08 February 2021

V4Action volunteers initiated the #SpreadLove campaign to spread messages of love, hope, kindness and positivity in support of those affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

V4Action in Nepal: Volunteers curb misinformation about COVID-19

Youth volunteers have been playing an important role in curbing misinformation about the coronavirus in Nepal. Brought together through the Volunteer for Action (V4Action) platform, they are providing accurate and verified information as educators and change agents among their peers and in their communities.

As Nepal began to shut down due to the coronavirus outbreak, myths and misinformation about the pandemic started spreading fast – through personal interactions and social media. To address this issue and to ensure the safety of all communities, the UN Volunteers (UNV) programme, together with the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), UN Development Programme (UNDP), World Health Organization (WHO) and UN Resident Coordinator’s Office (UNRCO), formed the Volunteer for Action (V4Action) group, comprising 500+ volunteers from all seven provinces of Nepal.

These volunteers use accurate and verified facts issued by the Government of Nepal, WHO, and other UN agencies. Serving online, the volunteers used verified infographics as their
profile pictures, cover photos, and stories, and shared informational flyers on their social media platforms. They gathered up-to-date information from webinars organized by the V4Action task group and then reached out to a wider audience with their learnings.

Three UN Volunteers are leading on this initiative: Sujan Govinda Amatya, Communications Officer with WHO, Binita Karki, Youth Programme Officer with UNDP and Samprit Rai, Information Database Coordinator, UNRCO. In a recent piece, Binita shared how V4Action is harnessing the power of youth.

“As an online campaigner, I got a chance to serve my community, by sharing authentic and reliable information on COVID-19 and mental health. I am very happy to raise the issues and problems faced by marginalized communities, including people with disabilities. I am eager to continue the work and hope to reach out to more youth.--Nir Shrestha, a visually-impaired V4Action Volunteer

The volunteers reported myths and misinformation spreading in their communities on UNICEF’s Joint Fight Against Misinformation rumour-tracking campaign; and created videos in local languages, giving their viewers the correct information and urging them to stay home.

Thanks to the efforts of the volunteers, more than 100 rumors and myths about the pandemic were submitted to UNICEF’s online rumor tracking application to be debunked.

“The online myth-busting campaign aimed to engage the public in rumour tracking and misinformation, and ever since, we have received hundreds of reports of fake news, misinformation and rumours across Nepal. We appreciate the myth-busting power of these volunteers. --Tania Dhakhwa, Chief of Communication with UNICEF Nepal

The volunteers also addressed the effects of the pandemic on people’s mental health. They attended webinars to learn more about mental health issues and created relevant videos in their local languages to reach more people.
Creating videos to raise awareness and conducting surveys in the community and individuals helped me understand the problems they were facing and provide solutions suited to the people in my community. --Anu Poudel, V4Action Volunteer

Social stigma and discrimination faced by COVID-19 positive patients, migrant workers, as well as health workers, also became a rampant issue due to the pandemic. The volunteers served to garner more support and awareness on social media by sharing videos, quotes and key messages. One example of such social media activity is the Corona Collage Video, which brought to light the discrimination faced by vulnerable groups.

The volunteers even started a karaoke initiative, with clips of people thanking COVID heroes, like Sabina Thapa, and her experience fighting discrimination, raising spirits.

The V4Action task team initiated the #SpreadLove campaign, calling on everyone, especially young people, to spread messages of love, hope, kindness and positivity in support of those affected by the COVID-19 crisis. It calls on people to amplify the voices and positive actions of #COVIDHeroes who are working on the frontlines.

The V4ActionTION volunteer initiative consists of diverse members from different backgrounds. This has helped the initiative in reaching different community groups irrespective of geography, culture, language and gender to effectively address issues affecting them.

Due to COVID-19, life of sexual and gender minorities in Nepal became more vulnerable. Many transgender people experienced discrimination and violence due to traditionally rigid gender roles, stereotypes and socio-cultural norms and insufficient or proper legal gender recognition law. Transgender people are being discriminated against during the distribution of relief food material from various agencies, as these require a citizenship ID and many transgender people do not have IDs to match their gender. Through V4Action we were able to create awareness on these issues and their rights. --Aanik Rana Magar, LGTQI Group

V4Action Volunteers have been committed to using their time and skills to fight against the threats of myths and misinformation to make sure their communities are guided in the right
direction to face the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. This inspiring team of young people continues to lead by example to ensure the safety of their communities.

- COVID-19 • Coronavirus • Verified initiative

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 3: Good health and well-being, SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals