Experiences in scale up of Samvad Project

A. Video Production, Dissemination
Challenges and Program Opportunities:

In the video production, skills of those involved at the front line is critical from the quality perspectives. It is also important that adequate skill sets are available for doing formative research, gap analysis, designing the content and developing a story line. In want of these skills, quality of video production suffers and this also reflects in terms of fewer number of health and nutrition issues covered via community videos.

At the field level a right kind of skill mix will be helpful to develop and continuously trained. A standard operating procedure and guidelines that details out step by step procedure would be helpful for improving quality of videos produced, coming up with more number of community videos and sustaining the project beyond its life cycle. The video approach to disseminate the key RMNCH messages, support behavior change and improve practices is found useful by the frontline workers (FLW) and also appreciated by the community. It allows the community to come together, share their concerns, talk about their challenges and discuss solutions. The approach makes the work easier for the FLWs to disseminate health information as part of their job. However, the field teams find that fewer number of videos on the subject and repetition of old videos drain the interest of participants in the video sessions.

The approach presents an opportunity and makes a strong case to replicate the approach for dissemination of information and support behavior change for other health conditions and diseases. 'No More Malaria' in Chhattisgarh has adopted this approach in one of the districts. It is therefore important that new videos are continuously produced and old videos are improved by adding new content.

At times field teams and FLWs find it difficult to disseminate videos through the conventional approach due to a variety of reasons such as hard to reach areas they work in, weather conditions and competing work priorities. Other than these issues, hardware related challenges, maintenance and repair also constrain field dissemination of the videos. Field teams constantly try to find out innovative means of reaching out to the target groups and they found social media platforms useful for dissemination of community videos.

Using What's App group is emerging an effective means of dissemination and discussion over video content and the topic under dissemination. The project may also try to explore other platforms such as facebook and telegram which allow large number of members to be added.
B. Partnership and collaboration

Local level partnership and field collaborations have helped in operationalizing the project in various ways. In the process of videos dissemination, alignment of frontline workers at the field level has helped in mobilizing the women and facilitating community discussions on issues pertaining to health and nutrition. The collaboration with the stakeholders in the project has helped in easing coordination, arranging dissemination logistics, seeking cooperation from the district and block level health, nutrition and livelihood functionaries.

C. Human Resource Issues

The human resource related issues are experienced at two levels viz: Digital Green (DG) staff and at the frontline workers' level who engage in the project for video dissemination. These issues affected the program rollout and quality of the implementation. The DG staff realized lack of skills in the functional areas of RMNCH that affected the way support could have been extended to the field staff. At the stakeholders' level, especially the frontline workers of National Livelihood Mission lacked adequate skills on RMNCH and general lack of facilitation skills to respond to the queries and moderate the issue based discussion with women's and men's groups. Further to this, the frontline workers also experienced challenges pertaining to work pressure, multiple program priorities, lack of regular skill trainings and also no incentives to take on additional work.

It is highly recommended that the human resource and training issues should be prioritized in the project to enhance the quality of program implementation. A set of technical and management guidelines should be prepared and form the part of staff orientation under Samvad project. It should capture the RMNCH related technical material and basic management tips on organizing the meetings, field coordination, mobilizing the target groups, program data collection and so forth. The staff should be oriented on the package and a mobile friendly soft copy should be delivered to them for reference.

The project should also do advocacy at the state level on incentivizing the work by proposing some incentives in PIP budget under innovation or SBCC support to maternal and child health. The advocacy should also happen around bringing the dissemination within the regular work of the frontline staff.
D. Scale up, Sustainability and Program Advocacy

For program scale up; process documentation, development of guidance notes and standardizing operations are critical components other than enhancing capacity of those functionaries that operationalize program at different levels and roll it out at the ground. The constraints such as program knowledge, understanding of implementation model and reporting mechanisms are realized at different levels of program structure under Samvadt that affect program quality and constrain scale up and sustainability of the program.

It would be desired that the program documents its processes, identify areas where standardization would be required. In addition to this, capacity enhancement would also be critical and for that training manuals should be developed for quality assurance and standardizing the process. Sustainability requires that the program is absorbed in the existing systems and structures that the government has. It also requires that the various resources that are required to run the program are identified and allocated. The project needs to come up with an advocacy strategy to promote the program at national and state levels for scaling up and sustaining it. It would be helpful to engage the government stakeholders at each level of program discussion and decision making. This will help in allocating funds under the state PIP to have dedicated resources to support dissemination of videos.

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