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# Youth Against COVID-19 in Libya

This newsletter is a special edition of the UNFPA Libya COVID-19 Newsletter entirely dedicated to the Youth Against COVID-19 Fund.

As part of its ongoing efforts to support young people in becoming agents of behavioral change within their communities and actively engage in the COVID-19 response, in April 2020, UNFPA launched its **Youth Against COVID-19 Fund**, in partnership with Tracks Organization for Peace and Development (TOPD). The Fund strives to expand and deepen the role of young people in minimizing and mitigating the devastating health and socio-economic impact of COVID-19 in Libya. In practice, the Fund aims at supporting youth-led initiatives that respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in all possible ways such as awareness raising, risk communication, and innovation.

**When empowered and provided with the necessary means, youth are best placed to be the enablers, the catalysts and the makers of change.**

Between March and August 2020, the Youth Against COVID-19 Fund supported six initiatives through microgrants – ranging from 2,000 LYD to 6,000 LYD each – in nine different Libyan cities, Tripoli, Benghazi, Sebha, Ghat, Gherian, Sebrata, Eljemail, Surman, and Alkhums. The initiatives are led by youth civil society organizations, namely the Y-PEER network (nationwide), Abhath Enterprise (Benghazi), Watar Foundation for Development and Awareness (Benghazi), the Libyan Association for Nursery and Midwifery (Benghazi), Fezzan Gamers Organization (Sebha), and Weqaya Team (Ghat).

Through the Fund’s support, these initiatives are combating the COVID-19 pandemic by increasing community awareness, promoting innovative prevention measures and supporting frontline health workers.

## Increasing community awareness

In Libya, a country affected by protracted conflict and instability, with an already over-stretched and under-resourced health system, there is a high need to raise community awareness of the risks associated to COVID-19 and promote the compliance with key preventive measures. Considering that the capacity of national authorities to conduct effective public communication is weak and the public trust in the institutions is compromised, the civil society in Libya needs to double its efforts to raise public awareness through risk communication and community engagement. Young leaders in Libya are best placed to raise public awareness and have a key role and responsibility to fulfil in these efforts.



Four of the six initiatives supported by the Youth Against COVID-19 Fund have indeed been focusing on conducting COVID-19 awareness campaigns. Between May and August, Watar Foundation for Development and Awareness from Benghazi produced and aired COVID-19 awareness messages on DO Radio (100.7 FM). In Sebha, Fezzan Gamers through their *Together We Can* campaign developed a series of online graphics that targeted different groups in Sebha such as street vendors, housewives, and athletes, reaching 223,000 online viewers of which 42% were women.

**“ We believe that with simple education about the COVID-19, we can save our beloved ones ”**  
*explained Halima, a 30-year old woman from Ghat, who’s leading the youth-led initiative*

Furthermore, most initiatives used creative online instruments to disseminate information. For instance, in Ghat, Weqaya Team produced a youth-friendly, animated video to promote precautionary measures and combat misinformation as part of their wide-ranging strategy of normalizing the new COVID-19 restrictions and measures.

## Using innovation in times of crisis



The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has challenged the effectiveness of conventional ways of combating public diseases and called for more unconventional and innovative measures to curb its spread. Young people are well placed to develop and lead inventive approaches. With local engineers and raw materials, Abhath Enterprise and Fezzan Gamers manufactured and installed sterilizing gates at the entrance of healthcare facilities in Sabha and Benghazi. These gates enable a full and quick sterilization of all the people accessing the buildings through vaporizing sanitizing liquid one visitor at a time. In Sebha, the sterilizing gate was installed at the gate of Abdulkafee Public Clinic, the first of its kind in the city.

“ We wanted to ensure the safety of the healthcare providers, so they can continue doing their job in the best circumstances possible, ” said the 25-years old head of Fezzan Gamers, Almahdi.

“ Being the first local manufacturers of a sterilizing gate, we faced many challenges such as difficulties to move around, access to raw materials, and power-cuts, but we succeeded! ” he added.

## Supporting healthcare frontline soldiers



In these difficult times, frontline healthcare providers need all kinds of support. Health facilities are overwhelmed and overstretched in developed countries, let alone in a country suffering from chronic institutional fragility and protracted conflict. Besides the two sterilizing gates that were both installed at health facilities, the Fund supported the Libyan Association for Nursery and Midwifery (LANM) which trained more than 35 young nurses in Benghazi about nursing in times of pandemic and the impact of COVID-19 on their daily work. Through the Fund's grant, in June, the LANM organized two workshops. The first for the nurses who work at the Disabilities Center and the second was for nurses who work at the different public hospitals in Benghazi.

“ It is our role as an association for nurses and midwives to support the true health frontline soldiers, ” said Bushra Eltajouri, the chairwoman of the Libyan Association for Nurses and Midwifery.

Although these nurses have been reporting to their work non-stop during the pandemic, the vast majority of the participants pointed that this was their first COVID-19-related workshop.

## 'Back to Zero Case' campaign

UNFPA supported the Y-PEER network in conducting the 'Back to Zero Case' campaign to help Libya achieve zero cases of COVID-19. The youth-led initiative focused on raising awareness of COVID-19 within the community, and helping people respect social distancing measures in banks, bakeries and grocery stores. The campaign was implemented in close coordination with the National Center for Disease Control. It took place between March and May 2020. It targeted Tripoli, Gherian, Sebrata, Eljemail, Surman, and Khums with over 4,600 followers on Facebook. During the last week of April alone, the campaign targeted 25 bakeries in Gherian with awareness materials. This is part of UNFPA's ongoing efforts to support young people in taking part in the humanitarian response in Libya. This was the first youth-led initiative UNFPA supported as a response to the pandemic, which marked the birth of the Youth Against COVID-19 Fund. Upon the remarkable capacity and leadership youth have shown responding to this crisis, UNFPA together with TOPD decided to extend its support to five additional youth-led initiatives.



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## Moving forward

While having an emergency, quick-impact nature, the Youth Against COVID-19 Fund is conceived as a long-term initiative that aims at fostering state-society collaboration in times of crises and at unleashing and cultivating the potential of young people in Libya.

Upon the promising results of the six pilot initiatives, UNFPA and partners are currently in conversation with the Libyan Red Crescent (LRC) to launch a call for ideas for all LRC young volunteers across Libya, to be funded through the Youth Against COVID-19 Fund. Given the LRC volunteers' hands-on experience in combating the pandemic in their communities, the LRC and UNFPA believe that LRC's young volunteers are best placed to develop innovative and contextualized initiatives that can make a difference in their communities.

### For more information:

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