



Advancing community health worldwide.

## Challenges and Opportunities in Conflict Affected Communities during the COVID-19 Response

Bi-Weekly COVID-19 Response  
Global Coordination Call

May 29, 2020

# Agenda -- 10:00 – 11:30 am EDT

**Moderator:** Julie Dargis, Senior Advisor, Global COVID-19 Response, CORE Group

10:00 – 10:10: **Opening Comments, Review Agenda, Introduce Presenters, and Conduct Initial Poll**

10:10 – 10:30: **Featured Speaker:**

**Achaleke Christian Leke, Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors Network**

will present youth-led efforts of blending peace building strategies and youth-led peace architectures to promote resilience and mitigate the spread of COVID19 in conflict affected areas of Cameroon.

10:30 – 10:40: *Pause for Discussion & Participant Polling.*

10:40 – 11:10: **List of Panelists:**

- **Search for Common Ground**
- **Relief International**
- **FHI360**

11:10 – 11:25: *Pause for Discussion & Participant Polling.*

11:25 – 11:30: **COVID Resource Corner** – COVID Resources to support the Global Response

11:30 am EDT: **Closure**



# Panel of Presenters

- **Judy Kimono, Swahili Coast Director of CORE Group global partner Search for Common Ground** *will discuss how SFCG is facilitating collaboration with a multitude of partners across dividing lines to manifest conflict sensitive responses from the Swahili Coast and up into Somalia.*
- **Dr. Kassam Ballout, Whole of Syria Health Specialist, and Alia M., HR Manager of CORE Group Member Relief International** *will contextualize challenges in mounting a Whole of Syria Emergency Response during COVID-19, including a special focus on Duty of Care and Wellness approaches for staff and community partners.*
- **Mike Obrien, Health Advisor Crisis Response Team at CORE Group Member FHI360** *will outline proactive responses to the complications that COVID-19 is having on Ebola operations in DRC and the health response in Yemen.*



# Let us know what you think!

**Use the Chatbox during the presentations to ask questions and share your thoughts.**

- *What have needed to adapt in your work to respond to respond to COVID-19?*

**Select comments will be Live-Tweeted by the CORE Group team during the webinar!**



# **CHALLENGES OF CONFLICT AFFECTED COMMUNITIES DURING THE INITIAL PHASE OF THE COVID19 RESPONSE**

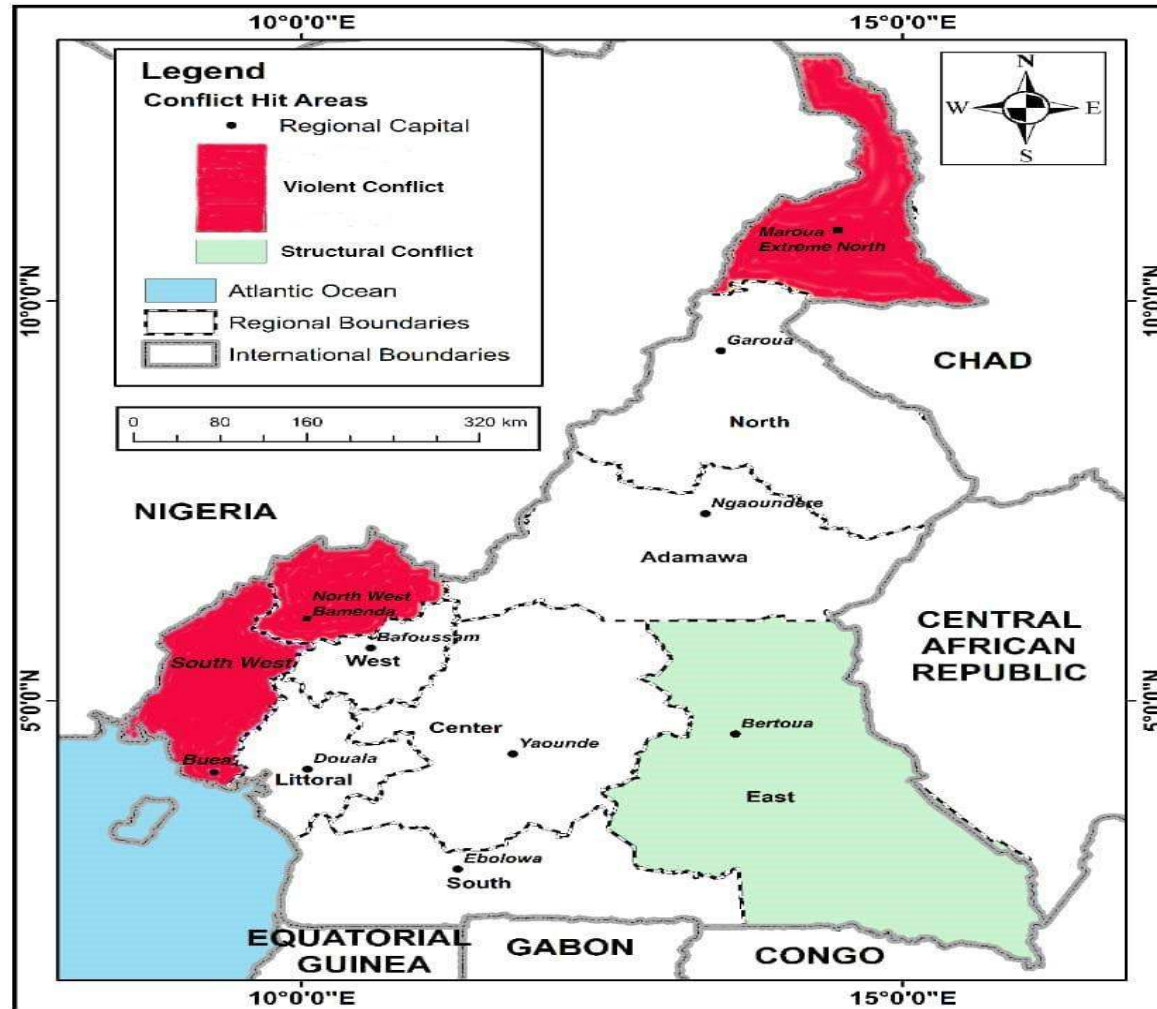
**THE CASE OF YOUTH-LED RESPONSE IN THE FAR NORTH ,  
NORTH WEST AND SOUTH WEST REGIONS OF CAMEROON**

**ACHALEKE CHRISTIAN LEKE**

**PAN-COMMONWEALTH COORDINATOR OF COMMONWEALTH  
YOUTH PEACE AMBASSADORS NETWORK**

**NATIONAL COORDINATOR OF LOCAL YOUTH CORNER  
CAMEROON**

## Hotspot of violent and structural conflict in Cameroon



Source: Local Youth Corner Cameroon, 2019.

# KEY VIOLENT CONFLICT ISSUES

- **Far North Region - Boko Haram Insurgency**

According to International Crises Group, (2016) over 1,500 lives have been lost, 155,000 displaced and 73,000 refugees

- **North West and South West - Anglophone Crisis**

Human Rights Watch, (2018) holds that over 437,500 people internally displaced, 32,600 as refugees in Nigeria, an estimated 42,500 children out of school and about 3000 people killed.

# LATEST COVID-19 SITUATION IN CAMEROON

- 5356 Cases
- 3326 recovered
- 177 Death



# KEY STRATEGIES IN OUR COVID19 RESPONSE

- Mobilise young people and open up for coalitions
- Use existing peace building strategies and structures as entry point into community
- Focus on face to face and online communication methods to sensitize communities
- Youth-led Production and free donation of PPEs in communities
- Collection of Data on community perception on the Pandemic
- Counter misinformation , fake news and hate speech amidst the pandemic



# PRODUCTION OF HOME-MADE HAND SANITIZERS

Our office was transformed into Rapid response Laboratory to produce hand sanitizers for free donations



We mobilized 6 youth bio-medical scientist and 100 volunteers who work in shifts in the production process



# PRODUCTION OF HOME-MADE HAND SANITIZERS

We have produced so far 20,000 bottles (50 ML, 100 ML, 200 ML, 300 ML and 500 ML)



Photo of official presentation of the sanitizers by the Minister of Youth Affairs and the Ministry of Public health to the public



## Key Points

- Product has been tested and validated by Ministry of Public Health and the United Nations Clinic in Cameroon
- Over 50,000 people in 80 communities are using the sanitizer.



# FOCUS ON FACE TO FACE AND ONLINE COMMUNICATION METHODS TO SENSITIZE COMMUNITIES

We visit Rural communities which and do open sensitization and respond to some misconceptions by communities. We work with elective officials ( Mayors and members of Parliament in this process)



## FOCUS ON FACE TO FACE AND ONLINE COMMUNICATION METHODS TO SENSITIZE COMMUNITIES

To access the hard to reach areas and ensure that we communicate to a wide audience, we use recorded sensitization messages both in English and French as well as local language for each location we going to.





# WE USE DOOR STICKER STRENGTHEN SENSITIZATION

We have produced and pasted 15000 stickers. The stickers are posted on doors and public places. The stickers have centralized messages with some of them reflecting around peace and social cohesion.



# COLLECTION OF DATA ON COMMUNITY PERCEPTION ON THE PANDEMIC

The volunteers using mobile App ( Kobo Collect) to collect perception of people



## Key Fact

- We have so far collected 1000 perceptions in these communities.
- The Survey equally collects key data on number of persons per home and also age of person
- Since we working on Conflict situation it also capture impact of the pandemic on peace and security





# Gender & the COVID-19 in the Swahili Coast



# Horn of Africa Conflict Geography.

We define our interventions based on the boundaries of the conflict system rather than the borders of any single country. Therefore our HOA scope includes Somalia - both in south-central Somalia and in Puntland and Somaliland, Kenya, Tanzania, and Northern Mozambique.

\*Depending on the unfolding dynamics in Ethiopia, Search may engage in the Ogaden region if need be, as well as possibly in Addis Ababa as the seat of the African Union







## Issues that are aggravated by COVID responses along the Swahili Coast ?

- Sense of disenfranchisement and political exclusion- COVID relief has revealed partisan interests
- Economic marginalization and threatened livelihoods- The Economic Downturn makes it even harder for low skilled communities including women who make most of the low skilled laborer's
- Lack of development and support services in most vulnerable regions- COVID response has withdrawn personnel and resources from Key priority areas e.g. Kenya Is currently faced by Floods, Locust Swarms , broken infrastructure
- Eroding trust between citizens and security actors- Heavy handed Security Approaches used to manage the pandemic heighten mistrust.
- High societal expectations around jobs, marriage, religion that youth have difficulties meeting- Cultural, Economic and recreational Activities have been curtailed



## Issues that are aggravated by COVID responses along the Swahili Coast ?

- Terror Groups exploiting community grievances to gain support - The Closure of places of worship, the cessation of movement, the Killings resulting from brutal force have seen increased supported and narratives for VE networks
- Political partisanship and ethnic nepotism- Covid Response has strong Political Wings, See Tanzania- State VS the Opposition are differing on the National response
- Rise of juvenile gangs and other criminal threats- Break ins, Gangs organizing to manage COVID security measures, AS breaking into shops along the Kenya Somalia Boarder
- Struggling family and parental support systems Trauma of families, and especially women, who have lost relatives to violent extremism- Need to develop systems and practice that provides one on one support even when interactions and services are limited



# **Gender and COVID-19 prevention and protection measures**

**Most of the people left out of public information campaigns will be women.**

Search incorporates this lens into its radio programming by ensuring important information is shared at times when it can also reach women, such as early evening mealtime when families are typically gathered together at home.

**Women reject protection and prevention measures because of mistrust and fatalism.**

Search is mobilizing its networks of local women messengers to ensure women have access to information from trusted sources, as we have done previously during Ebola outbreaks.

# **Gender and COVID-19 prevention and protection measures**

**In many places, women and girls have fewer options to protect themselves.**

This can be addressed by providing women with skills to make homemade masks and soap.

**Women and girls face increased risk of gender-based violence.**

On Going Radio Shows and Online platforms are actively addressing this form of Violence. Community influencers and State actors are engaging to enable survivors have increased access to services

Community Influencers along the Swahili Coast are reporting the occurrences and referral and treatment measures provided

# **Gender and COVID-19 prevention and protection measures**

**Gender inequalities within families will harm women and girls in the long-term.**

**Stricter security enforcement puts women civilians at risk.**

In Kwale County, Kenya, police allegedly beat a motorcycle driver to death after he delivered a pregnant woman to the hospital after curfew. This violence has in turn created fear among pregnant women and those on whom these patients rely for support, risking that pregnant women might not be able to access needed healthcare.

# Gender and COVID-19 Recommendations

1. **Support the design, implementation, and monitoring** of gender-sensitive COVID-19 containment, prevention, and support responses across health, security, and other sectors;
2. **Ensure that actions are integrated across sectors and agencies** and that best practices on integrated response are incorporated into future crisis response scenario plans;
3. **Consider the long-term impact of COVID-19 interventions** and whether chosen approaches can help build resilience against violence and risks that women face beyond COVID-19;

# Gender and COVID-19 Recommendations

4. **Ensure that supported information campaigns are gender-sensitive**, accounting for differences in women and girls' access to, acceptance of, and autonomy to act upon public-health advice; **engage women messengers** as trusted voices from within target communities;
5. **Support** monitoring, prevention, and response **services for gender-based violence within homes**, including for women refugees and IDPs, accounting for the increased risks and reduced access to support during quarantine;
6. **Support media initiatives that promote social cohesion** including entertainment media with gender- progressive narratives;



# Gender and COVID-19 Recommendations

7. **Prioritize** adaptive measures which allow women to continue to **participate economically, politically and socially in the public sphere; engage women's expertise, leadership, and relationships** in responding to the pandemic;
8. **Ensure** that actions to protect and empower women and girls facing COVID-19 are **funded without redirecting aid** from ongoing actions to protect civilians from violence, including gender-based violence, and promote women and girl's health and socio-economic wellbeing.



**Asante sana!**

# COVID-19 RESPONSE IN CONFLICT AFFECTED AREAS

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Relief International – Syria Response



**RELIEF**  
**INTERNATIONAL**

# Challenges

- Security situation;
  - Attacks.
  - Sleep cells.
  - Control shifts.
- Remote management.
- Access: Non-renewal of UN resolution in NWS beyond June 2020 is a possibility.
- Health system capacity itself:
  - Human Resources for Health (HRH) remains a major gap in quantitative and qualitative aspects.
  - Regular supply of medicines and medical consumables remains a gap especially for NCDs and surgeries.
- Funding.

# Challenges

## Additional challenges related to COVID-19 in particular:

- Shortage in PPE supplies due to exporting restrictions imposed by different countries.
- Regulations imposed by certain donor(s) on the procurement of PPE is causing delays in planning and implementing COVID\_19 related programs.
- Movement restrictions inside the country and all over the world.



# Social cohesion and catalyze peace processes

## Opportunities to Be Seized:

- While the warning signs associated with COVID-19 are significant, there are also glimmers of hope. The scale of the outbreak creates room for humanitarian gestures between rivals.
  - The UAE has, for example, airlifted over 30 tons of humanitarian aid to Iran to deal with the disease.
  - Venezuela and Colombia.
  - USA and North Korea.
  - USA and Iran. Release the detainees VS loosen the sanctions.

### On the other side:

- There is ample room for political leaders to try to exploit COVID-19, either to solidify power at home or pursue their interests abroad.
- Some leaders could order restrictive measures that make public health sense at the peak of the crisis and then extend them in the hope of quashing dissent once the disease declines.
- Elections scheduled for the first half of 2020, and perhaps later, are also liable to be postponed; here too, the immediate public health justification may be valid but the temptation to use the virus as a pretext for further delays and narrowing of political space could well exist.
- Similarly, the crisis may create openings for jihadist groups to launch new offensives against weakened governments in Africa and the Middle East.

# Mitigation Measures

- **16 Jan:** we started disseminate information
- Skype groups with field team to discuss preparedness plans, scenarios based discussions and mitigations measures
- **15 Feb:** the work modality for some of the countries that we are operating in has been impacted, either by movement restrictions imposed by local authorities or RI's consideration for staff safety in comparison to the number of confirmed cases Countries office staff, procurement and program plan, getting office ready
- **22 Feb:** COVID-19 awareness session for all staff in different countries (Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey)



# Awareness sessions



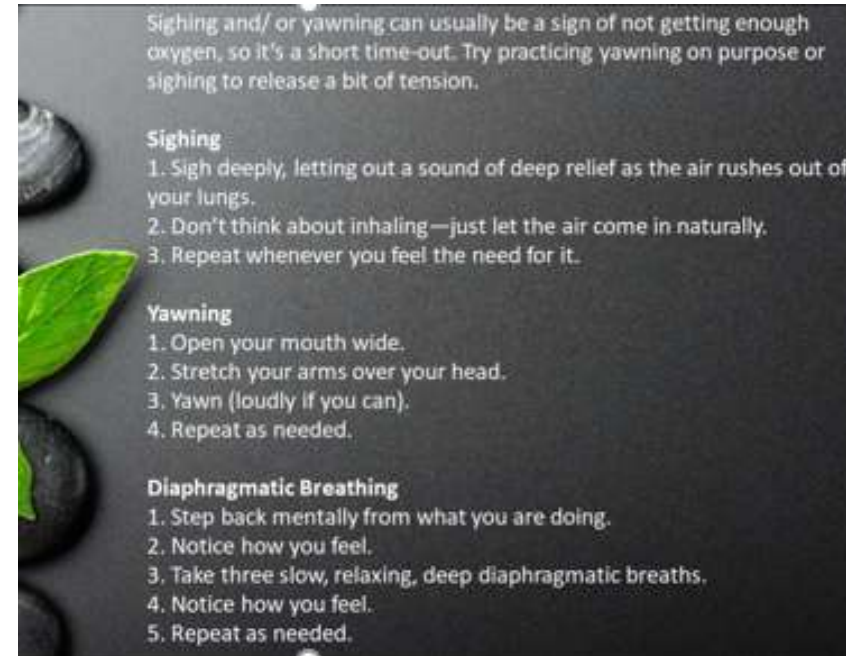
# Duty of Care March 2020

## Global Public Health Emergency (COVID-19)

- In case of suspected/positive case of COVID-19, and self/ICU/Isolation unit-quarantine is recommended
- In case of suspension due to movement restrictions/ spread of Covid 19 cases

# Staff wellbeing

- Ensure staff wellbeing and keep them informed about the support that can be provided, for this we introduce the “right to withdraw”, is a key concept we abide by the organization. Meaning that if anyone feels that they would prefer to stay home working. Such decision will be respected, and will not impact management perception, nor performance judgement
- Missing the Telltale: conducting many calls to equip supervisors with alternative screening methods to spot stress and how to provide support
- Provide Psychoeducational session to all staff in all locations through contracting 3<sup>rd</sup> party psychologist that can conduct individual sessions
- Providing stress management training and self care massages



MAY  
2020

# Disruptions in Humanitarian Health Programs



CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

# Impact of disrupted operations

THE LANCET  
Global Health

ARTICLES | [ONLINE FIRST](#)

PDF [450 KB] Figures

Early estimates of the indirect effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on maternal and child mortality in low-income and middle-income countries: a modelling study

[Timothy Roberton, DrPH](#) • [Emily D Carter, PhD](#) • [Victoria B Chou, PhD](#) • [Angela R Stegmuller, BS](#) • [Bianca D Jackson, MSPH](#) • [Yvonne Tam, MHS](#) • et al. [Show all authors](#)

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NEWS / MIDDLE EAST

## Yemen's health system 'has collapsed' as coronavirus spreads: UN

*World governing body rings alarm bell as it prepares to host donor conference with Saudi Arabia amid the pandemic.*

# What we are seeing in Yemen



Priority is staff welfare



Delayed clearances of imported goods



Delayed visas



Restricted movement with exceptions



Adapting ways of working

# What we are doing



Maintaining  
essential health  
services



Scaling up  
surveillance



Reassuring  
healthcare staff

# What we are watching



Increased  
hostilities



Increased  
inequalities



Distrust in the  
government



# Closure

Visit our website **COVID-19 Global Pandemic Response page** to learn more about CORE Group and Member Programs and Resources.

<https://coregroup.org/resources/2019-novel-coronavirus-global-response-coordination/>

*You can also upload COVID-specific resources there.*

**Thank you for your active participation!**

