Monthly Bulletin

Gov-HER-Nance

Ensuring Gender Equity and
Socio-Economic Resilience
During COVID-19

Women are generally the primary caregivers in Pakistani society. And with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, that burden of care has vastly increased. Data* shows that 83% of a woman's time is spent at home, providing care for household members, home maintenance and self-care. It is also reflected in the limited mobility of many Pakistani women. They are often four times less mobile than men leading to limited sources of information being available for them. Their need for updated information is critical to providing efficient care for their families. This bulletin aims to reach women and provide them with COVID-19 related news to help them navigate around issues of safety, community and local governance.

Accountability Lab Pakistan (ALP), with support from the Health Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany is publishing bulletins under the "Governance Ensuring Gender Equity and Socioeconomic Impact during COVID-19" campaign. This campaign aims to build and strengthen the resilience of marginalized populations, especially women, in three districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa against the negative impacts of COVID-19 as well as other future pandemics and health emergencies.

These bulletins include important government decisions, community feedback, verified information, valid concerns, and other questions from the ground around health, safety and local governance. These bulletins are translated into Urdu and 600 copies will be dissemi nated in three districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - Peshawar, Mardan and Nowshera.

*Source: UNWomen

FACT

The COVID-19 vaccine has severe side effects such as allergic reactions.

It has been observed that the side effects are similar to those experienced with other vaccines, including muscle pain, chills and headache. And although extremely rare, people can have severe allergic reactions to ingredients used in a vaccine.

That's why experts recommend people with a history of severe allergic reactions such as anaphylaxis (severe and potentially life-threatening reaction to a trigger such as an allergy) to the ingredients of the vaccine should not get the vaccination.

Source:muhealth.org

MYTH

Warm water or saline will protect you from getting sick if you're exposed to the coronavirus.

False reports are circulating that drinking or bathing in warm or hot water, or washing out the inside of your nose with saline (salt) solution, will protect you from COVID-19 if you are exposed to the coronavirus. These reports are not true.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is very tiny and cannot be rinsed or washed out of the throat or nasal passages. The best ways to prevent infection and contamination are to get vaccinated, wear a mask, practice hand hygiene and physical distancing.

Source: Johns Hopkins

PREVENTIVE MEASURES THAT CAN BE TAKEN AGAINST CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Wear a mask that has two or more layers of washable, breathable fabric and covers your mouth, nose and chin. It should not be loose on the sides.

Practice physical distancing outside your home by keeping a distance of 3 feet between you and others.

Get registered for vaccination as soon as possible and follow all pre and post-vaccination guidelines.

Avoid unnecessary contact with eyes, nose and mouth as that increases chances of virus transfer.

Keep yourself and your environment clean.

If you fall sick, stay at home and contact a healthcare provider.

Avoid unnecessary outdoor socialising and spending time in crowded spaces

Source: NCBI

Obesity may weaken vaccine protection; unvaccinated Omicron patients face risk from variants

According to a study conducted in Turkey, severe obesity may weaken the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines in those who have never been infected with the coronavirus. Among those in the study, without previous SARS-CoV-2 infection; who had received the Pfizer (PFE.N)/BioNTech vaccine, patients with severe obesity had antibody levels more than three times lower than normal-weight individuals. Among recipients of Sinovac Biotech's (SVA.O) CoronaVac, those with severe obesity and no history of prior infection had antibody levels 27 times lower than normal weight people, according to data being presented at the European Congress on Obesity in Maastricht, Netherlands. When comparing 70 volunteers who were previously infected by coronavirus, it was seen that the level of antibodies were similar between people with and without severe obesity.

New research suggests that adults (aged 18 or older) with severe obesity generate a significantly weaker immune response to COVID-19 vaccination compared to those with normal weight.
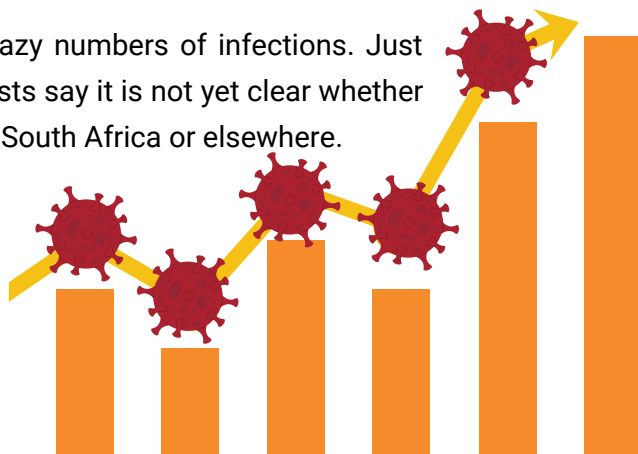
Source: ScItech Daily

Are COVID surges becoming more predictable?

Omicron relatives called BA.4 and BA.5 are behind a fresh wave of COVID-19 and could be signs of a more predictable future for SARS-CoV-2. Nearly six months after researchers in South Africa identified the Omicron coronavirus variant, two offshoots of the game-changing lineage are once again driving a surge in COVID-19 cases there. Several studies released in the past couple of months shows that the variants known as BA.4 and BA.5 are slightly more transmissible than earlier forms of Omicron1, and can dodge some of the immune protection conferred by previous infection and vaccination.

"We're definitely entering a resurgence and it seems to be driven entirely by BA.4 and BA.5," says Penny Moore, a virologist at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, whose team is studying the

Africa, whose team is studying the variants. "We're seeing crazy numbers of infections. Just within my lab, I have six people who are sick." However, scientists say it is not yet clear whether BA.4 and BA.5 will cause much of a spike in hospitalizations in South Africa or elsewhere.

  High levels of population immunity provided by previous waves of Omicron infection and by vaccination might blunt much of the damage previously associated with new SARS-CoV-2 variants.

Source: Nature

EXPERT INTERVIEW WITH........

In this month's edition, we interviewed Ms. Zil E Huma who serves as Deputy Director at the Department of Press Information and Broadcasting in Islamabad. She is also the founding president of Oxford South Asian Society at Oxford University, which aims to increase the collaboration among students on South Asian policy issues and promote regional peace. Her name was also included among top five Masters Student of the Year Post Grad Award in the UK.

What changes has the media industry seen after the Covid-19 outbreak?

"COVID-19 introduced the idea of online/remote journalism. The use of technology has become more common in talk shows. Now guest speakers can be taken online in TV programs after successful experiments. The bombardment of information on social media leading from genuine issues to rumors during the COVID and afterwards, raised the questions of authenticity and verification of information. Countering rumors and fake news has become an important agenda for the government. Society is discussing the ethics and norms of social media. Many journalists moved to online journalism and have started their personal you tube channels and organizing space sessions. Similarly, financial crises during the COVID-19 also negatively impacted the media industry. Many journalists were laid off or not paid for several months.

How Covid-19 rumors and misinformation has been spreading?

There are many reasons for the spread of rumors and misinformation related to COVID-19. During the first wave of COVID-19, there was an element of uncertainty due to its novelty. All countries were experimenting with different cures and safety measures that created space for rumors and misinformation. Second reason is lack of responsibility on part of social media users while sharing any news on social media platforms. While sharing some news or posts on social media by the public, the norms of authenticity and verifications are not followed. The general public believes in whatever news is given on social media and further shares it. So, it is very important to verify any news before sharing on social media.

What was the biggest problem the media faced to report, during the Covid-19?

Media industry faced many challenges to report during the COVID-19. In the beginning, there was uncertainty about the negative impacts of the pandemic in Pakistan. The developed countries who were far above than Pakistan in terms of technological advancement and financial resources, faced huge loss in the form of human lives and economic crises. An environment of fear was prevailing, causing spread of rumors and misleading the public. So, the most important challenge for the media was to obtain authentic and accurate information to inform the public. The access to credible sources was very important to counter rumors and create mass awareness about the precautionary measures.

How has the government managed infodemics during the pandemic and how it can be harmful for people?

The government of Pakistan took several steps to manage infodemics during the pandemic. First of all, the government of Pakistan closely observed and followed the guidelines issued by the World Health Organization (WHO). National Command and Control Center (NCOC) became the central body to issue and implement policies related to COVID-19 in Pakistan after careful monitoring of pandemic situations on a day-to-day basis. NCOC generated timely and accurate information to inform the public by engaging print, electronic and Digital Media on a daily basis. So NCOC became the

central source of Information for the media to obtain authentic information about the number of patients, deaths, restrictions and precautionary measures. Similarly, the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting created mass awareness about the pandemic through media campaigns that included advertisements, public service messages, arranging press conferences for relevant authorities and facilitating the media to get correct information. During the pandemic, I was working at the Ministry of Human Rights. The Ministry of Human Rights also initiated a social media campaign highlighting the issues faced by the marginalized groups and remedies available to them. The infodemics are harmful and involve flooding of information that consists of both verified and unverified content. Such infodemics create confusion among masses which direction to follow and what steps to take. They also create hurdles for the government institutions to control any emergency situations and calm the public.

What key problems or challenges journalists faced to report during COVID 19 pandemic? And what steps have been taken by the government to mitigate the challenges?

There were many problems faced by the media during the pandemic. They were a bridge between government institutions and the public to point out the problems faced by the public during the pandemic and apprize the masses about steps taken by the government to overcome this emergency situation. First challenge was to obtain accurate information rather than believing in assumptions and rumors. The government established channels of accurate information to feed the media directly. Second challenge for the media was their own safety during the pandemic. The government also tried its level best that precautionary measures are followed by the institutions and officials interacting with media like wearing masks, social distancing and use of sanitizers. Media was also given guidelines for their safety measures during the pandemic.

On a policy level, has the government deployed any specific tool or processes to fight disinformation or ensure verify information?

"The government established designated channels to provide accurate and correct information. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and National Command and Control Center became central points to get any kind of information related to COVID-19 according to the guidelines of World Health Organization (WHO). The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting initiated many awareness campaigns on print, electronic and digital media for the masses. Similarly, Cyber wing and Digital Media Wing of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting actively kept check on fake news and rumors on social media during the COVID-19 and rapidly responded to such misinformation.

VACCINATION CENTRES

▶ MARDAN

DHQ Hospital Mardan
03005921350

Mardan Medical Complex, Mardan
03339298814

▶ NOWSHERA

Cat D Hospital, Manki Sharif
03028318682

District Head Quarter Hospital Nowshera
03005712208

▶ PESHAWAR

Hayat Abad Medical Complex Hayatabad
03005669116

Khyber Teaching Hospital University Town
03339677767