

## Communication with communities (CwC) for COVID-19

July 2020



Refugees and host community members receive a one-on-one briefing on COVID-19 and vital preventative measures. © UNHCR/Marie-Joelle Jean-Charles.

### COVID-19 and CwC

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak in Yemen in April, UNHCR started empowering refugee and internally displaced Yemeni families to better protect themselves against the infection through awareness-raising, focussed on fact-based information, mitigating infection transmission, and referral pathways. UNHCR also monitored closely well-known border areas for COVID-19 related access constraints. **Since then, all of UNHCR's programmes have been adapted to prevention and mitigation measures against COVID-19.** Furthermore, the results of a CwC impact survey had been successfully incorporated in our response.

UNHCR shared recommendations from both the local authorities and the UN on physical distancing, handwashing, limitation of movements and referrals of suspected cases in a safe and humane way. These awareness-raising sessions were coupled with other programmes such as the distribution of hygiene kits, educational brochures in various languages and with messaging at the cash assistance collection points. At the same time, virtual and remote tools such as hotlines and online directories were adapted to allow UNHCR and partners to deliver protection services and information in multiple languages.

CWC ACTIVITIES UNDERWAY UNTIL AUGUST 2020

### Hotlines and WhatsApp messaging

- Since March when the first COVID-19 awareness-raising activities initiated, a steeply rising number – up to 75 per cent of the refugee families - contacted UNHCR and partner's 24-hour hotlines to request information and services available to lessen the impact of COVID-19, including cash support and psychosocial counselling. As a response, UNHCR widened the cash beneficiary criteria to support more families by alleviating their loss of income and limited movements, while providing vulnerable families with hygiene kits of soap and detergent.
- UNHCR set up several WhatsApp message groups to alert displaced families on prevention measures and services available, including contact details of health facilities.
- Up to some 1 million SMS messages are planned to be sent to IDP and refugee families on COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures. Moreover, the [UNHCR Yemen Facebook page](#), [Twitter page](#) and [Yemen operational portal](#) currently display COVID-19 prevention messages.

### Awareness-raising activities to 20,000 IDPs, refugees, asylum-seekers and vulnerable host communities

- Mobile UNHCR teams and trained volunteers specialised in interacting with children, women and older persons, as well as outreach workers from refugee communities, held focused awareness-raising sessions with displaced families and their community leaders in small groups or through phone calls. Sessions focused on facts about the virus and its infection and preventative measures to be taken.

A recent UNHCR survey of 2,322 IDP HHs and 700 refugees on their understanding of COVID-19, revealed that:

- ✓ Most refugee and asylum-seekers (87 per cent), IDPs and host community members (89 %) are aware of COVID-19 prevention measures. A similar number (85 per cent) of IDPs answered that they adapted to the recommendations. Main barriers for those who can not adopt include financial constraints in purchasing personal protective equipment, limited access to WASH facilities, limited means to bring suspected patients to health facilities and the need to earn a daily income, as for reasons not taking preventative measures.
- ✓ UNHCR's brochures in various languages were the most common source of information of COVID-19 for refugees, while IDPs/host communities preferred radio and SMS messaging.



#### Unveiling of household-level shielding concept

- One million IDPs who live in some 1,400 IDP hosting sites across the country are particularly vulnerable to communicable diseases, including COVID-19, due to overcrowding and unsanitary living conditions. The Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster led by UNHCR assessed and selected 600 of these as sites most-at-risk and provided more focused support with a community-managed strategy, such as washbasins in the most crowded sites, setting up shielding areas, enhanced awareness-raising measures, and clear community-based referral pathways for those with chronic medical conditions.

The following message was sent in multiple languages to displaced families

*"UNHCR would like to seek your urgent cooperation in advising your community **to stay home and limit movements**; if absolutely required, only go out to carry out essential tasks such as buying food, medicines, or collecting hygiene kits. You should go alone, and not take other family members or friends with you.*

*Please avoid any gatherings, including funerals, as a preventive measure. The best prevention for COVID-19 is to **STAY HOME**, especially if you do not feel well, maintain **PHYSICAL DISTANCE** (1.5-2 metres), **WASH HANDS**, and **DO NOT TOUCH** your face.*

**YOU MUST FOLLOW GUIDANCE FROM THE AUTHORITIES INCLUDING ON SPECIFIC MEASURES AFFECTING YOUR FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT FOR PUBLIC HEALTH REASONS.**

#### EXTERNAL / DONORS RELATIONS

**Special thanks to our donors** Thani Bin Abdullah Bin Thani Al-Thani Humanitarian Fund | United States of America | Country-based pooled funds | United Kingdom | Qatar charity | Japan | France | Switzerland | Kuwait Society for Relief | Sheikh Eid Bin Mohammad Al Thani Charitable Foundation | Qatar

**Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked funds in 2020** Sweden | Norway | Private donors Spain | Netherlands | Denmark | United Kingdom | Germany | Private donors Republic of Korea | Switzerland | France | Private donors Japan

#### CONTACTS

##### Won-Na Cha

External Relations / Reporting Officer  
[chaw@unhcr.org](mailto:chaw@unhcr.org) Tel: +967 (0) 1469771

##### Marie-Joëlle Jean-Charles

Associate External Relations Officer  
[jeanchar@unhcr.org](mailto:jeanchar@unhcr.org) Tel: +967 223 1441

For more information,

please see the  
**UNHCR Yemen Operational Portal**

Or follow UNHCR Yemen on:

