

**TRAINING PACKAGE FOR USING SOCIAL SCIENCE IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND/OR COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES**

**SESSION 1.3:** Advocating for the inclusion of social science   
in emergency response activities that engage communities

SESSION CONTENT

**Learning approach:** Real-time presentation, individual and group exercises, case examples

**Delivery mode:** Online and offline, 90 minutes approx.

**Essential sessions to have completed before this session:** 1.1

**Summary:** This session explores why and how to advocate for the inclusion of social science research in activities   
that engage communities and in a humanitarian/emergency response.

**Learning outcomes:**

* Understand the importance of advocacy to increase the use of social science in community engagement   
  and/or communication activities in a humanitarian/emergency response
* Know the key stakeholders to advocate with and how best to advocate among different groups
* Consider the important steps to advocate for funding social science research

FACILITATING THE SESSION



**TRAINING PACKAGE FOR USING SOCIAL SCIENCE IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND/OR COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES**

Introduction: (5 minutes total)

Talk through session summary and learning outcomes.

Position this session in the question flow below.

1. How to ensure that this information goes back to communities? To inform community-level actions and decision-making of the broader response?
2. What methodology and tools should be used to collect and analyse this information?
3. How to track the information used to ensure that it effectively contributes to operational and strategic priorities?
4. Who can collect this information?
5. Does this information already exist? Is there a related needs assessment or study?
6. What information is needed?

**DATA TO ACTION:**

Key questions in social science research

1. Who needs this information?
2. How to ensure that the information is used to make operational and/or strategic decisions?

Why is advocacy for social science important? (15 minutes total)

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|  | Question to participants (5 minutes):  Think about social science activities taking place within your unit/organization. Answer the following question: Is social science considered an important part of your activities? Why/why not?  Online: Invite the participants to write the answers in the chat function and summarize  Offline: Ask the participants to write their answers down on a post-it and after few minutes  invite a few participants to share their responses. Note them down on the flipchart |

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|  | Question to participants (5 minutes):  What is ‘advocacy’, and why might it be necessary for the use of social science in emergency response?  *Online: Invite the participants to write the answers in the chat function and share it with everyone*  *Offline: Ask two or three participants to give their definitions*  ADVOCACY means to support a cause, an idea, or a proposal. To make an appeal in favour of a cause or argument.  In our case: We mean the process of doing something to ensure that social science has a place, and its value is recognized across humanitarian structures and organizations, and that socio-behavioural data informs communication and community engagement work.  Why do we need to advocate for social science in community engagement and/or communications activities? |

**To…**

* Raise awareness about the importance of social science research
* Build common understanding of social science and its role in the humanitarian sector, specifically that community
* engagement/communications activities should meaningfully incorporate community perspectives as a central component
* Secure stakeholders’ support
* Increase funding and resources for social science activities
* Ensure social science actually informs community engagement and/or communications strategies and policies in an ongoing manner
* Embed social science perspectives into the work of leaders and implementers

**With the ultimate goal to…**

* Improve the relevance and effectiveness of community engagement and/or communications activities
* Ensure communities are at the centre of community engagement and/or communications activities
* Increase accountability to affected populations

How to advocate for social science in emergencies (35 minutes total)

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|  | Brainstorm (5 minutes):  Who might be important to advocate to/with? Tip: Who makes decisions about whether social science activities are part of your work? Who influences these decision-makers?  Online: Write in chat or map using digital tools  Offline: Call out answers from the room |

Effective integration of social science can be difficult and complex. It requires different engagements with different groups both internally and externally.

To place social science at the heart of your work it may be necessary to advocate at the level of:

* Donors
* International organizations
* Governments
* Media
* National and local partners
* Key influencers at community level
* Religious, cultural and traditional leaders
* Peers/fellow practitioners
* Affected populations
* Wider public

**9 tips to advocate for social science data**

1. Understand what social science research actually involves – you cannot advocate for something that you don’t understand. Gain knowledge on social science research processes, methods and outputs.
2. Understand how social science can contribute to community engagement and/or communications activities – the specific streams of work where social data can contribute – and have some examples of success you can use in your advocacy.
3. Be a champion yourself: People around you should know that you advocate for the use of social science research.
4. Invest in relationships strategically: Focus on influential relationships.
5. Understand the context – identify ‘windows of opportunity’ for advocacy and change.
6. Appeal to the values, beliefs and emotions of your colleagues and managers and provide examples of how social research fits with what they value the most. For example, if they believe in community-led action, explain how socio-behavioural evidence can support communities to prioritize issues and design their own solutions.
7. Be clear, concise and simple – social science evidence can be complex. Simplify your communication and voice your messages clearly.
8. Give recent examples and success stories of the value of social science in your work. Think about cases where social science research helped unpack complex humanitarian issues.
9. Be part of a network/community of practice – be connected to other individuals (formally or informally) who advocate for social science data both internally and externally.

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|  | Group exercise (20 minutes):  Break the group into groups of three.  Ask the groups to select the actors you would need to engage with in your unit/ organization in order to increase the use of social science. Complete the exercise using the grid below.   |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | |  | **Actor A** | **Actor B** | **Actor C** | | How can you invest  in this relationship? |  |  |  | | What are the ‘advocacy windows’ in this context? |  |  |  | | Which values, beliefs and emotions are aligned with the goals of social science? |  |  |  | | Where can social science be operationalized? |  |  |  | | Do you have successes or good examples to showcase? |  |  |  | | Who else can you engage with to advocate for the same purpose? |  |  |  |   Ask one group to feed back their work  Ask others to comment if they had any very different ideas (take two or three answers) |

Advocacy and funding (15 minutes total)

Funding is crucial to truly integrate social science work in different structures and groups.

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|  | Question to participants (5 minutes):  What are some specific funding sources in your context that either have already funded previous social science activities or could fund future social science activities?  Online: Invite the participants to write the answers in the chat function and share it with everyone  Offline: Ask two or three participants to give examples |

To increase investment:

* Identify potential funding agencies and actors at the institutional, national and international levels who may invest in social science activities targeted at community engagement and/or communications activities.
* Keep active relationships with individuals in funding agencies and other stakeholders at the institutional, national and international levels.
* When available, apply for funds for social science research and capacity-building activities, particularly at the onset of an emergency when they may be most available.
* When available, apply for rapid grant initiatives that can inject sustainable and long-term funding for social science projects and activities.
* Advocate for strategic investment in social science research at the donor and government levels and secure funding for social science groups.

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|  | Question to participants (5 minutes):  Ask the group for other ideas/experiences |

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|  | Case example (15 minutes total):  Ask participants to read through the case study. |

**CASE EXAMPLE:**

Okedo‑Alex and colleagues assessed the status of health systems and policy research (HSPR), domestic funding, and advocacy strategies for improving HPSR funding in Nigeria.

The study was undertaken with decision-makers and policymakers and researchers from Enugu and Ebonyi States in Southeast Nigeria using workshops, semi-structured questionnaires, group and panel discussions.

Graphical user interface, text

Description automatically generatedThe authors found that domestic funding for HPSR in Nigeria was considered to be grossly inadequate. They identified barriers to domestic funding of HPSR including bureaucratic bottlenecks, political and policy transitions, and corruption. Potential opportunities centred on existing policy documents and emerging private sector willingness to fund health research. Multi-stakeholder advocacy coalitions, continuous advocacy and skills building on advocacy with active private sector involvement were the strategies preferred by the participants.

<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Identifying-advocacy-strategies%2C-challenges-and-for-Okedo-Alex-Akamike/367ebb05c2b1a0bbc2206a7b189f959284be05b3>

Ask participants: What have you learned from this case study that could help advocate for the use of social science   
in your context?

Take two or three answers

Wrap-up/summary (5 minutes)

* There is a need to advocate for the use of social science in community engagement and/or communications activities, in order to:
* Improve the relevance and effectiveness of community engagement and/or communications activities;
* Ensure communities are at the centre of community engagement and/or communications activities; and
* Increase accountability to affected populations.
* Effective integration of social science can be difficult and complex. It requires different engagements with different groups both internally and externally. Following the tips given in this session will help you to do this effectively.

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