

"Champions in action"; resilience building through novel approach for communication during COVID 19 pandemic

Ranasinghe P¹, Herath H¹

¹ Disaster Preparedness and Response Division Ministry Of Health, Colombo, Sri Lanka

Introduction

- COVID19 is a long lasting public health emergency. Pandemic fatigue made people more resistant to public health advices.
- Novel participatory approaches of communication were much needed to combat COVID 19.

Objective

- To build health and socioeconomic resilience among public through community led communication, sharing their own success stories during the pandemic

Methodology

Sample selection

- People and occupational settings were selected in two steps:

➤ Step 1

1. Nominations from grassroot level health workers
2. Self-nominators through a pre- advertised telephone number.
3. Random Observation of communities /In depth Interviews

➤ Step 2

A team of three experts representing relevant locality, Ministry of Health (MoH) and media, visited these places to finalize as a "Champion" of new normalcy.

Project implementation

- Wide range of socio-economic backgrounds across the society from various parts of the country were included
- A news segment designed and telecasted regularly over three months collaborating with Sri Lanka Rupavahini Cooperation (SLRC) to **introduce the champions of new normalcy**
- Two minutes of prime-time news in SLRC was dedicated for these success stories.
- Commenced from 27th December 2020.
- News Segment marketed as a new year gift for 2021 from MoH and SLRC to all Sri Lankans
- The process was conducted with the informed consent of individuals and organizations.

Results

- Range of socioeconomically resilient occupational settings and people, well adapted to new normalcy through innovative approaches were identified
- They shared their real experience of "successful change" and its benefits to the public in story telling mode supported by actual visuals
- The news segment was published as "Rise again 2021- move forward with confidence"
- This motivational message was well received by the public and participants were identified as heroes within their communities.
- The feed back from the participants confirmed an increase of their customer base after the program and was accepted as a healthy setting by the community.

Strengths

- A review of community action
- Shared best practices and lessons learnt by the community in a story telling mode
- Community led participatory, innovative communication approach
- Multisectoral joint effort with involvement of all levels including grass root level workers
- **Whole of society approach to ensure community engagement**

Conclusions

- The proposed and tested model is an innovative, well accepted, motivational, communication approach involving resilient people during pandemic as "change agents"
- It is identified as one of the best practices of RCCE in Sri Lanka shifting the communication strategies, from one way communication at initial stages of the pandemic, towards the community engagement and participatory approaches during the pandemic fatigue stage.



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