

April 2011

Volume 1. Issue 1

## HIFC completes Nokia Data Gathering Pilot in Zimbabwe

by **Natasha Msonza**

HIFC recently completed a successful pilot using Nokia handhelds to conduct an investigation into the issue of access to essential medicines among ordinary Zimbabweans.

Though no longer considered to be in a humanitarian crisis but rather in early recovery; Zimbabwe has in the past decade experienced outbreaks the gamut of which is inclusive of the cholera and measles crises of 2008-2009 and 2010 respectively.

Both technological and bureaucratic constraints muddled the communication of accurate and critical information from affected zones to organizations offering humanitarian assistance. For various reasons, humanitarian organizations on the ground were unable to timeously collect and send information; resulting in sometimes catastrophic delays in decision-making and aid assistance. In other cases, hurried or delayed research processes have yielded inaccurate results at a time when diseases were evolving into epidemics.

Recognizing the need for expedient and timely flow of information in times of humanitarian crises, there was need explore faster, more efficient data gathering methods that would make the work of organizations a lot easier as well as prevent needless loss of lives.

It is against this background that HIFC with the support of IMS sought to undertake ground-breaking pilot



Field Officer conducting interview using NDG in Zhombe

project utilizing Nokia Data Gathering (NDG) software and the technology of mobile telephony to collect, send and analyse data in near real time. NDG is a software system developed by Nokia to replace traditional paper-based questionnaires that allows collection of data using mobile phones.

HIFC is the first organization to pilot this tool in Zimbabwe. In partnership with Community Working Group on Health (CWGH) – a local NGO working in community health - HIFC trained 13 community health monitors on the use of Nokia phones complete with the NDG software for data collection.

*cont. on page 2*

### In this Issue:



Using mobile telephony for data gathering—PAGE 1



HIFC reviews PEPFAR supported HIV journalism in Zimbabwe —PAGE 2



People with disabilities speak out —PAGE 3

## HIFC completes Nokia Data Gathering Pilot *cont. from Page 1*



### CWGH Field Officers trained to use NDG for pilot study

The 13 monitors conducted a survey in five districts of the country, administering questionnaires to health workers and patients alike and sending data pertaining to the drug availability status of over 30 health institutions.

Key findings indicate that the problem of shortages of pain-killers and drugs for common ailments is widespread across the country and attributable to stock outs possibly related to expiration, non-replacement and pilferage among other reasons. A survey conducted amongst the 13

monitors who participated in the pilot revealed that the NDG tool is a relatively easy technology that can be used across a range of age groups and by any individual who has handled a mobile phone before. Although connectivity was poor in some of the districts, 70% of the monitors were able to send data as soon as they collected it. The fact that data goes straight from the field into a pre-existing database means increased accuracy through elimination of transcription errors and the ability to make informed and prompt responses is enhanced.

The pilot project enabled HIFC to map and collate key information for humanitarian non-governmental organizations (HUNGOS) pertaining to GPRS connectivity status of various districts and the reactions of interviewees and respondents to the use of the new technology.

However, the key issue is that the NDG is a practical solution to field data collection bottlenecks related to accuracy, speed of transmission and analysis as well as convenience. Various partners working in the humanitarian sector have already expressed interest and HIFC expects to roll out this service to more HUNGOS this year.

## HIFC Reviews PEPFAR Grant for HIV & AIDS Journalism

On January 19<sup>th</sup> 2011, HIFC convened a road mapping meeting of media and stakeholders in the AIDS service sector to review a PEPFAR Grant project on HIV and AIDS journalism implemented in the last quarter of 2010. The outcome of the project was the publication of thoroughly researched, evidence-based HIV related articles across a wide section of Zimbabwe's mainstream media.

Articles were assessed for relevance, objectivity and coverage of key issues.

In road mapping, some representatives of AIDS Service Organizations (ASOs) felt that there was need to sustain the momentum of HIV and AIDS journalism as there was lots of room for follow-ups on the stories published. There was a feeling that a once-off would not be effective especially since HIV remains a critical humanitarian issue in Zimbabwe.

Concerns about correct terminologies and effective pitching of HIV stories were observed by editors as areas needing further strengthening. It was also recommended that the pertinent issues written about directly reached and possibly influenced policy makers. HIFC revealed that a publication of all the news articles was currently under compilation, and would be distributed widely among programmers and stakeholders to include policy makers.

One journalist in the meeting revealed that she had received positive feedback and support from the Tanzanian Council of churches to continue exploring the role of the church on combating HIV and AIDS in their communities.

Another journalist, Chipso Musoko - said that she felt humbled by the opportunity and privilege to tell the stories of others and their experiences in living with HIV. She said that the mentorship she received and the experience of researching on the subject broadened her horizons and boosted her confidence to a point where she could "speak knowledgeably to inform friends and relatives."



Madeline Dube of NAC emphasizes a point

*to page 3*

## HIFC reviews PEPFAR *cont. from Page 2*

Representatives of ASOs converged at HIFC in 2010 and identified pertinent issues being neglected and under-reported by the media. This was made possible with support from the US Embassy Public Affairs Section (PAS).

Ten journalists were then shortlisted and selected for financial support and mentorship to write articles on the subject, informed by the key issues identified by ASOs. After all the supported news articles had been published, it became necessary to take stock, provide feedback as well as review and roadmap for a possible phase two.

Key themes covered by the PEPFAR supported news articles included: the role of churches and religion in combating HIV and AIDS, issues of stigma, access to essential medi-

cines, the plight of positive students, home based care concerns and issues affecting grieving AIDS orphans.

Some of the representatives of ASOs who attended this meeting included SAFAIDS, NAC, ZNNP+, ActionAid, FOSINET, Youth Agenda Trust as well as individuals in their personal capacity who are living with HIV.



Some of the participants at the PEPFAR review meeting

## People living with disabilities speak out

Children living with disabilities finishing primary school often hardly proceed to secondary school. Not only can they not afford the school fees, but schools that offer the kind of services they need are too few. Vocational schools for the disabled churn out intelligent and gifted individuals, but a huge chunk of them remain unemployed while their potential to be productive members of society goes to waste.

Overall, stigma and stereotyping remain the biggest emotional challenges for the disabled who have once again become an almost forgotten people.

Early this year, HIFC convened a stakeholder consultative meeting to discuss pertinent issues affecting people living with disabilities.

The meeting brought together representatives from disabled peoples' organizations (DPOs) and colleagues from the media. Concern was raised over the prolonged delay by the government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) to sign the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

GoZ first signaled its intention to sign the Convention over two years ago.



Rejoice Timire, DWSO Director addresses other participants in the meeting

The Convention – which was passed by the UN in 2006 and came into force in March 2008 – potentially offers greater scope for inclusion of people with disabilities and equalization of opportunities. It will also ensure that some provisions are made nationally to cater for the disabled in everyday life.

Lack of commitment to this process by GoZ comes across as reflective of its inability to follow through with some of the convention's provisions.

As the Zimbabwean economy struggles to recover, issues affecting the disabled continue to be sidelined and relegated to the bottom rung on the

order of national priorities. Public transporters no longer accommodate wheelchair bound people; most public toilets are not user-friendly and general infrastructure including new buildings are overlooking the aspect of tailoring to accommodate various forms of disability.

The Federation of Organizations of Disabled People in Zimbabwe (FODPZ) highlighted in their 2010 country report that while "Donors, UN Agencies and NGOs realize the relevance of disability...(they) are unsure how to practically begin to tackle the issue." Some sections of DPOs feel that donors and communities simply shun the disabled.

The meeting noted that organizations like NASCOH have for a long time been lobbying government to urgently attend to issues affecting the disabled in Zimbabwe.

The media were conscientised on the need to objectively highlight some of these issues because in the end, "we are all potentially disabled" – said one Mrs Ncube\* who has dedicated her life to nursing her 15-year-old quadriplegic son and advocating for the rights of the disabled.

## Scribes applaud HIFC mentorship programme by Rumbidzai Bara

Journalists on HIFC's grants and mentorship programme recently expressed the wish to have more contact time with their mentors. This was both a surprising and pleasing revelation considering that one of the main challenges the programme previously grappled with was that of journalists intently avoiding interaction with mentors.

In a meeting between mentors and journalists held at HIFC early this year, most of the journalists revealed that over the year they had grown professionally and learnt a lot during their mentorship sessions with editors. They no longer abhorred the mentorship process but rather wished they could have more time with their advisors.

HIFC's mentorship programme is a specialised form of training that has groomed a number of journalists particularly freelancers — making them better writers and significantly contributing to their professional growth.

For HIFC, the meeting was enriching as some issues raised in the meeting helped inform improvements on the programme.

The mentors (who are seasoned editors) said they had also learnt a lot from the journalists they were coaching and concurred that one never stops learning no matter how long one has been in journalism. They also applauded HIFC for the programme which some said was a 'unique initiative' that they themselves never got to enjoy. Over the two years of HIFC's existence, the organization

has increased the quantity of and significantly contributed to the improved quality of humanitarian reporting in Zimbabwe.

Uniquely positioned to work with both the media and humanitarian organizations, HIFC has offered capacity building to journalists in the form mentorship as well as technical and financial support for story development. Humanitarian organizations have undergone media literacy training and frequently rely on the mentored journalists for objective coverage of their work.

HIFC's mentorship programme has ensured the production of over 90 thoroughly researched, multiple sourced, evidence based and objective humanitarian stories compounded by an understanding of the work of humanitarian organizations in Zimbabwe. A number of journalists who have been or currently are on the programme have confirmed the positive role HIFC played in their professional growth through the mentorship process.

Monica-Cheru Mpambawashe is one journalist who says she has benefited immensely from the programme. "On the strength of my first two HIFC feature articles published in the paper, I was offered a job as a senior reporter with the Herald. I feel that the HIFC mentorship programme has been an integral part of my development as a writer and therefore my climb up the ladder." she said.

---

## Psst...!

Check out HIFC's exciting new website: [www.hifc.org.zw](http://www.hifc.org.zw)

Take part in our e-forum and contribute your opinion to pertinent day to day humanitarian issues. Read latest reports and up to date information on the humanitarian situation. Know who does what where around Zimbabwe via our NGOs and media directory. Share your thoughts and be heard. Visit HIFC Now.

---

### Contact us



38 Harvey Brown Avenue, Milton Park  
Harare, Zimbabwe  
Tel: +263-4-250638  
Email: [info@hifc.info](mailto:info@hifc.info)  
Design and Layout by Natasha Msonza