



FINDING HOPE: Experiences of women, children and adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic in their own words

Further work of partners in countries to amplify the voices of women and adolescents



Amref Health Africa

Training additional health workers is essential in order to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on already fragile health systems. Diverting resources away from non-COVID health concerns could put whole systems at risk of collapse. Amref has been training health workers in sub-Saharan Africa through its learning platform [Leap](#), which functions on basic mobile telephones without the need for internet connectivity.

Between March and May 2020, 50,000 health workers were trained via this platform, and more workers are enrolling to reach rural and remote areas in Kenya. Amref Health Africa and collaborators have trained community health workers to manage stress within households and to offer psychosocial support to those affected by the pandemic.

Multilingual key messaging about COVID-19 helps to reduce misinformation within communities. Health workers will also be shown how to identify, isolate and refer suspected cases and how to maintain safety standards at points of entry and other high-risk areas to prevent transmission.

An estimated 1,849,432 households have already been reached with key messages via Leap, which has been rolled out in Malawi and South Africa. Ethiopia's Ministry of Health has adopted it as its go-to mobile learning platform.

Amref Health Africa has worked with governments to support their response to the pandemic, participating in committees and helping facilities to offer safe and high-quality services. Amref has also supported advocacy efforts to ensure that appropriate policies are adopted and implemented. It has worked with other stakeholders in Kenya to facilitate women's

access to services, even during curfew hours, through its Wheels for Life initiative.

Together with the Uganda Family Planning Consortium, Amref has developed family planning and SRHR messages, approved by Uganda's Ministry of Health, for dissemination through television, radio and print media. These messages are available for use by all stakeholders. Amref also organized a youth-led webinar to propagate advocacy for SRHR.

Centre for Catalyzing Change (C3)

C3 has been supporting those worst affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the poor, the marginalized and the vulnerable, and providing relief to those who need it most. C3 is working on the ground to support women and adolescent girls, and to understand the impacts of loss of livelihood and income, loss of access to sexual and reproductive health services and education opportunities, and the consequences of gender-based violence. C3 is working in the Indian state of Bihar to prevent stigma for both health workers and those with COVID-19, in line with a government initiative.

C3 has created a bank of audio and video messages which are being circulated among communities and families via digital platforms such as YouTube and WhatsApp and on community radio. They developed and curated content specifically for adolescent girls on issues affecting them during the COVID-19 pandemic, including on menstruation hygiene, resilience building and mental stress. C3 has also developed campaigns for Facebook and Twitter highlighting issues facing adolescent girls, as well as audio and video messages for pregnant women on preventive care and busting myths. The first phase of a chatbot was piloted on their

website, providing answers to 450+ questions about coronavirus: in its first month, over 3000 queries were received.

C3's field staff are working with community members to raise awareness of issues such as gender-based violence and menstrual hygiene. They are supporting health workers and reducing the stigma associated with the pandemic.

C3 is using platforms such as Zoom and Google to provide technical support to groups, including teachers, and creating training content to strengthen the delivery and impact of projects such as training teachers in life skills.

Graça Machel Trust

The Graça Machel Trust conducted a virtual brainstorming session about possible responses to COVID-19, using an integrated approach and including all relevant stakeholders. Focus group discussions were held with stakeholders including community leaders, young people, sector specialists and private sector players.

The outcomes are being used to inform collective action in response to the pandemic. The brainstorming sessions also enabled the sharing of ideas from across the African continent to inform Graça Machel Trust's response to COVID-19. Additionally, using the analysis and the key outcomes of the Ilizwi campaign (The voice: African women and children shaping policy discourse of the COVID-19 pandemic response), the Graça Machel Trust has developed policy asks to be put to state and regional institutions and key stakeholders in order to ensure that the immediate and short-term responses and longer-term re-investments reflect the needs of

women and adolescents, advancing gender equality and recognizing women's contributions to economic development.

International Planned Parenthood Federation Western Hemisphere Region (IPPFWHR)

IPPFWHR has been working with partners in Argentina, Chile, Guatemala, Mexico and Peru, countries with strict restrictions on abortion, to develop online platforms providing information on unplanned pregnancies, reduction of risk and harm, SRHR and pregnancy termination. Those platforms also offer free online counselling, delivered by qualified counsellors trained by IPPFWHR.

IPPFWHR is also creating a regional centre for digital health- to respond to the SRH needs of adolescents, young people and women. A [platform](#) has been established that allows the geolocation of adolescent-friendly and rights-based SRH services in the Latin American region and provides online counselling to adolescents and young people. This platform is available as a web and mobile app. IPPFWHR is providing additional training to partner organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean to scale up information provision to young people in the region, in partnership with other bodies that have expertise in these fields.

IPPFWHR has undertaken activities in line with the broader strategy of guaranteeing education, particularly high-quality, inclusive and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). These include: (a) teaching educators to use digital platforms to display CSE content; (b) developing digital CSE interventions; (c) [youth-led digital CSE campaigns](#), addressing

topics raised by young people; (d) producing short animated videos on CSE, including one on isolation, for adolescents and young people; (e) establishing regional partnerships to respond to adolescents' and young peoples' emotional needs through the Collective Care initiative; and (f) running webinars and workshops on CSE for families, teachers and others.

Asociación Profamilia

Asociación Profamilia has established [a platform](#) in Colombia that provides essential mental health services conducted in Spanish. Mental health professionals can be contacted by adolescents, young people and women suffering depression or anxiety caused by COVID-19 and its consequences. All services are provided free of charge and are easily accessible via the web or telephone. Callers requiring specialized assistance are referred to telemedicine platforms.

Profamilia is running a programme, Valiente, supporting children and adolescents, particularly vulnerable groups in rural and marginalized areas with little access to the internet. It aims to empower young people to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights, and to reduce gender violence, gender stereotypes and teenage pregnancy. During lockdown, this support was made available on cell phones via text messages and WhatsApp.

Profamilia also launched the Brave at Home initiative, focused on maintaining contact with all its service users during lockdown and finding ways to disseminate information and support widely, leaving no one behind.



More information available at:
<https://www.who.int/pmnch/knowledge/publications/lived-experiences-covid19/>