Community Engagement for Vector Control:
Key learning from APMEN VCWG Workshop
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A recent global review found that community engagement is often misunderstood by malaria professionals as community-based interventions or social and behaviour change communication (SBCC.) Whereas community engagement refers to a more holistic and integrated approach to jointly designing, delivering and assessing malaria programs together with meaningful participation from communities at risk.

Implementing effective community engagement for malaria control and elimination: Opportunities and challenges”
UCSF, May 2020
Issues we need to address

- **Sub-optimal coverage/underutilization of LLINs**: coverage-utilization gaps among key populations as a result of weaknesses in program planning and coordination
- **LLLINs durability** largely depends on self-efficacy of users
- Communities participate in a way in which they are pass-receiver of solutions handed by health authorities
- **Disconnect between users and product developers**: what do they like and dislike about the products
- **Ineffective communication, educations tools and practices**: language and cultural barriers
- Tools that are designed for indoor protection irrelevant for MMPs and forest-goers who spend most of the time outdoors
Background

• Virtual Workshop organized in July 2020
• Participants were representatives from NMCP (India, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Philippines), Private sector, community civil society organizations, research/academic organizations

Objectives

1. **Understanding** the needs and preferences of communities at risk for vector control products, information and delivery channels;

2. **Generating demand** consistent use of vector control products using approaches, terms and formats that resonate with communities at risk;

3. **Distributing** vector control interventions through channels that are conveniently accessible to communities at risk;

4. **Monitoring, evaluating and refining** vector control programming to best suit the needs of specific communities at risk.
The balance

The universal **coverage & use** of vector control tools

**Supply side**
- Program management, planning, coordination
- Risk and population mapping
- Monitoring and evaluation

**Demand side**
- Demand generation
- Self-efficacy (repairing torn nets, hanging correctly)
- Community consultations
- Coupling with appropriate SBC strategies
- User feedback loop
Community Engagement: A Life cycle Approach

Understanding the needs & preferences of communities affected by malaria

- Co-creating new vector control products to meet the needs and preferences of communities at risk
- Conducting ethnographic, HCD or other formative research to understand psychosocial and environmental barriers and opportunities to increasing consistent vector control practices
- Collecting and using continuous feedback and input to ensure programming aligns with community needs and preferences

Delivering & Promoting vector control products and services with communities

- Identifying distribution outlets and channels that already serve communities at risk, and integrating VC products and services into these channels
- Ensuring delivery mechanisms are aligned with the identify and influencers of those at risk
- Co-creating messaging and co-delivering content to promote the benefits of VC in terms that resonate with communities at risk. Delivery should be two-way
- Integrating with distribution/promotion of other health or non-health issues, considering recommendations from the community

As discussed during the APMENVCWG Online Workshop July 2020

Monitoring, Evaluating and Refining programming with communities

- Involving community members in the design, execution, analysis and interpretation of monitoring and evaluating findings
- Working hand-in-hand with communities to apply M&E findings to identify and implement improvements in programming going forward
Best practices in the region

Going beyond IEC & SBCC

Community Dialogue Approach is one of multiple, emerging community engagement approaches gaining traction and evidence of impact.

Watch: Using Community Dialogue to tackle antibiotic resistance in Bangladesh
https://bit.ly/3e2cpj0

Resource: A guide to implementing the community dialogue approach
Best practices in the region

Utilizing non-traditional distribution channels

Women and children are promising delivery and change agents. Workshop discussion highlighted the potential of women and children to leverage their community-level access and influence to improve gender equity and increase as well as sustain vector control results.

Vector control in Indonesia, On house on larva observer
Best practices in the region

Utilizing non-traditional distribution channels

Non-health distribution channels can expand access for communities, including retail outlets, schools, community events and community outreach mechanisms outside of the health sector. One example of this is PMI-supported program in Cambodia and Myanmar) use of community rangers to distribute “forest packs”—containing multiple vector control products—to forest goers at risk of malaria.

Forest-goers package distributed in Myanmar including a LLIN, head-lamp, topical repellent (PMI Burma)
Emerging priorities

- **Organize a more focused review the use of community volunteers**—health and non-health—to support vector control and elimination targets in the region, against community engagement principles to identify opportunities to further leverage this channel.

- **Purposefully identify specific opportunities to use a gender lens to inform, deliver and evaluate vector control programs** in Asia Pacific. Assess and document Asia-Pacific cases where a gender-transformative approach has expanded vector control and elimination results.

- **Develop standard operating procedure (SOP)-type guides to promote vector control community engagement best practices** in support of vector control and elimination more broadly. These SOPs could be organized by opportunity area discussed during the July 2020 online workshop.

- **Leverage technology to discuss community engagement principles with a broader audience of stakeholders** and maintain momentum with a core group of “champions” to promote more and better application of community engagement principles and best practices.
Innovations with potential to facilitate community engagement

- Mobile & digital methods are making it easier to engage communities *more quickly and more continuously* i.e. design, co-creation, monitoring & evaluation phases
- Digital technologies have potential to enhance the quality and reach of vector control programming
- Manufacturers, product development partners and funders are working with communities to design new vector control products to better address the needs and preferences of underserved/last mile communities at risk
- Bundled products & services
- Integrated delivery, linking VC with other products and services valued by communities at risk
More on Community engagement

APMEN TechTalk on Community Participation: A Foundation for Malaria Elimination

https://orene.org/tech-talks/

Recorded webinar:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCWNyvSajkc
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