DIGITAL COMMUNICATION IN WEC PROGRAMMES

A STUDY ON THE USE OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION IN RISK AWARENESS AND SAFER BEHAVIOUR IN WEAPON-CONTAMINATED CONTEXTS

EXTERNAL REPORT

REFERENCE

ICRC

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FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was conducted by Karen Kisakeni Sørensen with the support of Maryam Walton. The ICRC would like to sincerely thank and acknowledge the contribution of all colleagues who contributed to the discussion and development of the guidelines, both within the WeC Unit and from other units. The ICRC would like to extend thanks to other organisations who kindly contributed to the research.

ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) uses a mine action terminology different from other organisations. This report will use the ICRC terminology throughout except for the section on good practices from other mine action organisations and the sector lessons learned.

Weapon contamination refers to contamination from both conventional weapons and CBRN hazards. There are a variety of hazards of immediate concern to the Movement, including conventional weapons, non-conventional (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear) weapons; and the accidental or deliberate release of chemical, biological and radiological agents that are unconnected to non-conventional weapons.

The term mine/ERW risk education (MRE)/ risk education (RE) refers to activities that seek to reduce the risk of death and injury from mines and ERW, (including unexploded sub-munitions), by raising awareness and promoting safe behaviour. These activities include information exchange with at-risk communities, communication of safety messages to target groups, and support for community risk management and participation in mine action. ICRC use the term 'risk awareness and safer behaviour' (RASB) rather than MRE/RE as they deal with a much wider selection of weapon contamination, than mines and ERW; including the use of weapons during conflict and other situations of violence, and CBRN hazards. The term 'risk awareness and safer behaviour' also clearly articulates that more than just education is involved: the term 'safer behaviour' refers to both the promotion of safer behaviour and the facilitation of that safer behaviour through other Movement activities using the transversal approach.

CBRN	Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear hazards
CL	Community Liaison
COM	Regional Communication Centres
DCA	Dan Church Aid
DDG	Danish Demining Group
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
GIS	Geographic Information System
HI	Humanity & Inclusion / Handicap International
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IM	Information Management
IMSMA	Information Management System for Mine Action
MAG	Mines Advisory Group
MRE	Mine Risk Education
MRWG	Mine Risks Working Group
RASB	Risk Awareness and Safe Behaviour
RE	Risk Education
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
WeC	Weapon Contamination

INTRODUCTION

During and after armed conflicts as well as in other situations of violence, conventional weapons and other sources of contamination, including the release of chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear hazards (CBRN), expose populations to life-changing risks.

The Weapon Contamination (WeC) Unit within the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) provides delegations with operational expertise on conventional weapons such as landmines, explosive remnants of war (ERW), stockpiles and small arms as well as CBRN hazards. The unit is responsible for activities to reduce the impact of weapon contamination on affected populations. These may include field assessments on weapon use, clearance, risk awareness and safer behaviour, information gathering and capacity building.

The WeC Unit directly implements activities in the field, advises and provides technical support to other units within the ICRC, and plays a lead role within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement on issues of weapon contamination.

RATIONALE FOR INTERVENTION

The ICRC recognises that interactive, community-led approaches – that may, or may not, include locally relevant and trusted digital platforms – are the most effective means of sharing information and establishing two-way dialogue with people affected and/or at risk, and with staff and volunteers.

In recent years, a small number of initiatives that leveraged technologies for the aforesaid purposes – particularly around use of apps, web portal, and SMS – were launched in the mine action sector and then stagnated or disappeared.

The WeC and the Community Engagement teams seek to understand why the mine action (MA) community, including WeC, is not using technology more profusely to improve the effectiveness and accountability of its work, what the ICRC can learn from that, and how WeC could, potentially, better leverage technology to fulfil the vision outlined in its Institutional Strategy 2019-2022.

The purpose of this report is to take stock and provide cost-effective and to provide realistic recommendations on how the WeC Unit can better integrate technology in risk awareness and safer behaviour (RASB) and community engagement activities.

METHODOLOGY, SCOPE AND TERMINOLOGY

Although there are many interesting innovative initiatives being undertaken in MA, the study is delimited to exploring how digital platforms can be used in RASB and community engagement activities1 as well as to exploring the lessons learned accumulated in the MA sector so far. The study hence focuses on the communication between organisations, including the ICRC, and the people affected by weapon contamination.

As that there are many examples that use low-tech channels (i.e. face-to- face, posters, radio spots, video etc.), this study will not address these mediums. This study focuses on examples that leverage social media, apps, including messaging apps like WhatsApp or Telegram, and other digital platforms.

The methodology of the study is combination of desk research[2], interviews with internal and external key informants as well as an internal survey[3] targeted at relevant ICRC WeC and communication staff globally.

The study was undertaken between 15th October and 21st December 2018.

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1 It is recognised that community engagement activities often intersect with other areas in the MA operation such as information management and monitoring and evaluation. These will however not be dealt with in this study.

2 List of informants and interview guide in annex 1

3 Survey questions and targeted delegations in annex 2

GOOD PRACTICES

USE OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS IN RISK EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In this section, a number of digital platforms used for risk awareness and safer behaviour and/or community liaison (CL) will be presented. The list is not exhaustive, but rather reflects the information shared as part of the internal ICRC survey and during interviews held with MA organisations. The level of detail of each technology reflects the information available at the time of writing. Most organisations do not have a centralised system to track and document innovative initiatives developed by field offices. For this reason, there are likely to be more examples to learn from in the respective organisations than what is captured in this report.

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (ICRC and National Societies)

TECHNOLOGY: SOCIAL MEDIA
IMPLEMENTATION LOCATIONS: PAKISTAN, UKRAINE
TIME: PAKISTAN ONGOING SINCE 2016 / UKRAINE ONGOING SINCE 2017

Since 2016, Facebook has been used by the National Society in Pakistan. Two separate Facebook pages[4] are currently in use in two regions. The Facebook pages are used for sharing information on WeC activities implemented in the given region. The page followers are estimated to be mainly general public in the respective regions. Posts on the pages are predominantly provided by staff or volunteers. Currently there is little interaction in terms of two-way dialogue and responses from followers are usually in the form of likes and shares. The two Facebook pages are currently being followed by 384 and 478 people respectively. As these two pages are not part of a centralised communication effort, currently no systematic measurement of impact has been undertaken. The delegation is looking into streamlining the pages and making it part of a more systematic and strategic approach.

Since 2017, Facebook[5], Twitter[6] and other social media platforms have been actively used for mine action programming in Ukraine in a coordinated effort between the WeC Unit and the delegation communications team. As Ukraine is now among the most contaminated countries globally, WeC activities is of high priority in the delegation. The content on the Facebook page is a mix of awareness raising messages in the form of videos and digitalised risk education (RE) print material. Content is available in Ukrainian, Russian and English. Interaction on the Facebook page is dynamic, and it is actively used to communicate with the general public as well as affected communities on MA related topics. In addition to the regular monitoring and evaluation of communication activities, feedback on the WeC social media content is acquired through social media analytics and through traditional RE sessions where participants are asked to provide feedback on the RE messaging. In some non-government-controlled areas, other social media platforms are used to communicate directly with affected communities about services provided.

In Ukraine, Twitter is used to target primarily an international audience (e.g. INGOs, media etc.).

LESSONS LEARNED

Facebook, especially, is estimated to be an effective tool for interacting with the general public as well as affected communities. However, more assessment is needed to determine how to make the best use of the platform.

In some contexts, the lack of assessment of associated risks and potential added value is hindering the usage of social media as a channel for community interaction on MA related issues. The restriction of social media usage is therefore at times based on a perceived risk and perceived sensitivity of MA information rather than actual assessment of context realities.

4 https://www.facebook.com/Community-Based-Risk-Education-Victim-Assistance-Programme-AJK-807728122654656/ and https://www.facebook.com/CBRE.DIK/?epa=SEARCH_BOX

5 https://www.facebook.com/ICRCUA/videos/426586384451981/?___xts___

6 https://twitter.com/ICRC_ua/status/1052527754653110273/photo/1

United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS)

TECHNOLOGY: LANDMINE AND ERW SAFETY APP, SOLAR POWERED AUDIO DEVICE
IMPLEMENTATION LOCATION: GLOBAL, SUDAN (DARFUR)
TIME: APPLICATION ONGOING SINCE 2013/ AUDIO DEVICE ONGOING SINCE 2017

UNMAS uses an application[7] is designed to complement the Landmines, Explosive Remnants of War and Improvised Explosive Devices Safety Handbook[8], produced by the United Nations. Its ultimate aim is to provide general landmine and ERW awareness and safety information to organisations and individuals working in the vicinity of areas affected by these devices in order to minimise the risk of accidents.

This app allows users to register their ownership of this app with UNMAS. On completing the various training sections, users are able to undergo the landmine and ERW Safety Brief Test. The app is primarily targeted at international staff working in landmine and ERW and contaminated areas. The app has a minimum age limit of 17 years for downloads.

The 2013 version of the app allowed individuals working in the field to help reduce the effects of ERW and landmines by reporting hazardous items or areas directly to UNMAS headquarters. A picture, GPS coordinates and any submitted text would be recorded, emailed to UNMAS and processed to the correct clearance agency in the field. This function is however removed from the 2018 beta version. The reporting function is planned to be reintroduced, but as a tool targeted at explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) professionals only. The updated reporting tool will be linked to a geographic information system (GIS) technology that allows integration with the Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) Core. It is not known when this integration will be realised as the new version of the app is still in beta mode. The 2018 beta version of the app will be the first in an unspecified suite of apps to come and will be provided in the 7-9 major languages.

In 2017, UNMAS developed a solar powered audio device[9] , which is loaded with pre-recorded RE messaging approved by the Sudanese government, to provide hard-to-reach populations affected by mines and other ERW with RE. The RE messages come in different forms, e.g. songs, drama and interview with victims of ERW. The challenges this technology aims to address are connecting with hard-to-reach at-risk populations, low literacy levels, poor internet-, cellular- and radio network coverage and high costs of print materials. The device is currently being field tested and distributed by RE teams. The device can be reloaded with new messages as necessary.

LESSONS LEARNED

Regarding the application, the reporting function was found not to work as intended in the 2013 version. This was partially due to the lack of incoming reports as wells as fear of potential negative unintended consequences by encouraging reporting through the app.

Regarding the Risk Education Talking Device, UNMAS is currently looking into different aspects that might need further development such as the physical transport of devices to communities for distribution (including redistribution after reloading of the devices), monotony of messages, targeting of all relevant groups in communities, developing local ownership and lastly whether the audio device should be complemented with visual materials.

Danish Demining Group (DDG)

TECHNOLOGY: WEB PORTAL, SMS SERVICE, SMARTPHONE APP (THE "MAPPS PROJECT")
IMPLEMENTATION LOCATIONS: EASTERN UKRAINE AND CENTRAL VIETNAM
TIME: 2014 TO 2016 BUT PARTS OF TECHNOLOGY CONTINUES TO BE IMPLEMENTED

The MApps project[10] is a two-way communication web portal and parallel SMS service to strengthen communication between the affected communities and MA actors. An app supporting the web portal was additionally developed, however not field testes by DDG. All the open source code for the app was handed

7 https://www.gichd.org/resources/publications/detail/publication/unmas-landmine-erw-safety-app/#.W_LloqeZMnU

8 https://unmas.org/sites/default/files/handbook_english.pdf

9 https://mineaction.org/sites/default/files/documents/ndm-un_presentation_darfurmre.pdf and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBDhhxXPOfg

10 http://www.elrha.org/map-location/linking-communitites-mine-action-strengthening-community-liaison-digital-platforms/ and https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/alnap-hif-innovation-ddg-case-study.pdf and https://youtu.be/FZCDzqcSbzY

over to local partners for their free use and further development, if desired. Whether the app is in use is not known at the time of writing.

The web portal functioned as a public MA information on basic contextualised RE information, location-based information concerning ongoing or upcoming MA activities and services and information regarding the various MA actors operating in the respective areas and information regarding accidents. The web portal additionally functioned as a channel for the affected communities to submit reports on suspected hazardous items and for providing feedback to the respective MA authority. Incoming reports on suspected hazardous items contained location-specific data which were visualised on a map only visible to MA authorities in managing the backend system.

To obtain broader reach, a parallel SMS service targeted the affected communities with basic contextualised RE information, including appeals to report suspected dangerous items, supplemented with instructions on how to do so digitally. The SMS service likewise offered a channel to submit reports on suspected hazardous items and to provide feedback to the respective MA authority.

The products were designed, developed and implemented through local partners. In Vietnam, this was done though a provincial MA authority and in Ukraine a regional State Emergency Services and with the technical partners CartONG and the Social Impact Lab[11] .

The web portal and SMS service primarily targeted the affected communities and mine action actors. Secondarily, the web portal aimed to create a link between MA, humanitarian and development organisations. The platforms were available in Ukrainian, Russian, Vietnamese and English.

LESSONS LEARNED

The digital platforms can be good supplements to traditional RE and CL but cannot replace the traditional means. These tools work best if the implementing organisation is already well-known and trusted.

The reporting and feedback function worked less well than the information dissemination functions. Ensuring quality of incoming reports as well as to change people's reporting habits proved somewhat challenging within the piloting phase.

The platforms were partly successful and sustainable, as the platforms are partly in use in Vietnam (though in a different province) years later, and in Ukraine the digital RE materials have been transferred to a new national RE website, which will be presented below.

UNICEF, Danish Demining Group (DDG)/Danish Refugee Council (DRC)

TECHNOLOGY: RE WEBSITE
IMPLEMENTATION LOCATION: UKRAINE
TIME: ONGOING SINCE 2016

Stopmina[12] is a simple website containing a mixture of videos and text promoting safe behaviour and advice aimed at a variety of different demographics. The website contains basic, contextualised RE information as well as information targeted at parents who can find resources to provide their children basic RE.

The website is a supplement to traditional RE activities. Whenever traditional RE activities are carried out (e.g. hand out of print materials), references are made to Stopmina as a way people can go online and discover more information, should they wish. The website is available in both Ukrainian and Russian.

LESSONS LEARNED

Initial findings indicate that people appreciate the online option of getting more information. Basic website analytics are carried out to understand how many people are interacting with the website. The reach and impact of the website is not known at the time of writing.

Mines Advisory Group (MAG)

TECHNOLOGY: SOCIAL MEDIA
IMPLEMENTATION LOCATION: IRAQ AND LEBANON
TIME: ONGOING SINCE 2015

11 Social Impact Lab (SIMLab) closed operations in December 2017.

12 www.stopmina.com

Since 2015, MAG has been running risk awareness and advocacy campaigns on social media[13] in Lebanon on the occasion of the Mine Awareness Day. Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram are all used in a coordinated campaign with cross-sectoral participation, including participation of ministers and parliament members, tweeting under the hashtag #Together_Against_Mines (in Arabic). It is estimated that 400,000 people have been active during these campaigns. In between the 4th of April campaigns, MAG Lebanon actively uses Facebook as a channel to interact with the communities they serve and to provide RE information as well as for general visibility purposes.

In Iraq, MAG is currently looking into how Facebook ads can be used as a tool to provide RE. The ads will be RE text and visuals. The ads will refer to a mini website, which will reiterate basic RE information and provide contact details for relevant MA organisation or MA authority. The initiative is in the design phase and is planned to be tested during early 2019.

LESSONS LEARNED

MAG regularly monitors the number of visitors and interactions on their social media accounts (likes, comments, shares etc.). However, measuring impact of risk awareness messaging on social media in terms of measuring changes in knowledge, attitudes or behaviour is challenging. MAG is currently looking into using polls to interact with social media followers and to understand their position better on various issues. This might support a better understanding of the effectiveness of the RE messaging on social media.

Dan Church Aid (DCA), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

TECHNOLOGY: APPS FOR SMARTPHONES AND TABLETS
IMPLEMENTATION LOCATION: SYRIA AND MYANMAR
TIME: ONGOING SINCE 2016

In 2016, DCA's Learning Lab14 in headquarters developed a free RE app[15] targeting teachers in Syria. As it became increasingly challenging for Syrian implementing partners to access communities in besieged areas, DCA saw the opportunity to develop an application to be able to continue the provision of RE training to relevant stakeholders in conflict-affected and hard-to-reach areas.

The app provides the teachers with RE training and didactic methods to enable them to provide RE sessions to children. Materials are available in Arabic and English. The training session takes approximately 50 minutes to complete. Upon completion of the training, teachers are able to access the RE toolkit, which contains a variety of activities and games to be the used in the RE sessions with the children. The app content can be updated in the event that new hazards are identified in the areas of implementation, it can be downloaded and used offline and it has been tested on the oldest and slowest smartphones.

Also, in 2016, DCA developed a free of charge "Common MRE toolkit" application[16] in collaboration with UNICEF[17] and the Mine Risk Working Group[18] in Myanmar with the approval of the national Department of Social Services. By developing the app, DCA and UNICEF seek to capitalise on the rapid increase of active mobile phone subscribers in Myanmar, which is estimated to be more than 33 million and of which 80% are estimated to be smartphone users. The toolkit is an interactive tool which aims at creating a dynamic learning experience for its users. The app targets both RE facilitators as well as conflict-affected communities. Most of the functions in the app are not dependent on internet connectivity; the app can be shared between users offline and content can be accessed offline, thus enabling a broader reach.

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13 https://www.facebook.com/MAG-Lebanon-705697682900624/

14 The DCA Learning Lab is a unit within DCA dedicated to developing digital e-learning tools.

15 https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=scormplayer8.vongrad.dk.scormplayer&hl=en_US

16 https://mineaction.org/sites/default/files/documents/ndm-un_presentation_myanmarmre.pdf and https://www.danchurchaid.org/articles/unicef-supports-mine-risk-education-in-burma-myanmar

17 This app fall under the UNICEF initiative "The Internet of Good Things". https://www.unicef.org/innovation/stories/providing-life-saving-information-during-emergencies-internet-good-things-iogt

18 Mine Risks Working Group (MRWG) was established in 2012 under the leadership of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement with co-chair support from UNICEF. This inter-ministerial and inter-agency working group now comprised 10 ministries and 41 international and Myanmar organisations. The MRWG aims at ensuring that interventions addressing mine risks are aligned with minimum standards and in accordance with lessons learned in Myanmar.

LESSONS LEARNED
The comparative advantages of the app are found to be: cost-effectiveness as a traditional RE toolkit is costlier than a smartphone in Myanmar; easier transport to remote areas as the smartphone or tablet (and at times a projector) is much lighter than a traditional RE toolkit; it is easier to update and add new features to adapt content to changing context and hazards; the app can send emergency RE push notifications if necessary; and finally it offers an additional monitoring channel as numbers, location of users as well as amount of time spend on the app can be digitally tracked. So far both apps have been well received in the target areas. In Myanmar the Common MRE toolkit app is planned to be used by 40+ organisations. As both apps are still in the early stages, no impact evaluations have yet been carried out.

Handicap International / Humanity & Inclusion (HI)

TECHNOLOGY: WHATSAPP, SKYPE, WEBSITE, FACEBOOK
IMPLEMENTATION LOCATION: IRAQ, SYRIA, LAO AND GAZA
TIME: ONGOING SINCE 2013

Since 2013, HI has been using WhatsApp and Skype for remote programming and management in Syria in their work with implementing partners and affected communities. HI uses these platforms for remote-training purposes, coordination, quality assurance and monitoring purposes in hard-to access areas. Implementing partners are trained via a Skype video enabling an interactive training session when face-to-face sessions are not possible. Implementing partners can send documentation of RE sessions carried out via the digital platforms, which then can be quality assessed and monitored by HI. These platforms have in addition been used for training of trainers purposes, where implementing partners have trained community focal points or other relevant change agents.

HI also uses WhatsApp to communicate with dedicated community focal points. Through WhatsApp, the community focal points have an open channel to express needs and provide feedback. In this way, WhatsApp functions as an additional tool in their internal assessment and reporting systems.

LESSONS LEARNED
So far, the use of the above-mentioned digital platforms has worked well, especially as the platforms are commonly used in areas of implementation of activities. They are considered as highly relevant tools for remote management purposes, particularly in hard-to-reach or inaccessible areas.

HALO Trust

TECHNOLOGY: WHATSAPP, SKYPE, FACEBOOK
IMPLEMENTATION LOCATIONS: SYRIA AND CAMBODIA
TIME: ONGOING SINCE 2017

Since early 2017, HALO Trust has been using Skype and WhatsApp for remote programming and management in Syria in their work with implementing partners and affected communities. These platforms are used for remote training, coordination, quality assurance and monitoring purposes in hard-to access areas. Implementing partners, who often make up the CL teams, are trained through Skype video, which allows dynamic sessions when face-to-face training is not possible. HALO Trust digitally monitors the activities through monitoring offices in Jordan.

In addition to traditional CL activities, HALO Trust uses WhatsApp as an additional channel for feedback and two-way communication. To avoid possible local repercussions as a result of the complaint, all materials given out include a dedicated WhatsApp number and email address, which is explained as solely for confidential complaints and feedback. This number and email are checked by two members of HALO Trust and local partner in the respective offices who are unrelated to the project and can provide objectivity. They can then communicate directly with the complainant to learn more, before presenting the complaint to the project manager (if appropriate) who will address the problem through the appropriate measures. The members in the respective offices must ensure that the complaint is followed through to their satisfaction and that confidentiality is maintained throughout the process.

Additionally, since mid-2018 HALO, Trust have been distributing RE videos through Facebook in Cambodia.

LESSONS LEARNED
The use of digital platforms has been well-received by both implementing partners and affected communities. As the usage of these digital platforms is still in the early stages, comprehensive evaluations have not yet been undertaken and full impact therefore remains unknown at the time of writing.

The remote management of deployed teams, especially between countries, can present significant challenges for monitoring and evaluation, but the existence of the operations room in Jordan mitigates this to a large extent. The teams are required to remain in constant contact with the operations room and all activities are quality assured to confirm that they are conducted in accordance with mine action best practices. Additionally, the requirement of teams to provide GPS coordinates during activities enables the operations room to map where they are working in real time. Throughout the working day, the teams are directed, supported and advised from the operations room in real time via text, voice and video by HALO's Jordanian, Syrian and international technical advisors, and as well as local partner security and liaison staff. This multi-methods approach has proven successful to fully develop a programme and manage operations safely across two countries.

CONSOLIDATED LESSONS LEARNED

Based on experiences shared by the MA community, including ICRC, the following are the perceived opportunities for utilising digital platforms in RE and community liaison activities. Here the most cited external barriers19 to using digital platforms will be presented.

GOOD PRACTICES FOR USING DIGITAL PLATFORMS

DIGITAL AS A SUPPLEMENT

Digital platforms can act as a valuable supplement to existing RE practices, but rarely a substitute for traditional means such as face-to-face interactions. Several interviewees added that digital platforms work best when relationships between the MA organisation and the communities have already been established and trust has been gained. By adding a digital channel, organisations offer a complementary digital proximity that increases the interface for interaction between the organisations and the affected communities. Digital platforms can thus be very useful channels for continued and increased community liaison and follow-up RE.

REMOTE PROGRAMMING

Some of the examples showed that digital platforms can add great value in keeping contact with communities in conflict affected areas, when physical access is not possible. Digital platforms can at times be the only channel to reach some affected communities if connectivity remains accessible.

YOUTH AND URBAN SETTINGS

The use of digital platforms appears to be particularly relevant in urban settings and among youth. Some experiences show that Facebook or other social media platforms, popular in the RE target audience, can be a good way to get access to vulnerable groups as information is provided via outlets that they feel comfortable using.

TIMELY, RELEVANT AND ADAPTABLE MESSAGING

By using digital platforms for RE, organisations are able to exercise great flexibility in the content. Relatively easy and cheap updates of RE materials can ensure that RE messaging remains relevant and timely to the actual hazards in the given contexts.

COST-EFFECTIVENESS

The initial investment might be high for setting up new platforms for RE, but when it is up and running, it can be more cost-effective, as in some contexts it can replace print materials and digital updates can be done at a lower cost than traditional RE materials.

JOINT EVIDENCE BUILDING, FEWER SILOS, MORE SHARING

There is great interest in how digital platforms can be utilised within the MA community and several interlocutors suggested there should be more cross-organisational collaboration to identify how and when digital platforms add value to traditional programming and to accumulate lessons learned, sharing of expertise as well as avoid duplication of efforts. Many organisations pilot different platforms, however scaling up is often challenging. By building more evidence jointly, more sustainable initiatives could potentially be developed.

EXTERNAL BARRIERS TO USING DIGITAL PLATFORMS

With the many examples of using digital platforms for RE and community liaison and the opportunities outlined in this report, the question of why digital platforms are not more mainstreamed into RE and community liaison programming, to improve the effectiveness and accountability, persists. The following will illustrate external barriers as expressed by ICRC and the MA community.

CONSEQUENCES OF "GETTING IT WRONG"

19 External barriers refer to barriers in the implementation context and not those found within organisational structures.

The MA sector is relatively conservative when it comes to adopting digital tools because of the risks associated with 'getting it wrong'. The risks associated with testing new methodologies can in the worst-case result in casualties and restricted operational access to affected areas – if done wrongly.

IF IT ISN'T BROKEN...

A mentality of 'if it isn't broken, don't fix it' often dominates in daily operations, where focus is on doing 'core business'. Therefore, without clear evidence of the benefits of introducing digital platforms, it can be challenging to convince the sector and established programmes to test new approaches.

MEASURING IMPACT

Measuring impact of RE provided through digital platforms is perceived to be challenging because it can be very difficult and resource-heavy to evaluate change in perceptions and behaviour when RE is broadcasted though a digital channel. This hampers the needed evidence-building of how and when digital platforms add value.

TOO MANY SILOS AND ROTATION OF STAFF

Neither within nor between most organisations in the MA community are there centralised mechanisms to accumulate lessons learned from testing digital platforms and thus for sharing the good experiences of what works when and where. Combined with an often high rotation rate of staff in field offices, the loss of knowledge and experience is high. Additionally, designing, developing and testing new platforms and changing methodologies is very time-consuming and often exceeds the length of field contracts, making it challenging to change existing practices.

STAND-ALONE PILOTS

It has proven difficult to develop and scale new technologies if the project is a stand-alone project and not part of a larger organisational or strategic effort, as there is a need for systems to support the initial investments, development, implementation and evidence-building of the pilot.

FUNDING

It is not easy to find funding opportunities that support innovation and experimentation with unproven methodologies and approaches. Designing, developing and testing new platforms usually requires a large initial investment, thus making it difficult to fund within most programme funding structures.

INTERNET AND CELLULAR ACCESS

Poor internet and cellular coverage, in particular in rural areas, constitute a very tangible and obvious barrier to using digital platforms. Despite the fact that more and more people have access to information digitally, a great part of the beneficiaries of MA remain without, or with very limited, access to mobile devices, internet and cellular connectivity. The incentive to invest in developing digital platforms for RE and community liaison has therefore been limited thus far.

LITERACY

Low literacy rates, including digital literacy, is an often-mentioned barrier to employing digital platforms.

TRUST

Trust in information and stakeholders is often fragile in conflict- and post-conflict contexts, which are often permeated by rumours and disinformation. One of the most important tasks for MA organisations is therefore to build relationships and gain the trust of affected communities. Building relationships and trust continues to be most effective face-to-face, as digital communication come across as impersonal. Many affected communities are more used to face-to-face interaction and prefer this form of communication.

SENSITIVITY OF INFORMATION

As MA always takes place in conflict or post-conflict contexts, there is extra caution on the nature of the information shared by MA organisations due to the sensitivities related to information concerning landmines and other ERW. At the same time, communities affected by conflict may also not feel comfortable asking questions or discussing issues related to weapon contamination digitally due to uncertainties related to who might obtain the information and in fear of retaliation. This combination makes it difficult for MA organisations to employ digital platforms for community liaison and RE.

CONTEXTS CAN BE CHALLENGING FOR EXPERIMENTATION

Testing new technology in an active conflict context can be difficult and time-consuming. This is related to political, military and other sensitivities connected to the conflict. Relationship-building with authorities and populations is likewise challenging as they are time-consuming, and it can understandably be hard to convince stakeholders to take part in participatory design and development processes, when the outcome of them are not supported by evidence and when there are more urgent priorities. Consequently, active conflicts are fragile and challenging contexts to test and scale new technologies in a truly user-centred manner.

Restrictions on certain digital devices

In some contexts, the host government has imposed restrictions of certain digital devices (e.g. any device with a GPS). Therefore, in these contexts, making use of digital platforms in any parts of MA programming is very difficult, if not impossible.

Data protection

The issue of data protection when using digital platforms is another source of concern. Without the right experiences and expertise, there is a significant risk of unintentionally 'doing digital harm'. This can hence create yet another barrier to testing digital platforms. This could for example be when using popular social media platforms or other public or privately-owned platforms, where protection of data by the company or authority hosting the platforms is considered questionable from a protection and Do No Harm perspective. Uncertainty of how to manage such risk can consequently act as a barrier to using these kinds of digital platforms.

Manageability of digital platforms

Another concern related to data protection is that of the management of information exchanged with affected communities through digital platforms. Concerns include how to deal with hacking, fake news and the 'loss of control' of communication when using digital platforms.

Targeting RE messaging

Targeting a large audience may result in messaging that is non-targeted and too simplified. Furthermore, when no direct follow-up or assessment is possible, there are concerns regarding whether information provided being is misunderstood, misused or counterproductive.

Biased targeting and feedback

If perceiving digital RE as the silver bullet for wider dissemination of information, some fear that vulnerable groups without digital access to information may be left behind. Some interlocutors expressed concerns that organisations will receive a skewed impression of programme effectiveness if there is too much reliance on digital feedback mechanisms, as they will exclude vulnerable and 'disconnected' affected communities.

Accuracy and quality of data

If reports or feedback is received through digital platforms, concerns regarding the accuracy and quality of that data were expressed. If a digital channel for reporting and feedback is added, organisations must be able to respond to the information effectively. If the validity of incoming information is questionable, many resources can potentially be wasted on deploying EOD or CL teams to unverified requests. With no proven methodologies for quality assurance of incoming digital reports and feedback, this constitute a barrier.

ANNEX 1

LIST OF INFORMANTS

Internal informants

- Head of Accountability to Affected Populations
- Digital Community Engagement Advisor
- Innovations Advisor
- Strategic Technology Advisor

External informants

- UNMAS
- UNICEF
- UNDP
- MAG
- DDG
- DCA
- HI
- HALO Trust

EXTERNAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Questions

1. Have you utilised or are you planning to utilise digital platforms for RE/CL?
    a) Tell about the initiatives (after conversation, send links if possible)
    b) If your program have used or currently uses digital platforms for RE/CL activities, please tell about lessons learned
    c) If your programme does not used digital platforms for RA/SB and/or community engagement activities, kindly explain why.
2. Any overview of which contexts that work well for introducing digital platforms into RE/CL programming and which not?
3. Do you see potential for using digital platforms in RE/CL activities?
   If yes, kindly describe in which way.
    a) Can digital platforms can add value to RE/CL programming?
       If yes, kindly describe how.
    b) Have you come across digital platforms used by other actors that you think could be adapted and used in RE/CL? If so, please give more details.
4. Do you see any barriers (internal or external) for using digital platforms in RE/CL activities? If yes, kindly describe the barriers.
5. Do you believe digital platforms should be avoided in RE/CL activities?
   If yes, kindly describe why.
    a) What do you see as the greatest risks connected to using digital platforms for RE/CL activities?
    b) How could we overcome those risks/barriers?
6. Other comments, ideas, questions or the like.