Use of U-Report to strengthen humanitarian action

Mozambique: Supporting social mobilizers to reach affected communities with life-saving information
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CONTEXT
On 14 March 2019, tropical Cyclone Idai made landfall near Beira City, Mozambique, resulting in devastating loss of life and large-scale destruction of assets and infrastructure in its wake. The cyclone hit the provinces of Sofala, Manica, Zambezia, Tete and Inhambane, killing at least 416 people, injuring more than 1,500 and leaving an estimated 1.85 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection (as of 24 March). Entire villages were submerged, swathes of crops were damaged – with nearly 500,000 hectares flooded – and many livestock were lost, exacerbating food insecurity across the central region of the country. Many families were separated as they fled the rising floodwaters, while others were trapped on high ground, unable to access basic goods and services for days. Tens of thousand of people were displaced, and many fled with nothing. Many children, elderly and people with disabilities were left behind or stranded, while many women had to bear the brunt of the storm, as they worked to save their households and livelihoods.

ACTIONS TAKEN
UNICEF, in support to the government of Mozambique’s Institute of National Disaster Management (INGC) and the Inter-ministerial Committee for Disaster Management and response (CTGC), ensured community engagement (CE) coordination mechanisms were put in place both at national and subnational levels. The aim was to provide life-saving information in key programme areas – WASH, health, nutrition, education and Child Protection. Specific support was provided in the preparation and roll-out of vaccination campaigns such as oral Cholera vaccination, measles and others.

To strengthen accountability mechanisms, UNICEF country office collaborated with other partners to ensure that complaints and feedback from the affected populations, including on sensitive issues such as cases of sexual exploitation or abuse of women and children, were systematically collected and addressed through a hotline.

In collaboration with the Community Engagement Working Group partners who manage large numbers of social mobilizers in the field, UNICEF established a common monitoring system using U-Report.

RESULTS
By connecting social mobilizers and volunteers conducting door-to-door household visits to U-Report, it was possible to systematically collect real time data, not only to assess the efficiency and quality of the interventions but also to adjust the community engagement strategy.

U-Report was also used as a coordination tool to send streamlined messaging, run polls for rapid data collection, guide programmatic adjustments, as well as provide weekly updates to the government (represented by the Health Promotion Department), and relevant partners.

Programme design – mitigating mobile-related challenges: Since collecting real-time information directly from affected populations was challenging due to limited access to mobile phones, low connectivity, and some areas being hard to reach, UNICEF opted to engage social mobilizers deployed by different partners of the interagency CE Working Group. The mobilizers administered surveys and collected data through face-to-face interviews with the population. The information collected by 20-30 mobilizers was then compiled by a supervisor on a daily basis, who then uploaded the data onto U-Report.
This mechanism enabled broad reach in hard-to-reach areas and provided a good opportunity to build evidence based on the feedback of the population, as well as their knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding WASH and health-related behaviours.

The use of U-Report achieved the intended outcome to:

- Assess perceptions and attitudes which enabled UNICEF to reframe and adjust programme interventions and to tackle specific or strategic issues within the interagency CE Working Group.
- Monitor behaviours of communities and shape the response at inter-agency level; for instance, specific information was collected on consumption of treated water, hand-washing practices, use of latrines, permission to carry on indoor spraying to fight malaria, and exclusive breastfeeding.

**LESSONS LEARNED**

A combination of manual data collection by social mobilizers, adapted to feed the data delivered through U-Report, proved to be a successful approach. It enabled the implementation of a responsive, dynamic and evidence-driven approach to the response, by ensuring socio-culturally appropriate and time-sensitive messaging around the promotion of positive behaviours amongst affected populations.

Furthermore, the data collected through U-Report ensured better coordination amongst partners and redirecting interventions to those locations with populations most in need of assistance or “at risk” of contracting water-borne diseases such as cholera.

**Communities in hard-to-reach and vulnerable areas need to have access to feedback mechanisms that allow them to voice their concerns and be answered to.**

**To strengthen our reach we need to consider:**

- Basic mobile handsets can support the use of U-Report or other feedback mechanisms by affected people (especially young women and girls) who don't have regular access to other channels, such as radio and television.
- U-Report alone is not as effective and efficient as it is when integrated with other CE approaches and interventions.
- Data generated through U-Report could be more robust if the tool were able to bring together multiple data streams (data collected by different platforms). This would allow triangulation and validation of results.
• The simple, rapid and effective monitoring system that was set-up has been seen as an opportunity for other projects and to ensure harmonization in provinces affected by other types of emergencies. It can be easily replicated in other contexts.
• Additional human resources are required to analyse, visualize and present findings from data collected via U-Report to all involved partners on a weekly basis. Data cleansing and analysis, in particular, can take time and delay the visualization and dissemination process.
• Generation of automatic results on a regular basis would be an added value to the system.
• Information gaps in data collection needs to be better addressed. Supervisors have faced various issues when collating data due to information gaps (incomplete data, unwilling participation into polls, reporting of data interrupted, etc.).

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