Lessons learned from the content development stream of the mNutrition initiative:

Validating the content via sign-off letters as a part of the content development process

Between 2014 and 2017 the GSMA's mNutrition initiative brought together five global content partners (GCP) to deliver the content stream of the initiative across 12 implementing countries. Lead by CABI, GCP activities included: the development of a general framework for nutrition content creation, carrying out landscape analyses of nutritional needs in each implementing country, and identifying key factors for sustainable content services beyond the project. GCPs contracted and provided technical assistance to local content partners (LCP) so that they were able to partner with mobile service providers and/or mobile operators to either scale-up existing or develop, launch and market new mNutrition content services.

The focus of this brief is to provide the lessons learned related to validation sign-off letters as a part of the quality content development process.

1 VALIDATION SIGN-OFF LETTERS

As a part of the mNutrition content creation process, the Local Content Partners (LCPs) were requested to secure validation of the content from stakeholders including end-users, nutrition experts and national government representatives. Well into project implementation it became clear that expectations were misaligned and GSMA and the mobile operators it represents required signed letters recommending the content for national use. This would ensure that liability for the disseminated content was taken on by national governments and further, that LCPs and MNOs could use the content produced in the local context beyond the lifetime of the project without the need for further approval from the authorities.

Obtaining the signed validation letters was often a significant challenge, almost exclusively under the mHealth component of the initiative. In most cases, they were signed by a senior official as participants in the validation workshop did not have the authority to sign-off. However, finding the time to have the senior official take a final at the content and sign it off proved to be very challenging. Project and government staff taking part in the validation process dedicated a lot of time and energy to securing letters, sometimes up to five months after having the content prepared.

Furthermore, the benefits of the validation sign-off letters are questionable for several reasons. First and foremost, engaging nutrition experts after the content had been user-tested, often resulted in edits which may have rendered messaging more clinical in nature and less likely to be understood and acted upon by the target audience. This has serious consequences for the understandability and actionability of the messaging, as messages became much more clinical in nature than behaviour change focused.

 Also, governmental validation occurred as the final content development step prior to the content going through quality control. Where quality control revealed changes were necessary to the content, these post validation sign-off edits put the usability of the letters at risk. In many countries the government had recommended the use of content specifically as approved without deviation. In these scenarios, this led to a difficult situation where expert validation and quality control were in conflict.

Validation turned out to be easiest where validators were involved in the content development process as a whole, and not only in a sign-off capacity. Sri Lanka was a good example of where content authors were also validators, which hugely sped up the validation process. Tanzania and Mozambique are other examples where engagement of the validators in content creation provided a much smoother validation process.

Over the course of the mNutrition project, most government entities in mHealth countries suggested setting up a steering committee for the project at the country-level as a way to mitigate problems around authentication. Validation bodies should be engaged in training and content throughout its creation, or alternatively engaged as the LCP for simultaneous sign-off (i.e. Sri Lanka).

Moreover, validation should be sought before finalizing the content. This can be achieved by engaging with the validators throughout end-user testing and translations and making sure to seek their stance prior to the validation stage of the process. This may prevent the need to go back to validators for second sign-off after additional edits made based on end-user testing or other process steps.

mNutrition

Project overview and aim:

The mNutrition initiative was launched in 2014 by the GSMA in partnership with the UK government's Department for International Development. The aim was to see 'improved nutrition for the poor as a result of behaviour change promoted by accessible mobile-based services delivered at scale through sustainable business models', reaching 'at least three million people across eight Sub-Saharan African and four Asian countries'.

The GSMA delivered this through leveraging expertise and capacity from two of its existing development initiatives under Mobile for Development: mFarmer (mAgri) and mHealth, and brought the global content partners onboard to manage the content creation process.

Briefs in this series:

1 How to set up the right content creation model, processes and structures to achieve maximum project efficiency and quality outputs

2 End-user feedback and its role in producing high-quality localized content

3 Validating the content via sign-off letters as a part of the content development process

4 Quality assurance and quality control processes as a part of mNutrition's aim to produce high-quality content

BMJ **CABI** **gain** Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition **ILRI** INTERNATIONAL LIVESTOCK RESEARCH INSTITUTE **OXFAM**

To view and download for free the content produced by the mNutrition initiative's content partners, please visit the Nutrition Knowledge Bank at: www.cabi.org/nutritionkb.