



# Quick Slow Knowledge

## Knowledge Network and Community of Practice for Rapid Response Teams, 2015

**The client:** World Health Organization (WHO)

**The challenge:** This specialised UN agency must have the quickest response times and strongest practices to tackle global health issues. They deal with emergencies like the Ebola virus in some of the world's toughest countries. The client knew that a state of constant preparedness called for an agile, effective network on a global scale. It needed to have lightening-quick responses, be formed of fully invested individuals, foster a sustainable approach to learning needs and increase long-term preparedness for rapid response. The quick knowledge with the slow. Sparknow was invited to bring both subject-matter expertise, and design-and-facilitation experience to a meeting: "Building a Knowledge Network/Community of Practice in Support of Ebola Virus Disease Preparedness Activities". Following the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) Rapid Response Team (RRT) training that had taken place in early 2015, the Knowledge Network project aims to build a sustainable long-term capability to respond to emergencies. The meeting sought to form an advisory group to lay the foundations for a pilot network.

The need for a Knowledge Network had three immediate drivers:

1. The rapid prototyping delivery of the RRT training to around 200 people had been successful, and a major investment. How could that urgent investment translate to more resilient capacity?

2. A new wave of RRT training was kicking off in different regions. How could the knowledge of implementation from one region be made available to another in a more regular way?
3. A key lesson from the RRT training was the need to build social relationships and trust in interdisciplinary teams being convened at short notice, and perhaps after a long period of not being needed. How could a knowledge network increase the exchange of expertise and experience so as to build shared knowledge and resources and increase the capacity for rapid, effective interdisciplinary team action?

### The solutions:

Sparknow acted to:

- attend and report on the meeting, providing the client with a "critical friend's" perspective and offering methods for structuring and running the meeting
- support the advisory group in creating and launching a network by contributing expertise on building knowledge networks, peer-to-peer networks and communities of practice, as well as offering practical guidance on addressing specific issues, references, roles and responsibilities
- bring research depth and give access to others whose insight and knowledge could be brought to bear on the challenge
- develop an informal critical friendship with the WHO client in order to build firm foundations, practical approaches and strong relationships to help make for an energetic, focused beginning leading to a connected, purposeful group in the long term

**"My first encounter with Sparknow (Victoria) was in a training on Collaborative Meetings and Products (CMP) in WHO in 2010. The training proved to be very useful in building my confidence to conduct interactive sessions in a WHO environment. Currently, I am benefitting from their years of experience on knowledge building and nurturing communities of practice as I engage in establishing a Knowledge Network for Rapid Response Teams. What makes my partnership with Sparknow special is, just when I start to think within my box, I get pulled out of it and introduced to options I could not imagine, and then I build on and re-create them."**

Yolanda Bayugo, Technical Officer, Global Capacities Alert and Response, WHO

### Notes on approach:

Sparknow has a decade-long relationship with the WHO, working on different aspects of capacity building. We have:

- gathered and coded first-hand experiences of primary healthcare in a pilot project, working with the SenseMaker® software and an elicitation method. 2005
- co-designed and delivered two 6 month learning programmes aimed at technical and administrative officers, providing them with the resources and confidence to convene more effective meetings and projects, with a particular focus on departures from the traditional, prevalent models. These Collaborative Meetings and Products (CMP) informed Sparknow's contribution to the Knowledge Network programme five years on. 2010-2011

- been on mission. Alongside the CMP work, a Sparknow team was part of a WHO mission to Sudan applying narrative approaches to assessing the relevance and resilience of an Information and Knowledge Management Strategy for the Health Action in Crises Cluster (HACC) that WHO led. 2010
- developed technical training on Intersectoral Collaboration to support the International Health Regulation (IHR implementation). 2014

**Key words:**

Knowledge, regulation, governance, networks, strategy, culture, timelines

**Similar case studies:**

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