have a collaborative responsibility in programs. Naturally, effective engagement and solutions with true potential, result in domino effect and ownership across communities.

Job approach vs service approach

Community-led services – complementary to (i)NGO services – can be instrumental to boost operational outcomes. However there are settings more conducive for this than others. In camp settings, where several actors are present, the community is likely more dependent and engaged in incentive hopping. In addition, work and volunteering conditions might be highly limited; In urban settings, rewards are less expected, and existing services are more likely to develop.



“Nobody asked me”

Facilitation is (i)NGOs true added value in the humanitarian sector. The community on its own, can play different relevant roles in assistance: people to train, to develop autonomous services and to hold stories/past data. NGOs have assessment and engagement tools but lack critical and conversational capacity to go beyond a simple answer and build a sense of trust “What I did in CAR I will do in DRC”. The concept of empowerment goes beyond listening. It means to value and invest in the opinion of others and believe in their capacities. Mobility and staff turnover in the sector increase the context analysis capacity by (i)NGO staff but is disruptive. For this reason, it is worth complementing operations with community empowerment that retains the memory of the response. There are tools that can help develop this thinking and understanding of the ecology of communities, and how influence and knowledge develops. The organizational resistance to change the power dynamics of humanitarian assistance and empower the community, may well be in the lack of capacity to work iteratively and fear for loss of identity.

Making sense of built up experience

Organizations should have a database with context, historical data and lessons learnt from previous interventions, to be able to act adequately. Building a database is one solution that raises a question without a clear answer; how do we balance time for capturing knowledge and solving disasters? Essential for a database to work, is a learning and adaptive attitude to ensure that the experience built up is transferred from the individual – part of staff or community – to the wider organization. Siloed job positions in (i)NGOs promote the disconnect of learning – which is required from assessment to evaluation.



Fifteen years from now....

In a near future, the practice of community engagement, community-led responses will be key in circumstances where the rights of (i)NGOs to operate is limited. More acute climate events, increase of world population and displacement trends will challenge NGOs methods and bias.

Decision making processes will need to adapt to more vocal/empowered but also sceptical authorities and citizens. And finally, with the increase of (access to) information worldwide, it will become harder to synthesize and trust information from numerous sources, as well as to consume it responsibly. A navigation capacity is needed as well as understanding the new type of risks associated with wrong decisions and approaches to use and remain a trusted source. This will be a new aspect of community engagement for (i)NGO's.





Atsushi Shibuya ©

We would like to thank the participants of this Show and Tell for their contribution and openness to discussion.

The MSF Displacement Unit was created with the aim of delivering adapted products to the field operations that address emerging operational challenges related to the assistance of refugee, internally displaced and people on the move.

displacementunit.msf.es

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