Tips for Starting Your Own Tesfa Program Model
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Purpose: Be clear about the problem you are solving. The Tesfa Program recognized early on that the problem of COVID-19 was very, very big.

However, there was a specific problem we were trying to solve-
A lack of linguistically, culturally appropriate, curated, tailored, and timely info about resources related to COVID-19 for the local Amharic-speaking communities.

This approach allowed us to focus our energy on gathering information and then curating and organizing it in ways that made the most sense to our community.

Focus: While Ethiopians speak multiple languages, focus your efforts on one language. Because interested volunteers and community leaders only spoke Amharic, we focused on that language and community. To support other Ethiopian languages, we partnered with other organizations/groups with that language expertise.

Frequency: Pick a sustainable program frequency. Start with something more infrequent initially, once a month for example. The Tesfa Program found that weekly sessions were ideal, however, you have to decide for yourself and your group if that is feasible. Whatever you pick, be consistent, and don't skip weeks. This is critical. People have to trust that you will be there when you said you will. We never skipped a week during the almost two years we ran the weekly program and that really helped us maintain trust with the community.

Staffing: Bring on volunteers with native language skills and good communication skills. Those that host the program can be supported by others in the background

Format: We found that the live program can be long (1-2 hours) but if you are pre-recording and sharing it, it is best to keep the audio or video clip very short (5-10 minutes). When possible include video/images when you share recorded audio content. You will need someone who can focus on the technology so the host can focus on delivering the information.

Preparation: Once the resources are gathered, the host should spend time going over the materials and practicing delivering the information to an audience. The host should also spend time anticipating and preparing for possible questions.

Follow Up: We sent a text immediately after the live program with resources and relevant phone numbers etc. It is important to provide organization names, key staff or contacts, and their phone numbers so community members can ask more individualized questions. Our program kept the information general and tried to respond to high-level questions. When people had very specific questions about their own case, we recommended they directly contact the organization operating the resource.

Marketing: Word of mouth is the best way to market this type of program. Focus on being consistent, delivering useful information, and building trust and relationships with those that come to the program, and your program will grow.

Impact: Be realistic about how many participants will attend your program. The Ethiopian Amharic-speaking population in our region is around a few thousand. Try to figure out what makes sense to measure in terms of the impact of your program. The Tesfa Program decided the total unique participants was an important indicator of our success. Additionally, the feedback we got from program participants directly fed back into the design of our program structure and the topics covered.

Quick Tips

Text rather than email. People may not know how to use email or have an email address.

Offer phone #s for resources. People would like someone to talk to rather than a website or email.

Provide a phone # for program meetings. People may struggle with video resources and like the option to call in.