IDENTIFYING COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL INNOVATIONS IN HEALTH THROUGH CROWDSOURCING

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INTRODUCTION

Significant gains have been achieved in improving the health of the people in the past century. However, despite these advances in health care, wide disparities in health and socio-economic status remain in many places. In the Philippines, access to quality health services persists especially for those living in remote and geographically isolated areas (GIDAs). These gaps are caused by failure to understand the complexity of the health systems that hinder efforts to achieve better and more equitable health outcomes.

A new way of thinking for health system innovation is needed to address the complexity of these challenges. Interventions that are grounded on the contextual realities of the people at the grassroots level must be identified, recognized and pursued. Social innovation is a new lens to approach the transformation of the health systems. Traditionally, social innovation models are often not found in literature review, as most social innovations are designed and implemented by non-academics.

This study presents crowdsourcing methodology as a new approach to identify socially innovative models that country policy makers can learn from, adapt or scale successfully as part of policy and practice.

OBJECTIVES & PURPOSE

This study is aimed at identifying existing social innovations developed by the public as a response to their health need through a crowdsourcing innovation contest. We present the feasibility crowdsourcing as a research method of participation in solving health challenges within their contextual realities. Identifying them allowed us to understand how and why social innovations are impactful, the factors that influence all the lessons that can be gleaned from their experience to scale it more broadly in the larger health system.

PROJECT & PROCESS DESCRIPTION

This project was made possible through the Social Innovation in Health Implementation Initiative (SIHI). The Initiative is a global network of individuals and organizations that aims to advance SIHI through research, capacity and influence. SIHI was launched in 2014 by the World Health Organization. The Special Project on Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (WHO-TDR), SIHI also partnered with the first social innovation in health global call using the crowdsourcing methodology in 2015. In 2017, WHO-TDR expanded the network to other countries in the global south which includes Colombia, Malawi, and Uganda. The SIHI - Philippine Hub is hosted by the University of the Philippines Manila - College of Medicine. Figure 1 illustrates the SIHI global partners network.

Crowdsourcing comes from the contraction of the word “crowd” and “outsourcing.” It is an approach of obtaining information from a large number of people through an open call mostly through Internet. This methodology was used by the SIHI Philippines in identifying locally socially innovative projects. The crowdsourcing contest followed a systematic process as explained in Figure 2.

A call for innovation was launched in June 2017 and we searched for initiatives that focused on, but not limited to, infectious diseases of poverty, including Tuberculosis, HIV and AIDS, patient safety, and interventions that improve affordability, equity, and access. A broad range of stakeholders which include community organizers, business owners, students, government workers or organizations were invited to nominate solutions online or through email. The call was marketed and promoted through online and in various places and events. A nomination portal at http://socialinnovationshare.org was made available to receive submissions. The call ran for 10 weeks from June 1 to August 11, 2017. The Hub received a total of 17 projects and 16 were shortlisted for expert panel review.

DISCUSSION

Four (4) projects emerged as outstanding examples of socially innovative solutions addressing priority health issues in the country such as health financing, improve access to health services, and health governance. Figure 3 provides a brief description of these projects.

CONCLUSION

1. Crowdsourcing is a feasible tool to engage innovators outside the traditional boundaries of academia. The projects that we gathered provide rich lessons where communities with similar context can learn from.

2. Simplify the data collection or nomination forms to encourage more submissions. A telephone interview or on-site validation may be considered to gather more details if necessary.

3. Data protection policies must be defined, and strict data sharing protocol must be enforced. Secure the consent of the innovator before sharing personal information and/or specific details of the project.

4. Internet connectivity may not be reliable all the time. Other channels to gather nomination forms must be established such as regional or provincial submission hubs or an option to submit via courier.

REFERENCES


Figure 1. SIHI Global Partners Network

Figure 2. SIHI Philippines Innovation Call Crowdsourcing Process Flow

Figure 3. SIHI Philippines Innovative Call Spotlight Projects

Benefits and challenges of crowdsourcing

crowdsourcing methodology provided us a range of community-based solutions developed by local innovators and a response to a health need. Their innovation stories highlighted not only the “what” solved the problem but the detailed “how to” that can serve as a guide for other communities to scale and sustain. Crowdsourcing is beneficial to those with fewer resources, who wants simplified logistics but would want to capture knowledge across a wider and more diverse population.

However, reliance to Internet connectivity is one of the challenges in implementing a completely online crowdsourcing. Philippines has the lowest average internet in the region. In addition, most of the innovators who submitted the online forms intimidating and too cumbersome to complete. Another key issue with crowdsourcing is data protection of personal sensitive information of individuals who contributed their solutions. Oftentimes, individuals are not comfortable to publicize their full name, contact information, sex, and address among others.

Table 1. SIHI Philippines Innovation Call Selection Criteria

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<tr>
<th>GENERIC CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>WEIGHT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inclusiveness</td>
<td>The solution is accessible to the community with diverse backgrounds and cultures</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affordability</td>
<td>The solution must be affordable to the low income and middle income community</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>The solution provides a demonstrable impact and shows evidence of being replicated</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory &amp; Community</td>
<td>The solution involves the community at every level of the process</td>
<td>10%</td>
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Table 2. SIHI Philippines Innovation Call Selection Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY-SPECIFIC CRITERIA</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>WEIGHT</th>
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<tr>
<td>Health need</td>
<td>The solution addresses a health need of the Philippines</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integration Scale</td>
<td>The solution is scalable and has potential to be replicated in other settings</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation Scale</td>
<td>The solution solves a problem and is innovative</td>
<td>5%</td>
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Figure 2. SIHI Philippines Innovation Call Crowdsourcing Process Flow

Figure 3. SIHI Philippines Innovative Call Spotlight Projects