Comparative review of the First Aid App: briefing paper

Adopting the First Aid App

Overview of the lessons learnt

This First Aid App briefing paper is based on the Comparative review of the First Aid App study. More information can be found at http://preparecenter.org

INTRODUCTION

People the world over face varying degrees of risk on a day-to-day basis. Risks can range from small domestic accidents to large national or international disasters and crises. Emergency services may be unavailable, or far from reach, and as a result, it is imperative that people have the knowledge and skills to help themselves. The absence of access to such skills and knowledge and, a lack of confidence in one's first aid skills despite having received first aid training, can prevent people from dealing with risks. How people define risk in their everyday lives depends on their social contexts, their level of preparedness and their specific community needs.

Access to first aid knowledge may help reduce dependency on emergency services, provide people with a sense of security, or allow them to act as first responders in the event of an emergency when the initial response may prove crucial. Providing quick access to essential first aid knowledge has been facilitated by the widespread availability of smartphones and access to the Internet. The First Aid App, under the Universal App Program, utilises this widespread social medium to provide a platform for sharing basic first aid knowledge and information on emergency preparedness, catered to each local context.

This briefing paper examines the adoption of the First Aid App by Red Cross National Societies under the Universal App Program. Specifically, it provides an outline of the program and the experiences of some of the National Societies in adopting the app in their local contexts.

The briefing paper highlights the barriers faced in developing, rolling out and marketing the app, how these were overcome and what strategies were identified to further improve the uptake of the app. Additionally, it examines the rollout of the app and how users of the app responded to and engaged with the app and, what this engagement reveals about the local contexts being investigated. Examples of user engagement during national and international emergencies are used to highlight the app's potential as a reference guide during critical events. By drawing on these various experiences of the adoption of the First Aid App and user engagement with it, this briefing paper provides a unique overview of the lessons learnt for other Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies interested in, or in the process of, adopting the First Aid App.

THE FIRST AID APP & THE UNIVERSAL APP PROGRAM

The successful release of First Aid Apps by the British Red Cross and the American Red Cross, led to the concept of the Universal App Program being developed. The Global Disaster Preparedness Centre (GDPC) launched the Universal App Program in May 2013 with the aim of expanding the availability of First Aid and Hazard apps and, by default, expanding public awareness of first aid. In this regard, Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies work with the GDPC to adapt the app to their local contexts.

The First Aid App provides access to basic first aid knowledge and information on emergency preparedness in an interactive format that has the capability of reaching a wide audience. In the 'Comparative review of the First Aid App' study led by Trilateral Research, with support from Fraunhofer Institute for Open Communication Systems (FOKUS), Utah State University (USU) and the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC), the adoption of the app by nine Red Cross National Societies was analyzed. The participating countries included: the Czech Republic, Hong Kong, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Malta, Mexico, Myanmar and Switzerland. Given the social, geographic and political differences between these countries, the comparison focused on how the National Societies adapted the app to adhere to the requirements of their local contexts.

Goals of the program

- Develop and rollout a version of the First Aid App that meets local needs and reflects the specific goals of the National Society
- To spread knowledge of first aid to as many people as possible through the localization of the app

What follows is an overview of the key findings, lessons learnt and recommendations for other Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies interested in adopting their own First Aid App.

DEVELOPING A LOCAL APP

Red Cross National Societies were provided with a prototype First Aid App by the GDPC. The prototype served as a basis for National Societies to begin the development of their own version of the First Aid App, as well as providing an interactive example of the structure and content of the app.

The development of the app revealed similar approaches across the nine participating National Societies. This process involved:

- A review of the applicability of the app content to the local context
- Consultation of National Society guidelines and local legislation
- Translation of the content where English is not the national language
- Insertion of photos and videos relevant to the local context
- Addition of content relevant to the local context
- Removal of material not relevant to the local context
- Testing the app (in most cases on Red Cross volunteers)

Although the process of developing the app seems straightforward, all of the National Societies involved stated that it was a long and laborious process, generally taking up to a year, with the exception of Iceland and Israel (five months), and Ireland (nine months). The main difficulties with this process were the reliance on volunteers' time and effort, a lack of finances and technical expertise (especially in terms of translation) and, issues with the translation of the text. For example, in the case of Israel the app was initially unable to recognize the Hebrew script.

In some cases, technical expertise was also identified as a requirement in terms of the medical advice provided in the app. In the case of Malta, conflicts were identified

between the original app content relating to the administration of aspirin and local legislation where Red Cross members are allowed to provide assistance but not administer aspirin.

Recommendations related to app development

- Consider key objectives
- Set tasks with realistic timescales
- Plan for delays
- Resolve conflicts between the app and taught first aid courses/local legislation
- Focus on one language for the app before including other versions with different languages

ROLLING OUT THE APP

In order to ensure the wide appeal of the First Aid App, National Societies were careful to time the launch of the app to coincide with other significant events that heightened its visibility. These included events that were related to, or enhanced, the Society's role or image.

Although the development of the app revealed similarities in the process across the National Societies involved, the app rollout provided a wide array of different opportunities. Some of the most innovative methods used for launching the app included:

- Launching the app on a day associated with the Red Cross, such as the World Red Cross Red Crescent day, or the anniversary of the Red Cross organization
- Utilizing free press opportunities that involve other popular events, people or organizations (e.g., Malta Red Cross used a meeting with the President of the Republic to launch the app)
- Using Internet based resources to announce the launch of the app (e.g., social media)

Due to limited funding, which was identified as the main barrier for launching the app, the societies involved identified free events and media they could draw upon to advertise the app.

Members of HKRC demonstrate how to use the First Aid App at the press conference and launch of the app

Fostering cooperation to promote the app

- Use templates of other Red Cross Red Crescent societies promotional materials
- Identify local businesses to advertise the app for free
- Identify events during which the app can be launched
- Seek out opportunities to promote the app through media outlets

MARKETING THE APP

Continued marketing of the app beyond its launch proved to be a challenge due to limited resources. However, National Societies utilized a variety of outlets to maintain user interest in the app and to market the app to a wider audience. Some examples of the most innovative methods are listed below:

- In Israel, regular updates and new content was added to the app at regular intervals to regenerate interest
- The Myanmar Red Cross set up information booths in popular shopping malls
- The Icelandic Red Cross created a cartoon character 'Clumsy' to widen the appeal of the app

The character 'Clumsy' created by the Icelandic Red Cross to promote the app

- The Czech Red Cross provided information sessions at schools to establish contact with younger people
- The Irish Red Cross engaged in street campaigns

Other methods that were common among the Red Cross National Societies involved included free advertising on social media websites such as Facebook and on popular blogs. National Societies also took advantage of opportunities when they were invited on radio stations to discuss and promote the First Aid App. The app was also regularly promoted during first aid courses given by each National Society.

A marketing plan is required in order to identify options for the successful promotion and uptake of the First Aid App. Prioritizing goals in the development of a marketing plan will help ensure that the app reaches a wider audience and achieves the desired impact which is to spread first aid awareness and help save lives. In this regard, creative and informative content will significantly help with marketing the app. Below is a list of key points in the development of a marketing plan.

Developing a marketing plan

- Identify specific target groups
- Identify key social figures, events and media with whom to collaborate in promoting the app
- Decide on measurable objectives, such as a target number of downloads
- Decide on content that can be created to promote the app (for example articles and press releases)

MONITORING USER ENGAGEMENT

Monitoring user engagement allows Red Cross National Societies to determine whether their marketing strategies have had the desired effects by looking at the number of downloads and sessions during periods when the app is being promoted. National Societies can also find out about users' preferred app content and help build their own understanding of their local communities' needs. This will influence how National Societies plan further marketing strategies.

Google Analytics provides a free medium to monitor and understand user engagement. It provides app data in real time that ranges from the number of users and new users to the amount of time users spend on the app during each session and, the first aid topics that users are most interested in.

National Societies stated that they did not have the technical expertise to use Google Analytics to its full advantage. To this effect the GDPC has provided a simple guide to using Google Analytics that can be found here: http://preparecenter.org/resources/using-google-analytics.

Apart from monitoring user engagement, Google Analytics allows National Societies to gain a better understanding of their users and their local community.

Understanding user engagement

- Tracking the location of app users allows National Societies to determine the reach of their marketing strategy
- Taking note of the number of screens viewed per session reveals how many topics users engage with during each session
- The most popular first aid topics reveal the major concerns of the community

In Israel the most popular first aid topic was 'Bleeding' which coincides with an increase in the number of stabbings taking place in the country. In five of the countries the most popular topic was 'Burns', suggesting that the app was being used for

domestic accidents, where burns are one of the most common accidents.

User interactions with the app

An important aspect of monitoring user engagement involved engaging with users themselves or user feedback through a variety of different media.

National Societies received comments and feedback from users via Google Play, iTunes and the Apple App Store. The Irish Red Cross also received feedback via e-mail. In Malta and Myanmar feedback was also collected via word of mouth.

> **"Excellent useful app with great Android design layout, a must app in mobile"**

In Malta this was considered a feasible option considering the small size of the island where, as a result, Red Cross members benefited from frequent face-to-face encounters with app users. Most comments received were positive and related to the originality, accessibility, and usefulness of the app. One particular comment from Ireland detailed how the app helped in an emergency.

> **"Had a situation of unconsciousness and not breathing yesterday in my home with my sister. A lot of people panicked, but remembering I had the app handy for a while now, whipped it out and had a quick few second video on exactly what to do, got her breathing under the instructions, lifted her to the car, sat in the back with her and got to A&E, and she was ok to leave by morning.**

Monitoring user feedback provides key insights into the impact of the app, its drawbacks and the interests of the local community. Users posted comments regarding compatibility problems between the app and their devices, while others provided suggestions of features and content that they would like to see included in the app.

RESPONDING TO RISK

The study investigated whether a relationship exists between critical events (e.g., disasters, national and international emergencies) and user engagement with the app, by analyzing user engagement during two critical events for each country. This investigation had at least four benefits:

- Whether critical events increased user engagement with the app
- How different critical events might impact user engagement (for example, the different effects of short-lived events and long-term disasters)
- It helped identify some of the major risk concerns for the local population
- It determined the usefulness of the app in an emergency situation as a reference tool

In order to understand user engagement with the app during crisis situations, analysis of Google Analytics data on user engagement with the app was carried out during particular national or international critical events. Data on user engagement was collected for the day of the event, the two days following the event and, for 30 days after the event.

Two of the more revealing examples and results are provided below. The information suggests that user engagement was affected by the critical events. The monitoring of such events allows Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies to learn more about risks and the level of preparedness in their local communities.

User engagement during crises

Malta

On the 22nd September 2015, a 57-year-old woman choked to death while having lunch in a packed restaurant. Neither the staff nor diners were able to properly assist her. Her brother released a public appeal for catering staff to be trained in basic first aid and the news story caused a stir in the local community with a surge in newspaper reports on the importance of first aid.

The data revealed that there was a notable increase in user engagement with the app in the days following the choking incident, especially when compared to the average for the 30 days following the incident, where user engagement on the two days following the incident was more than double the 30 day average. The incident was initially reported on local television and an article was published in the main local newspaper on the second day following the event which likely accounted for the surge in user engagement. The most popular first aid topic for the lifetime of the app in Malta was 'Burns', but in the two days following the incident the most popular topic was 'Choking'.

Israel

On the 8th October 2015, seven civilians and one soldier were wounded in four different stabbing attacks across Israel. The attacks were the first of a string of attacks on Israelis using "everyday" objects like knives and cars.

The data revealed an overall surge in user engagement with the app in the days following the stabbings, with a particularly high increase on the day after the stabbings. An increase in the number of users was noted, from 1805 on the day of the event to 6211 on the day after, with the most popular topic during this time being 'Bleeding'. Other data revealed a notable decrease of 35% in the number of screens accessed in each session suggesting that users were looking up specific topics, not simply browsing. The most popular topic for the entire lifetime of the app was also 'Bleeding', which may reveal local concerns about the predominance of similar events.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The First Aid App provides National Societies with a unique and modern resource that they can use to help drive first aid related preparedness for the local population, as well as to bolster their own reputation. First aid is a vital tool in an emergency and can be delivered by laypersons in the community. The proper application of first aid procedures also contributes to reducing secondary injuries or complications in victims, thereby reducing morbidity and enhancing the faster recovery of victims. Through partnerships with the GDPC and National Societies, the First Aid App has the potential to be a great resource for increasing people's knowledge of first aid and improving disaster resilience.

Further information

Comparative review of the First Aid App
The report provides a comprehensive analysis and a detailed Comparative review of the First Aid App and the countries and National Societies involved in the Universal App Program. The Final report provides a detailed analysis of the main findings, lessons learnt and recommendations. Accompanying the Final report are the Country Reports that provide individual and analysis of the development, rollout, marketing and secondary analysis of the First Aid App in each of the country case studies.
Link: http://preparecenter.org/

Global Disaster Preparedness Centre website and resources
The GDPC website hosts information, guidelines and news related to the app and the tools (such as Google Analytics) needed for gaining the best results out of the First Aid App.

- *Universal App Program*
  This section provides an overview of the program, as well as a brief overview of the First Aid App and the Hazard App and what they include.
  Link: http://preparecenter.org/activities/universal-app-program

- *First Aid App*
  This section provides a more detailed overview of the First Aid App, the specific features, the benefits of joining the program and the responsibilities of Red Cross Red Crescent organizations participating in the program. An introduction video is also provided.
  Link: http://preparecenter.org/activities/first-aid-app

- *Welcome Packet*
  This section provides step by step details and guidance on each aspect of the development of the app, including the development of videos and content for a localized version of the app. In addition, information is provided on using Google Analytics and monitoring user engagement with the app.
  Link: http://preparecenter.org/welcomepacketFA

- *Mobile Application Marketing Toolkit: Best Practices and Guidelines*
  This document offers help to promote the app in the host country in order to spread the word about its availability and to encourage users to install it.
  Link: http://preparecenter.org/resources/mobile-application-marketing-toolkit-best-practices-guidelines

- *Frequently Asked Questions – Universal App Program: First Aid*
  This document provides some of the most commonly asked questions and answers related to the First Aid App and the Universal App Program.
  Link: http://preparecenter.org/resources/frequently-asked-questions-universal-app-program-first-aid