



SHARING MIDTERM REVIEW FINDINGS WITH COMMUNITIES: A case study from Zambia

Red Cross Society's Pneumonia Reduction Project

Introduction

Zambia Red Cross Society (ZRCS), with financial and technical support from the Netherlands Red Cross (NLRC), has since 2017 been implementing a three-year Pneumonia Reduction Project targeting under 5 children in selected communities in Luampa, Limulunga and Kalabo districts of Western Province of Zambia. One key focus of the project is reduction of indoor pollution and risk of Pneumonia and Acute Respiratory Infection (ARIs) through construction and use of improved cook stoves, but implementation has been problematic due to lack of clay soil in most parts of the project area. A midterm review was carried out in February 2017 to better understand the issues faced by communities.

This case study documents how ZRCS adopted a Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) approach by going back to communities to discuss the findings from this review and seek suggestions from community members on implementation of activities such as the construction of cook stoves. Sharing evaluation findings with communities is one of the CEA minimum actions, however a CEA baseline survey in late 2017 found this was one the least common CEA practices by National Societies in Africa with 54% of respondents saying they rarely or never share evaluation findings with communities.

Context

ZRCS strives to provide quality services that are people centered by integrating CEA in all its programming and at all stages of project implementation. This commitment was rekindled following capacity building the National Society received in CEA from IFRC in June and September 2018 that facilitated the process of institutionalization of this approach within the NS programming and ways of working. In the past, ZRCS used to provide feedback on surveys and evaluations at district level only and not to the villages and as such, the National Society missed an opportunity to fully engage communities. This was the first time that ZRCS undertook a community feedback process following a midterm review of its projects. ZRCS shared the findings through community meetings, which were organized by the volunteers, with support from the project officers. The meetings brought together "Indunas" who are traditional community leaders, mothers who were the primary audience of the project, fathers, and traditional healers. The community appreciated the involvement and provided some feedback that will be used to improve project outputs, including construction of cook stoves in the remaining project implementation period. We shared the results through community meetings as the picture shows.



ZRCS Staff sharing and discussing midterm review findings with community members in Lyoto Village – Kalabo District

“We are glad that ZRCS staff have come back to provide feedback on project implementation, most of the time, no one comes back to us after an evaluation or assessment of any kind. Decisions are made from their offices without engaging us community members or beneficiaries on what we really want. We are the ones who can tell our story and what we really want or what is on the ground because we are the ones who live in this community. We hope this practice will continue and that our suggestions will be put into consideration. We really say thank you to ZRCS for this initiative” said Induna Inambao - from Lyoto village of Sihole ward in Kalabo District.

Concerning construction and use of cook stoves, community members suggested alternative soil to clay that they can collect from nearby communities, *“We have heard from Luampa district on how these cook stoves are helping to reducing indoor air pollution and risk of pneumonia and Acute Respiratory Infection (ARIs) in children. We know it is a challenge to find clay soil here, but we are prepared to find some alternative soil which we use to construct our houses which is just as strong as those done with clay soil. We are very positive it will also work on the cook stoves – we want this technology in our community”* said one mother from Lyoto village, Sihole ward in Kalabo

Results

Community members used this platform to share ideas on alternative ways of implementing various activities including construction of cook stoves. They also shared ideas on how best a complaints and feedback mechanism can be implemented and work effectively. Community members appreciated their involvement in the planning of remaining activities and indicated that the Pneumonia Reduction Project and other projects that the NS implemented in various communities were very relevant in promoting health and the general welfare of the



vulnerable people. Community members mentioned that they would love to see effective communication and feedback on project implementation between ZRCS and the community by face to face engagement through frequent visits, social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp for those who have access to these platforms.

Lessons learned

Community engagement through sharing findings of assessments and surveys such as midterm review, with community members or beneficiaries, makes the later (community members) feel valued as partners in project implementation which is key to success and sustainability. In that way, communities take responsibility and ownership in finding solutions to their problems or gaps revealed in the surveys. Effective community engagement is about recognizing that involving beneficiaries in the whole project cycle is not done by just telling the people what is being done for them, but a two-way information sharing platform. It was wonderful to get views from the community members on how certain project outputs such as cook stoves could be delivered in absence of clay soil

Next steps & recommendations

Construction of cook stoves which was almost planned to be discontinued in some parts of project implementation area due to lack of clay soil, will now be explored by using alternative soil as suggested by community members. ZRCS staff will undertake regular community visits to listen to and provide feedback related to project implementation to ensure successful delivery of outputs and realization of expected outcomes and impact. We recommend that findings of surveys and assessments in all projects should be shared and discussed with community members for them to see the value and need for participation and take ownership. Senior Management and Governance Boards in various National Societies need to support institutionalization of CEA in order to deliver people centered services

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