



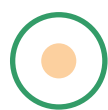
Photo: A volunteer explaining the COVID-19 prevention measures to market women. (credit: Action Aid Ghana)

CASE STUDY 3

YOUTH-LED RISK COMMUNICATION AND  
OUTREACH FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

*"I AM GLAD THAT I JOINED OTHER YOUTH TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE ON COVID-19 WITH PEOPLE LIVING IN DEPRIVED AREAS. IT WAS A GREAT TASK, BUT WE WERE ABLE TO SPREAD INFORMATION TO A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO OTHERWISE WOULD HAVE BEEN UNINFORMED AND LIKELY TO CONTRACT THE DISEASE OUT OF IGNORANCE. I FEEL PROUD AND SATISFIED THAT I CONTRIBUTED TO CHANGING PERCEPTIONS AND SAVING LIVES."*

Bernice, Youth Volunteer.



The aim of this initiative was to initiate a short-term emergency response mechanism to bridge the information gap on COVID-19. This involved reaching out to rural communities to implement sensitization strategies locally in 10 communities from eight districts in the Upper East region of Ghana from 1st April to 30th June 2021.

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The strategy was to start with essential COVID-19 information training for the youth volunteers, and for them to undertake the community sensitization outreach. The use of radio broadcasting for broader information sharing was initiated to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable and hard to reach populations.

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50 volunteers from the social movement were trained and remained active in the initiative.

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This initiative was youth-led by the Young Urban Women's Movement (YUWM), supported by ActionAid Ghana, and funded by ActionAid Denmark. The Ghana Health Services Ministry was a key partner in providing COVID-19 training and traditional and community leaders played an important role in mobilizing the communities.

## THE COVID-19 CONTEXT

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Ghana recorded its first case of COVID-19 in March 2020, and by the end of 2021, it was one of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa that recorded the highest confirmed cases. The government response to the pandemic was to bring in a series of social distancing measures, and to subsidize

utilities due to widespread poverty. Frontline health workers were given incentives to give their best for the needs to the communities at large. For people living in rural areas, conditions were severe as they were vulnerable due to limited access to COVID-19 information and for access to health facilities.

## THE INTERVENTION

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Based on the context, the youth movement, Young Urban Women's Movement (YUWM) together with ActionAid Ghana, 'brainstormed' their response to COVID-19, particularly for rural communities. It was decided that the YUWM would initiate a short-term emergency response to bridge the information gap by reaching out to rural communities in the Upper East region of Ghana. The project intended to implement sensitization in local language in these rural areas. The project design was to start with essential COVID-19 information training and to utilize radio to undertake the community sensitization outreach and for broader information sharing. These means were also used to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable amongst these communities.

The Young Urban Women's Movement leaders discussed implementation strategies, dates, and locations; and selected 10 communities from eight districts of the region to benefit from the project and agreed on the methodologies for various activities. These included the use of small group discussions, public place announcements, house-to-house education, one-on-one sensitization, social media, and radio campaigns. They

also made use of methods such as public announcements, group meetings, and one-on-one discussion using Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials like flyers, pictures and posters.

50 volunteers received a one-day health information training course by the Talensi district directorate of the Ghana Health Services. Additional training on Communication for Development (C4D) and Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) strategies was provided for a portion of the youth volunteers to educate communities at public places like markets, lorry parks and other places where people gathered and created awareness on COVID-19 in their respective languages.

Radio was also identified as a valuable channel for raising public awareness. The youth volunteers, with support from ActionAid Ghana, developed five radio programmes to raise awareness on COVID-19 in local languages (Grune, Talen, Bissa and Kusaal). Using radio was a strategy to include both rural and peri-urban people, as it was understood that people in peri-urban societies were also unaware of the dire situation regarding COVID-19, but through the radio programmes, they were updated and cautioned to stay safe.



Photo: Volunteers making public announcement on COVID-19 at a market. (credit: Action Aid Ghana)

The youth also conducted social media campaigns and raised awareness by posting COVID-19 messages and flyers on Facebook and Twitter. 150 vulnerable people, including people with disabilities,

the aged, widows, orphans and the needy were given humanitarian relief such as food and non-food items to support them to cope with the economic and social impacts of the pandemic.

## OUTCOMES & RESULTS

As a result of the intervention, it is estimated that 3800 people were reached with COVID-19 prevention messages during the sensitization activities in public spaces. Approximately 520 people were reached on Facebook

and 160 people reached on Twitter with messages on the importance of observing COVID-19 safety protocols. About 1500 people were reached with messages about the myths and truths about COVID-19.

## MEETING CHALLENGES

One key challenge was the short timeframe of the project because of the limited funding provided. It was always understood to be a short-term response, however it was a frustration for the youth

volunteers not to be able to do more. This challenge was partly addressed by the youth by asking those who received the information to spread it further to their family members and networks.

Another challenge was the traditional belief systems which made it difficult to convince some community members about the dangers of COVID-19. This challenge was addressed in part by the youth gaining

the support of traditional authorities who promoted the accuracy of the project and helped the project succeed in changing some of the more intransigent perceptions and myths about COVID-19.

## KEY LESSONS

A key lesson has been the importance of partnerships. The partnership with the Ministry of Health brought success in the intervention as they trained the youth and collaborated for information sharing. The value of partnership with local leadership is also noteworthy due to the relations that were built with local chiefs, community and religious leaders to access communities. The value of partnerships with local media such as radio stations was also a key learning; many people in remote areas listened to the programmes made for the intervention, either via household radios or via loudspeakers set-up in villages for communal listening.

Undertaking sensitization in public venues provided a lesson about two-way communication, as it provided an

opportunity for community members to ask questions about the virus and receive responses and advice from the volunteers. This was also apparent in the context of the radio programmes, where listeners were able to dial in, ask questions and speak about their concerns. Some realized they did not know much about COVID-19, but the radio programmes helped them learn about the virus.

Another key learning has been about combining information and relief strategies with the aim to reinforce one another. It was understood that providing food and non-food items enabled the most vulnerable to secure some relief, and it helped them engage better with the information that was provided.

For further information about this case study, you can contact the following individuals:

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You can also find out more by visiting the organization's websites:

- [ActionAid Ghana](#)

### Collective Service - For a Community-Led Response

The Collective Service, a strategic partnership between UNICEF, IFRC, and WHO, with the support of GOARN enables collaboration between a wide range of organizations to increase the scale and quality of community engagement approaches in public health emergencies and other crises. Find out more: <https://www.rcce-collective.net>

**This document forms part of a collection of 7 case studies, and has been selected by the Youth Engagement Subgroup YES! of the Collective Service (UNICEF, WHO, IFRC, GOARN) as an initiative of UNICEF, UNAIDS, and the Collective Helpdesk with the support of UN WOMEN and the Compact for Young People in Humanitarian Action, as part of an open call for good practices to document, analyze, and promote youth engagement and youth leadership across countries and regions.**