An enquiry of the dissemination of RMNCH messages using digital tools under Samvad during COVID-19

Background
Project Samvad aims to improve the knowledge and practices related to the first 1000 days period in six states of India through digital media tools. Under the project, audio and visual material are developed by Digital Green and circulated to the target beneficiaries through the Front Line Workers (FLW) of government and non-government organization. During the pandemic, the WhatsApp and IVR were used as tools to generate awareness, instead of the usual Pico projectors. For ensuring optimal coverage the FLWs received trainings on these alternative platforms. A monitoring exercise was conducted after three months of implementation, in September 2020, to understand role played by the FLWs and other aspects related to the implementation of WhatsApp and IVR based disseminations.

Objectives of the monitoring exercise
• To explore the role and training of FLWs in the project
• To identify the enablers and barriers in implementing WhatsApp and IVR based dissemination of RMNCH messages

Process adopted
• Telephonic discussions were conducted with 224 FLWs from five project states – Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh
• Similar discussions were held with programme staff from DG as well as government and non-government partners

Training and performance of FLWs (in%)

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<th>Training and performance</th>
<th>FLWs who</th>
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<tr>
<td>trained in WhatsApp group formation</td>
<td>52.2%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
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<td>who formed groups</td>
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<td>who shared videos</td>
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Key Findings
86% FLWs watched self-learning videos on role of FLWs during COVID-19
72% FLWs reported that generating awareness about taking precautions related to COVID-19 infection and motivating people to participate in WhatsApp group discussion were their key roles in this process
Prominent reasons of low participation of FLWs in training were lack of information about the training schedules
Key enablers: Acceptance of the approach by partners due to COVID-19, repurposing the videos as per government’s agenda, penetration of mobile phones
Key barriers: Difficulty in repurposing 10 min videos to 3 min, problems related to internet connectivity, and additional expense on mobile data for sharing/watching of videos

Way Forward
Loop in different other IVR channels running (govt. and private) and play the contents of these videos.
Plan activities as per partner’s need to expedite institutionalization process.
Advocacy and liaison with district or block level authorities of the government to increase the reach of the WhatsApp videos and IVR messages.
Assign Nodal Person from partners to communicate with FLWs and regularize monitoring related to sharing of WhatsApp videos to target beneficiaries.
Building partner’s internal capacity to use and promote digital approaches.
Assessment of Digital Media Tools under Project Samvad

Background
Project Samvad aims to improve the knowledge and practice related to the first 1000 days in 6 states which have poor maternal and child health outcomes. It adopted WhatsApp and IVRS based approach to disseminate information during COVID-19.

Objectives of the monitoring exercise
- To assess the exposure to messages disseminated through different digital media tools (like WhatsApp and videos, IVR).
- To understand the utility of the repurposed videos and IVRS messages for the community members.

Process Adopted
- Information was collected telephonically from 5 states (Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Uttarakhand)
- Sample size: 318 Mediators and 540 Community members

Learning
Awareness about WhatsApp and IVR service can help increase its use.
IVR phone numbers may be saved in mediator and community members’ phones to identify where the information coming from.
Short duration videos are preferred by community.
IVR messaging should be continued to reach those who did not have access to smartphones.

Key Findings
Out of all mediators and community members who watched/heard the messages, more than 90% of the mediators in four states (except Bihar- 88.6%) and almost 100% of community members found the messages useful.

Advantage of these messages include simple and brief content and ease of accessing. IVR messages were preferred because it could be heard in feature phones as well.

Exposure to Whatsapp Videos
- More than 90% mediators in Bihar and Chhattisgarh while more than 75% of community in Odisha watched Samvad videos.
- Videos on WASH is most watched (92%), followed by IYCF (76%), Mother’s diet (65%), Family Planning (58%).
- Videos watched more than once: WASH (87.1%), FP (60%), IYCF (58%), Mother’s diet (52%)

Exposure to IVR
- 58% of mediators and 32.8% of community received messages.
- Lack of awareness about IVR service and phone related problems are common reasons for not receiving.
- Also female mediators did not carry phone during field work.