
2020 ONLINE FORUM REPORT

A short summary of what we
learned together

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ABOUT THE FORUM



We described the forum as "a week of events to support members in their lives, work and Cluster"

8

sessions took place on Zoom, each on a theme suggested by Cluster members

50

people joined us during the week - every Cluster was represented

30

was the minimum attendance at a session



Guests speakers included experts from inside and outside of our network



The next few pages give a short summary of what we discussed in each session



INTRODUCING THE FORUM

Communications Co-ordinator JAKE gave a short introduction to the forum. Here's 8 things he said.

1

We are a very diverse network - we're from different backgrounds and we have different strengths

2

We're united by our shared aim of 'Arukah' - a word that means wholeness, restoration and health.

3

We do not pursue this aim with large sums of money, or through outsiders trying to name and fix a community's challenges.

4

Instead, we **CONNECT** (build relationships with each other) **INFORM** (share knowledge and stories) and **INFLUENCE** (work together to serve our communities)

5

This forum aims to **CONNECT** us, **INFORM** us and equip us to have more **INFLUENCE** in our lives and work

6

It is sometimes a challenge for diverse groups to connect, but great things can happen when we make this effort

7

Arukah's co-ordinating team (JAKE, RIVKA, ROBINS, TED, ELIZABETH) are here not to lead Arukah, but to follow the lead of Cluster members.

8

As a Cluster member, Arukah is **YOUR** network! We invite you to continue to share ways that it can best serve you and your Cluster.

WHAT DIFFERENCE CAN A CLUSTER MAKE?

ELIZABETH (UK) and NATHAN (Uttarakhand) led a discussion on how Clusters can increase and show their impact. Here's some of what we learned...



Our process (connect, inform, influence) should enable positive outcomes (health and wellbeing)



'Good community relationships' is the journey we are all on, but it is also the destination!



We want to be sure we're making positive change - surveys and self-assessment can help



Some Clusters have asked an external researcher to study and give feedback on their work



By sharing stories locally and through the global network, our impact can ripple a long way



Arukah is creating a database so each of us can more easily offer and receive advice and support

QUOTES

"We want to be clear where we're headed, but flexible about how we get there." ELIZABETH, UK

"Difference enriches Clusters." RICHARD, RWANDA

FURTHER LEARNING

View ELIZABETH's Powerpoint presentation: bit.ly/2HNU7KY

Visit arukahnetwork.org/blog for stories and inspiration from Cluster members and others

LISTENING SKILLS WORKSHOP

ELIZABETH (UK) chaired a discussion with TARA (Mediation Expert, USA). RUTH (Friendship Bench Creator, Zimbabwe) and JEET (Uttarakhand) to explore how the simple act of listening can help transform relationships in our communities.



Listening is about more than just hearing words: it's about noticing people's non-verbal messages too, like body language



Don't try to fix others' problems. Different people need different solutions, and it's useful to work it out themselves



You don't have to agree with the person you're listening to. But if you're getting upset, it's okay to take a break



You can improve your attention span when listening by using your imagination – try to visualise what the person is telling you

ACTIVE LISTENING PRINCIPLES

- ★ Stay focused on the other person
- ★ Assure them that what they share is confidential
- ★ Don't give advice or make suggestions
- ★ Create a safe environment
- ★ Try to be non-judgmental
- ★ Keep eye contact

QUOTES

"Communication starts at the foundations of 'I feel safe with you'."

"Listening can be learned, and should be taught more." RUTH

FURTHER LEARNING

Listen to in-depth interviews with both TARA and RUTH at www.soundcloud.com/user-471889218

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH ENTERPRISE

PATRICIA (Kericho) talked about her work training female entrepreneurs, followed by ASHA (North East India), JOSEPH (Uttarakhand) and HORMIS (Rwanda) sharing stories on how their livelihood projects and training are empowering women in their communities.



3 KEYS TO GREATER EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

- 1 More access to health, education and resources
- 2 More participation in the labour force
- 3 The removal of structural barriers e.g. the right to own land and access credit



Network members have addressed this through women's entrepreneurship training.



This training helps women to be financially literate, build business plans and access markets.



Projects where profits are put back into the business are more likely to be sustainable.



Good relationships with local government can help bring in funds and support schemes.

QUOTES

"Women are powerful change agents. Empowering women benefits whole societies."
PATRICIA, KENYA

"Women need agency as well as empowerment." TED, UK

FURTHER READING

View PATRICIA's powerpoint presentation: bit.ly/2H2MZXU

MAKING CLUSTERS AND PROJECTS SUSTAINABLE

ELIZABETH and ROBINS hosted a chat on developing the programs and skills to help our communities and Clusters prosper. This is what we discussed...



To us, 'sustainability' means 'being self-driven', 'standing on its own' and 'continuity'



To plan long-term work with a group with diverse talents, focus on unifying goals and themes



Early community conversations in Clusters should address what can be sustainable and what can't.

QUOTES

"A strong vision will attract the right people and funders."

"People carry out "needs assessments", but what about starting with a "strengths assessment"?"



We should consider our own wellbeing - if we're burnt out, our work will not be sustainable



To create sustainable change, whole communities need to be involved – not just individuals



Patience is important - quick-fix solutions will not be long-lasting.

FURTHER LEARNING

To explore the 'Business Model Canvas' tool, which can help you plan sustainably, email robins@arukahnetwork.org

Listen to a story of how to motivate others on our podcast and radio show:

www.soundcloud.com/user-471889218

UNDERSTANDING MENTAL HEALTH

KAAREN and JEET (Uttarakhand) were joined by NICK (Truste, UK) to share stories and practical tips kfrom their community work supporting people with mental health issues. Here's what we learned.



Community caregiver groups can support each other indefinitely, not relying on outsiders.



Community groups share similar experience, living conditions, and community connections.



Counselling is a talking treatment that heals. It shouldn't be seen as a negative thing.



Mental health is shaped by culture, language and community.



We can all counsel our friends, colleagues and others in our community - by listening.



To listen well, use open body language, eye contact, and minimise distractions.

Q+A EXTRACT

Q: How can I de stress?

Members named exercise, prayer, socialising, helping others, watching funny movies, and focusing on hobbies as ways they destress.

Q: What about living situations that cause continual stress - like poverty?

This is where connections with other organisations are valuable. If people working in mental health can connect with people working with livelihood-based organisations, the root causes of stress can be addressed.

LEARNING FROM FAILURE WORKSHOP

JAKE (UK), ROBINS (Kericho) and SEDEVI (North East India) led a discussion on times when our efforts have failed, and how these occasions can be a chance to learn and grow. Here's some of what we shared...



It's easier to talk about failure if we have good, trusting relationships with each other



We should celebrate our failures as a learning opportunity - one which can make us stronger



It's important to consider what success is - is it about data and reports, or building relationships?



Failing at something isn't the same as being a failure - try not to take failure personally



Creating a supportive environment where we're free to fail allows creativity to flourish



We should show solidarity with and acceptance of others who are having feelings of failure

QUOTES

"Failure has success in it."
MOSES, KERICHO

"Success is moving from one failure to another without losing the enthusiasm."
DENNYSON, BIHAR

FURTHER LEARNING

JAKE's powerpoint introduction:
bit.ly/3JK2N5K

SEDEVI'S powerpoint presentation:
bit.ly/3DLCLUM

COLLABORATION IN A CHALLENGING TIME

ELIZABETH led a conversation with special guests JUDE (Tearfund), IAN (Affirm Facilitators) and ELVIS (Chisekesi Cluster). We talked about what it really means to collaborate, and how it can help a workplace or community face challenges. Here's some highlights...



It's important to nurture formal and informal relationships in a workplace or community



You can create a collaborative environment by prioritising communication and building trust



If collaboration is already embedded in an organisation, it's easier to respond to a crisis



Sharing a vision doesn't mean never disagreeing – rather it's about openness and forgiveness



Secular and faith-based organisations need to work together



Action-oriented people might want to work alone, but it's less effective in the long term

QUOTES

“Believe in people’s capacity – they will respond.” IAN, UK

“Whoever you meet, whatever community you walk into, there are a lot of beautiful lessons to learn.” ELVIS, CHISEKESI

FURTHER LEARNING

To receive the free Tearfund Footsteps magazine, visit: www.learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/

FAITH AND RESILIENCE IN COMMUNITY WORK

TED led a group discussion on how our faith can provide a special presence in our lives and our communities, especially as we face challenges like COVID-19 or climate change. Here is what we discussed...



Many of us are tired of the pandemic. Though our faith doesn't solve all our current problems, it does offer us the hope and courage to persevere.



It can be helpful to reflect on times in the past when God led you through hard times



We can be role models in our families and in our communities when times are hard.

BIBLE VERSES

Phillipians 4: 7. "The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Habakkuk 3: 17-19



'Being' with God is more important than always 'doing' things. We are human beings, not human doings!

JOY

Through faith it's possible to experience joy even in hard times



Faith can guard our hearts against the temptation to be selfish and only look after ourselves.

QUOTES

"I have nowhere else to go except towards Jesus. Nobody else gives hope in spite of our difficulties."
DENNYSON, BIHAR

"You can't go wrong in trusting Jesus - so keep doing it!"
TED, UK

FEEDBACK

AFTER THE FORUM, MEMBERS WERE ASKED TO SAY HOW MUCH THEY AGREED WITH THESE STATEMENTS....

"The forum has helped me BUILD RELATIONSHIPS which can support me as I serve my community."

70%
strongly agreed

30%
agreed

0%
disagreed

"Through the stories, experiences and INFORMATION shared at the forum, I feel better equipped to serve my community"

63%
strongly agreed

37%
agreed

0%
disagreed

"As a result of attending the forum, I feel like I can have MORE IMPACT in my community work"

61%
strongly agreed

39%
agreed

0%
disagreed

HERE'S SOME OTHER THINGS MEMBERS SAID
ABOUT THE FORUM...



The learning through failure session opened my eyes ... I have come to know that we learn through mistakes so I don't have to give up.



I feel blessed to find myself in this global organisation... I learnt a lot from the experiences of others. Together we can.



The forum showed me that we can continue to struggle to ensure the Cluster is sustainable and serves the community... [in future we could have] online courses and certificates.



It would have been better if we had activities to practice so that we would learn more and never forget.



I enjoyed the fellowship of like-minded people, with the vision to see change in the lives, transform our communities.



I enjoyed the organisational aspects, and the technical parts worked well.



More technical support would have been helpful.



I realised through the forum that community is both the means and the purpose.

Learn more at
www.arukahnetwork.org

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