

# User-Centred Community Engagement: What We Learnt

This document outlines what we learnt from the pilots in Bangladesh and Iraq based on the team's own observations and experiences, and feedback from the field teams involved in the implementation.

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# Implementation of the Community Engagement



## Timely and meaningful implementation of the engagement hinged on organisational buy-in and level of staff capacity.

- In Bangladesh, changing organisational leadership significantly delayed implementation at various stages of the pilot. Staff rotations meant that new management was not as informed and invested in the pilot and often other activities were prioritised.
- In Iraq, management buy-in was low and temporary staff were put in charge of implementation, which delayed progress.

## Recruiting field staff from the community was beneficial to engagement.

- The affected community appreciated member of their community carrying out digital engagement and facilitating the Co-Creation Sessions. Caregivers and children felt more comfortable and open than talking to someone from outside the community.
- Intimate knowledge of the community helped the field team to understand cultural context (i.e. gender engagement teams) and what time to best engage with the community (i.e. avoiding lunch time or when children are at school).

## The field teams found it easy to deploy the Digital Tool because it was both simple and lightweight.

- The average time (less than 15 minutes per household) of engagement meant that field staff was able to cover a large number of households in a relatively short period of time.
- Point and click nature of the survey was easy for the field team to understand and to explain to the affected community.

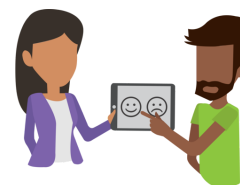
## Budget restrictions that are not communicated effectively to the affected people can lead to increased dissatisfaction.

In Iraq despite design decisions being made based on Co-Creation Sessions they were not implemented due to inadequate budget. The limitations of the budget and feasibility of some design changes were not communicated to the community. Therefore, they expected changes that did not materialise, which led to increased dissatisfaction.

## Key learnings for implementation

- The lightweight methodology allows field teams to deploy it alongside their ongoing responsibilities and activities.
- Field team capacity for facilitating the methodology is crucial and requires buy-in from management and investment in training.
- For successful implementation a dedicated focal person is vital. Ideally, they have some experience in participatory approaches.
- Buy-in needs to be fostered by providing relatable examples on the value of a participatory approach. This could be achieved by relating positive outcomes to strategic goals.
- The scope of the implementation and related budget need to be sufficient to inform new constructions or significant alterations. Superficial alterations will cause dissatisfaction among the affected population if they are seen as inadequate when compared to the pain points and solutions identified by the community. This means that, engaging the community could be most beneficial towards the beginning of a programme to inform response early on.

## Interactive Digital Surveys deployed on Digital Tool



The use of visuals in the Interactive Digital Surveys generally helped to overcome difficult language exchanges between the field team and the affected community.

### Illustrations:

- In Bangladesh in particular, the illustrations helped the Rohingya community to understand the survey, mitigating the absence of a Rohingya written language. In both pilots, the illustrations were perceived as fun and engaging and helped to facilitate discussions by overcoming barriers to talking about the sensitive topic of sanitation.

### Smiley Scale:

- Children in Iraq easily understood the smiley scale and it helped them to communicate how they felt about the latrines and handwashing facilities.
- In Bangladesh, children were not familiar with similar visuals (e.g. emojis). Therefore, the field team had to first explain what the smiley faces meant before children were able to use them.

The Digital Tool report was simple to access and interpret for the WASH engineers.

- WASH engineers appreciated the automatic population of the report. This made it easier for them to fit the engagement into their ongoing response work.
- The presentation of the data in the report allowed WASH engineers to quickly identify pain points and feed into the next stage of engagement.

Prohibitively high costs of the current Digital Tool platform complicated setup and reporting.

- Due to the high costs of extra licenses of the Qualtrics platform all activity was conducted on a single account. This complicated setup on all devices in the country and the way reports were produced.

## Key learnings on Interactive Digital Surveys and Digital Tool

- The visuals in the Interactive Digital Surveys (illustrations and smileys) facilitate good engagement.
- Accessible and easy to interpret report formats save time and resources during implementation.
- The Digital Tool needs to be available at low costs and ideally should run on open-source software in line with the budgetary restrictions of humanitarian responses.

## Co-Creation Sessions



**The Co-Creation Sessions generated valuable design changes, but required a level of abstraction and rigour that the field teams were not used to.**

- Most of the temporary or junior field staff in both field teams were not used to this type of participatory approach. Even though some had guided focus groups or children sessions before, it took a while for them to grasp the activities and to feel comfortable facilitating them with the affected community. However, once they felt more comfortable and understood the activities, they led them well.
- Despite successful training sessions, the Iraq field team first conducted the sessions incorrectly and had to repeat them as intended.

**The output of the Co-Creation Sessions helped engineers make quick design decisions.**

- WASH engineers were able to quickly make design decisions by selecting feasible design changes from the the ideas co-created with the community.

**Gender, age and cultural dynamics influenced the way in which the affected community engaged with each other and the field staff.**

- Splitting up men and women during the practice sessions in Bangladesh and Iraq allowed women to feel more comfortable to speak and share their opinions.
- In Iraq, we noticed that the older children dominated the younger children during the training sessions. Splitting them up by age groups (5-8 years) and (9-12 years) during the actual engagement helped to mitigate this.
- In Iraq, it was a challenge for female team members to facilitate the male group. The male caregivers often interrupted and raised issues that were out of scope.

## Not managing expectations enough by knowing what solutions might be feasible can lead to dissatisfaction in the community.

- In Iraq, the Co-Creation Sessions were run without an understanding of what design changes would be feasible within budget. This resulted in higher expectations within the affected community than could be delivered within budget.

## Key learnings on Co-Creation Sessions

- The structure of the Co-Creation Sessions needs to take gender, age and cultural dynamics into account.
- Informed expectation management is vital. WASH engineers need to look at pain points identified via the Digital Tool and bring an understanding of feasible changes into the Co-Creation Sessions. The Co-Creation Sessions then are about identifying the best solutions within budget.

## Training



### Hands-on training was vital to build field team confidence in deploying the new approaches.

- Field staff was initially hesitant to engage with the tablets and Digital Tool. Role-play training and practice in the camp helped to overcome this.
- Despite some facilitation experience in the field team, the concept of the Co-Creation Session was novel for all and supported practice sessions were crucial in building confidence.

### Participatory approaches are novel in Iraq and Bangladesh working cultures

- The working culture in both countries is generally hierarchical and top-down, with little scope for initiative of the junior staff. The mindset that comes with this working culture makes a participatory approach for latrine designs harder to understand and more effort is required to ensure staff recognise why a participatory approach is important and gain confidence in how to work in this manner.

### Language barrier affected the length of training and confidence in comprehension.

- The need for translations extended the time required for training as everything had to be repeated in the local language.
- Training sessions were translated by local Save the Children staff, with uncertain accuracy.
- Translations of guides and materials were done in country and of uncertain quality.

### Key learnings on training session

- Training should have hands-on components that allow the field team to familiarise themselves with the methodology in a practical way.
- Training should involve a basic introduction to participatory approaches and convey their value with relatable examples.
- When planning training, language barriers need to be considered and trained interpreters involved.