

MAKING CONNECTIONS

STORIES OF INTEGRATION IN
OUTBREAK RESPONSE



One Perception Can Make a Difference

Setting the scene

Integrating risk communication and community engagement in outbreak response is essential for addressing potential challenges to the acceptance of public health measures. To do so, humanitarian actors must partner with communities, understand community members' lived realities and perceptions, leverage their capacities, and adapt interventions to the local context.

In 2018, Oxfam launched the Community Perception Tracker, a new approach to better understand the perceptions and beliefs of crisis-affected communities during disease outbreaks. The approach uses systematic information collected daily through a mobile app alongside multi-sectoral program activities. The use of digital technology supports faster and more accurate data collection and analysis, generating concrete evidence of specific perceptions that can rapidly communicate trends and contribute towards multi-sectoral integration of activities and holistic people-centered services. Before 2020, Oxfam used the Community Perception Tracker in the Democratic Republic of Congo for Ebola outbreaks; more recently, they utilized this tool through local partners in Lebanon and Venezuela during the COVID-19 pandemic.



The integration journey in Lebanon

In recent years, Lebanon has endured multiple, concurrent crises, including COVID-19, economic and political instability, and the Beirut port explosion of August 2020, and are hosts to the world largest refugee population per capita. Because of the unique challenges the population is facing, and specifically to ensure an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Oxfam and their local partner Nabad decided to integrate risk communication and community engagement strategies into their COVID-19 response using the Community Perception Tracker.

Listening to people and understanding their perspectives in a crisis is part of the foundation of community engagement. While the emergence of COVID-19 was a public health issue, it also led to issues of protection, violence, and stigmatization, and impacted livelihoods, schooling, and mental health all of which were important to understand and address as part of their response. To initiate the use of the Community Perception Tracker in Lebanon, Oxfam's Global Public Health Promotion Advisor connected with the Humanitarian Coordinator, as well as the WASH and Health Program Manager.

The team trained staff from various programs on how to incorporate the Community Perception Tracker into their everyday work during conversations and in community meetings. Over time, trends identified through the tracker made clear the concerns of the affected population. Oxfam and Nabad were able to adjust their programming to discuss peoples' perceptions of COVID-19 and address these concerns through their response activities in a holistic and multi-sectoral way.

How can you use the Community Perception Tracker to make connections during outbreaks?



Systematically capture informal data alongside program activities and translate it into purposeful evidence that can inform programs and the design of multi-sectoral, holistic, and people-centered humanitarian services. Remember "one perception can make a difference"



Feed the reports back to the community and support community leaders to design their own integrated action plans and solutions.



Use the real-time data and reports during donor management meetings, multi-sectoral coordination groups, and advocacy.



In February 2021, when the COVID-19 vaccines were just arriving in Lebanon, Oxfam's team used the tracker and learned that people viewed the cost of transportation to and from vaccine centers as a key barrier to access. Understanding this perception significantly influenced the organization's vaccine response plan. Oxfam committed to covering transportation costs for any refugee in their area of operation who made the trip to get vaccinated. As transportation costs increased with the fuel crisis, the team followed up with refugees who wanted to be vaccinated and increased coverage as the market prices rose. This commitment to covering transportation costs, borne out of a single perception using the Community Perception Tracker, helped ensure that many refugees and people living in hard-to-reach communities had access to the vaccine.

Another major breakthrough was in Lebanon, where the tracker helped Oxfam and partners better understand that community members were struggling to register for vaccine appointments on the local platform. Initially, the organizations had no plans to assist with registration, but when the topic appeared several times through the tracker, team members spoke with Community Health Volunteers and learned that the platform was only available in English. Most refugees were unable to read or fill in the forms. Not long after this discovery, partners were on the ground making connections and assisting those who wanted to register for an appointment by translating and helping them to complete their vaccine registrations.



Suggested additional reading and videos

- [Oxfam Community Perception Tracker webpage](#) with case studies from Lebanon, Venezuela, and Democratic Republic of Congo, videos and more resources
- [Oxfam Community Perception Tracker overview](#), available in English, French and Spanish

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