



Photo: Showcase of the correct handwashing techniques during a visit to families in the community Sintchan-Fanca. (credit: UNICEF/GuineaBissau/Mendes)


CASE STUDY 4

**ADOLESCENT GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT LEADING
TO OUTREACH FOR COVID-19 AWARENESS**


**Collective
service**

"I AM VERY PROUD TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO RAISING THE AWARENESS OF MY COMMUNITY ON HOW TO STAY COVID-19 FREE ... THIS PROJECT HAS ALLOWED ME TO INCREASE MY CONFIDENCE AND UNDERSTANDING THAT EDUCATION IS THE MOST POWERFUL SOLUTION TO UNBLOCK OUR FUTURE."


Ramatulai Seidi, Youth Volunteer.

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The aim of this initiative was to raise awareness about COVID-19 among impoverished communities and to leverage the facilities of the already established youth project - 'Adolescent Girls Education Empowerment and Participation Project'.

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The strategy involved the adaptation of a communication training programme to better support youth volunteers reaching out to communities and producing solutions to address needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, the young volunteers were trained to communicate and encouraged citizens in villages and towns across the regions involved to seek out their first doses of the vaccine too.

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THE COVID-19 CONTEXT

The COVID-19 pandemic hit Guinea Bissau caused tremendous socio-economic dislocation of lives and livelihoods, that stretched the already fragile health system further. The remote rural areas were hit the hardest. For example, in Sintchan-Fanca, a community located in the Bafatá region, health care and education systems had already

been extremely weak. Here, community members were exposed to higher risks of contracting COVID-19 and the population had been struggling to cope financially. Furthermore, because of the pandemic, the most vulnerable members of the community were exposed to additional social protection risks, including child labor and child marriage.

THE INTERVENTION

The 'Adolescent Girls Education Empowerment and Participation Project' had already established a youth training initiative before the pandemic broke out. 40 youth reporters were trained as part of the 'Young Reporters' Network'. Subsequently, in the light of the pandemic, many of these trained youth were instrumental in helping communities combat misinformation and rumors, remove fear from the vaccine conversation, and in gathering feedback from communities.

For example, in response to the challenges faced by their community in the remote Sintchan-Fanca area, youth volunteers who were active members of the adolescent project, decided to act as information agents of change and conducted door-to-door

activities to raise awareness about COVID-19 prevention measures, and share key information about the virus. At a time when the fear of COVID-19 contamination was high, the four young women understood that for their own safety and that of their community they needed to act. Understanding the power of effective communication, the young women used their skills to engage with community members and pass on main COVID-19 prevention measures. The young women's messages were straightforward: 'Clean your hands often, using soap and water. Wear a mask when in public. Practice physically distancing whenever possible. Maintain a safe distance from anyone who is coughing or sneezing. Cover your nose and mouth with your elbow or a tissue when you cough.'

OUTCOMES & RESULTS

Training and participating in the project gave the youth volunteers increased communication skills and built their confidence to engage with members of their communities to speak about critical

issues. The door-to-door campaign proved to be one the most successful ways to speedily raise awareness about the COVID-19 outbreak in remote communities.



Photo: Community animators during a COVID-19 awareness-raising visit in their community in the Bafata region. (credit: UNICEF/Guinea-Bissau/Mendes)

The intervention enabled better relations of trust between elders and the women youth group. With the support of the elders, the group was able to reach out to the community to COVID-19 awareness while continuing their work on the prevention of sexual abuse both inside and outside schools. "I have participated in this project since

the beginning. I have seen that our adolescents have not only increased their sense of identity and civic engagement, but also how they are more respected within their community ... Moreover, they should be praised for sharing information with us on how we can stay safe during this Covid-19 period." Quidi Balde, a local leader.

KEY LESSONS

Communication training provided a foundation to build effective advocacy and awareness-raising strategies. The training that the 'Adolescent Girls Education Empowerment and Participation Project' was providing on children's rights and basic journalism techniques, was instrumental for the young women in sharing the necessary knowledge, communication skills, and competencies to develop a successful COVID-19 awareness-raising campaign. As the young

women had been enrolled in the training prior to the door-to-door campaign, this contributed to their capacity as communicators and agents of change and led to the success of their endeavors.

A key learning that emerged from engaging with people who are 'influencers' such as religious leaders and community leaders within their own networks, was to engage more effectively with such communities.

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:

- [UNICEF Guinea Bissau](#)
- Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3j5mKgc>
- Learn more: <https://uni.cf/3PXxqw9>
- Learn more: <https://bit.ly/3wjdlD3>

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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.