

Organization

UNICEF

Organization Type

UN

Country

USA, Headquarters New York City

Sector

Knowledge Management

Describe the KM initiative

UNICEF's community network brings together 11,000 staff in more than 155 countries around the world. This network has a widespread presence on the ground, and offers staff and partners the potential to connect, shape and share their knowledge, experience, and research on global issues for children.

The Communities Project started in mid-2008 by an active team that created the opportunity for people to connect and collaborate. They mobilized an unprecedented demand to engage multiple groups at the global, regional, and country level.

To further expand the connection the team introduced a platform that integrates Web 2.0 technologies and social networking in August 2009: people are now using blogs, discussion forums, document and photo libraries, webinars. Some groups pioneered online wiki spaces to co-create resources in real time and micro-blogging to communicate immediately.

This project is expanding rapidly with more than 25 groups and 2400 people forming an online presence, actively sharing knowledge and ideas, learning from each other. Some of these include membership from other UN and multi-lateral organizations, research institutions and key stakeholders. The most active groups formed around issues include HIV/AIDS, Evaluation, Policy Advocacy, Knowledge Management, Social and Economic Policy, Gender Equality.

The initial success of the project is greatly energized by staff and stakeholders motivation and sustained momentum. The team is building a simple model for productive engagement. Community membership is expanding rapidly projecting greater demand and more groups forming in the future. The team is actively measuring the value and consolidating the results of the Communities as they continue to evolve.

Unique Value and Potential of this innovative Approach

- Quick mobilization of people worldwide in a sustainable and cost-effective way
- Mix of motivation, talent and new technology maximizes the time and organizational speed
- The power of connectivity fosters maximum cross-fertilization and provides quick access to practical solutions

Describe the approaches utilized to measure / assess this KM initiative

In the Spring of 2010, the UNICEF Communities team and recognized experts in the field: [Etienne Wenger](#) and [Beverly Trayner](#) organized a global workshop on community leadership to strengthen and expand communities. It pioneered the use of innovative media and technologies to engage and co-create in real time with close to 60 community leaders from across the world. This initiative was selected for presentation at the UN Knowledge Fair in Turin, Italy in November 2010.

Approaches:

- Defined five specific leadership roles to maximize and measure Communities impact. The participants performed these five roles working together from multiple locations in real time.
- Developed Community Booths to visualize the progress of ten different groups.
- Created Community Case Clinics to identify areas of success and need for improvement through collective feedback by the groups, including sharing relevant stories.
- Piloted multiple online spaces to enable staff and partners to lead their groups effectively.

Participants' testimonial *"The Community Leaders Workshop is one of the most dynamic, earn-while-you-learn experiences I've been a part of. It was absolutely one of the best, immersive learning and community building experiences."*
(Tanya Accone DHR-Source: Yammer)

"The workshop was an immersion into using the social media tools to get us up and running with our own sites. However, the workshop was not only focused on technology, but also addressed our responsibilities in leading communities. Towards the end of the meeting, we learned that a successful community may not be about leading anybody, but by creating the space to allow something." (Michelle Seigel – UNICEF DOC)

1. Surveys

Developed a simple model for online survey and piloted to help gauge how well communities meet the needs of their members. The results have been useful to identify successes and areas for improvement. Key questions covered specific actions required to enhance each community, relevant issues and topics members need to focus on, discuss and share knowledge using the community. The results of surveys and along with action points we intend to pursue early in 2011 to follow up on the survey were shared with members of four communities. We adjusted platforms and approaches accordingly.

2. Google Analytics

Set up and developed a method for Community leaders to implement and analyse statistical information provided by the Google Analytics. By having access to the Google Analytics Community leaders are now better able to monitor and track traffic orientation and subsequent page views, user activities and contributions, and create a monthly comprehensive report.

3. Maximize Community impact

Organize a workshop with [Etienne Wenger](#) to articulate the business value of communities, with a focus on real time effectiveness and the practicality of the Community model for supporting UNICEF's mission and goals (March 2011). We will identify key practical actions to maximize communities' effectiveness globally and define specific Return Of Investment (ROI) indicators. Key intent is to maximize community effectiveness, and simplify model and tools.

What was the purpose or motivation for assessing this KM initiative?

- Identify the simplest, sustainable way to scale up the communities model to fit the global needs of UNICEF staff and partners.
- Illustrate how Communities create a learning structure that unleashes the passion, commitment and motivation of people to engage for results.
- Define specific Return on Investment (ROI) measure(s) for Communities.

- Create an effective model for collaboration using appropriate technology.
- Collect stories to illustrate what works and what needs improvement.

What were the most important lessons learned about the assessment process?

Surveys

The respondents positively confirmed the validity and usefulness of the approach and provided feedback on its future direction. This includes: enhancing the platform by making it available to staff and partners in real time and simplifying its use by perfecting writing for the web and social networking skills.

Actions

- Identified potential solutions for external communities
- Producing a web enabled guide for engaging communities and networks
- Refining and simplifying the current platform to make it more user-friendly

Community Snapshot

Leading a Community is different than leading a team because of the skills required. Communities' value proposition is greater when we empower their leaders. The success of the Global Leadership Workshop demonstrates that it is critical to train leaders to identify knowledge and expertise, attract external members, actively engage them to collaborate, grow and sustain membership, and measure impact.

The Evaluation Community is currently one of the largest in UNICEF with more than 380 members reaching out to staff beyond the M&E group. In 2010, the Community reached close to 11,000 hits. During 2010, there were a number of significant discussions and blogs that supported the development of the advocacy tool kit and the M&E Companion. The Evaluation Community uses a combination of tools to actively engage partners including webinars and an external platform.

What would you do differently next time?

What we are currently doing:

Combine the essential elements and resources to sustain the connection and collaboration of an expanding global network of people.

Create a sustainable model to attract and inspire motivated people to share knowledge and ideas to improve the life of children across the world. This leads into the following future actions providing resources are made available:

- Invest in writing for the web and production techniques for narrative development
- Create a market for narratives while empowering and encouraging people to publish
- Measure the impact of Communities from the very start
- Actively use digital storytelling

What advice would you give to others based on your experience?

- Setting clear goals and results from the start. This provides a focus and rationale to share, helps to sustain participation and productive engagement.
- Making insightful and relevant content easily accessible is essential to sustain community engagement
- Community action leads to fast results when it grabs and sustains the attention of people virtually. If aligned to a clear focus of work this is a practical model to harness the power of collaboration across the global Community network working for children.
- Blending face-to-face and online activities
- In organizations, it is paramount to create incentives and motivate people to produce quality content through investing in capacity development, recognition and rewards.

- It is strategic for productive communities to estimate cost savings and the impact of collaborating virtually which can be a scalable model to increase performance. Maximizing resources to enhance organizational effectiveness is key.
- Participatory technologies are effective when incorporated into users' daily workflow. Good practice is to design a community minimally at the outset and allow participants to create their interaction, adding design elements over time.

What do you think are the main unanswered questions or challenges related to this field of work?

- Validation begins when we set the objectives of a Community. It is essential to develop metrics that track specific outcomes in areas such as engagement, participation, involvement, collaboration and co-creation.
- Value is generated by intangible assets which traditional metrics don't capture, but are possible to evaluate, and they have proven to be a powerful source in sustaining organizational performance. Measuring quality is the essence of a successful endeavor, and measuring evidence is an integral part of any program.
- We are currently working to pilot indicators to measure the results in order to evolve the Communities project, and maximize its impact. We will illustrate how Communities contribute to enhance strategic capabilities of staff and align to UNICEF's mission and goals.

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