



GRANT PROJECT OUTCOMES AND LESSONS

Communities in Haiti Access New Technologies for Early Warning/Response (CHANTER)

GRANT PROJECT DATES

October 2018 to March 2020

Mercy Corps is a global team of humanitarians, working together on the front lines of today's biggest crises to create a future of possibility, where everyone can prosper. Their mission is to alleviate suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities. Mercy Corps has been working in Haiti since 2010.

Leveraging SMS and interactive voice response (IVR) technology through **Viamo's** mobile communication platform, via **Digicel's** Haitian mobile network, the CHANTER platform is designed to deliver a twelve-week curriculum on extreme weather preparedness and first response practices, as well as early warning messages. The messages are tailored based on recipient's livelihood activity and their location to ensure they receive useful information.

The project used human centred design to create the curriculum and delivered it in three communes (Arcahaie, Bayonnais and Camp-Perrin). Delivery was supported on the ground by a network of community based organisations.

The project aimed to support communities by limiting loss of income, better protecting households and reducing the risk of physical harm in the wake of the increasing frequency of sudden onset disasters in Haiti.

KEY STATS

USAGE DATA



16,672

PEOPLE REGISTERED ON CHANTER

13

LIVELIHOOD SPECIFIC MESSAGES DEVELOPED & SHARED WITH COMMUNITIES

11,783

PEOPLE LISTENED TO MORE THAN

75% OF MESSAGES

SURVEY RESPONDENTS*



84%

TOOK THE ACTIONS SUGGESTED IN MESSAGES

91%

SAID THE MESSAGE RECEIVED WAS CLEAR

*USERS WHO RECALLED RECEIVING A MESSAGE FROM CHANTER

99%

SAID THE INFORMATION FROM CHANTER WAS USEFUL



Toussaint* Farmer, Camp-Perrin

CASE STUDY

“I remember the losses I had when Hurricane Matthew hit in 2016. I lost all my tuber production that was to be harvested two months later! We had not received any information on soil conservation practices and techniques such as the installation of mechanical anti-erosion structures or rainwater infiltration such as contour canals, or the planting of live fences. We lost everything! But thanks to the CHANTER project, we now have the knowledge of best ecological production practices to implement even before the cyclone period in order to minimize losses due to heavy rain and devastating winds. Through my association, members and farmer friends, we slowly start to help each other building soil conservation structures. I feel more confident and better prepared for the next rainy season.”



Rosemarie* Vendor, Bayonnais

CASE STUDY

“Establishing economic activity is not easy in Haiti, worse in remote and marginalized rural areas where there is no financial support from traditional financial institutions. I was able to invest in the resale of local agricultural products thanks to local creditors with high interest rates exceeding 3% monthly. So, losing business due to rainwater is a recurring risk in our community. Through CHANTER, I was able to access clear and precise information on preventive actions to take in order to protect my small business such as having a regularly updated inventory list, investing in waterproof packaging and infrastructure such as better roofs. And with a few saleswomen and neighbors, we had negotiated a contract with a warehouse company in town to keep our products in case of hurricane alerts”.



Community leader Camp-Perrin

CASE STUDY

“People didn’t know what to do during the hurricane season, they were left on their own. Now, we can see that at the very moment the clouds are forming, people are already preparing for possible rains, thanks to the prevention messages received on their phones.”

Project Outcomes & Lessons

OUTCOME

CHANTER enabled positive behaviour change amongst users

More than 11,000 people received CHANTER messaging under the grant project. Whilst (thankfully) there were no major weather events in Haiti during this time, users still adapted their behaviour due to the messages they received. Eight in ten (84%) survey respondents said they took an action suggested to them by CHANTER and a number of interviewees discussed their appreciation for the messages helping them proactively avoid the worst impacts of future weather events.

The vast majority of survey respondents reported gaining skills from CHANTER messaging. The top three skills were in preparing for emergencies (97%), managing their resources better (96%) and planning responses as a community (96%).

“Before CHANTER, I did not know how to put my documents in plastic bags and look after them. After receiving the messages, I always check my goods.”

Woman, Small business owner, Camp-Perrin

OUTCOME

CHANTER acted as a conduit for information, even for those not receiving messages

The qualitative interviews found that many recipients of CHANTER messaging proactively shared the key information with other people within their community, acting as a conduit for the information for those without access to phones or simply not signed up to the service.

“I liked the way I got the message on my phone and then someone else could listen to that same message.”

Woman, Crop-farmer, Bayonnais

LESSON

End-users found the CHANTER platform relevant and useful

More than 99% of survey respondents felt that the information that they received was relevant to them and 25% thought the *main* strength of CHANTER was its relevance.

Virtually all survey respondents (99%) reported finding the platform useful, with only six people saying otherwise. Even users who felt that they received messages late thought that these remained relevant and intended to use the information they gained in the future.

Importantly, the evaluation found no significant differences across demographic groups, so it was found equally useful by all user groups. This positively reflects the effort Mercy Corps put into meaningfully engaging with women, such as including women and organisations that support women within the community in their human centred design process. They beat their target for female participation in the programme by 28%.

"I want the project to go through to reach the whole community."

Woman, Livestock farmer, Bayonnais

"I am very happy because Mercy Corps has thought of us in very remote locations."

Woman, Crop farmer, Camp-Perrin

LESSON

In person sensitisation was an effective way to drive engagement with the platform

Eight in ten (84%) survey respondents participated in the sensitisation activities, which were considered useful by a very high percentage of the participants (83%).

This face-to-face engagement proved to be successful in building trust in the system. According to participants, the key benefits of such engagement were becoming more familiar with a new topic, and understanding the importance of sharing the information with each other. The two locations with in-person sensitisation also saw higher rates of user retention, likely an indication of the importance these had in keeping users engaged with the platform.

"Due to the sensitisation, I know more about cyclones, how to be prepared."

Man, Small business owner, Camp-Perrin

"[Sensitisation] showed me how I should educate others in the community."

Man, Farmer, Camp-Perrin

LESSON

Users would prefer messaging to be interactive

Nearly a quarter of survey respondents (22%) said that the platform should be more interactive, including a 'pull' mechanism by which users could access the messaging on demand (where the original CHANTER design only 'pushed' messages out to users). This is likely linked to the fact that a number of respondents had issues charging their phone (34%) and with reliable network coverage (47%) meaning they weren't always able to receive messages when they were 'pushed'.

This could be addressed by using Viamo's 3-2-1 service, which enables users with even the most basic handset to access information when they need and to navigate it using their keypad. This service was recently launched in Haiti through a partnership with Digicel.

SCALING THE MODEL

Building from the lessons learned through the CHANTER project, Mercy Corps has developed five additional projects in partnership with Viamo. These projects aim to reach 2.5 million people across three countries in the Americas. One of these projects is 'LAVE' which is leveraging the CHANTER approach to deliver messaging to vulnerable populations in Haiti to reduce the spread of COVID-19. The service has reached more than **two million people** thus far.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The future: how CHANTER might successfully scale within Haiti or be replicated in other locations

- Ensuring that messaging continues to be tailored both to intended recipient communities and the specific disasters they may face will be key to being successful. This will always require the allocation of significant resources for co-design and tailoring.
- Enabling communities to access the information through a 'pull' mechanism, alongside timely 'push' notifications, will help with longer-term buy-in, as users are able to access information as they need (including repeating useful messages).
- In person sensitisation, where possible, seems to help create buy-in within communities and lead to longer term engagement with the platform.
- The active involvement of a range of stakeholders will be essential to ensure that the platform is successful and plugs into existing infrastructure. This is likely to include local government officials, a mobile network operator (such as Digicel) and a technology provider (like Viamo).

DATA SOURCES

Mercy Corps reporting and monitoring: Project data and documentation;

Viamo reporting and user survey: Project data and a survey with 614 respondents (non-representative); and

Final evaluation conducted by external consultants: representative survey (447 respondents) and qualitative semi-structured interviews (112 participants)

(Fieldwork conducted March-April 2020 by local community-based organisations)