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Report on an evaluation of Field Exchange conducted with readers between April 2007 and January 2008

“While other agencies / people may be on the outside being seen and using the information developed and/or accumulated by ENN, it is ENN that keeps nutrition driving forwards. By providing excellent materials, ENN keeps nutritionists (and others) up to date and so helps to raise standards and excellence in the nutrition field.”

“Independent, neutral, impartial nutrition knowledge sharing medium”

“A forum for sharing field experiences in nutrition programming (whether positive or negative) as a tool for joint learning, to inspire innovation and evolution of best practice. A really useful tool for sharing relevant information drawn from many sources, including different agencies and from both ends of the academic - operational continuum”

Source: Questionnaire respondents asked to describe the role of the Emergency Nutrition Network

Introduction

Field Exchange is mailed to 110 countries and has a print copy readership of 2545. Although positive verbal feedback about Field Exchange and the other activities of the Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN) is frequently received informally, a formal evaluation of Field Exchange and the ENN's activities has not been done since 2003. As the ENN is partnered with many governmental and non-governmental agencies, it is important that the effectiveness of Field Exchange can be shown, to help maintain these partnerships and for pursuing funding to secure its future. The primary aims of this evaluation therefore were to:

- Gain insight into the use of Field Exchange amongst readers
- Acquire examples of the impact that Field Exchange has had on programming, policy, or training within agencies and/or on individuals
- Gain insight into the perceived role of the ENN in the emergency nutrition and food security sector
- Gain ideas for improving Field Exchange in terms of content, format, frequency, etc.

Method

This evaluation was carried out using a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire, which was designed by an independent researcher with some knowledge of the field, was included in issues 30 and 31 of Field Exchange (April and September 2007), and was available to fill out on the ENN website from April 2007. Questionnaires filled out on paper were returned by post to the ENN office in Oxford. The 15-item questionnaire sought feedback regarding the content, format, frequency, funding, and effectiveness of Field Exchange as well as the role of both the ENN and Field Exchange in the field on emergency nutrition, and other activities undertaken by the ENN. Questions used a variety of tick-box, ranking, and free-text formats to gather detailed data. The questionnaire aimed to take no more than 15 minutes to be fully completed. The questionnaire can be found in appendix 1.

Results

Completed questionnaires were returned to the independent researcher via the ENN office in Oxford, or directly accessed online by the researcher. 98 questionnaires were returned between April 2007 and January 2008. This represents 4% of the Field Exchange print readership. 61% of the questionnaires were completed online, 39% being returned by post. 80% of respondents answered the questionnaire as an individual, whereas 15% answered on behalf of an agency (e.g. NGO, UN, government body, research group, training institution, donor etc). Over 60% of respondents had been receiving Field Exchange for 2 or more years, and a quarter of respondents were past or present contributors to the magazine. Below is a selection of the main findings from the questionnaire. All quantitative data can be found in appendix 2.

- 97% of respondents said they used Field Exchange for “*personal learning/updating knowledge*”, several of which gave specific examples such as “updated operational guidance for IFYCF [Infant and Young Child Feeding] in emergencies”.
- 35% of respondents stated that they had used Field Exchange to “*guide programming or policy*”, several of which gave specific responses such as “articles on nutrition surveillance [were useful] when I was asked to give support to set up a nutrition surveillance system”.
- 35% of respondents had used Field Exchange in training, giving examples such as “[Field Exchange] helps in guiding graduate and postgraduate students on nutrition research”.
- 93% of respondents had recommended Field Exchange to others.
- In a ranking exercise successfully completed by 42 respondents, the different segments of Field Exchange were valued in the following order for their “*usefulness*” - Field Articles (most useful), Research, Evaluation, News (least useful). However 48 people answered this question incorrectly, scoring the segments from 1-4 instead of ranking them. All of the segments scored between 1.6 and 2.1 (1 being the most useful). The order of ‘usefulness’ for scores was Research, Field Articles, News and Evaluation.
- 70% of respondents accessed Field Exchange only through the print version. Just 8% accessed only the online version.
- 85% of people preferred the print version of Field Exchange. Reasons for preferring a printed copy were all covered by the broad categories of: easy to carry/transport around; lack of computer/internet connection; easier on the eye; can be annotated; or easier to refer to and share with others. However there is clearly value in other ways of accessing Field Exchange as 10% of people opted for a pdf version, 4% for online view, and 8% for a CD compilation (more than one option could be chosen).
- Asked for suggestions to improve Field Exchange, 28% of people had comments on the “*content*”, such as “review acronyms in a glossary in the front to facilitate reading articles”; “Would like to see some post project evaluation looking at the longer term effects of nutrition projects in communities. Like the special publications which cover a specific topic, such as targeting food aid 2004”; and “Perhaps branch out a bit to bridge the gap between emergencies and development”.
- 34% of people commented on the “*frequency*” of Field Exchange. No one suggested that it be less frequent, with 14% suggesting that it should be more frequent, with suggestions ranging from quarterly to monthly.
- The majority of respondents were aware of at least one of the ENN’s other activities (Supplements on emergency nutrition programming, Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies, and research on supplementary feeding programmes), and 67% of respondents claim to have benefited from one of these extra activities.
- The majority of respondents supported ENN seeking funding from bilateral donors (75%), UN/NGO contributions (84%), and selected private donors (74%), but only 33% supported seeking funding from personal subscriptions, although one or two people commented that this could be done on a sliding scale basis.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results reveal a few areas in which the ENN can take some immediate action, and some areas where further consideration may need to be made.

- The 35% of people that used Field Exchange for programming, policy, and/or training was slightly lower than expected, however this may reflect the fact that 80% of respondents answered as an individual rather than an agency. Thus, many of those individuals may not have been in a position to affect those aspects of their organisation or otherwise. This evaluation is being followed up by some targeted telephone interviews with agencies and field staff, where this aspect can be probed further, and any future written evaluation could take a stratified approach to sampling to enrich this data.
- Although the News section of Field Exchange was seen as least useful in the ranking exercise, the scoring exercise reveals that all sections of Field Exchange scored highly, so forcing people to rank sections against each other may not be an accurate reflection of their true 'usefulness'. This should be addressed in any future evaluations, and in the short term the ENN could look at how to target the news articles more appropriately for the audience.
- Although there was a high response (93%) to whether respondents had recommended Field Exchange to others, there was little indication from the data as to whom respondents had recommended it to. However a few comments in other parts of the questionnaire indicate that this may be mostly to students, colleagues, and field staff. A future evaluation could probe this further and ask respondents whether they would be prepared to recommend Field Exchange to particular targeted groups that are not covered well by the current distribution of Field Exchange, for example Government counterparts and ministries. This can also be incorporated into the continuing phone interviews.
- Several comments, as well as the data above, suggest that it is necessary to have Field Exchange in electronic format as well as in print, in order to aid the sharing of Field Exchange with colleagues easily. To further aid this, a full cataloguing project is now underway, funded by the UNICEF-led Nutrition Cluster, which will allow for the access and distribution of individual articles electronically.
- Finally it is noteworthy that several people commented that they would like to see more articles on long term evaluations of emergency nutrition projects and more special issues on particular topics of interest. It is recommended that the ENN seek out suitable material and identify subject areas in order to address these identified needs.

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Finally thanks to Phil Wilks of www.fruitysolutions.com who prepared the online questionnaire free of charge.

Appendix 1 - the questionnaire

Evaluation Questionnaire for Field Exchange Readers

PLEASE NOTE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE CAN ALSO BE COMPLETED ONLINE AT: www.ennonline.net/ OR RETURNED BY EMAIL TO: eval@ennonline.net

This questionnaire asks your opinions on the content and use of Field Exchange and on the wider role of the Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN). It comprises 15 questions and should take no longer than 10 -15 minutes to complete. When complete, please return to **ENN, 32 Leopold Street, Oxford, OX4 1TW, UK**

Are you completing this questionnaire on behalf of an agency or as an individual ?

'agency' is defined loosely to include any group, e.g. NGO, UN, government body, research group, training institution, donor etc.

FIELD EXCHANGE CONTENT AND USE

1. How long have you been receiving Field Exchange?

Less than a year 1-2 years 2-4 years 5 years or more

2. Where did you hear about Field Exchange?

Recommendation of colleague Web search engine Employer Academic institution
Other: _____

3. How have you used Field Exchange? (you may tick more than one, please include examples if possible)

For personal learning / updating knowledge e.g. _____

To guide programming or policy e.g. _____

In training e.g. _____

Other (please specify: _____) e.g. _____

4. Have you recommended Field Exchange to others?

Yes No

5. Have you ever contributed material to Field Exchange?

a) Yes No

b) If not, but you have considered it, for what reason(s) have you not contributed?

6. Please rank how *useful* you find the following sections of Field Exchange (1= most useful, 4= least useful)

Field articles _____ Research summaries _____ News _____ Evaluations _____

7. How do you currently access Field Exchange?

a) Print copy Online PDF download Both

b) If you receive a print copy, have you ever failed to receive a scheduled edition? Yes No

8. Which format do you prefer? (please include a reason if possible)

Print copy Online PDF download Online viewing CD compilation

reason: _____

9. Do you have any suggestions for improving Field Exchange?

- Content _____

- Format _____

- Frequency of publication _____

THE EMERGENCY NUTRITION NETWORK

10. How would you describe the role of the Emergency Nutrition Network (ENN)?

11. Which of the following activities are you aware the ENN is involved in?

Production of 3 Special Supplements on key areas of emergency nutrition programming

A Developing policy guidance and training materials on Infant and Young Child Feeding in Emergencies

A Review and research on Supplementary Feeding Programmes and outcomes in emergency settings

12. Have you benefited from any of the above activities? (if yes, please include examples if possible)

Yes No

e.g. _____

13. Are there any other activities you think the ENN should be involved in?

14. Where do you think the ENN should access funding from? (you may tick more than one)

Bilateral donors UN/NGO contributions Personal subscriptions

Selected private donors (e.g. foundations/trusts) è

Other suggestions: _____

15. Do you have any other comments on the ENN or Field Exchange?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO COMPLETE THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

n=98

Table 1: basic data

How answered?				How long receiving field exchange?				Contributor?	
Online	Post	Individual	Agency	<1y	1-2y	2-4y	>5y	yes	no
61.20%	38.80%	79.60%	15.30%	23.50%	12.20%	29.60%	34.70%	25.50%	74.50%

Table 2: about FEx

Where did you hear about Field Exchange?					Recommended to others?	
recommendation of colleague	search engine	employer	academic institution	other	yes	no
34.70%	12.20%	19.40%	8.20%	28.60%	92.90%	5.10%

Table 3: use and usefulness of FEx

Use of FEx				Ranked usefulness of FEx (1=most useful, 4= least useful, n=42)			
personal learning	programming	training	other	field articles	research	news	evaluation
96.90%	34.70%	34.70%	18.40%	1.9	2.2	3	2.9

$p=0.03$ for variance between ranked usefulness

Table 4: Accessing FEx

How accessed?			Failed to receive? (n=55)		Access preferences			
print only	online only	print and online	yes	no	print	pdf	online	CD
70.40%	8.20%	21.40%	21.80%	65.50%	84.70%	10.20%	4.10%	8.20%

Table 5: Awareness of other activities of ENN

Awareness of other activities			Benefitted from these?		Where should ENN access funding?				
3 supplements on EN planning	IFE	feeding programmes	yes	no	bilateral donors	UN/NGO's	subscriptions	private donors	other
55.10%	61.20%	8.20%	67.30%	22.50%	74.50%	83.70%	32.70%	73.50%	11.20%