



UN Volunteer Basmeena Safi, a UN Volunteer Health Officer with UNICEF, supports efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus by sensitizing communities about facts surrounding COVID-19 to stop misinformation via social media.

© UNV, 2020

Propagating health awareness online to ensure the safety of communities during COVID-19

Afghanistan, like many other countries across the world, is in lockdown due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Creating awareness about the effects of COVID-19 in communities embroiled in conflict over the years is onerous. UN Volunteers serving with the UN Children's Fund are propagating health awareness by engaging with target groups online.

UN Volunteer Basmeena Safi, a UN Volunteer Health Officer with UNICEF, is sparing no effort to prevent the spread of the virus and protect communities. A specialist in healthcare, Basmeena, has supported efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus by sensitizing communities about facts surrounding COVID-19 to stop misinformation.

While the country remains in lockdown, she works from home using social media to inform

communities about COVID-19. She is also an active member of the online support community in Afghanistan, which uses the internet (web, blogs, and social media) to help address people's concerns during the pandemic. These concerns include access to health facilities and support to vulnerable groups, especially women and those lacking financial resources to survive daily during the lockdown.

Basmeena has this to say about her experience supporting COVID-19 response efforts:

“ In the Afghan community, spreading the word about COVID-19 is difficult, and circulating facts is harder. Supporting during crisis is not an easy task. Strong social and cultural norms exist in these communities, where people have witnessed death and unbearable suffering. Here, people have experienced so much pain that they no longer consider COVID-19 a threat.

"When I tried to distribute some pamphlets and brochures from UNICEF on the first day of the epidemic, even my family members, including my husband and father-in-law, were unsupportive. I felt challenged," Basmeena says, and continues, "We need help to defeat COVID-19, and we must include religious leaders, respected elders and influential community members in awareness campaigns."

"A few tips I can give for beating COVID-19 are to follow the doctor's advice, wash your hands as many times a day, try to eat vegetables and fruits containing Vitamin C, and, most importantly, avoid social gatherings," she concludes.

Baseema is among 22 UN Volunteers serving with UNICEF Afghanistan, supporting in water, sanitation and hygiene, nutrition, human resources, monitoring and evaluation, gender, communications, IT and project management, among others.

“ We at UNICEF love the UNV programme, and we are proud of our UN Volunteers. All of them are women, and they are highly qualified. We are thankful for their contributions to furthering UNICEF's mandate and activities to promote the development of the communities. --Mr Abubakar Kamp, UNICEF Country Representative in Afghanistan

The continued increase in infections could overwhelm health systems in a country like Afghanistan, which faces a shortage of nurses, doctors, and other frontline health providers.

With an increasing number of people testing positive, the country's fight against COVID-19 comes at a crucial time. Governments are pledging more foreign aid to fight the crisis, thus ensuring that communities are on board in the response measures – while challenging – remains critical.



Asia and the Pacific

• UNICEF • COVID-19 • Coronavirus • community health

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 3: Good health and well-being](#) [SDG 6: Clean water and sanitation](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)