

Community Engagement - LCBB4002

Assessment 1

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Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
What do we know about Community Engagement?	3
Help on a global level - Community Engagement for Ukraine.....	4
Instant mobilization without planning and/or design - "Welcome to Romania!"	4
BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES.....	5
Increasing Community Engagement.....	7
SWOT.....	7
Conclusions.....	8
Reference list.....	9

INTRODUCTION

What do we know about Community Engagement?

Let's start with the beginning, "community" makes you think of people and groups of people who have a common goal, who interact and share their ideas regarding the development and stabilization of the goal. They are bound by the same principles, orientations, religions, ethnicities.

When it comes to Community Engagement, we try to overcome barriers and look for solutions to build close ties, based on respect and common activities, which through transparency, trust and equity lead to mutual benefit of members and healthy collaboration. Their pursuits are aimed at creating and preventing positive change, to improve everyday life and the lives of local communities.

"Good community engagement [...] refers to engagement processes and practices in which a wide range of people work together to achieve a shared goal guided by a commitment to a common set of values, principles and criteria. It doesn't necessarily mean that everyone in the community can or should be involved, but that we are making efforts to be as inclusive as possible and to offer everyone a chance to be engaged if they wish to be. Good community engagement can be achieved by using a wide range of tools and techniques, not by applying a simple recipe or prescription applicable to all situations. Community engagement is about understanding all the processes that are involved. These processes may have a number of stages and may last some time. They should not be seen as involving only one step, one decision, one event or one tool. Thinking about community engagement is thinking about how these processes fit together. It is about engaging the community to take action. The engagement process is part of furthering another process: decision-making for a particular purpose..." (Heather J. Aslin, Valerie A. Brown, Towards Whole of Community Engagement: A PRACTICAL TOOLKIT, 2004, pp. 3).

In the following paragraphs, I have analyzed a global problem triggered in the current year, 2022, in which I have approached a different vision and perspective on Community Engagement. We analyzed how the business environment, the community, the Government and local policies, helped by the international environment, fought together for the same goal, Help for refugees, "Together we help more". We analyzed the way in which the barriers and challenges that appeared since the beginning of the efforts were overcome and how the <<power of community engagement>> was created.

Help on a global level - Community Engagement for Ukraine

At the end of February, over 1 million Ukrainians took refuge in Romania, terrified by what was happening in their country, an armed attack on Ukraine by Russia.

What happened? At the moment of maximum tension, during a time not exactly good for "traveling" or for "moving", the Ukrainians come to Romania, and the Romanians, without putting together a strategic plan and organization, jumped to help their neighbours, offering: shelter, food, transport, medical care and most importantly, emotional support.

Instant mobilization without planning and/or design - "Welcome to Romania!"

The project had a clear goal "Help for Ukraine!". Instantly, a community was created at the national level, followed by international involvements, of great help to Ukraine.

Which were the expectations? Companies have forgotten about profit-making and have tried to help the refugee community. The business environment joins the Governmental Companies and the people willing to offer help, shelter, food to their neighbours across the border - For whom? - The good done for people.

Time was not the best friend, in fact it was the main enemy, because without a plan to come to help, without a design of what it is to be done, without a reflection on the case, instant Community Engagement had to mobilize. When? - Now!

Above Community Engagement, all mobilization for Ukraine represented the definition of "CIVIC and Community Engagement". Costs no longer mattered, there was no budget. How much? - As much as anyone is willing to offer!

How can we help? Standard methods were used, important in emergency situations. (National Standards for Community Engagement, 2020)

Communication was based on technological methods, social networks and television, through which people were mobilized, so that:

- they created fundraising campaigns;
- the Romanian state announced social and economic measures to support refugees;
- they increased the community.
- they distributed eloquent and transparent information taking the steps that should be followed;

The Impact was seen in less than a few weeks, the results began to appear, many of the refugees began to make friends, to show a much better state of mind, to find their place in the temporary houses, to stop being afraid and to gain confidence in the help offered.

The improvements of the procedures were NOT late in appearing. The humanitarian HUB in Suceava became functional, which was equipped with medicines and strictly necessary products. With the involvement of private and public companies, transport was facilitated and in a short time, the refugees were integrated into society, having permission to study and work in the host country.

Team work was the saving method that led to a good functioning of Community Engagement. Each participant knew his role and "Learn from others and seek improvement in practice" (National Standards for Community Engagement, pp. 15)

The involvement of the entire community reached maximum levels, the result being the well-being of the refugees. The right result was achieved and the feedback was positive - this coming both from the refugees and from all the states that were with the world tragedy.

Above Community Engagement, all mobilization for Ukraine represented the definition of "CIVIC and Community Engagement".

After years of peace in "civilized societies" in Europe, Russia's attack on Ukraine was a shock for European citizens. The aid that followed for Ukraine was a challenge (for individuals, Government, companies, Nonprofit Governmental Organizations, countries, unions) to establish a cross-border dialogue between the objectives of each part and the common goal, "help for Ukraine!" ".

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

This chapter follows and analyzes what were the barriers and challenges faced by all those who got involved in "CIVIC and Community Engagement", how stakeholders approached the imposed barriers, if they were overcome and how they were overcome to lead to the proposed goal.

The challenge that it was felt from the very first moment was the large number of refugees entering Romania, unexpected and surprising, so the Protection and Rescue Bodies mobilized to deal with the avalanche of people who crossed the border. The objectives of the community were divided:

1. **SHORT TERM GOALS-** "First EMERGENCY response" Medical, protective assistance, providing basic food and items of utmost necessity;

2. **LONG TERM GOALS-** "Second PROTECTION Response". Integration, adaptability, access to education and work;

In the case of the initial shock, the government bodies laid the foundation for the creation of Community Engagement.

Communication barriers were difficult to overcome. Many refugees, not knowing Romanian and/or English, found it difficult to adapt and manage in a foreign country. Measures to solve the challenge have not stopped appearing and even Ukrainian refugees have joined Community Engagement, helping other refugees to book "...tickets, accommodation and onward destinations".

Trust was gained over time and was mutual. The Romanians knew nothing about the despair of the Ukrainians, and the Ukrainians could no longer believe in help. The companies sacrificed their profit for a while and provided the underprivileged population with shelter. Restaurants provided food, private and state transport companies provided free transportation. In a short time, the Ukrainians integrated into the Romanian society, because the labour market was accessible for them and at the same time they had access to education.

The weather made the situation difficult, being an uncontrollable phenomenon that did not depend on Community Engagement. Also uncontrollable and independent of Community Engagement was the time, the short time for mobilization, not having the possibility to start a plan and a projection, not having the possibility to reflect on the situation.

Barriers such as: ethnicity, race, age, gender, Community Engagement cannot be discussed, respecting each listed category.

Everything was possible thanks to the actions of NGOs, institutions, companies, volunteers, foreign support funds, the Government and local communities, from every area of Romania that was populated by Ukrainians. The effort was 100% towards the purpose of the commitment.

Although the Internal National Defense Bodies were trained for such a situation, stakeholders and the community could not evaluate such a phenomenon, then following to create a plan, a design and a reflection on the project, to analyze in advance the challenges and to find situations to remedy and improve them, being obliged to carry out the evaluation during the Community Engagement.

After the shock caused by the avalanche of refugees, stakeholders started to communicate with each other (for example, the transport companies communicated with the people in charge with the places intended for food and shelter, in order to transport the refugees there).

Increasing Community Engagement

In support of the Ukrainians and Romania and thanks to the challenges that were difficult to face, world solidarity made its presence felt. To help refugees from Ukraine, Romania received funds from several countries (such as Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway).

At the global level, companies have taken measures against the war-triggering country, Russia. Many of the companies preferred to lose financial resources, rather than to be active in Russia and withdrew their activity, as a form of fight and disagreement, regarding the actions undertaken in Ukraine.

- Starbucks closed all its stores in Russia;
- Heineken closed the production and sale of beer in Russia
- Uber transported refugees from Romania and Poland for free;
- Pepsico, Philips, Accenture, etc. donated money to refugee support associations in Romania;
- AIRBNB offered free housing to refugees;

These are just a few examples of effective involvement and ways to combat the conflict triggered by Russia.

SWOT

The SWOT analysis is a method by which current and future situations can be classified and evaluated, following strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats, current and alive. The purpose of the analysis is to reduce the weak points and develop the strong points and to create a vision of the opportunities and the threats that have been overcome.

Analyzing the situation from the SWOT analysis point of view, we can classify as follows:

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
✓ Solidarity and quick organization of stakeholders, emergency bodies and local communities; ✓ Adaptability in emergency situations and humanitarian crisis; ✓ Developed civic sense;	✓ Language barriers; ✓ Lack of a plan and an evaluation; ✓ Limited budget; ✓ Lack of a leader to organize and establish the roles of each member;

✓ Easy and free communication on social networks; ✓ Documentary via television; ✓ Involvement of stakeholders;	
<i>Opportunities</i>	<i>Threats</i>
✓ Global financial support; ✓ World moral support;	✓ The pressure of war; ✓ Fear of the unknown; ✓ Short reaction time; ✓ Weather condition; ✓ A very large number of refugees; ✓ The extent of the situation;

(Source: Self-report, 2022)

Conclusions

Community Engagement is more than a dialogue in which organizations and communities make decisions, create and prevent changes, but it is a humanitarian action with and about people, through which organizations and public entities bring an improvement of lives, creating a global impact.

The above paragraphs deal with a world crisis situation, with a major economic and social impact, which has and will have repercussions. At the same time, it highlights the power of the CE and the effective methods of involvement that had an important role in the reintegration into society of some groups of disadvantaged individuals, due to a political problem.

Stakeholders got involved and found new ways to effectively get involved in the cause. Different activities were rethought and organized, to come to the aid of the cause and to combat the challenges and barriers imposed. The transport of medicines, theaters transformed into shelters for refugees, free transport provided to refugees, food offered by restaurants and the involvement of refugees in support of their own community are just a few ways of effectively engaging in the community.

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