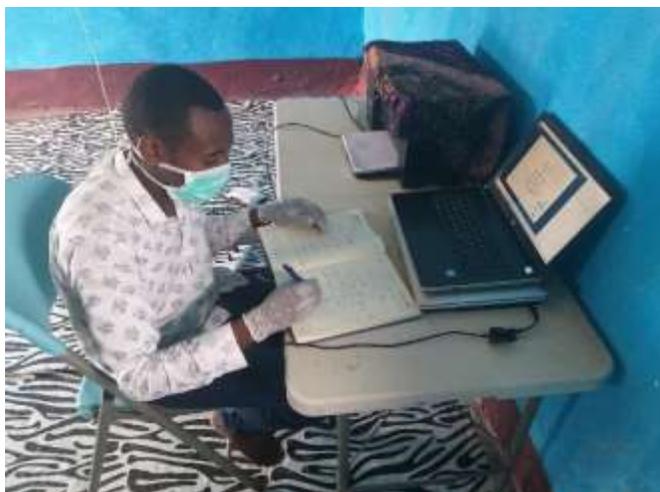


e-learning tools help to ensure continuity of services in Somalia during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Mohamed Mohamud from WASDA (a national NGO) participates in the on-line training in Afmadow district, Lower Jubba, Somalia.

Background

Equipping facility and community health workers (CHWs) with the right skills is critical in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 as they implement various nutrition interventions at facility, household and community levels. This is particularly relevant in Somalia where many community level interventions are delivered through CHWs. However, with restrictions on travel and gatherings imposed as a measure to curb the spread of COVID-19, the traditional way of providing trainings and refresher trainings to health staff at facility and community levels is no longer feasible. Since the start of this pandemic, there has

been an urgent need to ensure that health staff and CHWs are trained on COVID-19 specific messages, while minimizing the risk of transmission of the virus. To address this challenge, virtual training was carried out for all implementing partners in Somalia, supported by UNICEF through the nutrition cluster. The training covered three topics for partners, guided by the GNC-GTAM¹ guidance; i) Key information for CHWs on COVID-19, ii) Wasting programme changes in the context of COVID-19 and iii) IYCF advice in the context of COVID-19.

Preparation of training materials

The UNICEF Somalia nutrition section, together with the UNICEF health section, the Nutrition Cluster and WFP worked swiftly to adapt materials that had been developed by WHO, UNICEF HQ, GNC/GTAM and UNICEF Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office, to design presentations for use in the training of implementing partners. The presentations focused on three thematic areas listed above.. Global technical notes and guidance on wasting management and IYCF were adapted to the context in Somalia. In just 5 days, the training materials were ready.

Delivery of webinars

The webinar format was chosen as the modality for e-learning because of its advantages in terms of cost-effectiveness, the ability to reach all partners remotely, quickly, and the ease with which organizers could effectively moderate discussions. In preparation for the actual webinars with implementing partners, mock webinars for each of the facilitating teams were conducted to check connections, assign roles and address any challenges. The first webinar on CHW training for COVID-19 set the scene with a quiz taken from the UNICEF public website on COVID-19 and helped to engage participants and assess their existing knowledge.

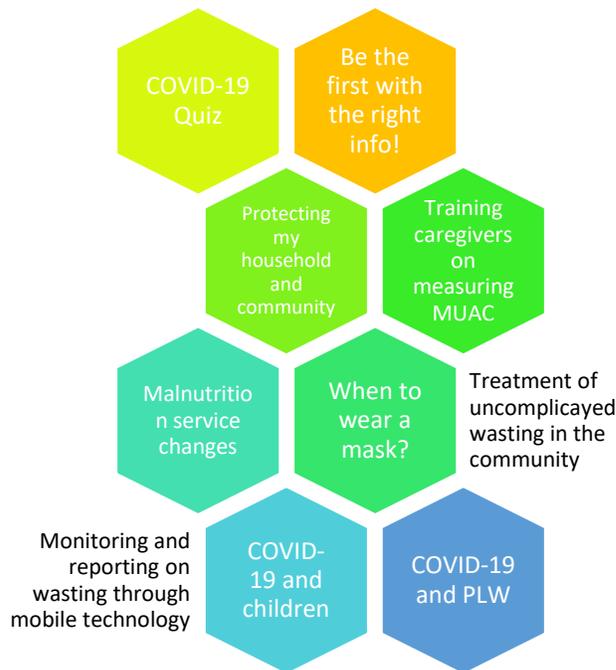
¹ Global Nutrition Cluster – Global Technical Assistance Mechanism

Webinars were delivered to partners in two groups in the first week to ensure a manageable number of participants for each session, morning and afternoon. The first week’s webinars were delivered in English. A broad range of content was covered, from basic information on COVID-19 to specific information that reflected on how to address nutrition in the context of COVID-19, to how the evolving situation would be monitored. Each day focused on one of the three thematic areas, and the webinars were repeated twice daily to cater for the two groups of implementing partners. Participants received copies of the training materials in advance to counter any technological challenges with the webinars.

In the second week, the webinars were repeated, morning sessions were in Somali, afternoon sessions were in English and all partners were invited to whichever session they preferred. This decision was made based on feedback from partners in the first week, with approximately 30% of those polled reporting they would prefer a session in Somali. This also enabled us to allow partners to invite health facility staff to attend the Somali webinars.

After the first webinar, it was clear that the participants (including implementing partner technical teams and health staff) lacked knowledge on COVID-19 and were interested in its epidemiology. UNICEF thus engaged colleagues from the health section to be part of subsequent calls so that they could respond to questions related to COVID-19 epidemiology as needed. At the end of each webinar, participants were invited to complete a short Survey Monkey questionnaire to help inform the structure and delivery for the following webinars.

Example of some of the training topics included:

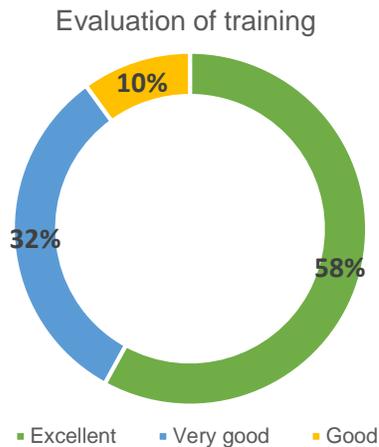


Numbers reached with e-learning

Participation was high, and a total of 372 people were trained across implementing partners.. These participants operate in all three of Somalia’s zones, namely Somaliland, Puntland and South-Central, and they joined the training webinars over two weeks in April. As a result of the training, all partners who participated in the training at a de-centralized level across the three

zones have access to the knowledge necessary to continue implementation of nutrition activities in COVID-19 safe manner. Since the training, partners in Puntland have cascaded the training to 550 frontline workers and partners in Somaliland are currently rolling out the training using WhatsApp, and one round of training was successfully implemented through this approach on 13 May 2020.

Evaluation of e-learning approach



The training approach adopted was engaging, with a total of 488 questions asked on different focus areas. Many questions asked were around the epidemiology of Covid-19 and health-related risks, reflecting the knowledge needs of participants.

'The information in the webinar was exciting and helpful for all aspects for IYCF'

All questions were shared with C4D specialists and used to refine risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) messaging, and with the Health Section to help them prepare for health webinars that were run in the week following the nutrition webinars. Evaluations were

conducted after each training session with positive results despite almost half of the participants reporting that they had not used Zoom before. All participants who responded reported that the training was either excellent, very good or good, and almost all (95%) indicated that they had learned something new.

Lessons learned

- Cross sectoral engagement and collaboration with health, C4D and nutrition resulted in the development of an effective e-learning training package that met the capacity needs of implementing partners
- Distance does not prevent training with use of digital tools to for virtual capacity building.
- It is crucial to use clear instructions and communication including use of calendar invitations to ensure ease of attendance during an emergency response situation.
- This pandemic has emphasized that getting the right information to the right people quickly is essential. These information sessions addressed an information gap in a timely fashion and were greatly appreciated by partners.

'I like to gain cascade knowledge about malnutrition responses during COVID-19 crisis. Some of the best tips we got was stopping measuring weight for height'

Next steps

Coordination:

All training materials are available on the [Somalia Nutrition Cluster](#) page on the GNC website. The materials include webinar recordings (with their associated questions and answers), slides and audio-only recordings, each in English and Somali languages. **Capacity building:**

- This was a first training provided to partners in field locations across the three zones in Somalia. Training of frontline workers is now being carried out through the trained implementing partners, following appropriate physical distancing precautions.
- All on-line training materials are downloadable to facilitate printing and hard-copy distribution of presentations to point of service, and the sharing of audio and webinar recordings via USB sticks and other digital platforms used by partners including WhatsApp to further share the training.

'It is good for us to continue such programmes during COVID-19'

Monitoring:

- Implementing partners received a checklist as part of the e-training to keep track of all the changes they were going to effect in their catchment areas as a result of the training.
- The Somalia National Nutrition Cluster and UNICEF together with WFP and the Ministry of Health invited partners across Somalia to a Question and Answer sessions on 14th May. This allowed partners to share updates and emerging questions after giving some time for implementation of programme modifications in light of COVID-19.

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Hawa Aden Omar receives breastfeeding support with her newborn in Kismayo, Somalia through a partnership between UNICEF and SAF-UK.