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YouthLead Social Issue campaign Report

By

Ambassadors Jacmen & Humayun

Leveraging social media to advocate for Transparency and Accountability during covid-19 pandemic.

The YouthLead Social Issue campaign is an avenue for YouthLead Ambassadors to lead a “theme-based” short campaign. The goal of the campaign is to provide a platform to share and amplify youths’ voice about a social issue that they are passionate about, and for them to share their knowledge, expertise, insights and experience about this topic to a global community of young changemakers.

Currently the world is facing the most critical time ever due to the coronavirus outbreak. Since the outbreak of this pandemic, the International Monetary Fund is disbursing billions of dollars globally to relieve the populations. However, corrupt officials may take advantage to siphon the funding. More than ever, youths should make their governments more accountable, and due to lockdown social media are powerful tools. It is in line with this perspective that YouthLead Ambassadors Jacmen Kouakou from Cote d'Ivoire, passionate about transparency and governance and Humayun Nosheerwan from Pakistan, passionate about social media, led from 11-15 May, 2020 a campaign around “**Leveraging social media to advocate for transparency and accountability during the COVID-19 pandemic**”.

On this campaign we took a look at how social media can be used as a tool for ensuring accountability and transparency in the society.

Webinar session

We kicked start the campaign leading a webinar on May 13, 2020 where we emphasized on the power of social media and the need to promoting Transparency and accountability amid Covid-19.

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YouthLead Ambassadors Webinar:

Leveraging Social Media to Advocate for Transparency and Accountability in the COVID-19 Pandemic

Jacmen Kouakou, Côte d'Ivoire

Humayun Nosheerwan, Pakistan

**Wednesday, May 13, 2020
9:00-10:00 am EDT**

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In the first part of the webinar, Ambassador Humayun, a social media expert from Pakistan demonstrated the power of social media because it allows people to reach and influence people locally, regionally, nationally and even

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internationally. In addition, during Covid-19 crisis, social media usage has increased manifold, for instance Italy has seen a 70% increase in time users spend on social media since the crisis arrived. Social media usage exceeded four hours in India, which is 87% higher than normal times. Moreover, Governments are using social media and mobile technologies to monitor and contain the spread of the pandemic, Facebook now has a COVID-19 information tab, WhatsApp launches information hub, and Twitter is providing reliable sources for people who make coronavirus-related searches. These statistics show that social media are playing a key role amid the pandemic and can be utilized to advocate for transparency and accountability. In so doing, Humayun promoted some ways how youths can use social media amid Covid-19, for instance, increase transparency and accountability through observation and reporting , making effective use of hashtags to drive social media trends and utilizing social media for crowdsourcing and mapping for efficient delivery of essential health services amid the Covid-19 crisis.

In the second part, Ambassador Jacmen, passionate about promoting transparency and governance, discussed about the importance of making public and private officials more accountable amid Covid-19 and beyond. He equally provided tips how youths can be engaged in their communities. First of all, according to Jacmen transparent implies some values such as openness, communication, accountability, honesty, citizens' participation in public decision-making and making data available to public. In fact, it is obvious that the corruption trends worldwide is still increasing as five regions out of six Corruption Perception Index are below the average score. Also, according to UN Secretary-General, the annual costs of international corruption amount to \$3.6 trillion in the form of bribes and stolen money. This situation can even get worse amid COVID-19 putting accountability under threat because due to lockdown integrity champions and whistleblowers cannot do field investigations, risks such as hidden contracts, and overpricing in public procurement may occur and opportunistic criminals may take advantage of the coronavirus pandemic for money laundering. Therefore, youths should advocate to ensure that the billions of dollars the International Monetary Fund is disbursing to dozens of countries ACTUALLY BENEFIT the populations and they should advocate for transparency in public bidding for sanitary kits to mitigate risks such as hidden contracts, overpricing and favoritism. For example, according to Transparency International, in Poland, the Health Minister is under fire after the government bought more than 10,000 useless face masks through a family friend. Finally, based on his own experience as youth activist for transparency, Jacmen provided some tips for youths when advocating for a social issue, they should seek institutional support to give credit to their works, collaborate with mentor(s) that work in their domain and build a team of volunteers that are passionate about the cause they are fighting for.

To round the webinar session off, participants raised some concerns about media literacy. In response to this, Humayun provided some valuable insights for youths to use social media appropriately, they should always cross-check information to make sure they are relevant before posting. Also some of participants raised a point about how youth should react whenever there is corruption case in their country amid the pandemic. To this concern, Jacmen highlighted some process youths should follow, firstly search for data to make sure the case is relevant, if there is a proof about the case then, they should team up with other whistleblowers like journalists to raise the issue to public.

Twitter chat

As part of the ambassador-led Youthlead issue campaign titled “Leveraging Social Media to Advocate for Transparency and Accountability in the COVID-19 Pandemic” Humayun Nosheerwan (Pakistan), and Jacmen Kouakou (Côte d'Ivoire) also worked in close collaboration to conduct an hour-long interactive Twitter session on May 14, 2020.

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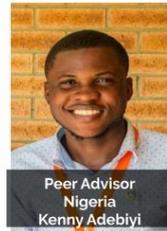
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YouthLead Social Issue: Social Media, Transparency & Accountability During COVID-19

Leveraging Social Media to Advocate for Transparency and Accountability in the COVID-19 Pandemic

Twitter chat : May 14, 2020 - 9.00 a.m EDT

#YouthLeadIssue #YLAchat



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The primary aim of the Twitter session was to engage young changemakers alongside general public in having an exciting and productive conversation to discuss how the power of social media can be harnessed to promote transparency and accountability amid Covid-19 pandemic. All in all, Twitter session generated extraordinary interest and garnered tremendous feedback from a number of different participants who shared their personal insights regarding various important issues concerning social media, transparency and accountability, and overall how to use technology to improve our response to Covid-19 situation. These participants used their Twitter handles to tag, comment, and share the tweets with their followers on Twitter which resulted in generating a lot of traffic and trending of this topic.

In order to actively engage the participants through the Twitter session, a total of 8 questions were formulated with the help from Youthlead team. At that stage, we received valuable feedback from our Youthlead peer advisor Kehinde O. Adebisi who helped us by suggesting important changes and edits. Similarly, Abolaji Omitogun along with Shakira Choonara played a major role in coordinating and handling different aspects of this campaign and making it happen. The questions we formulated with the help of Youthlead team pertained to different crucial aspects of the overall Youthlead issue campaign and encouraged participants to share their opinion about the topic. For example, the second question asked participants: What does transparency mean to you? In response, different participants shared their personal take on the definition of transparency. For instance, Owen Okoko (@OkokoOwen) replied to this question by stating: *"Transparency means doing, sharing, thinking the right actions and information for the communities from grassroots to high ranking institutions and officials. Despite the challenges, the decisions to stay true for the people we work with and especially the ones we manage."*

Similarly, in replying to another question where it was asked what are some of the challenges to promoting transparency and accountability in your country especially at this time of Covid-19? Khushal Naharki (@KUSHALNAHARKI11) tweeted: *"False information, dishonest behavior and corrupt nature of people are likely to increase during the disasters. Corruption has always been a major problem of our country. With the system being disturbed during pandemic, lack of transparency has occurred in many sectors"*. Replying to the same question, another Twitter user SAWADOGO SAIDOU (@saidousawa14) said: *"The main challenge is the lack of possibilities to meet and interact with decision makers. Many of them are not used to holding online meetings"*. One very interesting and somewhat challenging question that was posed to the participants of twitter chat session was "How can we ensure inclusive, transparent, and accountable government in communities where there is little or no access to technology?" This question was truly challenging because it is a common fact that majority of the populations living in developing world countries still lack easy access to technology, particularly internet and social media. In



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response to this interesting question, a lot of participants provided practical and insightful solutions. For example, participants emphasized the role of grassroots engagement, networking, and local community leaders in ensuring transparency and accountability in areas that lack access to technology. Moreover, some participants highlighted the role of giving voice to marginal communities and adopting a participatory approach so that different stakeholders are taken onboard while making important decision regarding crucial issues. If these procedures and factors are taken into account, we can be rest assured that dream of transparency and accountability can be realized even in communities that do not have easy access to technology.

In the end of the Twitter session, we thanked all the participants for their active engagement and participation in the hour-long discussion, some of whom included Adebisi Kenny @Prof_K_S_A , Denaya Dennis (@denayadennis), Zayithwa (@zayithwa), Philbert Aganyo (@Paganyo), Owen Okoko (@OkokoOwen), SAWADOGO SAIDOU (@saidousawa14), Khushal Naharki (@KUSHALNAHARKI11), Ambassador_Arafat (@arafat_bakir), and others.

All in all, both the webinar and the Twitter sessions were a great success as they yielded immensely valuable insights about how to leverage the power of social media to promote transparency and accountability in Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

Additional resources

<https://voices.transparency.org/covid-19-perfect-storm-for-the-corrupt-c42eb9dfc234>

<https://www.devex.com/news/interactive-who-s-funding-the-covid-19-response-and-what-are-the-priorities-96833>

<https://www.france24.com/fr/europe/20200508-la-pand%C3%A9mie-de-covid-19-un-terrain-propice-%C3%A0-la-corruption-en-ukraine>

https://www.unodc.org/documents/Advocacy-Section/COVID-19_and_Anti-Corruption-2.pdf

<https://notesfrompoland.com/2020/05/15/polands-health-minister-denies-cronyism-after-purchase-of-useless-masks-from-family-friend/>