

Communities perspective

Engaging communities for behaviour change

Rwanda



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International Federation
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies



Introduction

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Rwanda Red Cross Society (RRCS) have jointly been working together to integrate Community Engagement and Accountability within the RRCS projects since 2013. This has included capacity building on CEA, use of mobile cinemas and radio shows as communication tools for community engagement and social and behaviour change communication.

The IFRC and RRCS undertook a field mission to assess the impact and successes of the mobile cinemas, radio shows and mobile radio from 28 to 31 May 2018 in Rwamagana district and Mahama refugee camp. We talked to community members and RRCS volunteers to determine whether mobile cinemas and radio shows actually work in sensitizing communities and influencing behaviour change as well as any unintended impact. This is a documentation of the stories from those we talked to.

A special thank you to Japanese Red Cross Society and Danish Red Cross Society for supporting these activities in Rwanda.

Community Radio in Rwamagana District



J. Claude Yussuf Siyarewo
Rwanda Red Cross Society volunteer and
radio show host

“This is our radio, we come here to do community mobilization on different health issues. This radio has a signal that reaches the whole country, but it is very much listened to here in the Eastern province. We do at least one show per month. Every show is an hour-long. The show is called “Sangira ijambo na Croix Rouge” (share your voice with the Red Cross). We want to increase the frequency of the radio show. It would be good to become a weekly show so that the information would stay fresh in peoples’ minds. And we would like to increase the time given to the people to call the show.

Our focus is on health issues: malaria prevention, waterborne and communicable diseases and we also look at disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction, first aid and such issues. Today we had a show on malaria prevention and more

precisely on how to use the mosquito nets and how to take the medication that is given in the hospitals.

The Rwanda Red Cross radio show is based largely on those we invite to the studio, such as health experts. We also go to communities and collect peoples’ comments on topics that we cover on that day’s show, and we broadcast their voices live on air. We also give people time to call and text in the studio during the show to ask questions from the experts. And we also have someone from the Red Cross here in the studio so that they can tell the community about the work of the Red Cross, regarding the issue we are tackling.

For example, today, someone called and asked about the mosquitos that are around these days. She said that they appear earlier in the evening than before,

and that they are bigger than before. Another question was about malaria medication: the caller commented that even if you take medication, you immediately get sick again, as soon as you finish the dosage. They wanted to know what the reason behind this was.

I am the one who prepares the show. I go and interview communities and then we edit them and plan the show together with the team of volunteers. I learned to do this work in a training organized by Rwanda Red Cross. I took the first training in 2013 and then after that I have taken refreshing trainings once a year. It is a great opportunity to get trained. Outside Red Cross I have a small business of my own. I arrange sound systems and such for events. So, the Red Cross training has helped me even in my day job as well.

I joined Rwanda Red Cross in 2006. The Red Cross has a connection with my personal views and I wanted to help people who are suffering. I feel that when I am doing the show, I am helping people to change their mindset on something and to live a better life.

Here I am doing something that is like a passion to me. I will never leave the Red Cross. I give at least one whole day per week of my time to the Red Cross.

The feedback I get is exciting. I get people calling me and saying that they have received good information from our show, and in my community, people refer questions to me, to ask to the experts in the next show. It makes me feel I have really done something to improve my country.

I feel like the show has had a big impact on the community. It has become the voice of the people on health issues. For example, when we started with the show, people complained about the mosquito nets that were not working properly. We communicated it in the show and it caused the nets being distributed to be changed and the situation improved.

The radio and mobile cinema shows have been effective tools in doing community mobilization, raising awareness. Since we have been doing them, we have seen the incidences of waterborne diseases, malaria and nutrition problems going down.”



Jacques Nsengiyumra

Head of Nyamirama health center, Kayonza district, participating in the radio show as a health expert

“I am here as a health worker. I am a Rwanda Red Cross member as well, in Kayonza district, so it is a pleasure to be able to use my technical skills for the work of Red Cross. I have participated in many shows since 2010 when we started to work together in mobilization. It makes me feel good to work together on this. I have a degree in public health and I have a diploma in nursing as well.

People call us here during the radio show and ask

questions. Today they asked things regarding the mosquito nets. They said that they are not protecting them well enough. I was telling people what they need to do now as we are moving from a rainy season towards the dry one: dry out the stagnating waters in the homes, cut bushes that have formed during the rainy seasons, sleep under the nets and if they have symptoms, to go and get treated immediately.

The biggest health challenge in this area is malaria. Secondly, the respiratory issues and thirdly the malnutrition issues and as fourth, the waterborne diseases. The Eastern province represents more than 60 per cent of the malaria cases country wide. We have a lot of swamps.

The radio is a very good channel in preventing malaria. In Rwanda, at least every household owns a radio or one mobile phone. So, this kind of communication reaches people well.

We learned that there were issues of malnutrition in our area: Just in one sector we had over 100 children under 5 years who had moderate malnutrition. And 30

that had severe malnutrition. That was in 2010. Today, as we speak, we only have 4 cases of moderate malnutrition and one of severe malnutrition. So, we have managed to reduce it significantly. It was thanks to the radio shows and the door to door mobilisation. It was a mindset problem, and for some an issue of food insecurity as well: when someone had chicken at home, they would sell the eggs in the market and not eat any of them themselves. Some would not eat any vegetables. The kitchen gardens help them to have more food at home. Another thing we noticed is that many times the families are too big, they can't feed them. So, family planning is important as well."

Matthew Rwahigi

Communications Manager, Rwanda Red Cross Society

"We do not want to depend on journalists. We want our volunteers to become journalists. We have a number of them, they have actually become community journalists. Apart from the Red Cross show, they do other radio shows as well. We trained them starting from the basics: how to record sound, how to edit them, how to arrange the show and to make it interesting. We did the first training in 2013 in Rwamagana and Gyomagama and a couple of other

districts. A year later we did a refresher training and in 2015 a master class with the first group again so that they can get to a higher level and to become lead journalists in their own shows. We are looking into arranging another training this year, concentrating on community engagement and accountability from a wider perspective, not just the radio."

Theogene Nzabandora

Branch manager of Radio Izuba, Rwamagana

"Our radio station reaches around 5-6 million listeners country-wide. The feedback we get from the people about Rwanda Red Cross show is very positive. They ask us, when is the show going to be on again. The Red Cross works with many things in our district, so sometimes people call us and share information on problems, asking us to send the Red Cross to them. We have the contact information, so we can direct them to the right people. I love the Red Cross, so I

don't mind the community contacting us about these things.

As a radio station, educating the listeners has a big value for us. So, we appreciate what the Red Cross is doing here. I would like to add more hours to the Red Cross show. The work they do is technically of very high quality as well. I would really like to see them do more shows here."

Mobile cinema in Rwamagana District



Marie Louise Mukakalisa

Volunteer

“I have been a Red Cross volunteer for 2 years. I joined because it is a good organization and they do a lot of good things. I wanted to contribute and now, every time they call me, I am there to support. This is my third time to participate in the mobile cinema. I have been mobilizing the community, telling them about the mobile cinema show coming up. People love the mobile cinema because they love watching the cartoons, the movies. They have come to realize that every time they come, they learn something, so they enjoy it very much.

The previous show was about hygiene and sanitation and waterborne diseases. Tonight, we

will talk about malaria and how to prevent it. It is a very popular event, we have a lot of people coming to see the show. Last time when we showed the film about hygiene and sanitation, people were so excited because in the film there was a character, a boy, who helped his father who was affected by cholera. They said it was amazing the boy could do so many things.

I am also involved in the Red Cross model village program, promoting the vegetable gardens and promoting good nutrition in the community. After the mobilization we have done, many people now have gardens.”



Emmanuel Sibomana

Volunteer

“I have participated in the mobile cinema a couple of times before. Today I was doing community mobilization to tell people about tonight’s show. The impression I have is that people are excited about the mobile cinema. After the show they are committed to put the things they have learned into practice. We used to do mobilization by showing people illustrations on paper, to explain the good practices, but we have seen that with the videos they understand these things much faster. They are more committed, and they want to put the things into practice. Every time we finish the cinema, they are already asking, when is the next show going to be.

I have been in the Red Cross for 9 years. I started by donating blood. I later learned about all the good things they do, and I wanted to do more to support the

people in need. Generally, I am a community mobilizer. I largely concentrate on good nutrition promotion. We are trained on how to build small kitchen gardens and I go to the community and tell them about them.

The biggest challenge in our community is that we still have extreme poverty, to some extent. We are an agrarian community, but we have small pieces of land, so productivity is not high enough. Access to water is also a problem. And sanitation and hygiene is a problem for the poor families. They do not have latrines.

Apart from the Red Cross I am a farmer, like most people in my community.”



Eugene Bwanakweli

Branch branch coordinator, Rwamagana and Kayonza districts

“We started to arrange mobile cinemas in 2013. We do shows every month, at least two in each place: Rwamagana and Kayonza. We have more than 500 people visiting the show each time. The biggest impact of mobile cinema is awareness on certain issues, especially the good practices we try to promote.

When we go back to the communities later, we see that the knowledge on the issues we have been talking about in mobile cinema is higher, and that people are trying to adopt some practices they learned about.

We still have issues of hygiene and sanitation in our community. And problems caused by disasters, such as drought and floods. Malaria is also a big challenge, and malnutrition due to food insecurity.

We work with the local authorities. We give them the date of the cinema and they help to disseminate on the upcoming cinema event. We also have volunteers who go to their communities and mobilize people to come and join. We put a lot of effort on mobilizing the people to

come. For the first thirty minutes we do entertainment, music and dancing to attract even more people.

They will then stay for the educational part as well. Mobile cinema is appreciated by the community. The problem is that the community leaders expect us to go to all the communities, but we don't have the capacity.

There is the cost of transporting the volunteers and the cost for the equipment, so we cannot arrange as many mobile cinemas as we would like to. We have 12 volunteers participating each time, plus a DJ.

And we bring experts to talk about the night's issue/ theme and respond to questions from the audience.”



Children dancing before the cinema screening

Matthew Rwahigi

Communications Manager, Rwanda Red Cross Society

“When we do house to house mobilization, it costs a lot and it takes a lot of time. And the impact and effectiveness are not so big, so we wanted to look at opportunities of mass mobilization. Radio is a good opportunity of mass mobilization, but it does not offer face to face interaction. And when we talk about behaviour change, face to face is the most effective way. That is how mobile cinema came about. In Africa it started with Rwanda and Burundi. We started it here in Rwanda in w. We only have one set of equipment in this area for the cinema so we change places. There are more than 500 participants in every show. In Mahama camp especially, the cinema can attract up to 3000-4000 people. The very

first time we did a mobile cinema show in the camp we had 28,000 people participating. We work with the IFRC to come up with the material, the films to show.

For the cinema we write a script and IFRC then hires someone to do the films. We customise them with the national society, translate them into Kinyarwanda etc. We mostly show animated films. In the camps, a major issue is gender-based violence. We do some material of our own as well: we come up with a script and go to experts and produce the material, such as small films and sometimes photos.”



Mobile cinema screening in Rwamagana at night



Jeanne Mutumwizoga

48 years old

“I have participated in the mobile cinema many times. The topics they normally talk about are nutrition and hygiene and sanitation. We get a lot of lessons from the mobile cinema. Specifically we learn about hygiene and sanitation, we learn practical ways of doing it. And we learn about ways to have a balanced diet in our families. It is a good way of preventing diseases in our communities.

I am a farmer, I have 7 children. We live in this neighbourhood. The living conditions in this community

are not so good. When you look at the biggest challenges, you see that there are a lot of issues with people’s mind sets, especially when it comes to health issues. There is still a lot of need for sensitization around disease prevention and hygiene and sanitation. Especially for the most vulnerable people, since they are not practising good hygiene in their families.”



David Shumbusho

17 years old

“I live around here. We are 5 siblings and my mum and dad. I am in second class of secondary school. Life here is good, we have seen change and development. Especially having electricity is good, I enjoy it. I can go and see some movies around because there is electricity. And a new road was built, so things are evolving.

Last time I came here to the mobile cinema, I saw a film on hygiene and sanitation. So today when I saw these people with the Red Cross, I thought they might have come to show films again, and I rushed here from

school. On the previous night I learned how waterborne diseases are spread and how to prevent them. It looked like everyone really enjoyed the cinema and learned a lot from it. These days I wash my hands more often than before. I wash them every time before eating.”



Jean Bosco Sengiyumva

36 years old

“I have a family of 3 kids and my wife. I am a farmer. This is the second time I am participating in the mobile cinema. Last time I came here I learned about waterborne diseases, how they are spread and how to prevent them. I learned a number of things that I can put into practise. For example, how to clean the utensils well and let them dry before using them, how to clean the food well before preparing it, and I learned about the importance of washing hands well. I also learned about how bad open defecation

is, and how it affects the population. So, I have changed my behaviour based on the things I learned.

Since I realized that they teach a lot of things here in the cinema, I also wanted to come this time. There are still many things that need improvement in the lives of the people in this community. We need more sensitization around the issues of nutrition, hygiene and sanitation.

Mobile Radio in Mahama Refugee Camp





Maria Goretti Mukahigiro

58 years old

“I have been here in the camp for 3 years. I escaped the conflict in Burundi, people are still dying there. My 3 children came here before me, and I followed them later. The youngest one is 18. I was also given one unaccompanied child that I am taking care of. I am a widow. After my husband died, I did not have more children. What they are saying here in the radio show about family planning is true. At least I don't have too many kids that I cannot take care of.

Life here is very hard. I do not even have a mattress. I requested for one but have not received it. I don't have work here in the camp. They don't give me work, because I am an old woman and I

cannot really dig, and the work one can do here is mainly cultivating. It is for those who are young.

I normally follow where the mobile radio is happening and come to listen to it. When we listen to them carefully and answer some questions, we sometimes get some prizes like soap or Vaseline. I find that the messages they are giving on family planning are very good, especially for the youth. People here in the camp have nothing to do and they are having kids all over, but they should remember that once we return home, they will have a difficult time if they have too many kids. So I find the messages they share very important.”



Salvator Niyibitanga

41 years old

“I left Burundi 3 years ago. It was violent, there was fighting. I decided that I needed to take my children to a safe place. I live here with my wife and 4 children, my sister and her child. My kids are between the ages of 7 months to 12 years.

Here in the camp I do not have work, but I have done some volunteering with the Red Cross and with one NGO. Back at home I was teaching in a primary school. To be able to work as a teacher here in Rwanda, I would first have to go back to school, to get a degree, since I never finished my studies back at home. Life in the camp is hard. We had to leave behind everything we were used to, what we used to know. Everything changed overnight. Now I am unemployed, but my family still needs things like before, and I do not have the same resources, and I cannot take my children to the schools I would like to. I wanted to study myself, too, but I did not manage.

The mobile radio has played an important role, doing community mobilization. When we came here in

2015, not everybody knew about things such as the importance of washing hands after using the latrine. The radio has helped to improve very many things.

It has had a great impact in terms of family planning, too. Nowadays so many people are going to clinics to seek for assistance with family planning and that is very important for our lives and wellbeing, not just now, but even once we go back to Burundi. Besides family planning, the mobile radio and mobile cinema tackle issues like malaria prevention. Malaria is a big challenge for us here because we live just next to a swamp. All these issues they teach are very important for our health.

The mobilization should continue, we need people to keep reminding the community about all these good practices. Through the radio they also give us advice on life in general, such as encouraging people to put up small businesses. They are saying: even if you are receiving some support now, look for more opportunities. It helps us realize that we also have some strength within ourselves that can be used

to develop and grow. And since the radio moves around, these messages reach the whole camp.

The radio is also a platform for sharing information. For example, if you lose your documents, you can go to them and they help spread the message in order to trace them. And it is a platform to showcase your talent: those who want can sing, for example. It is an opportunity we would not get otherwise, here in the camp.

My desire is to develop my mind, to grow and to go back to studying. But, of course, for that I will need some support. It will be very hard for me, but I hope I will be able to achieve it. I do not see any future in Burundi, I cannot picture where to go back to. My house was demolished. I believe it is better we stay where it is safe.”



Clarisse Muhawenimana and her child

21 years old

“The situation in Burundi was violent so I decided to leave. I have been here in the camp for 2 years. I came alone, but later my father joined me. My mother stayed in Burundi. I have had a child during this time, and my mother has never seen my baby. My son is 2.5 years old. I take care of him on my own. Life here in the camp is challenging. It is hard to get enough food and firewood, or clothes for the children. All these things are hard to get here.

I do not have a job. Just occasionally, someone asks me to go and do some digging in the plantations. But that job pays you only 700 francs a day. There is not much you can do with that money. I never went to any schools. Before coming here, I was working as a maid.

I have seen this mobile radio unit many times, and I often come to listen to them. Even yesterday they came in another area of the camp and I was there. The show usually talks about family planning, gender-based violence, hygiene and sanitation. I think these messages are very important for us. After the lessons I learned here, I actually got involved with family planning so that I don't have another child very soon.

For now, I take life the way it is. I intend to keep my reproductive health under control, I do not want to have many children I cannot take care of. But if I will have the means, I will have more kids.”



Aime Tresor Nibitanga

11 years old

“I have been here in the camp for 3 years. We had to leave Burundi because there was a war. Back at home we used to have what we wanted, and life was much easier. We lived a very happy life. Here in the camp life is a bit tough. Here people have a lot of problems. Back at home my grandmother used to tell me stories. Now I do not have her, since she stayed in Burundi. There I was used to being taught in French in school, here they teach in English. So things are a bit different here. What makes me happy here is that I can go to school and that there are so many kids to play with. I get to have fun with them.

When I grow up, I want to be president of Burundi. It is my motherland and I feel like there are so many good things I can do there. I want to lead the people well and give them a good life.

We have listened to this radio show many times: to the music, to the stories. They also come to show films that teach us things. I came here because I heard the noise and the music, and I knew it was the radio that had arrived. They teach us a lot about disease prevention, especially malaria, sexually transmitted diseases like AIDS and on general health practices. One of the things I have learned is to sleep under the mosquito net. Now when we go to sleep at home, I check that everyone is sleeping under one.”



Thomaida Dusabe

28 years old, radio conductor, Rwanda Red Cross volunteer

“The Rwanda Red Cross is an exciting place to be in. Their principles and values felt important to me and I fell in love with the Red Cross, and decided to join.

There is a very high fertility rate here in the camp. Families have many children, more than they can afford to take care of. We see that it causes poverty and hardship to feed the family. Today we did a show on reproductive health and family planning. We talked to many health workers and we also interviewed people in the community, did background research and then put them all together to form a show.

I did not have experience with radio before this, I was trained to do this work by the Red Cross. Since I was a child I have been listening to the radio a lot and I was fascinated by it, so when they trained us, I was very excited. Approximately a year ago we started with the mobile radio here in Mahama camp.

We have seen good results, working here with the radio. One of the things I can talk about is malaria prevention. Before, many people did not sleep under mosquito nets, but after continuous sensitization more

people are doing it, and the malaria rates are getting lower. Another thing I can say is that people live in a more hygienic and clean way now, after all the promotion. We also see more people going to the clinics for family planning than before. There used to be a lot of diarrhoea in the camp due to bad hygiene practices, but we have been able to cut that by sensitization.

I am a mother of two. After high school I had planned to study, but I did not manage. I now live here close by and I work in the camp every day, I only return to my family on the weekends. I get so many good things from this work, and I learn good messages I can pass on to my family as well.

My favourite thing about doing the radio show is that it allows me to give a message to the people and the people listen to me. Before I did not know anything about producing radio shows. Now I can share important messages and make a difference.”



Didien Hategekimana

30 years old, radio conductor, Rwanda Red Cross volunteer

“I joined the Red Cross 10 years ago, when I was still in high school. I loved the principles of the movement and what I saw them doing. Later I started volunteering as well. At first I was volunteering in the community radio and then I was asked to work here in the camp. I love the Red Cross. It is not very easy to be a volunteer, since one has to sacrifice a lot, but it gives me happiness to see that we can help improve the lives of the people. I have been with the Red Cross for so long that I feel like it is my life now.

I have been working with the mobile radio for a year. I live just next to the camp. We do the show 3 times a week, two hours each time. One hour consists of the program we put together, and the second part is interaction with the listeners.

I become happy when I see that the people listen to us, and that the message is important to them.

We come up with the topic based on the challenges the community has. And then interview different people, experts and the community. Then we write a script and do the editing.

The radio has a big impact on the community. We have seen that the people have changed their habits to wash hands. When the people had just come here, they did not wash hands, but after continuous mobilization we have seen that people now do it, in a right way.

We use the radio to give messages to the community, such as to tell about the services of the Red Cross, like restoring family links. We get the message from the program personnel in charge and then share it via radio. We have seen an increased awareness around sexual and gender-based violence. When we talk to the community, we see that they know now their rights and where to go if they have problems. And there were people that were going to fish and some to look for logs by the river, and we would lose around 2 people in the week, they would drown. We were asked to sensitize the people around the issue and nowadays there are no deaths because of the river anymore.”

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