

Minutes from September 4, 2008 GDLN media seminar for SAR AIDS DM 2008 Implementers

Participants

The Global Development Learning Network (GDLN) video conference (VC) seminar connected participants from six sites: Delhi, Dhaka, Islamabad, Kabul, Kathmandu, Mumbai and Washington. Lahore and Karachi were connected via webcast. Implementers of the South Asia Region Development Marketplace on HIV related stigma, national AIDS program managers, communications specialists and other resource people attended the seminar.

Participants included, in Washington: Mariam Claeson, Phoebe Folger, Roselind Rajan, Mapi Buitano, and Juan Ancin, (World Bank), and Anne Stangl (ICRW). In Kabul: Ghulam Sayed and Hasib Karimzada (World Bank), Saifur Rehman and Joe Rittmann (MoPH/NACP), Tawab Saljuqi (MoPH/IEC), Akbari (Afghan Family Guidance Association), Yonus Entezar, Russ Fortier (Constella Future), Arvind Das (Concern), Amanullah, Lal Mohammad (Afghan Help Training Program), John Foran (Action Aid), Nesar Ahmad (MCIT), and Amanullah (UNDP). In Dhaka: Ahmed Rezaul Karim and ABM Abu Sayem (MATTRA, media campaign partner of the National AIDS Program), Afroja Parvin and S.M. Razzak (Nari Unnayan Shakti), Jeevani Fernando (DRIK), and Shirin Jahangeer (World Bank). In Delhi: Ruby Singh, Anne Bossuyt, Kees Kostermans, and Neera Bhatia (World Bank), and Manju Dhasmana (NACO). In Mumbai: Harsha Mehta, Sukanya Ghosh, and Sonalini Mirchandani (The Communication Hub). In Kathmandu: Nastu Sharma (World Bank), Usha Jha and Sweetie Shrestha (NANGAN). In Islamabad: Huma Ali Waheed (World Bank), Asim Mahmood Khan, Shahid Nadeem, and Ayesha Gul (Integrated Health Services). In Lahore: Nazir Masih (New Light AIDS Control Society) and in Karachi: Owais Aslam Ali (Pakistan Press Foundation).

Purpose of the Seminar

The purpose of the seminar was to share information and best practices on how to develop effective communications strategies and messages with SAR DM implementers whose projects include a media or other communications component.

Agenda of the Seminar

The VC covered the following main areas:

1. Overview and introduction of seminar participants;
2. Strategic message dissemination;
3. Making sure messages reduce stigma and do not stigmatize.

Main issues raised under each agenda item include:

1. Overview / Introduction: Mariam Claeson, AIDS Coordinator for the South Asia Region of the World Bank, who moderated the seminar, welcomed participants and briefly presented the rationale for holding the seminar. She explained that the purpose of the seminar was to go over the basics (theory & practice) of designing messages for communications strategies – including the importance of communicating accurate information to avoid potential risks and challenges. The main audience was the DM

implementers who are implementing projects that directly involve media and/or other communications activities. Introductions were made from each of the participating sites.

2. Strategic Message Dissemination: Mapi Buitano, a Communications Specialist at the World Bank, presented a five step process for how to develop and disseminate focused messages (see her .ppt). Major topics included: program objectives, messages, communications approach, implementation action plan, dissemination goals, dissemination approach and dissemination model.

Several DM implementers shared their main communications objectives (e.g. NUS, The Communication Hub, IHS, AFGA) and a question was raised about where in the message dissemination process (see .ppt) should formative research and message pre-testing take place. Mapi endorsed the use of focus groups for testing and clarified that pre-testing should be carried out at the stage when you are identifying program objectives.

Mapi highlighted the importance of starting by defining your projects' operational goal so that you have a clear idea of where you are going. Equally important is identifying your primary audience (e.g. the people you need to convince) and then designing a message that will move the target audience, keeping in mind that general information is often not enough).

3. Making Sure Messages Reduce Stigma and do not Stigmatize: Anne Stangl, from the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) gave a presentation on 'Making Sure Messages Reduce Stigma and do not Stigmatize' (see .ppt). The presentation covered some of the unintended consequences of HIV-related media messaging, stigmatizing language and images, lack of stigma-specific messages in HIV awareness campaigns, and stigma reduction messaging fundamentals.

In particular, Anne highlighted how HIV-related print and visual messages can often unintentionally perpetuate stereotypes and myths about how HIV is transmitted, thereby reinforcing stigma and discrimination. The presentation stimulated questions on HIV terminology and Anne reminded participants that they have a list of UNAIDS preferred terminology in the information packs they received in Mumbai (see Guidelines for reporting on AIDS). One good practice suggestion made by Anne is to pair HIV knowledge with stigma-specific messages. For example, discuss the facts about how HIV can and cannot be transmitted and dispel myths about HIV transmission. Anne suggested that anti-stigma messages should target peoples' actual fears of infection. In addition, messages should disassociate the individuals from the behaviors that put them at risk of HIV infection (IDU, MSM, sex work, etc.).

4. The minutes, webcast link and presentations will be shared with all DM implementers. The next meeting, the M&E workshop, will be held in Delhi, from December 3- 6, 2008 for representatives of all DM projects.