Meeting Urgent Needs With Chatbots
Speakers

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Before we get started

- Please say hello, share your organization, tell us where you’re joining from in the chat box
- Post your questions in the chat window
- Participate in the polls
In this session...

1. What chatbots are good for and what to consider before getting started
2. Examples of chatbots in the international development sector
   - COVID-19 chatbot
3. How to build a chatbot using a no-code tool developed by Microsoft: Power Virtual Agents
Poll: Have you interacted with chatbots before?
Poll:
Have you / your organization built a chatbot?
Why?

• Reach more people (e.g. refugees, youth) with services and information they need (e.g. education, legal information).
• Provide 24x7 coverage and reduce the time it takes to get answers to people in need.
• Respond to repetitive information requests, free up staff time to focus on other priorities.
• Provide equal support to all people in need (e.g. youth in remote areas, girls).
• Deliver high-quality, accurate information.
• Support rapid learning about end-user needs and information gaps.
• Support training needs of NGO staff.
• Determine whether / why you need a chatbot. Start with the problem and end-user benefits.
• Design the bot in a responsible way – inclusive, transparent, responsive, sustainable.
• Learn from other practical implementation, reuse whenever possible.
• Decide what bot framework to use based on the scope and resources.
• Start small (content, features, # of users) and iterate before scaling.
• Develop a data plan – collection, policies (e.g. local privacy laws), security, maintenance.
• Define chatbot persona early on to ensure relevance.
• Measure performance of your chatbot and iterate based on the end-user feedback.
• Embed your chatbot in the existing programming to ensure reach and sustainability (e.g. education / livelihoods programs, outreach to end-users).
• Ensure infrastructure is there for your bot to be useful (e.g. connectivity, devices).
• Define the transition plan from pilot to scaling and maintaining, especially if the pilot was developed with / by a partner.
• Develop a maintenance plan (to refresh content, fix technical issues, add new features) and secure resources (skilled people, hosting platform)
Examples of Chatbots

• TESSA [Plan International]: Helps marginalized youth in the Philippines articulate their skills, create a full competency profile, and find work and training opportunities where they live.
• Digital Care Assistant [SOS Children’s Villages]: Supports SOS care staff around the world by answering their questions about pedagogical topics.
• Hakeem [NRC]: Connects conflict-affected youth with online learnings resources.
• Mr. Finance [USAID-funded]: Provides financial management guidance to users in Burma.
• Karim [X2Ai]: Acts as a mental health counselor for refugees.
• Miss Migration [IOM, iRex]: Provides migrants in Myanmar/Nepal with accurate information about the migrant rights and processes.
• LucyBot [Paradigm Youth Network Organization]: Provides young women and men with information about sexual/reproductive rights.
• Farm.ink: Connects farmers to information and each other.
• MomConnect [Praekelt Foundation]: Provides pregnant women and new mothers with a text-based help desk to receive tips & guidance throughout their pregnancy.
• RapidPro Surveyor [UNICEF]: Enables offline, text-based, and multimedia data collection in the field.
• Tarjimly: Provides refugees and humanitarian staff with instant access to live translators.
• Saathi: MyGov India built a chatbot to offload the surge in requests the Government is getting related to COVID-19

Poll:
What would you want a chatbot to do for your audience?
Case study

COVID-19 Response Initiative

- Organizations struggle to keep up with increased demand for critical services
- Existing infrastructure often strain resources, provide limited access, and lack contextual assistance
- Chatbots offer immediate scale, 24/7 access, contextual awareness, fresh data
- Working with partners around the world on better reach, better informed audience
- COVID-19 knowledge bot:
  - Chatbot to address an urgent need, access to expert resources, live data
  - Guidelines for how to quickly build an engaging conversational experience from scratch
  - No-code chatbot authoring
Poll:
What are the barriers that might prevent you from building a chatbot?
Demo

Learn how to build a virtual agent in minutes

https://powervirtualagents.microsoft.com/
Step 1: Go to: https://powervirtualagents.microsoft.com/ and sign up with your org email

Step 2: Create a new environment (to store and manage your data)
- Go to Power Platform https://admin.powerplatform.com
- Environments > New
- Name your environment (something unique)
- Type=Trial, Region=US or Europe, Create database=Yes
- Save
- Receive email notification when environment is ready

Step 3: Create new bot in https://powerva.microsoft.com
- Name your bot
- Select your newly created environment
- Create

Step 4: Create bot content: new topic

Step 5: Test the bot

Step 6: Publish and share your new bot with your network!
Resources

- Practical insights on chatbots and how to get started blog post
- Power Virtual Agents
- AI Primer webinar
- Demos of AI/ML Tools and Services by AWS, Google, Microsoft and Salesforce.org webinar
- Guidelines for creating a crisis response chatbot blog post
- Reflecting the Past, Shaping the Future: Making AI Work for International Development report
THANK YOU.

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