2018 IAP Report on the theme of private sector accountability for women's, children's and adolescents' health

UN-Habitat Youth Unit self-reporting
INNOVATE COUNTIES CHALLENGE PROJECT, KENYA

CONTEXT

Three parallel dynamics—the demographic "youth bulge", the explosive adoption of technology and the continued devolution of local government — are setting the stage for change in towns and cities of Kenya. The growing number of young urban citizens, coupled with the explosion of hand-held devices is introducing new challenges and opportunities for both local governments and youth that have not been adequately addressed. It appears that the scope of concerns crosses into new and uncharted territory as governance itself is transformed by fast-moving changes of ICT in the hands of the youth. UN-Habitat started to address these converging trends through the development of a conceptual framework on improving local governance for youth using ICTs articulated in its "ICT, Youth & Urban Governance" report.

Building on this, UN-Habitat's Youth and Livelihoods Unit implemented the Innovate Counties Challenge Project, a scaling project that seeks to build capacity of local government in small and medium sized cities around the use of ICT as a tool for good governance, planning and youth engagement. The project sought to institutionalize innovative solutions to enhance citizen engagement in line with UN-Habitat's priorities according to the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 11 on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. The project was implemented in three counties of Kenya – Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu.

The objectives of the project were to:

- Bridge the gap between tech savvy urban young people and county governments grappling with devolution and decentralization.
- Give a voice to marginalized youth with regards to county governance issues.
- Develop tech solutions, which can be used to improve and promote accountable service delivery by county governments.

It was implemented in three phases as described below:

Phase one of the project – Problem identification. January 2017

The first phase of the project has consisted of three components: stakeholder consultations, a stocktaking exercise of existing ICT solutions for governance in Kenya and an urban challenge workshop which brought together youth and county governments to jointly establish urban challenges being faced in the counties.

Phase two of the project – Solution identification and development. May 2017

The second phase saw an Innovation Hackday bringing youth and the local governments together based on a supply and demand equation, collaboratively developing ideas and concepts forward to tackle urban challenges. A jury consisting of private sector partners and government stakeholders was established to determine which solutions should be considered for further development and implementation at the local level. The most viable

solutions were taken into a development stage called incubation. This is where a variant of more traditional business incubation schemes, assist technology-oriented entrepreneurs in the start-up and early development stage of their firms by providing workspace (on preferential and flexible terms), shared facilities and a range of business support services. These solutions were developed to a level of readiness for pilot.

Phase three of the project – Pilot projects implementation October 2017

The third phase focused on working with the county governments to support institutionalization of the winning ICT solutions. This was done in close collaboration with the winning team and Strathmore University, with support from Ericsson Research. The digital solutions most ready from the incubation were implemented in a pilot project to show proof of feasibility and for the solution to be then presented to the county government for support and scaling.

IMPACTS ON WOMEN'S, CHILDREN'S AND ADOLESCENTS' HEALTH

One of the solutions that has emerged out of the Nairobi and Mombasa County process is a Digital TV station - Imara TV - that crowdsources and vets academic, entertainment and support information to educate Kenyan Youth on Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH). The platform enables small groups of talented Kenyan youth to express their artistic and digital skills to dramatize the Kenya Government's Ministry of Health Sexual Reproductive Health curriculum. Produced were entertainment content such as movies, comedies, dramas, music, poetry and animations that educate the Kenyan audiences on issues affecting the local communities such as HIV/AIDS, contraceptives, FGM, GBV, LGBTQ and drug abuse. Imara Tv distributes these videos through social media, smartphone apps and public film shows targeting youths aged 13-35 who are most affected by lack of knowledge about sex leading to high prevalence of teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS.

To innovate the Imara Tv platform, the Imara Tv team had been given a challenge by the Kenyan Government's Ministry of Health: to enable easy access to Sexual Reproductive Health information and resources by the youth in Kenya. This call for help was in response to the exponential increase in new HIV/AIDS infections among the youth with official records showing that in 2016 alone, 35,000 out of the 60,000 Kenyans who acquired the HIV virus were youth under the age of 24 years. The goal of Imara TV is to create youth celebrity stars in the local film and music industry who will be positive role models and social influencers to the youth in Kenya which will lead to positive behavioral and attitude change.

The team used an agile project management methodology to quickly identify the root cause of the problem, develop a minimum viable solution, pilot it with a small test group to test assumptions made and gather feedback for changes and improvements as input in the next sprint iteration to ensure the end solution was designed around the user's needs and based on empirical data. While different regions showed evidence of different reasons for the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS cases among the youth, the root cause was identified as poverty due to the lack of employment opportunities.

In the Coast region for example, unemployment leads idle youth to engage in drug addiction where sharing of dirty needles and engagement in casual unprotected sex to earn money for more drugs has increased avenues for the virus to spread unchecked. Across the country in western Kenya, young women get fish to eat or sell in exchange for unprotected sex with different fishermen on a daily basis, leading to one of the highest HIV prevalence rate of up to 25% among the local population. The team realized the solution had to create sustainable employment opportunities to keep the youth engaged constructively and generate wealth among

them to enable them afford critical SRH resources such as condoms on demand.

RESULTS

The pilot project managed to produce 7 TV series (5 in Nairobi and 2 in Mombasa) from 52 Kenyan youth (33 in Nairobi and 19 in Mombasa). These TV series have so far reached over 350,000 youth (200,000 in Nairobi and over 150,000 in Mombasa) and continue to be watched and shared both online and offline to reach even more audiences and earn more revenue for the youth content creators.

Imara TV pilot is part of the Innovate Counties Challenge Project that was funded by Making All Voices Count (MAVC) – a fund targeted at the global south region to support innovation and technology that has the potential to support better governance and to leave a legacy of learning that helps to ensure that future governance programmes that seek to capitalize on the transformative potential of innovation and technology are more informed, inclusive and impactful. MAVC was supported by four donors: DFID, USAID, Sida, and the Omidyar Network (ON). For sustainability, Imara TV monetizes the videos using advertisements, sponsored messages and product placement from corporate organizations who target the youth with their products and services. Imara TV disburses up to 90% of the lifetime revenue generated by a video to the youth group content creators for their economic empowerment and retains 10% for maintaining the platform and scaling it to reach more audiences.

Imara TV is now integrating block chain technology into their platform to:

- prove ownership of the digital video assets among the youth groups which the youth can use as collateral to secure loans
- track online content consumption to prevent video piracy which steals royalties from the content creators
- automate revenue share among the content creators using smart contracts to reduce operating overheads and increase administrative efficiencies for scalability.

Imara Tv has also partnered with a local bank, Barclays Bank of Kenya, to enable the youth groups create bank accounts for processing their revenue share income to enable them save and access small loans to buy more video production equipment for creating higher quality and higher quantity of content or investing in their brand.

LESSONS LEARNED

The platform that showcases creative and artistic talents among the youth was innovated to capitalize on the untapped potential among the youth in Kenya to create art such as music, movies, comedies, poetry and animation which could be broadcasted to a large audience and earn advertising revenue for the content creators. Thanks to the youth engagement and work, Imara TV could afford to give them 90% of the Net revenue generated. Not only the content was able to generate revenue from entertaining the public thereby directly and indirectly creating sustainable jobs in the local film industry but also was used as a mass medium to cost effectively educate the public about sex. In the long-term, the team hoped this will change negative public perceptions around SRH issues such as FGM, GBV and LGBTQ and publicly promote positive behavior change such as use of contraceptives and gender equality.

The Imara TV team not only was able to earn revenue from corporate sponsorships which validated the

innovation, but also realized that the youth were collaborating online to create content such as animations without the need for meeting physically as each can work from home to deliver their part. This lesson has inspired the Imara TV team to think more boldly about reinventing the way people work to enable virtual work groups for the teams in the future. This is a scalable way to create sustainable employment and wealth among the youth. The team is now integrating blockchain technology into the solution to enable digital authentication of platform members online to foster trust among the content creators and unlock even more potential for collaboration and co-creation. The blockchain will also enable automation of revenue share using smart contracts, prevent content piracy by tracking video consumption and record copyright ownership of the digital video assets among the youth groups to enable them use their creations as collateral to secure small loans to invest in the growth of their celebrity brands and star status.