SOCIAL MEDIA FOR SEXUAL HEALTH

By Byaruhanga Felix

“A like or a post won’t stop a bullet, but when people are connected they have a chance to build a common understanding.”

Those were the words of Mark Zuckerberg (C.E.O of Facebook) to the United Nations when he was announcing the connectivity declaration where he emphasized that the internet belongs to everyone and how he announce how they (Facebook & UN) are to introduce the internet in refugee camps.

You may ask yourself what Mark’s words may have to do with sexual health but bear with me it will make sense in the next few lines. Early September, I was invited by Mr. Agaba Peter to a five day sexual health facilitation who happened to be the focal person on a project titled “Social Media for Sexual Health for Urban based refugees.” As a blogger (social media enthusiast) and a youth advocate who had worked with him before he had already grabbed my interest in the project with his title. Social Media for sexual Health is a project whose objective is to deliver Sexual reproductive health and rights knowledge/education with the use of all social media platforms to the young urban based refugees in Uganda. Which brings me back to Mr. Zuckerberg’s words how the internet is to some extent key in this project hence the essence of connectivity.

With Kampala young Urban Refugee population being over 100,000, not forgetting their livelihoods are challenged in different ways and one of which is access of sexual health services which this particular projects seeks to address in a friendly comical manner but still factual. Like earlier stated, this project seeks to use social media because this largely hinges on a research conducted by Rap Software Solutions limited whose research embraces the “viral speed phenomenon”. Let me try to break it down for you; What would happen if just 7 people talked to just 7 other people about Sexual reproductive health and rights and this happened just seven times? This is basically referred to as the power of 7 thus $7^7 = 823,543$. This shows that using the power of 7, your message would be spread to over 800,000 people in just 7 iterations. The exposure is self-generating and free once it starts flowing. We are connected to each other online through the mass electronic communication via social networking sites.

The project not only intends to use social networking sites but also a system known as “E-REFERRAL” system. This is an android based mobile application or system that is there to serve the young Urban Refugees and make easy for them in accessing sexual health services. These
services are made available to the young urban refugees by Reproductive Health Uganda clinics and community Dental and Reproductive Health Clinics that are in different regions of the country.

**HOW THE APP WORKS?**
The app works on android devices (mobile, tablets) with two main operators thus the administrator (clinic/hospital) and the champions. The administrators are the clinics that operate under Reproductive health Uganda and Community Dental and Reproductive Health. The different clinics sign up on the system so as to have the different privileges when using the system. The champions are what you would refer to as ambassadors of the project from different Areas where urban based refugees stay in Kampala Uganda. They underwent training about the different topics of sexual reproductive health and rights, STDs, post abortion care, contraceptives, sexual orientation, Cancer among other topics and I’m glad to say I’m one of them. Furthermore the role of the champion is to bring these sexual health services to the youths in a given area for example bringing contraceptives such as condoms ,emergency contraceptives to fellow youth , help young urban refugees organize appointments with the medical personnel in a given clinic, utilize social media to teach about sexual health among other duties. Let’s dive into the app itself, shall we? The app has two sections thus the administrator and champion as illustrated below;
In order to access the services of the application both the administrator and champion have to be registered onto the system so as to be able to login.

When the champion logs in he’s able to make referrals hence the name “E-Referral” system. A champion enters the details of the young person in need of clinical then a number is generated by the system which is given to the youth. The patient visits one of the clinics that use the system provides the number and is able to access services of medical personnel. A champion refers someone to the clinic when the condition of the patient can only be handled by a medical personnel or when the issue is above his /her pedigree.
Furthermore, a champion is also able to make/place an order to a given clinic (hospital). This order may be given medical supplies like Emergency contraceptives, condoms such supplies.
Champion’s interface when referring a patient.

On the other hand when logged in the medical personnel (administrator) at a given clinic will be able to see referrals made and what orders have been placed by a given champion and from which area as illustrated below. The administrator also has power to register a new champion or another clinic still using the same application. In addition to having authenticated login details all champions are known and registered at a given clinic that's partnered with a project so as to avoid fraud, theft or anything of that nature.
The administrator interface/panel when logged in.

Administrator’s interface showing details of a referred patient
Administrator's interface when registering a champion

Stored data of a registered champion.
Administrator’s view of orders placed by champions.

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Like any other IT project this also has got its challenge and its funding. With proper funding more clinics can be made available on the system, facilitation of more online meetings with champions, more champions from all regions of the country can be signed up and web based version of this application can be designed for those who can’t access a smartphone but can access a computer at least 20mins in an internet café.

To be a part of this is easy you can reach out to the project Focal person via email (agabapeter1@gmail.com) or you can check out the project’s Facebook page (Social media for sexual Health Uganda) and on twitter @SexualHealth_UG.

Connect with writer;
Twitter: @TheNinjaFelix
Email: felix.byaruhanga@gmail.com