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Mamadou Bah (right), national UN Volunteer Community Change Management Specialist with UNICEF, speaks to the Village Development Committee of Nafugan In Upper River Region of The Gambia on the feedback mechanism.

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Engaging Gambian communities to stop the spread of COVID-19

In the fight against the COVID 19 epidemic, the commitment of communities remains essential. In the Gambia, a national working group on Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE), including both the government and United Nations, was set up to assist communities in their response to the pandemic. Mamadou Bah, a national UN Volunteer Community Change Management Specialist with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), is a member of the working group. Read more on how he supports Gambian communities.

In times of emergency, the demand for information is exceedingly high. Providing people with the right and relevant information they need to stay safe is part of the mission of Mamadou. He coordinates the U-Report and Rapid pro platforms of UNICEF. These are

mobile empowerment programmes with more than 10,000 users that connect young people, community members and frontline workers to information that will influence decisions.

Data matters. It is crucial to understand the needs of communities which might experience barriers to accessing information. Mamadou provides real-time disaggregated data by gender, age and region to inform programming and advocacy.

"Limited knowledge of the use of technology, monitoring and evaluation for development has been challenging for me. But as UN Volunteer I benefited from online courses via Agora, which helped me deliver expected results," he reports.

Mamadou also contributed to reinforcing the capacities of the 33 members across the country, and 120 community structures called the Village Development Committee (VDC) on inter interpersonal communication, participatory rural appraisal, monitoring, and feedback mechanism.

With his team members, he rolled out a nationwide training on coordination and awareness-raising. They delivered pieces of training on community lead action plan, reporting mechanism on accountability of affected population, and rumors monitoring. He also coordinated and managed the monitoring and feedback mechanism aspect through all engagements with local authorities and community structures.

“ Part of the gap we noticed was the urgent need for proper engagement of regional and local structures to enhance their capacity in coordination and awareness-raising to further engage communities in fighting COVID-19. Mamadou has been instrumental during this challenging time. We appreciate his continued technical support. --Sandra Lattouf, UNICEF Resident Representative, Gambia.

Mamadou and his team members are working to ensure communities have an action plan response to covid-19. A job he is passionate about.

“ What motivated me in the current program I serve is its relevance in helping rural communities strengthen their capacity and its people-centered approach. As a former volunteer of the Red Cross, I saw how communities are vulnerable to health and other key issues impacting their development. I have seen how communities have little

“ or no say in their own affairs and development programmes are not sustainable or accountable. Engaging with UN Volunteers is an extension of my purpose to help the vulnerable people of my country. --Mamadou Bah, national UN Volunteer Community Change Management Specialist , UNICEF



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