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The past year: October 2003 – September 2004

Introduction

Exchange is a networking and learning programme that acts as a catalyst to promote and improve effective health communication practices and policies which benefit the poor. The lessons learned from health communication can be applied to other development communication areas.

Founded in 2000 as the result of extensive consultation among health communication practitioners, Exchange is funded by the UK [Department for International Development \(DFID\)](#) and hosted by [Healthlink Worldwide](#).

Exchange makes use of dialogue, reflection and learning processes to strengthen and encourage the efforts of other organisations. In the words of someone interviewed during a recent output to purpose review, Exchange **'helps others to do better what they want to do... It doesn't set up its own projects and structures.'**

Exchange uses four main strategies to achieve its outputs:

1. Share learning about effective health communication
2. Involve Southern-based organisations in generating, analysing and applying good health communication practice
3. Increase capacity of health communicators to influence policy and practice
4. Support strategic health communication approaches.



Photo: Georgina Cranston / Healthlink Worldwide

Exchange has introduced two priorities to help focus its work. These are:

- Strategic communication particularly around social mobilisation, networking, advocacy and grassroots communication aiming at social change around major public health concerns including maternal and child health, nutrition and communicable diseases
- HIV/AIDS communication.

This report summarises the programme's achievements over the past 12 months, highlights key lessons that have emerged, and provides a brief overview of areas for future work.

Achievements 2003-2004

During 2003-04 Exchange made significant progress in delivering its outputs. This included:

Sharing lessons

- Strengthened networking and sharing of learning among some 600 UK-based health communication practitioners and Southern partner organisations through 10 successful lunchtime discussions. Topics were: participatory communication in Peru, Communication for Social Change, HIV/AIDS communication, community empowerment, impact assessment and outcome mapping, HIV/AIDS and very young children, community level communication tools, learning from partnership, engaging culture in communication and development, and communication for advocacy. Summaries of the discussions are available on the Exchange website: www.healthcomms.org and resource lists related to the discussions for each session were produced in partnership with Source (www.asksource.info)
- Made the evidence and experience from a vast number of communication for development interventions more accessible to some 50,000 communication practitioners worldwide through continued support for improvement of the Communication Initiative's (www.comminit.com) communication vehicles – website and e-magazine
- Contributed to improving programming approaches on HIV/AIDS and early childhood development at the [Bernard van Leer Foundation](#), through a new Findings publication, a detailed research report and an analysis of funding trends, together with facilitating a dialogue workshop and electronic discussion forum
- Improved access to key learning through a revitalised and revamped Exchange website to and published a series of [new materials](#) on HIV/AIDS communication, learning processes, culture and communication and partnerships

Involving Southern organisations

- Facilitated and supported workshops in South Africa, Kenya, Thailand, Ethiopia, Zambia, Ghana and Burundi that have brought together practitioners and policy makers to share learning on participatory communication, social change communication, community level approaches, knowledge management and the use of information centres as part of a strategic approach to communication
- Provided seed grants to Southern organisations in Latin America, Africa and Asia to document learning, increase their reflection and analysis, and share their learning and experience more widely
- Improved understanding of grassroots communication activities through support for research by [KANCO](#) and [AfriAfya](#) in Kenya
- Contributed to the development of a strong, integrated approach to [continuing medical education](#) among the governments of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania by facilitating the second in a series of three regional workshops in East Africa
- Facilitated improvements to the impact of advocacy work of the [International People's Health Council](#), particularly active in Latin America, and the [People's Health Movement](#), particularly active in South Asia, through strengthened communication approaches
- Initiated a new programme of work with [Creative Exchange](#) and UNESCO to look at ways of engaging culture more effectively in development work and in work around HIV/AIDS communication that aims to identify effective 'beacon projects'
- Supported the [Global Health Watch](#) in its efforts to identify country specific case studies and testimonies to provide a forum for voices of the poor to promote human rights as the basis for health policy



Photos: Georgina Cranston / Healthlink Worldwide

Increasing capacity of health communicators

- Facilitated a workshop to bring together participatory facilitators from Latin America, Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Europe to explore how to best deliver strategic and participatory communication training. The workshop has led to the development of a network of lead facilitators who are undertaking a number of workshops as part of a long term process to build communication capacity
- Facilitated key elements of a WHO, University of Amsterdam, Royal Tropical Institute [training course](#) on promoting rational drug use at community level, with an emphasis on issues related to anti-retroviral therapy. This is leading to the development of a support network involving the participants at this annual course, and the development of new training material
- Initiated dialogue and a series of workshops with staff of [Health Unlimited](#) to strengthen learning processes around their communication work with indigenous populations and the use of radio as a communication tool
- Facilitated a [workshop](#) on approaches to ensure that radio programming on HIV/AIDS is relevant and reliable. This brought together broadcasters, health researchers and information providers, internet portal managers, NGOs, information and knowledge managers, donors and communicators to exchange experience and explore the potential for closer collaboration.

Strengthening strategic communication approaches

- Strengthened strategic approaches to [social change](#) and rights-based communication programmes around HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia and Zambia in partnership with the UNICEF East and Southern Africa regional office
- Strengthened the capacity of researchers involved with the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine's [Malaria Knowledge Programme](#) and the [Disability Knowledge and Research Programme](#) based at the University of East Anglia to communicate their research more strategically

- Made consistent inputs into DFID policy discussions and papers, including on HIV/AIDS communication, communication around antiretroviral therapy, impact evaluation, research strategy and made inputs into a DFID internal training workshop on communication for development approaches
- Supported the development of Healthlink Worldwide's [participatory communication strategy](#), facilitated a strategic analysis among stakeholders of [INASP-Health](#), and worked with the International People's Health Council and the People's Health Movement on developing communication strategies
- Facilitated the design and delivery of a series of strategic communication workshops with National AIDS Councils in nine African countries as part of Exchange's support to the ActionAID, UNAIDS and Healthlink Worldwide programme of [Support to the International Programme Against AIDS in Africa](#) (SIPAA)
- Contributed to the strategic planning of communication efforts around [WHO's 3x5](#) initiative to roll out anti-retroviral treatment
- Refined understanding of ways to evaluate communication and networking activities in part through completing evaluations on INASP-Health and the International People's Health Council and progressing evaluations on the People's Health Movement and the International Forum for Rural Transport for Development and strengthened work with [MandE News](#), the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) to develop the [Pelican Initiative](#) to take forward thinking and learning on networking and communication evaluation



Constraints

The biggest constraint has been the lack of certainty over the next phase funding. Although a five-year agreement has been made in principle for a total of some £4 million, the size of the funding means that it needs to go through a final set of hoops within DFID. This has meant having to re-jig the operational plan and, because of delays in implementation, the budget. Final decisions are now expected in December 2004, with the new phase to start in January 2005.

Lessons

Increasingly organisations are approaching Exchange for support and strategic input. The time taken to build trust and develop good communication processes facilitates this engagement.

We need more 'new communicators' – people who help build strong communication processes. Building capacity for this at country and field level is likely to be a major challenge for Exchange's future work.

More information

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www.healthcomms.org/resource/pubs.html

Future plans

This summarises some of the key activities planned for the next 12 months.

- Agree a new five-year programme with DFID by 15 Dec 2004
- Establish joint working agreements with the Communication Initiative, Panos Institute, AfriAfya and Healthlink Worldwide
- Set up new advisory board to guide the programme
- Explore effective approaches for monitoring and evaluating the impact of health and development communication through the Pelican Initiative and other partnerships
- Strengthen capacity development initiatives on communication and documentation, by working with local communication networks and organisations and supporting the development of a core group of facilitators and communicators who can expand the experience of using participatory communication, social change communication and effective HIV/AIDS communication
- Continue to support lunchtime discussions to share experience and learning to improve and strengthen the effectiveness and strategic nature of communication
- Produce a series of analytical papers on health communication issues – including 4 new Findings and three other analytical documents
- Support local partners in operational research and planning and dialogue workshops to increase strategic communication and ensure increased involvement of people living in poor and marginalised communities in local policy dialogues
- Work with the Communication Initiative, the World Bank, the Government of Italy and other partners in planning for a conference on Communication for Social Development to be held in late 2005