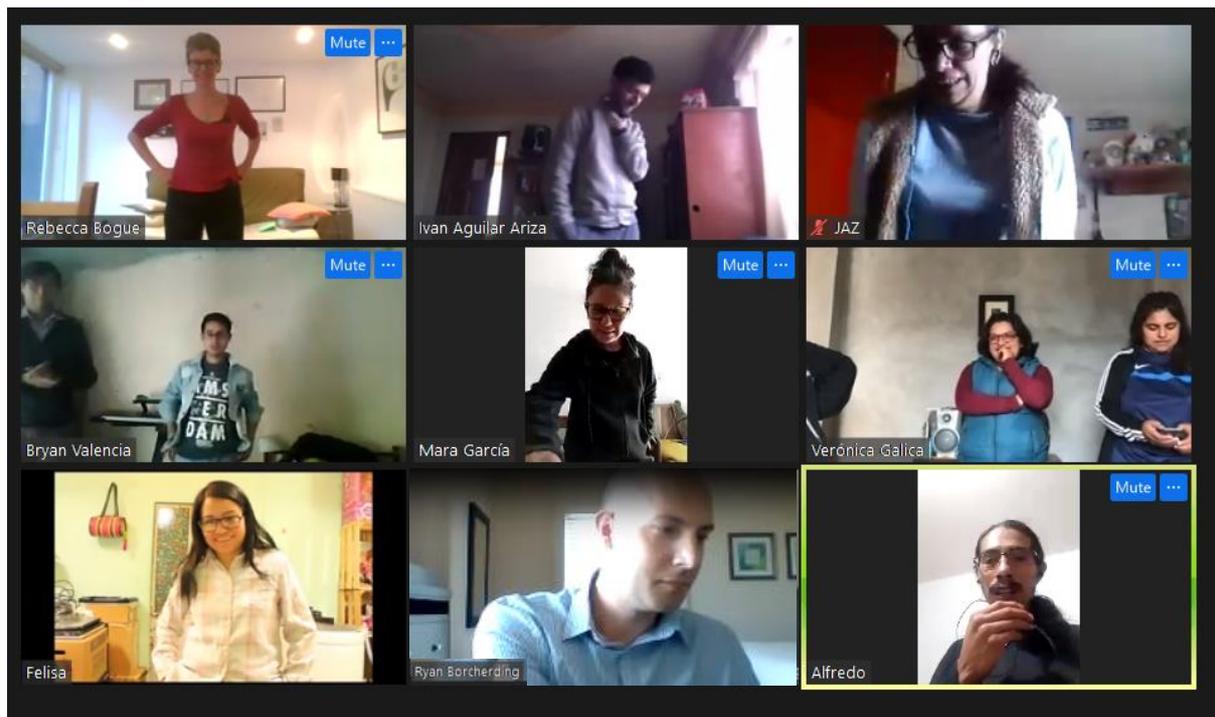


THEATRE
FOR A **CHANGE**



Interactive Radio Drama Training Summary Report for UNICEF México, AMARC México and La Voladora Radio from Theatre for a Change

November 2020



TfaC trainers with the Core Radio Team.

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Introduction

In May 2020, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in México and Theatre for a Change (TfaC) began partnership discussions involving the use of TfaC’s Interactive Radio Drama (IRD) methodology to support UNICEF’s work supporting children affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in México.

These conversations developed into a partnership project involving UNICEF, TfaC, the Asociación Mundial de Radios Comunitarias (AMARC) – a network of community radio stations across México - and La Voladora Radio 97.3 FM, a community radio station in Amecameca, which was chosen to produce and present the programmes on live radio.

In October-November 2020, TfaC trainer Rebecca Bogue, with support from TfaC’s New Partnerships Programme Manager Ryan Borcharding, delivered online training to ten participants who formed the project’s Core Radio Team. The aim of the training was to equip the team with the knowledge, skills and confidence to produce an IRD series that advocated for the health, education and safety needs of children affected by COVID-19 in México.

The Training

The training was delivered through a series of seven half-day workshops via Zoom from 7th October to 6th November 2020. The training involved a combination of La Voladora radio station staff and community volunteers.

The training guided the group through the process of producing the first episode in a 12-episode series of Interactive Radio Drama. Below is a short summary of the curriculum that was delivered:

- Workshop 1 – Critical Moments – 7th October 2020
 - This workshop developed team work and trust in the group, and introduced the concepts of Critical Moments and Interactive Touch Tag.
- Workshop 2 – Devising our Story – 9th October 2020
 - This workshop guided the group through the process of devising stories based on real stories from the field related to the thematic areas of the project. The group learned the devising skills of sculpting and improvisation using the devising questions of who, what, when, where and why.



- Workshop 3 – Developing our Characters – 14th October 2020
 - This workshop guided the group through the process of developing characters using activities including hot seating, power/status and character objectives.
- Workshop 4 – Finalising our Story – 16th October 2020
 - This workshop focused on finalising the story and characters in the first episode through rehearsing, and giving and receiving performance tips and constructive feedback, with a particular focus on performing drama on radio.
- Workshop 5 – Facilitating Touch Tag – 21st October 2020
 - In this workshop, the group learned how to facilitate Interactive Touch Tag on radio, which enables the audience to change the main character’s behaviour in the story.
- Workshop 6 – Developing Broadcasting Scripts – 4th November 2020
 - In this workshop, the group learned how to develop content for the remaining segments of an Interactive Radio Drama programme using a provided script template and a broadcast series planning tool.
- Workshop 7 – Mock Broadcast – 6th November 2020
 - This final workshop saw the group practice delivering their first broadcast for an invited audience of radio producers and staff from AMARC’s network of partner radio stations.

The Core Radio Team

- The Core Radio Team was made up of six women and four men between the ages of 25 and 45. All were affiliated with La Voladora Radio as either staff or volunteers.
- A wide range of radio experience was represented by the group. About a third of the group had two to three years of radio experience, another third had around ten years of experience, and the final third had 12 to 20 years of experience. Most had beginning levels of recording and editing experience, but two members of the group had advanced skill sets in these areas.
- At the start of the training, the group expressed interest in developing a wide range of skills in areas including radio production, story development, and producing radio drama specifically for child and adolescent audiences. TfaC incorporated these areas into the design and delivery of the training curriculum.



- The group cited time, weak radio signals, and lack of recording and editing skills and experience as possible barriers to implementing the training on radio. TfaC addressed these potential barriers to implementation during the training – e.g. by developing realistic production schedules, planning weekly transmission in conjunction with AMARC network radio partners, and positioning those group members with advanced recording and editing skills to take the lead on these aspects of project delivery.

Key Successes

- There was **excellent planning, coordination and communication** between UNICEF, TfaC, AMARC and La Voladora in the project inception and training delivery phases.
- There was **excellent attendance, participation, energy and commitment** from the group throughout the training period. The group's commitment was also shown through the long hours they put in between the sessions.
- The **audience response to the mock broadcast was overwhelmingly positive**, with several audience members commenting how much they enjoyed the programme, and how engaging this format will be with audiences on radio.
- TfaC **delivered the full curriculum on time**, and the **overall training aim was achieved**.
- There was **demonstrable development of knowledge, skills and confidence** in the group in the key areas of devising, rehearsing, scriptwriting, presenting and facilitating Interactive Radio Drama. See Feedback, below.
- The **delivery of the training via Zoom was, for the most part, very smooth** - the group seemed to be able to use Zoom without any significant problems, and even the mock broadcast went smoothly when we had over 25 guests participating simultaneously in the call.
- **Clear and robust production and project delivery plans have now been developed** to ensure successful implementation of the training over the next few months.
- The group indicated **high levels of satisfaction** with what they learned in the training, and indicated that **they feel well-prepared** to implement this training on radio.

Key Challenges

- A pre-training risk assessment indicated that the group could safely meet at La Voladora for the training as long as they practiced handwashing, physical distancing and the wearing of masks. However, in reality, **these practices proved difficult to manage**. One participant informed the group after the first session that they thought they had been exposed to COVID-19 by someone they lived with, and this resulted in the group feeling insecure about continuing to meet physically for the training. The space was also not big enough for the group to practice physical distancing, so the decision was made after the first workshop to hold the remaining workshops remotely via Zoom. This solution seemed to work well and enabled the rest of the training to be delivered without exposing the group to further risk.
- The internal story synopsis review process **caused some disruptions to the training schedule**, as we wanted to wait for this process to finish before proceeding with the rest of the training; however, once it became clear that this process might take several days, the decision was made to proceed with the rest of the training despite the first episode not being recorded and edited. This was not a major challenge but did result in a few workshops having to be rescheduled.
- **The group's ownership over the story was felt to be somewhat reduced as a result** of the internal approval process, and subsequent changes to the synopsis that were made without the group's involvement. This will be an important factor to consider moving forwards – i.e. how to maintain the group's high level of involvement and ownership over creative decisions during this process for future episodes, so that they still feel that the story they end up telling is theirs to tell. This will likely have a direct impact on the quality of the work they end up producing, as well as the quality of interaction during Touch Tag, as a result of the group knowing their story and characters well.

Feedback from Participants

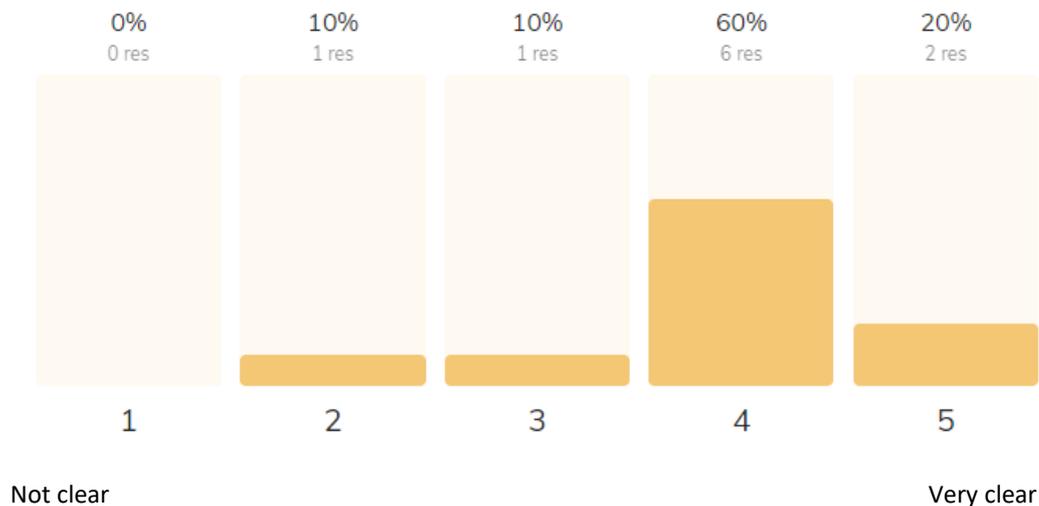
The group completed a training feedback survey on the last day of the training. Feedback is mostly very positive, with a summary of feedback for each question as follows.

1. Did this training meet your overall expectations?



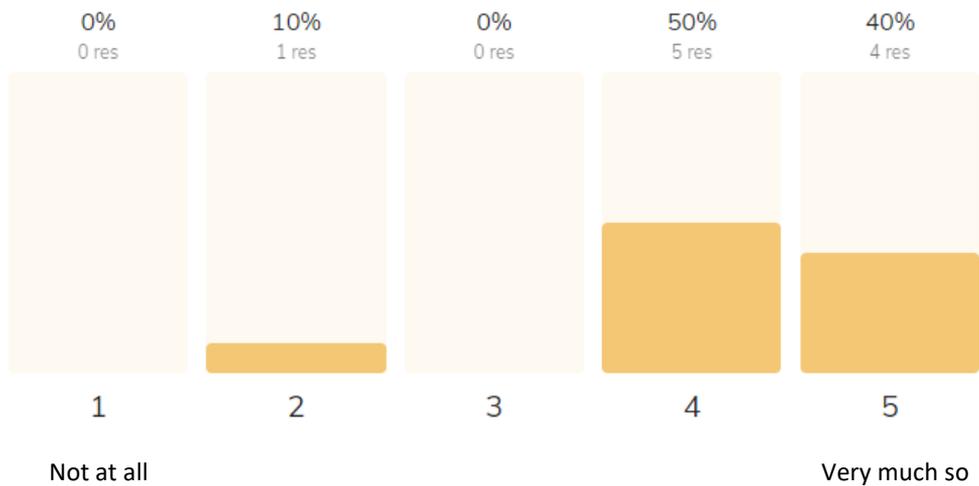
9 out of 10 participants answered 'yes', that the training had met their overall expectations. The 1 participant who answered 'no' cited language barriers between the group and the trainer as the reason why the training did not meet their expectations.

2. In your opinion, were the objectives of this training clear?



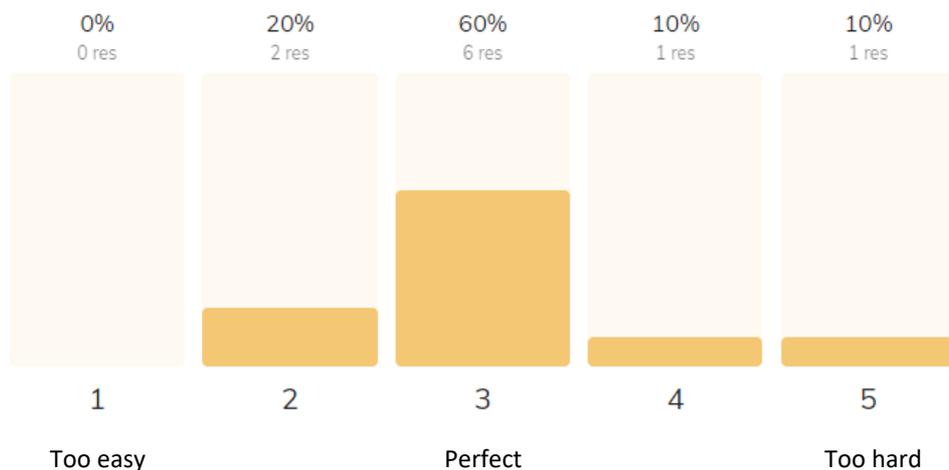
The majority of participants (8 out of 10) felt that the objectives of the training were clear or very clear.

3. In your opinion, did the structure and sequence of the workshops make sense?



The majority of participants (9 out of 10) felt that the structure and sequence of the workshops made sense.

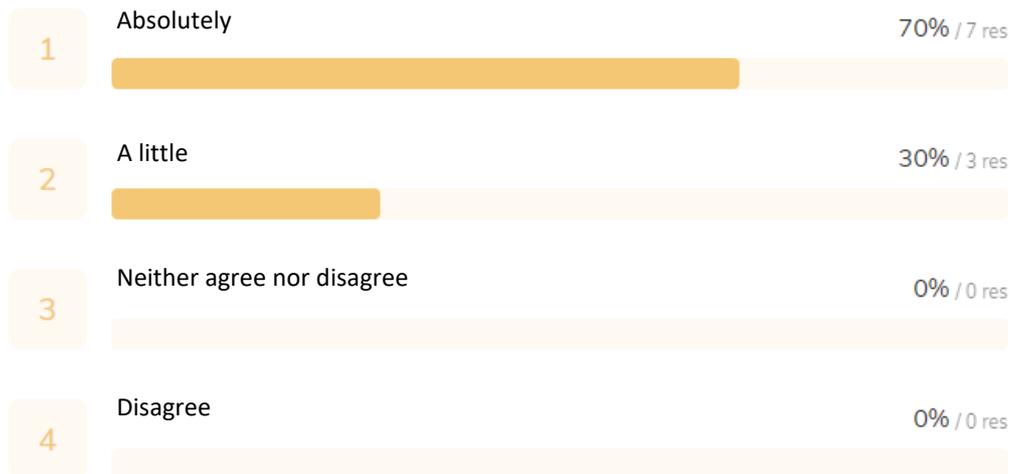
4. In your opinion, the level of the training was...



6 out of 10 participants felt that the training level was just right – neither too easy nor too hard. 2 participants thought it was slightly on the easier side. 1 participant thought it was slightly on the harder side, and 1 participant thought the training was too hard.

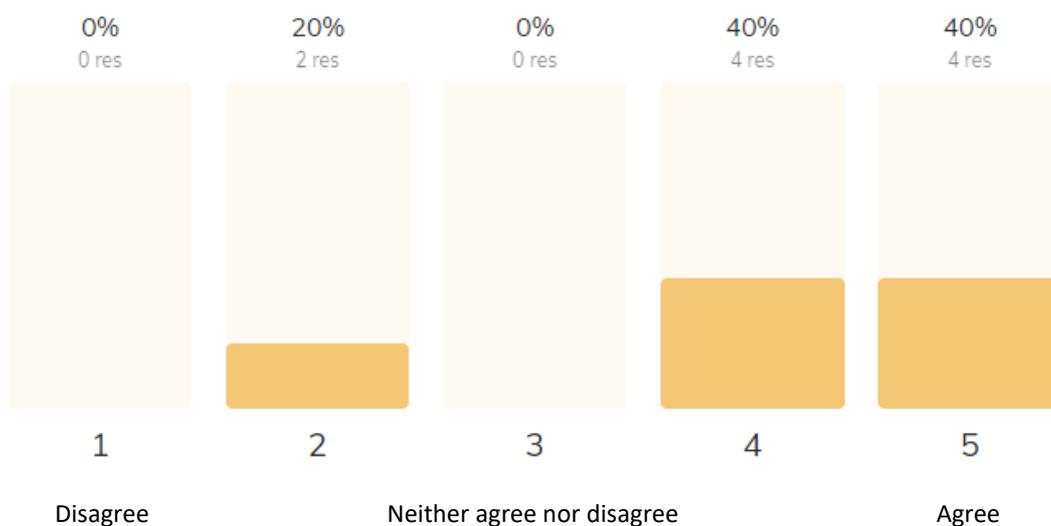


5. *“I learned new knowledge and skills in this training.” Do you agree with this statement?*



Most participants (7 out of 10) agreed wholeheartedly that they had learned new knowledge and skills in the training. 3 participants indicated that they agreed “a little” with this statement - likely because they already had significant levels of previous radio experience.

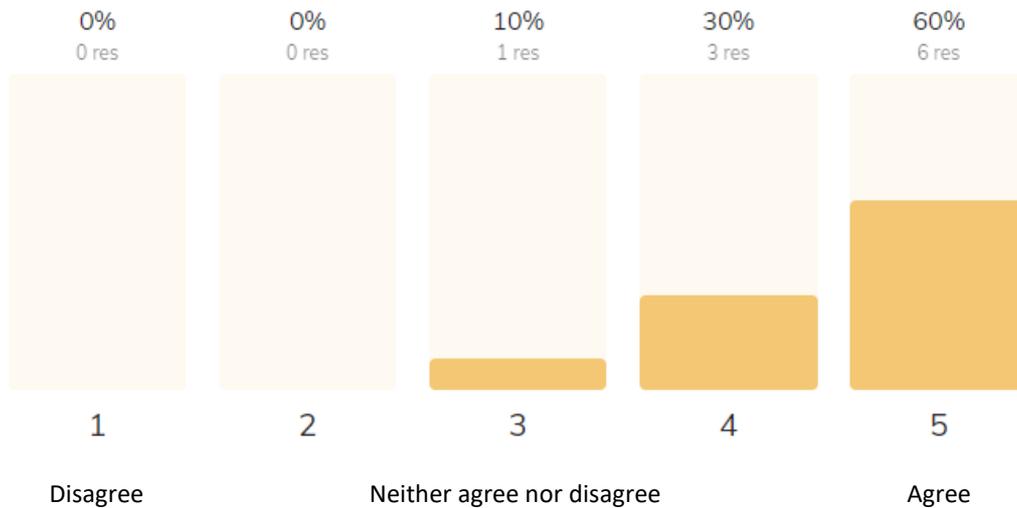
6. *“The workshops were clear and easy to follow.” Do you agree with this statement?*



8 out of 10 participants felt that the workshops were clear and easy to follow.

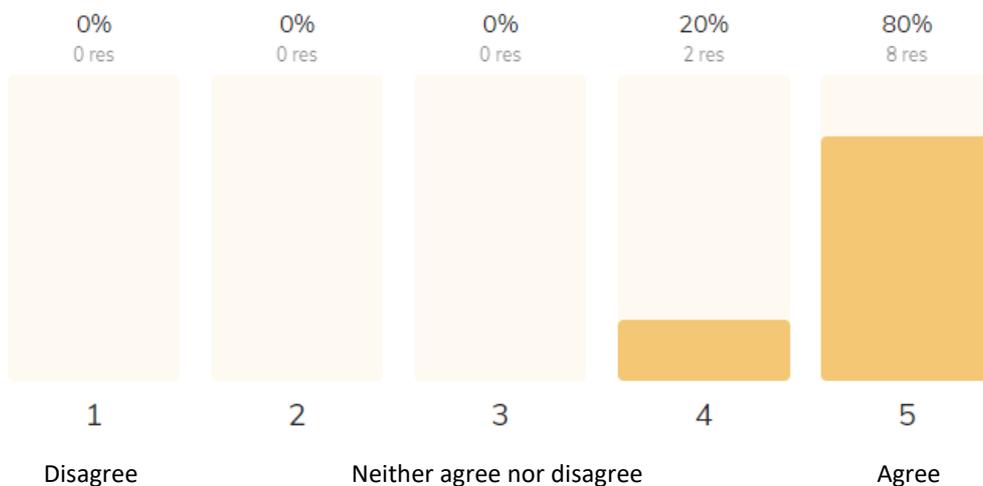


7. *“I was encouraged to participate actively in the workshops.” Do you agree with this statement?*



The majority of participants (9 out of 10) agreed that their participation was actively encouraged in the workshops.

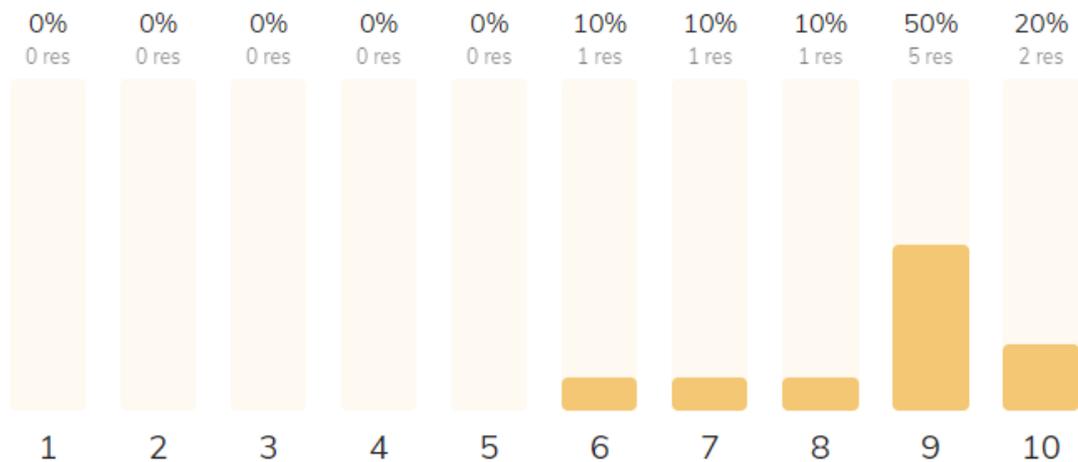
8. *“The instructor was enthusiastic and supportive.” Do you agree with this statement?*



All participants (10 out of 10) agreed or strongly agreed that the instructor was enthusiastic and supportive.



12. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate this training overall?



The majority of participants (7 out of 10) scored the training a 9 or 10, signaling a high level of overall satisfaction. 1 participant rated the training an 8, 1 participant rated the training a 7, and 1 participant rated the training a 6. No one rated the training 5 or below.

Insights into how the training could be improved can be found in the participants' responses to the next question.

13. If you could change one thing about this training, what would it be?

The group responded to this question in the following ways:

"Sometimes the training felt rushed, and sometimes we weren't given enough time to do things that required lots of time."

"Maybe make the training a little longer."

"Reducing the language barrier between the group and the trainer, and paying more attention to the application of Interactive Radio Drama in México."

"More time between the sessions."

"The language barrier. Sometimes it was difficult for us to understand each other."

"I wouldn't change anything. Maybe the schedule."

"Giving more time in between the sessions – for example, sometimes we were asked to devise an episode in only one or two days, since the workshop was on Wednesday, we devised on Thursday and it was presented on Friday."

“The activities that were carried out could have been shared from the beginning such as vox pop and the theme song, so that we could’ve had more time to record them, in addition to the stories. It would’ve been good to have had a general overview of what was going to be done, so that we can plan ahead.”

“Less bureaucracy on the part of the people in charge of approving the story synopsis.”

“To make it clearer what TfaC and UNICEF want to achieve through Interactive Radio Drama.”

Having reviewed these comments from the team, there are a few themes emerging:

1. Timing. Many participants felt that time was a limiting factor for them. Some participants wished that they had more time in between the sessions, and that the training itself was over a longer period.
2. Language. A few participants had trouble communicating with the TfaC trainer. This is probably due to the Spanish dialect that the TfaC trainer speaks, which is different to Mexican Spanish.
3. Expectations. Perhaps a clearer explanation of the purpose of the project, and what TfaC expects from the team, could have alleviated the concerns around the objective of the UNICEF-TfaC partnership, and the expected deliverables of the team throughout the training period.

14. Finally, how has this training affected you personally and professionally?

Participants responded to this question in the following ways:

“It generated new knowledge about Interactive Radio Drama in a dynamic way that I had not explored or used before.”

“This training has really helped me grow as an artist and increased my organisational capacity.”

“It helped me to develop skills and gain knowledge to apply in my personal life.”

“This training was an opportunity for professional growth and the development of new skills. Personally, it has helped me to be more emphatic with other people.”

“It has been a GREAT opportunity to learn from another perspective and to reaffirm methods that I already knew.”

“It allowed me to learn new elements about radio.”

“The training was good. I have managed to connect with other skills.”

“It’s been a great advance professionally.”

Recommendations and Next Steps

Theatre for a Change would recommend the following:

1. **Prioritize the health and safety of the Core Radio Team** throughout the project period, ensuring they have the knowledge and resources they need to deliver the project safely.
2. **Create a WhatsApp group** with the Core Radio Team to serve as a professional development tool, where they can coordinate workshops and continually collaborate, share and reflect on best practises and learning throughout the broadcasting period.
3. **Ensure close communication between UNICEF and the Core Radio Team regarding key indicators and intended behaviour changes** in episodes for the remainder of the series. Ideally this process could be balanced alongside giving the Core Radio Team as much creative license as possible to devise, perform and produce the remaining storylines based on their own experiences of these issues, as well as stories gathered from the field.
4. Find ways to **address both individual and systemic barriers** to achieving project goals.
5. **Design and roll-out a dynamic multimedia advertising and comms strategy** for the broadcasts and the project as a whole, in order to generate wide programmatic listenership and engagement with audiences and stakeholders across México.
6. **Coordinate the broadcasts with AMARC's network of partner radio stations** to maximise the project's impact and reach on listening audiences. This includes encouraging partner radio stations to produce their own pre- and post-listening programmes to enable local communities to engage with the content and learning from the Interactive Radio Drama broadcasts, and to have their voices and experiences heard.
7. **Involve government officials, health professionals and other key stakeholders as much as possible** in the programmes – e.g. by inviting them to the studio or as callers on programmes or during Touch Tag - to increase the project's advocacy and public health impact, and shore up support for a possible scaling up of the project over time.
8. **Coordinate the design and timing of broadcasts with service providers**, to ensure that enough supply of services is ready to meet the increased demand created by the radio programmes. Along these same lines, TfaC would also strongly encourage following up with health and human service agencies and organisations to ensure that reported cases of child abuse, sexual and gender-based violence are being appropriately responded to.
9. **Document the qualitative and quantitative impact of the project** on the Core Radio Team, target audiences, programme guests and other key stakeholders. This could include conducting telephone surveys, audience polls and semi-structured interviews, as well as documenting spikes in calls to child protection hotlines and emotional support hotlines immediately following broadcasts.

Conclusion

It was a real pleasure working with the Core Radio Team, UNICEF and partners on this training. The fact that the training was a success, despite the extraordinary circumstances under which it was delivered, is testament to the group's talent and commitment to use this approach for the protection and well-being of children in México in a time of overwhelming need.

It is clear that the group responded very positively to the training in terms of how quickly they developed their knowledge, skills and confidence in the devising, performing, producing, presenting and facilitating of Interactive Radio Drama. These skill sets were on full display during the mock broadcast with a live audience, where the group clearly demonstrated that they are ready to begin the task of broadcasting the live programmes to a national audience.

The group also worked very well together - they have a natural instinct for collaboration and equal participation, and these traits will serve them well as the project progresses.

As the production cycle continues and pressure increases to produce radio content on time, it will become increasingly important for the group not to skip over activities in the process of devising and rehearsing that can help them deepen the quality of the stories and characters they develop. Enabling different participants to lead on the areas of the work they are most interested and skilled in, while at the same time maintaining a sense of collective ownership over the content they produce, will be a delicate but certainly manageable task.

We are already proud of what this group has achieved, and very much look forward to following them on this exciting journey, and supporting them however we can.

We also look forward to discussing the scale up of this training and partnership to other countries of UNICEF operation, given the urgency of the pandemic, and that we now have proof of concept that this training can be delivered remotely.

