COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

Situation Overview

Communities in South Sudan have been cut-off from critical aid, social amenities and infrastructure due to recurrent conflicts for over five decades. A combination of insecurity, destruction of infrastructure including sanitation facilities, lack of safe drinking water, and interruption in services has ignited and accelerated disease outbreaks such as measles and cholera in parts of the country. Harmful practices such as child marriage, preference to educate boys over girls among other child rights issues continues to affect children in South Sudan. This has greatly affected how communities respond to shocks and challenges facing them, leading them to develop some behaviors and social norms that negatively affects the rights of children. To advocate for the rights of children and to encourage positive social and behavior change, sustained communication and community engagement is key. Access to information is one of the core humanitarian principle which is often left especially during emergencies.

UNICEF works in partnership with ministries, UN agencies and NGO/Community Based Organizations (CBO) to advocate for the rights of children in health, nutrition, education, child protection and WASH through sustained community engagement and information sharing. As part of the Communication for Development (C4D) strategic response, UNICEF uses a multichannel approach including interpersonal communication mainly through house to house visits, community meetings, school-based activities, outreach sessions in market places and at water points and through announcements in mosques and churches to raise awareness and mobilize communities on key issues. Mass media activities including use of public addresses, roadshows, radio, television and newspaper announcements. The use of social media including cell phone text messages are continually being used to not only mobilize communities but also to provide a feedback mechanism and promote community engagement.

C4D uses the humanitarian development nexus to build resilience among affected populations through sustained communication and community engagement activities in promoting positive child rights behaviors among caregivers and communities.

Community Engagement

UNICEF has invested heavily in forming a network of skilled community mobilizers (Integrated Community Mobilizers) at community, boma, payam, county and state level. Through house-to-house visits, interpersonal communication and community meetings, the community mobilizers have reached 373,613 households with life-saving messages since January 2019 and conducted 11,829 community meetings with mother-support groups, religious leaders, youth groups and community leaders throughout the country.

2019 results

- 350,000 annual target of households to sensitize on key behaviors to promote social and behavioral change.
- 373,613 household reached with key life-saving messages.
- 2 million number of people reached with messages on key behaviors through radio.
- 11,829 number of community meetings including youth groups, women groups, religious groups and schools.
Use of Media
With radio being the most trusted source of information after interpersonal communication and the most widely used communication tool, UNICEF has partnerships with over 42 radio stations throughout South Sudan broadcasting in nine widely used languages. Through production of jingles/radio spots, radio talk shows and other radio programmes, UNICEF has been able to provide a platform for two-way communication reaching over 2 million people with key messages on water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education, nutrition, child protection and health.

Campaigns
To increase the uptake of immunization and reduce the risk of polio in South Sudan, UNICEF in collaboration with the ministry of health and other partners have conducted two polio campaigns reaching over 3 million children under the age of five years with two drops of polio vaccine in 2019. UNICEF has been instrumental in mobilizing parents, caregivers and children for the Back-to-Learning campaign. UNICEF also mobilizes communities around commemorative days like Global Handwashing Day and World Breastfeeding Week.

Faith for Positive Change Initiative
The C4D section has successfully launched South Sudan’s first-ever faith for positive change initiative in South Sudan. The initiative aims at engaging and building the capacity of the religious leaders and institutions to realize the rights of children as part of their religious engagement with the communities.

Risk Communication
UNICEF is the lead agency for Risk Communication Technical Working Group supporting emergencies such as measles outbreak, cholera outbreak, polio eradication and Ebola preparedness and response. UNICEF has been mobilizing and sensitizing communities in high risk counties on Ebola preparedness and prevention.

In partnership with the Social Science Humanitarian Social Action Platform, UNICEF conducted a social science study on consumption of bush meat along areas bordering the Democratic Republic of Congo. In addition UNICEF conducted a Knowledge Attitudes and Practices (KAP) study on Ebola and is currently doing a KAP study on menstrual hygiene management.

As part of complaints and feedback mechanism, rumor tracking and management was introduced in Ebola high risk areas.

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Funding required in 2019: US$ 6.5 million
Funding available: US$ 3.4 million
Funding gap: US$ 3.1 million

* Beneficiaries figure adjusted from previous report to improve quality of monitoring progress as well as activity that rollover between reporting periods

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More information on the situation in South Sudan and UNICEF response, including the latest situation reports, can be found at https://www.unicef.org/southsudan/