



UNFPA South Africa response to Covid-19

March- June 2020

The onset of the novel coronavirus invoked sweeping emergency measures in South Africa

The first case of the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) was confirmed on 5 March 2020 in South Africa. The case was from a group of travelers returning from abroad. Since then, more Covid-19 cases have been confirmed. On 15 March 2020, the President of South Africa officially declared the Coronavirus a national disaster as he invoked sweeping emergency powers and announced a range of extraordinary interventions by government and to curb the spread of the coronavirus outbreak.

The United Nations in South Africa responded with much urgency, including launching a US\$136 million (R2.5 billion) emergency appeal to assist up to 10 million people in vulnerable communities facing various risks caused by the pandemic in the areas of health, water and sanitation, food security and gender-based violence, among others.

With procurement support from UNFPA, the United Nations in South Africa and partners donated thousands of menstrual health and

hygiene management products and masks to the government as part of the UN response to prevent the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.



UN in South Africa Resident Coordinator, Ms. Nardos Bekele-Thomas and Minister of Social Development, Ms. Lindiwe Zulu holding a box of sanitary products while Minister in the Presidency for Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, Ms. Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, and Director General, Ms. Shoki Tshabalala look on.

Minister of Social Development, Lindiwe Zulu thanked the UN for its long partnership with South Africa and for leading the entire community in its response to COVID-19. She expressed delight with the partnership the department has with UNFPA, adding that the products

handed over to her ministry would be distributed to people who need them the most.

"Access to menstrual health remains a constraint in South Africa and across Africa, hindering the daily activities of adolescent girls and young women & has negative implications for their sexual and reproductive and mental health." - Ms. Beatrice Mutali



Ms. Beatrice Mutali, UNFPA Representative at the media briefing at the handover event

UNFPA response

As the confirmed cases of the coronavirus were beginning to rise in South Africa, UNFPA Country Office partnered with a number of Civil Society Organisations to strengthen their capacity to deliver integrated SRHR, HIV and GBV Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) interventions, with a focus on Covid-19, in response to the needs of adolescents and young people.

With the disruption of schools, routine health services and community-level centers, this necessitated UNFPA to adopt creative and flexible outreach strategies to reach young people, particularly through digital platforms to promote Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Social and Behavioural Change Communication. The messaging was packaged creatively for the youth around Covid-19, using content guided by information from the National Department of Health and the World Health Organisation.

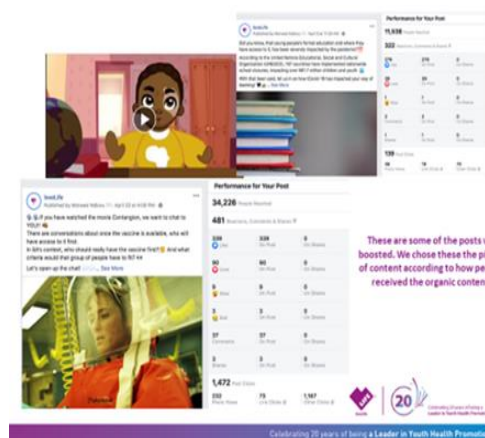


Working with loveLife

With an audience on social media made up of 56% women with 29% of those comprising of young women between the ages 25- 34 and 16% being 18- 24 year olds, it was strategic to partner with loveLife, the biggest youth organisation in South Africa. On their social media platforms young men make up 44% of the audience, with 25- 34 year olds making 23% while 18- 24 year olds men comprising of 11% of the audience. In implementing the SBCC activity, it was recognized that

young men were engaging far less, and this prompted efforts to reach and include men and boys in activities to engage them effectively.

At the end of the partnership in May, the overall growth of impressions totaled **133,669K**. According to Twitter and Facebook analytics there was an increase from 256, 178K to **389,847K** young people reached with the engaging content.



Partnering with Siyakwazi Youth Network

The Covid- 19 pandemic has had a major impact on the delivery of sexual and reproductive healthcare around the world and young people are mostly affected by the closure of social spaces including schools, community centers and health clinics where they receive Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) and SRHR services. This has resulted in many young people not having access to essential SRH services.



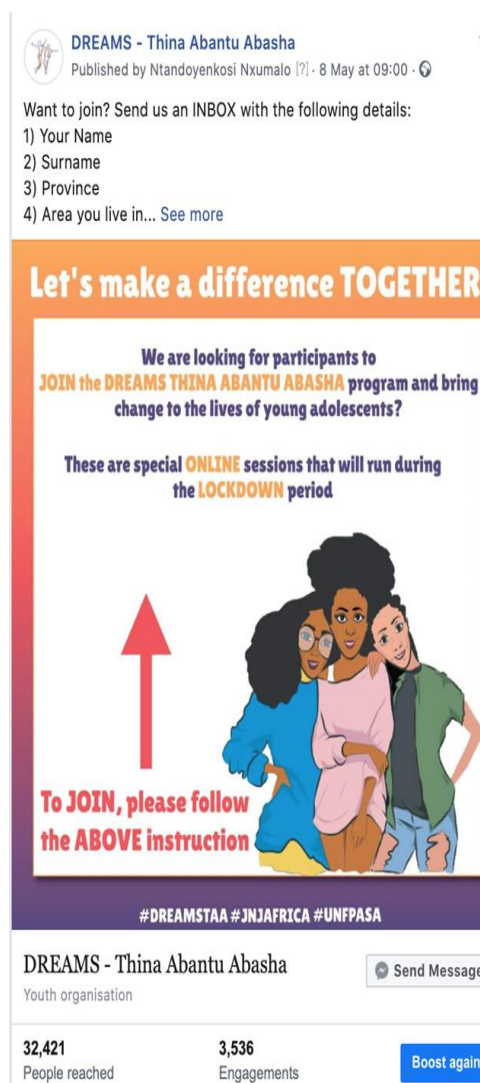
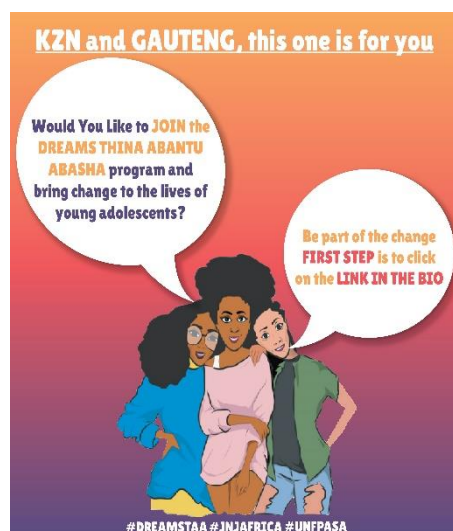
In 2015, Partners for Sexual Health (PSH), a national sexual and reproductive health and rights organisation, whose focus is on adolescents and youth, established a national youth network, in collaboration with the Department of Social Development, called the Siyakwazi Youth Network. It is against this backdrop that during this time of crisis, UNFPA partnered with PSH and Siyakwazi to amplify SRHR messaging and create awareness about SRHR topics and prevailing issues. It is often stated that young people play a significant role in contributing to the dissemination and sharing of key messages, and as such, one of the approaches to addressing the spread of the virus was to engage young people on social media platforms through the provision of factual, age-appropriate information about SRHR in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic. On the WhatsApp groups the total young people reached was **7749** and for the period, both Facebook and Twitter, the organic impressions totaled an astonishing **1,226, 416** young people and the

reach surpassed all targets, amounting to **1,015, 410**.

Digital deployment of Dreams Thina Abantu Abasha (DTAA) in the wake of Covid19

As the Covid-19 pandemic evolved rapidly, increasing the number of countries being affected by the outbreak, UNFPA, through its Public Private Partnership with Johnson & Johnson, focused on ensuring continued implementation of the DREAMS Thina Abantu Abasha (DTAA) program.

DTAA is designed, led and implemented by the youth to reduce HIV infections among girls aged 12-24. The peer education programme focuses on 3 pillars, namely sexual and reproductive health, leadership and employability skills. The modules are interactive and conveyed from peer (Peer Educator) to peer (Participants), with support from the Program Trainers and Data Capturers, overall leadership of the Youth Leadership Team members and technical oversight from Johnson & Johnson and UNFPA.



Young girls are recruited online, through an invite on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and the DTAA landing page. Interested participants join the program with all the necessary guidance for the online participation. A minimum of 10 girls are identified for participation per group. DTAA resource materials are uploaded on Google drive. Program Trainers assist Peer Educators with downloading of the Sister Pack for each workshop. Peer Educators share material prior to or during the session with the group of participants on WhatsApp. Date and time are arranged for the actual facilitation and discussion of the module with the group. **906** young girls were enrolled on the WhatsApp

program, with an impressive **87%** retention to date. Considering the unfamiliar terrain, guidance notes, social media invites and monitoring tools were developed for the digital program. The focus was two-fold; to continue with the program through an alternative medium and to ensure that the content is available, accessible to young girls now more than ever. During the month of April, the total reach was 92 095 and in May it was 151,581 and a total of 15 924 young people were actively engaged.

Public Service Announcements on community radio

Nqubeko Community Radio is a community radio station, based in KZN's UThukela District Municipality. The community radio station is broadcast throughout three surrounding municipalities i.e. Langelibalele Local Municipality, Okhahlamba Local Municipality and Alfred Duma Local Municipality.

Nqubeko FM also extends to external areas like Dundee, Newcastle, uMzinga, Greytown, QwaQwa and Harrismith on the frequency 100.5FM and audio stream site www.nqubekofm.co.za to listen online.



A vibrant & youthful presenter at the station



Nqubeko community radio station ran a Public Service Announcement for the United Nations Population Fund from the 23rd of April 2020 to the 7th of May 2020. The PSA was aimed at informing communities of preventative and precautionary measures to limit the spread of the coronavirus. The PSA ran successfully for a period of 14 days and reached thousands of people in the district of UThukela and all extended areas. Nqubeko also has an online presence with 29 000+ followers on Facebook and has a listenership of between 65 000 – 75 000.

“We are looking forward to working with UNFPA more and more, our listeners were excited to hear the PSAs & key messages...it’s good to know that UNFPA is supporting us deal with COVID-19,” said Kwande Sithole, a manager at the station.

UNFPA, drawing on its extensive networks of youth organizations and partners has cultivated compassion, raised awareness of the virus and shared information to promote preventative measures, using a variety of online tools and channels. This has resulted in the SBCC

activities reaching hundreds of thousands of young people with health seeking behaviours.

Paying tribute to midwives on International Day of the midwife

This year May 5th marked International Day of the Midwife celebrated under the theme “Midwives- Celebrate, Demonstrate, Mobilise, Unite.” To mark the day, the Mail and Guardian, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in collaboration with the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), held a free live webinar on May 8. The webinar was titled “A Tribute to Midwives - amid COVID-19 and beyond.” It was held to celebrate midwives in South Africa who are delivering frontline health services in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Webinar moderator, Dr. Tlaleng Mofokeng, with panelists Ms. Elgonda Bekker, Dr Muna Abdulla and Dr Melinda Suchard

The moderator, Dr. Mofokeng, a Commissioner at CGE highlighted the role of midwives as central to the delivery of quality sexual and reproductive healthcare services. Ms. Elgonda Bekker, the President of the Society of Midwives of South Africa spoke to some of the issues facing midwives and suggested that they were demonstrating courage and resilience by continuing to support childbearing women in the toughest of circumstances.

Dr. Muna Abdullah, from UNFPA said that during times of crisis, maternal services often bear the brunt of not getting attention. However, she emphasised that at the centre of the UNFPA’s work was to ensure that women have access to these services during times of crises. She hailed the work of midwives and highlighted the global leadership role of UNFPA as the lead UN agency on midwifery.



Dr Melinda Suchard from the National Institute for Communicable Diseases raised the issue that the virus is not going anywhere and that this poses an occupational risk for midwives. She said that even as South Africa work to flatten the curve, this means promulgating the curve. She said there was a need to plan and arm people with the knowledge to get through the pandemic.

The webinar might have only been an hour long but it provided a number of great insights in the world of midwifery and why scaled up investments in quality midwifery care and support are central during this time of the Covid-19 pandemic.



Stories from the field:

A young man's story: Running out of condoms under a COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa

<https://bit.ly/2BossYH>



A woman's diary of giving birth during the COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa

<https://bit.ly/3gUVTSo>



Nurses and midwives working around the clock to ensure safe pregnancies and births in the time of the COVID19 in South Africa

<https://bit.ly/2Mrjexo>



Social media banners

#21DaysLockDownSA



#TheNewNormal



#Midwives2020



Transformative Results



Ending unmet need for Family Planning



Ending maternal death



Ending violence & harmful practices for women & girls

*Delivering a world where
every pregnancy is wanted
every childbirth is safe and
every young person's
potential is fulfilled*

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