

# RAISING FUNDS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA TO SUBSIDISE CERVICAL CANCER SCREENING WITH HPV TESTING IN RURAL GHANA – THE BATTOR EXPERIENCE

Patrick Kafui Akakpo<sup>1\*</sup>, Joseph Emmanuel Amuah<sup>2</sup>, Priscilla Dunyo<sup>3</sup>, Gladys Akwada<sup>3</sup>, Yusra Kalmoni<sup>4</sup>, Comfort Mawusi Wormenor<sup>3</sup>, Saviour Tetteh<sup>3</sup>, Kofi Effah<sup>3</sup>,

1. Department of Pathology, School of Medical Sciences, University of Cape Coast Teaching Hospital, Cape Coast, Ghana 2. School of Epidemiology, Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa, Ottawa, Canada 3. Catholic Hospital, Battor, Ghana 4. 37 Military Hospital, Accra, Ghana.

## Objectives

Over 260,000 women die yearly from cervical cancer mostly in low and middle income countries due to inadequate cervical cancer screening services. Visual Inspection with Acetic acid and molecular testing for high risk HPV are recognised as acceptable screening methods by the WHO. A limiting factor for HPV testing, however, is the cost in setting up and running the tests. After consultations, the initial cost of setting up a care HPV based screening in Catholic Hospital Battor, in rural Ghana, was \$13,500. Our objective was to reduce the cost of cervical cancer screening to rural folk by absorbing the initial cost of setting up.

## Methods

From January 24 to June 6, 2016, the team in Battor undertook fundraising through social media (WhatsApp®). The fundraising administrator sent messages to friends, family, former school mates and professional colleagues. Once committed, the individuals added their name and amount and sent the message to the administrator. Majority pledged openly while some pledged anonymously. Anonymous donors were given a unique number to allow tracking. Duplications were cleaned and individuals assigned unique numbers. Individuals contributed mainly through mobile money transfer.

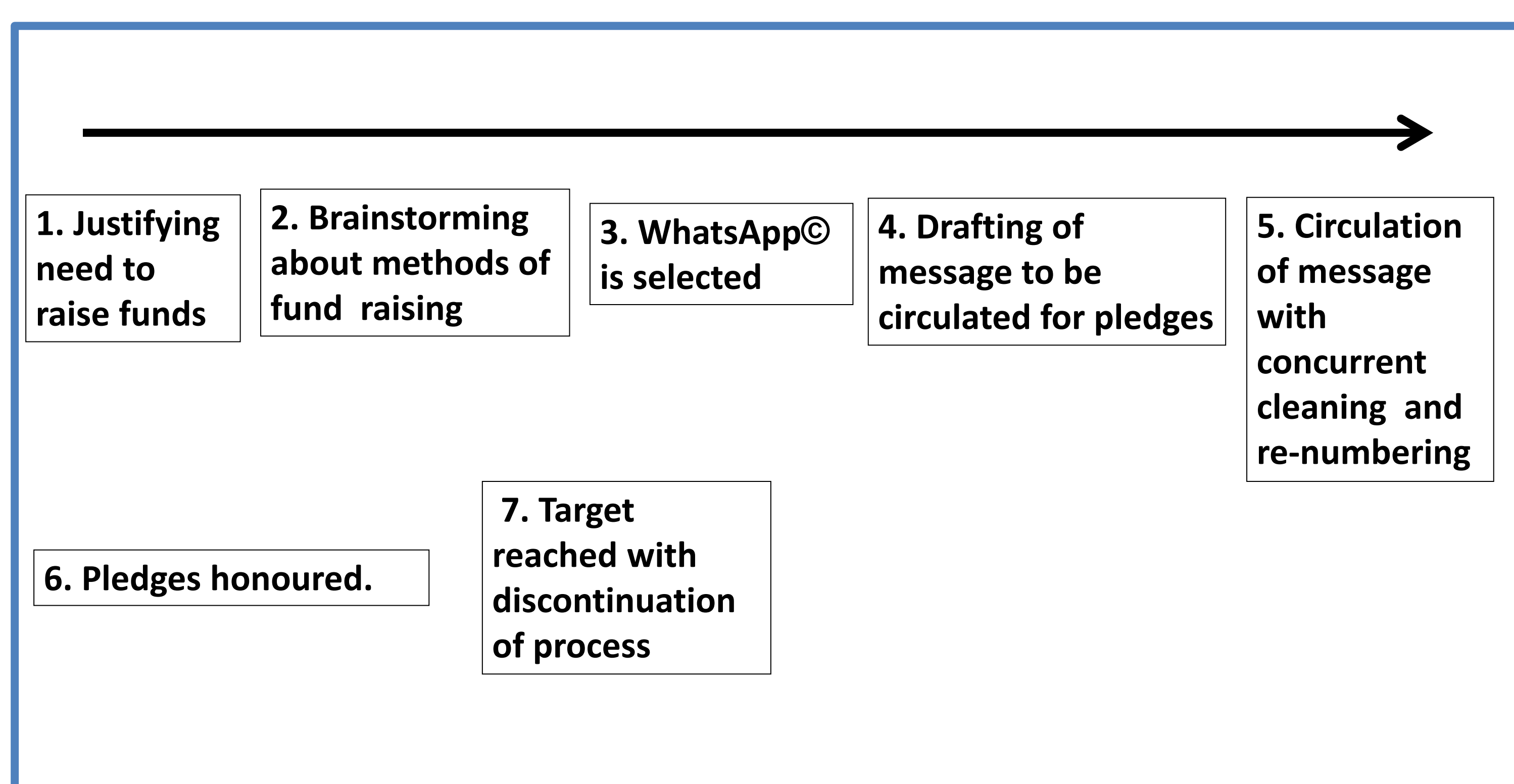


Fig. 1: Timeline of 6 months for the project

The donations were sent via mobile money to a designated mobile money account. Money was withdrawn regularly from the mobile money account (so that the account limit was not exceeded) and deposited with the hospital accountant.

## Acknowledgement

We are grateful to Ms Lucia Addae whose chat (on WhatsApp®) with one of the authors initiated the fundraising idea and thank all those who donated during the fund raising

## Results

234 individuals, majority of who are based in Ghana, pledged to contribute with pledges ranging from \$2.6 to \$3,769.2 (median = \$25.6, IQR = \$12.8 to \$38.5). Over the 4 months \$15,153 was raised. Upon reaching our target, no more donations were accepted.

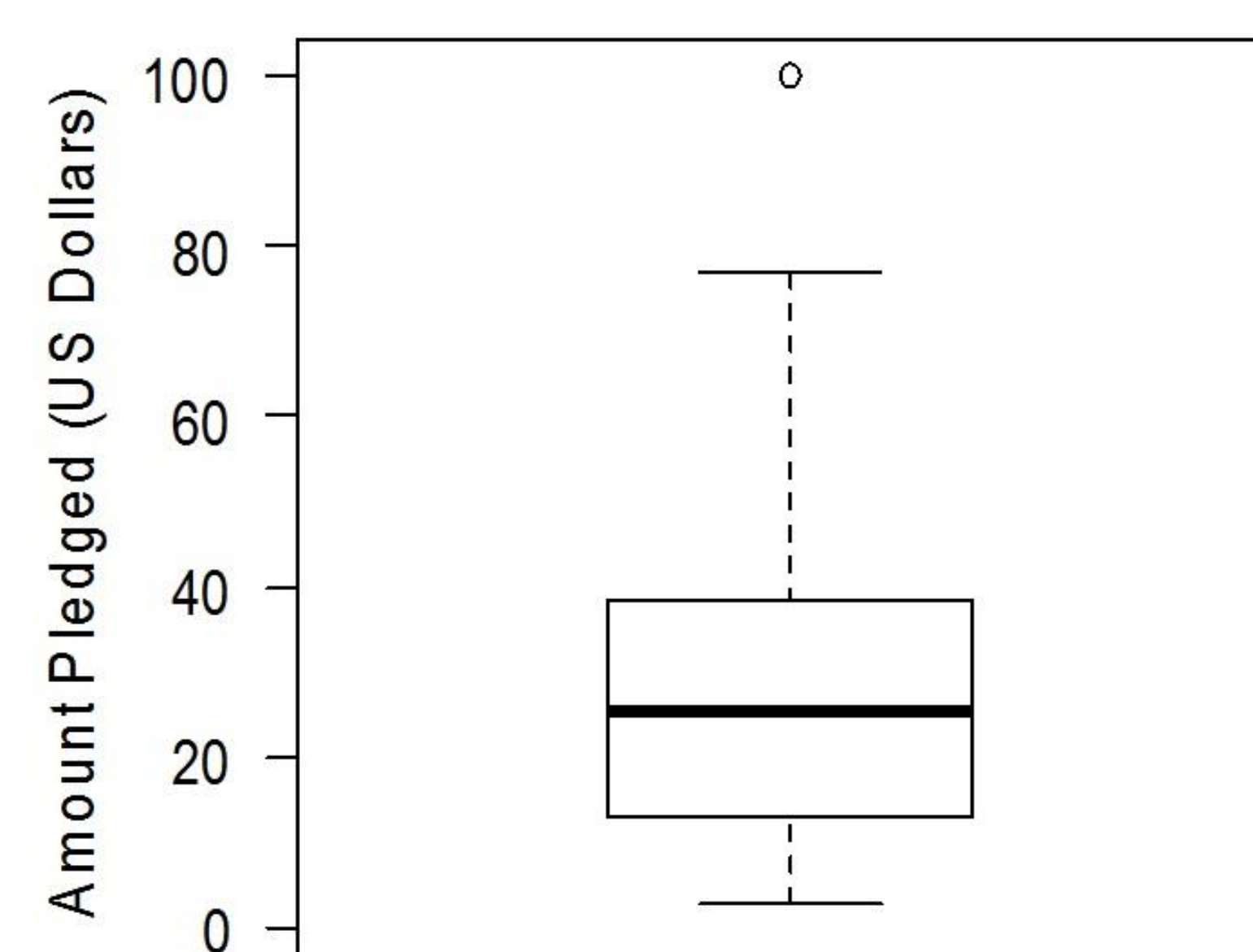


Fig. 2: Boxplot showing distribution of pledged funds after removing outlier amounts that were more than \$100

Location	# of Pledges	% of Pledges	Total Amount Pledged (US Dollars)	% of Total Amount Pledged
Ghana	220	94.0	8176.4	47.2
Germany	4	1.7	7501.9	43.3
Canada	1	0.4	74.4	0.4
USA	8	3.4	1500.0	8.7
UK	1	0.4	70.0	0.4
Total	234	100	17335.5	100

Table 1: Geographical distribution of the origins of pledged funds

## Discussion and Conclusion

The funds raised through WhatsApp® was used to install the initial equipment needed to kick start an HPV based cervical cancer screening program in a low resource setting. We demonstrate that it is possible to raise funds through WhatsApp®. It allows for easy pledging and payment without the need to organize gatherings requiring a budget. It also enables donors to become fundraisers towards a common goal as they in turn are able to forward the fund raising messages/ updates to their social networks for further donations to be made.

The fundraising reduced the screening cost from \$25 to \$19.2 (GHS 75) (23.2% reduction) in a sustainable programme, including some financial motivation to staff involved in the screening, and maintenance of equipment. This demonstrates the potential role of social media in cervical screening systems in low middle income countries. It also demonstrates the opportunities for “citizen fundraising” through friends, colleagues and families in support of a common goal.