How simple technologies can help with CDD communications and monitoring to prevent the spread of COVID-19

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Given the COVID-19 outbreak and widespread calls for physical distancing, this is a good time to look at some simple technologies to facilitate community processes. Below are some simple, low-tech solutions that teams can tap into for communications and monitoring to prevent the spread of COVID-19 through ongoing CDD operations. We would be happy to work with teams to help integrate any of the below in their platforms. These low-tech solutions can be used to communicate culturally appropriate messages on preventive measures and establish community feedback mechanisms to support two-way communications to monitor the spread of COVID-19 in target communities.

1. **WHO COVID19 Alerts via WhatsApp**

This messaging service was launched by WHO on March 20, 2020 with WhatsApp and Facebook to keep people safe from coronavirus. This is an easy-to-use messaging service with the potential to reach 2 billion people and enables WHO to get information directly into the hands of the people that need it. From government leaders to health workers and communities, this messaging service provides the latest news and information on coronavirus, including details on symptoms and how people can protect themselves and others. It also provides the latest situation reports and numbers in real-time to help government decision-makers to protect the health of their populations. The service can be accessed through a link that opens a conversation on WhatsApp. Users can simply type "hi" to activate the conversation, prompting a menu of options that can help answer their questions about COVID-19.

2. **HealthBuddy**

HealthBuddy is a virtual health advisor that provides useful information on COVID-19 and tips on how to protect yourself and others and how to reduce the risk of infection. It has multi-channel support to integrate with the social network, instant messengers, SMS, voice calls. HealthBuddy automatically detects the language of your page and, if supported, will automatically speak in

that language. It is easily integratable with other platforms. HealthBuddy is an intelligent bot that can also be adapted for SMS. HealthBuddy has been developed by ilhasoft with UNICEF and WHO and will be launched over the next few days. Ilhasoft has implemented similar low-tech communication platforms in 30 countries, including Cambodia, India, Niger, Costa Rica, Jamaica, Moldova, and Western Balkans.

3. Covid19Info App **- Tracking/educational platform with mobile phone alerts**

Covid19Info is a free mobile app where people can subscribe to receive alerts (sent via SMS, Whatsapp, or Telegram) on COVID-19 (e.g., latest case figures, updates from WHO, Ministry of Health, information on preventive measures/ social distancing). People can access the latest COVID-19 statistics and information and report cases and symptoms (including sharing their location). This reported information will be forwarded to the provincial and national response team for follow up. This app uses information from WHO and Johns Hopkins University.

4. **Amplio Talking books**

The talking books enables governments to share information with the hardest to reach communities. The talking books can create local language messaging to raise awareness of COVID 19 symptoms and prevention measures. It can provide information at the end of Talking Book messages that link users to existing COVID-19 hotlines or counseling services available. Listeners can choose the topics that interest them most, replay content as often as they want, and record their messages and feedback. The user feedback mechanisms are used to understand barriers to practice adoption and accessing health services. In past years, Amplio has also worked with UNICEF to disseminate messages in response to cholera and ebola outbreaks.

5. **Africa's Voices - Interactive Radio**

This is an interactive radio forum with SMS feedback and follow-up SMS surveys for people to discuss the impacts of and responses to COVID-19. Listeners could participate using SMS texting to ask questions on COVID-19 and will receive individual responses (using Katikati, their platform for one-to-one communications powered by innovative human-centered technology). On March 8, Africa's Voices launched a collaboration with Radio Africa Group to air Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and interactive radio shows + 1-to-1 SMS channel to provide immediate high-quality public health content, establish a trusted communications space and

garner rapid social insights for future content. Their first show featuring an expert guest virologist reached over 5 million listeners.

6. **Farm Radio - Community Radio**

The farm radio keeps people updated about COVID-19 information and gather feedback to better refine communications and responses to COVID-19. Listeners can potentially share concerns and feedback on COVID-19 through mobile-based polls (i.e., SMS on their feature phones). Listeners can answer poll questions and call in for free to ask questions/ share feedback on COVID i.e., giving a missed call to ("beeping") the station and having the station call them back. The users can also "beep" the station to hear key highlights of the radio program on COVID-19, and an interactive voice response system returns the call to play the summary. Feedback from listeners (including poll results) is automatically and immediately aggregated and viewable through Uliza. This feedback will be used to refine the COVID-19 radio program and can be shared with authorities for follow up and to inform policy.

7. **TIMBY – This is My Backyard**

TIMBY is a suite of interconnected digital tools used by communities and organizations working in offline/low-literacy situations to monitor healthcare and other areas. It is available in 18 languages and relies heavily on icons and colors for use amongst low-literacy groups. The collection system (including maps, which can consist of COVID data) works entirely offline. TIMBY has an API for offloading data to other analysis systems and can integrate in-app messaging and machine learning. TIBMY has been used in community-based projects in Liberia, Senegal, Keyna, and Mozambique, but not as health focused.

Some Country Specific Examples

1. **MyGov Corona Helpdesk in India**

This AI based helpdesk was created by Haptik in partnership with Whatsapp for the Government of India to spread awareness and information about COVID-19 among the citizens. The helpdesk is being used for communication and monitoring, including answering queries at scale and avoid the spread of false information regarding the Covid-19 outbreak. The service can be accessed

through a link that opens a conversation on WhatsApp. Within 24 hours of Bot going live, it had 1.5 million users, and 2.1 million queries answered.

2. **115 Hotzone - Disease Reporting and Information Hotline in Cambodia**

This free to the public hotline system is used by the Ministry of Health for sharing information and reporting on COVID-19. The service can be accessed by dialing 115 on any phone in Cambodia. In recent weeks, the hotline system received an average of 12000 daily calls. Reports submitted by health centers and community health workers are improving the accuracy of reports and enhancing investigation into outbreak response and prevention measures. The hotline was set up by InSTEDD iLab.

3. **HealthAlert in South Africa**

HealthAlert is a WhatsApp-based helpline to disseminates accurate and timely information about COVID-19 from the National Department of Health to the South African public. It includes a helpdesk with automated response and triage to answer users' queries and real-time data insights for national policy decisions.

This is a live note and we will keep updating it with more low-tech solutions in the coming weeks.