

Vitamin Angels Case Study

Background and Justification

[Vitamin Angels](#) is a US based non-profit which helps at-risk populations - specifically pregnant women, new mothers, and children under five - gain access to vitamins and minerals. Vitamin Angels offers vitamin A supplements, deworming tablets, and multiple micronutrients to non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or field partners, that distribute the products to vulnerable populations. Vitamin Angels reaches those it seeks to help through more than 1,000 local field partners (or locally based international NGOs) in 66 countries. It understands that the health opportunities it brings to millions of people depend importantly on the quality of its relationships with these partners. For that reason it commissioned a [Keystone Performance Survey](#).

“We have a growing number of field partners and these are our primary constituents. While we thought they were happy, we wanted to validate this.” - Jamie Frederick, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Vitamin Angels

Approach

Vitamin Angels used Keystone Accountability’s standard performance survey to benefit from benchmarking against similar organizations and added in a few custom questions to explore areas of particular interest. These included the added value of networking with other field partners, collaborating with governments and better understanding the impact of their training program. The survey and follow up actions are based on Keystone’s Constituent Voice™ method.

Surveys in English, French, Spanish, Bahasa Indonesia, Haitian Kreyol, and Tagalog were sent to more than 1,000 partners.

In total, 506 partners from 46 countries responded to questions in four categories including: the value of capacity building, administration – what it is like to work with Vitamin Angels, relationships with Vitamin Angels and their staff, and Vitamin Angels’ approach to understanding and learning. The questions included things like ‘Based on your experience of working with Vitamin Angels, would you recommend partnering with them to a colleague or another organization?’



Keystone's Constituent Voice Cycle

Results

“We were happy with the results, but not surprised. It confirmed what we were feeling. We were pleased that although we are a small organization with only 40 staff we were ranked 8th out of more than 80 INGOs.” – Jamie Frederick, Vitamin Angels

To the question ‘would you recommend partnering with Vitamin Angels?’, field partners responded with a net promoter score of 75, which is 50 points (on a 200 points scale) above the benchmark mean average of 20.

As a result of the constructive feedback received, Vitamin Angels is in the process of making some changes to their programming. These include facilitating more in-person meetings between field partners, exploring the creation of a field partner network, and improving communication with field partners.

Dialogue Sessions (in-person meetings)

Following the CV cycle, Vitamin Angels brought its survey results to its partners through in-person dialogue sessions in their eight priority countries; India, Indonesia, the Philippines, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, Uganda, Haiti and Mexico. This provided an opportunity to share the survey results with their partners and to learn more about the feedback they received, including how to improve moving forward. Where possible these events were tied in with other program activities.



Vitamin Angels' partners meeting in the Philippines

Vitamin Angels held their first in-person meeting for their field partners in the Philippines. It was very well attended with the majority of their partners present. As a part of the meeting, they presented the global results of the survey and the Philippines specific results. Through this face-to-face discussion Vitamin Angels staff learnt more about their partners' needs.

“I’ve become more conscious of the key areas that the field partner respondents cited as needing improvement. Having the results of the survey and getting them affirmed during the networking meeting helped identify areas that we need to focus on in terms of program management and strengthening relationships with our field partners.” – Dr. Luz Escubil, Country Program Advisor in the Philippines, Vitamin Angels

Creating a network

In the survey, field partners stressed their desire for increased opportunities for networking with other field partners. At the in-person meeting in the Philippines, each partner brought

a poster representing their organization. There was an opportunity to showcase these and learn about each other's work.

"The event was a way to bring different organizations together to share experiences and bridge partnerships across our field partners" – Jamie Frederick, Vitamin Angels

During the meetings, Vitamin Angels also asked partners to write down the support they would like to receive and support they were able to offer each other, such as support with training, fundraising or grant management.

Improved Communication

Meetings organized around the survey findings created the context for a different and richer communication between Vitamin Angels and partners. For example, Vitamin Angels had assumed that partners were aware of their training programs because they had previously offered training opportunities to them. However, the meeting was an opportunity for staff to provide more information about Vitamin Angels' new e-learning course on how to give vitamin A and deworming. When partners who had already taken the course started to discuss it, this encouraged other partners to take the course.

"This event was a way of expanding the scope of what we can offer to field partners. It was also good to hear their needs and we will be redirecting our organization to addressing those."
– Jamie Frederick, Vitamin Angels



Vitamin Angels' partners meeting in DRC

The face-to-face meetings, such as one in the Democratic Republic of Congo also gave Vitamin Angels' advisors an opportunity to explain why they are not able to satisfy all their partners requests. This process creates a new way of managing the expectations and needs between the two partners. When VA is clear about what it cannot do, a CV dialogue session may create the space where VA and partners can co-create another way to meet the expressed need.

Vitamin Angels has not concluded all its country partner feedback dialogues, and when it has the data will be gathered, analysed, and then used as the basis for strategic decision making. Meetings should be held in Indonesia, India, Uganda, Mexico and Haiti in 2018. In addition, Vitamin Angels will be tracking a few key indicators over time as a measure of the organization's performance – in particular questions relating to capacity building support, monitoring and reporting, and those related to the network. Vitamin Angels is tracking not only indicators where they feel there is room for improvement but also those where they scored highly. These indicators will provide a way to monitor partners' perceptions on changes in Vitamin Angels' model and will be used as the basis for future discussions with partners as the feedback cycle continues.

Further Opportunities for Feedback

Vitamin Angels will conduct micro surveys throughout 2018 and hopes to conduct the Keystone Performance Survey again in 2019.

“I’m interested in doing more monitoring because it gives me a chance to interact more with our field partners and to see their situation on the ground. I find that it is also an opportunity for them to ask their questions and air their concerns.” – Dr Luz Escubil, VA’s Country Program Advisor in the Philippines

This whole process did not require a significant outlay in terms of finances but does require considerable buy-in and time investment from Vitamin Angels’ staff. Vitamin Angels has found that the effort is justified for the benefits achieved.

“Partnerships are at the core of our work at Vitamin Angels. Before the Keystone survey, we believed that we were already good partners. Now we have hard data on how our partners see us, and an evidence-based way on how we can work with them to improve performance. It is great to have this data to help inform us as we move forward in our relationships.” – Jamie Frederick, Vitamin Angels

Further Reading

Vitamin Angels’ full survey report

https://www.vitaminangels.org/assets/content/uploads/Final_VA_CV_Report_%2802.June_.17%29_.pdf

Vitamin Angels’ executive summary of the survey report

https://www.vitaminangels.org/assets/content/uploads/VA_CV_Executive_Summary_FINAL.PDF

More information about Keystone Performance Survey

<http://keystoneaccountability.org/international-non-governmental-organization-survey/>