

Messaging on Ebola Treatment Seeking Behavior in Sierra Leone

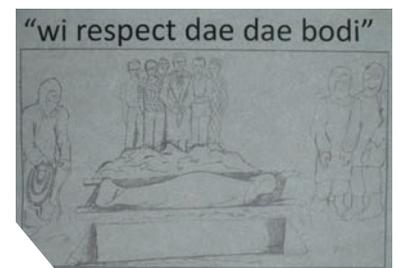
Development of a Social Marketing Strategy
to Promote Ebola Treatment Seeking Behavior in Sierra Leone
Umeå University

As part of a project aimed at developing messages promoting Ebola treatment-seeking behavior in Sierra Leone, Associate Professor John Kinsman from Umeå University in Sweden travelled to Sierra Leone to work with his partners from the Medical Research Centre in Freetown and the Centre for Health Research and Training in Sierra Leone (CHaRT-SL).

The trip was centered around a creative workshop to develop messages and messengers based on previously conducted formative research. The hope was to address some of the concerns of the Sierra Leonean people in relation to Ebola and the response to the epidemic.

In a rapid turn around, just two weeks later the messages developed by the Project were used to promote behavior change and treatment for Ebola in a three-day, enforced shut down to try to close down the cycle of transmission once and for all.

Following their message development workshop, the team presented at the NERC (National Ebola Response Centre) Daily Briefing. In the presentation they outlined a draft set of messages and associated channels, messengers, and associated operational issues. Their findings were extremely well received and they were asked to draw up messages that could be used immediately in the country.



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The in-country head of the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), and a number of people from NERC itself, including from the social mobilization pillar, requested that the material developed by this project be fast-tracked into operation. The project noted a concern about the possibility of unanticipated consequences of disseminating the materials before they were validated in the field. But a senior NERC official countered this: “Don’t be so academic!” he half-joked. “We don’t have time for that. We need to change behavior right now and your materials reflect the reality in the field...”

“We were happy to hand the materials over on that basis. We are delighted that the timing worked so well, and that we are able to contribute substantively to such a critical national mobilization event.”

Associate Professor John Kinsman
from Umeå University

Working through the following night, John and his team refined the messages and images, and passed them to NERC officials the next day. The document contributed to the message development process designed to support the three-day enforced ‘stay at home’ that ran from Friday 27th to Sunday 29th March throughout the country, aimed at trying to close down the cycle of transmission. The main focus of the messages was on Ambulance Drivers, Burial Teams, and the fear of Chlorine.

Programme Name:

Development of a social marketing strategy to promote Ebola treatment-seeking behaviour in Sierra Leone.

Key information

Grant awarded: £158,547

Lead organisation:

Umeå University, Sweden

Partnering organisation(s):

Medical Research Centre in Sierra Leone, Centre for Health Research and Training in Sierra Leone.

Project length: Jan-15 to Apr-15

Health sector: Messaging

Study location: Sierra Leone

Principal Investigator(s)

Professor John Kinsman

Purpose

This study takes an applied anthropological approach, firstly examining community perceptions of current Ebola messages and treatments, then developing Ebola treatment-seeking messages that respond to people’s concerns. These messages will then be validated in a further, short round of field work, then refined and disseminated to key in-country stakeholders for their use.

Expected outcomes

The project will deliver a database of all Ebola messages, as well as the range of treatments used to date in the country, while presenting and assessing community perceptions of these messages and treatments.

A set of gender-sensitive and urban-rural-specific messages, both generic and targeted, will then be developed and disseminated to promote Ebola treatment-seeking behaviour.

<http://www.umu.se/om-universitetet/aktuellt/nyheter/nyhetsvisning//sr-umeaforskare-overdriven-radsla-for-ebolavirus.cid233646#>

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