REMOTE PROGRAMMING TO SERVE WOMEN, GIRLS, AND THEIR COMMUNITIES IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

COVID-19 threatens to upend decades of progress toward gender equality. The pandemic undeniably harms the health, safety, and livelihood of millions of people globally. Yet experience from past disease outbreaks has taught us that the resulting school closures, lockdowns, and restricted access to health care will exaggerate existing gender disparity. Women and girls will be disproportionately affected, particularly those disadvantaged by poverty, age, race, geography, migration, disability, or health status. They face increased violence, reduced access to reproductive healthcare and rights, and a heightened caregiving burden.

The crisis makes the work of reaching women and girls more critical than ever. However, when an emergency such as COVID-19 strikes, engaging women and girls is more difficult. Restricted mobility, lack of physical safety, loss of livelihood, and limited access to essential resources such as food and health care make remote programming necessary.

WomenStrong International developed this guidance for adapting programming in response to the current emergency. Although remote programming is not new, particularly among humanitarian agencies, it often has been implemented on an ad hoc basis, with limited guidance. This publication seeks to fill that gap. It includes a menu of considerations, resources, and examples from the Americas, Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East.

Remote Programming to Serve Women, Girls, and Their Communities in the Time of COVID-19

SECTION 1 explores six considerations for adapting programs to a remote platform. Practitioners can examine these considerations in any order; each focuses on aspects of program design that are critical to successful implementation.

SECTION 2 provides a list of possible alternative program modalities and platforms that can be used in both low- and high-resource settings.

Please note that in this document, "remote programming" is not necessarily virtual or digital. WomenStrong defines remote programming as a shift from the usual, often in-person delivery of services to a new approach in which programs are managed and/or implemented remotely to meet

emerging participant needs and reduce risk for all during a crisis. "Remote" in this context means that there is a physical or social distance between staff and participants, and/or that services are delivered in a location that is "remote" to the program's usual site, such as a school or office.[1]

Throughout, the examples we lift up include the experiences of WomenStrong's 19 partner organizations working to prevent violence and advance education, health, and the rights of women and girls in 16 countries worldwide. These organizations are participants in WomenStrong's peer-driven Learning Lab, where they develop, test, sharpen, and amplify solutions for women and girls.

Finally, this publication also includes an **Appendix on Feminist Responses to COVID-19**. WomenStrong supports a response rooted in gender justice, which calls for participatory, inclusive, and rights-based mobilization to address the pandemic's impact – including within remote programs. Before launching remote programs, organizations should assess internal capacity to address emerging needs during a crisis, given resources, expertise, and the larger context in which organizations work. This includes identifying potential unintended consequences in remote settings and taking steps to address them.

[1.] See the World Health Organization's *Humanitarian Programming and Monitoring in Inaccessible Conflict Settings: A Literature Review* (Chaudry et al., 2017).

SECTION 1: CONSIDERATIONS FOR REMOTE PROGRAMMING

REVISIT GOALS **IDENTIFY TARGET AUDIENCE** **UNDERSTAND PARTICIPANT NEEDS** **ASSESS CONTEXT AND POTENTIAL RISKS** **LEVERAGE PARTNERSHIPS TO EXPAND CAPACITY** **CHOOSE A PROGRAMMING APPROACH**

The considerations included below are presented as key questions organizations should examine as they respond to COVID-19. WomenStrong offers this information as a menu of considerations, examples, and additional resources related to remote programs, and readers are encouraged to choose and dive deeper into the topics that are most relevant to their respective contexts and situations.

As organizations adapt their program approaches during the time of COVID-19, experience from past emergencies shows the importance of incorporating a gender analysis into preparedness and response efforts to improve program effectiveness and to promote gender and health equity goals. For each of the considerations discussed below, organizations should address the gendered impacts of the emergency, tailor programming to the needs of different groups of women and men, and develop a coordinated response with key actors within local contexts.

REVISIT GOALS

What are the goals and objectives of the original program plan within your organization? How have these changed, based on the emerging needs of participants and the community during this crisis? Do your organization's goals need to shift to address the unique impact of this crisis on vulnerable or marginalized populations, specifically women and girls? How do the program objectives address the differing needs of men, women, girls, and boys? If needed, update your analysis of the issue this program is addressing, and adjust your goals accordingly.

IDENTIFY TARGET AUDIENCE

Who was the target audience for your organization's programs before this crisis? Are these the same people you need to reach now? Has the crisis had differential impacts on your audience based on age, class, ethnicity, residence, and education? How does your organization plan to reach this audience during this time, given limited mobility and varying degrees of access to technology?

EXAMPLE

MUJERES ALIADAS AC
Women's Organization for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

WomenStrong partner **Mujeres Aliadas** planned to begin a new community education program in their area of Michoacán, México, about healthcare rights and advocacy for women. However, the organization had not recruited the groups of women with whom it wanted to work for this program before the COVID-19 pandemic and stay-at-home restrictions began. Adapting to

changing circumstances, Mujeres Aliadas partnered with community-based organizations that already work with women's groups to pilot its community education program with this different but more readily accessible group of women. When circumstances permit, the organization plans to bring this piloted program to its originally intended audience.

UNDERSTAND PARTICIPANT NEEDS

What do people in your organization's target audience need now, given the unfolding crisis? If you aren't sure, consider conducting a community needs assessment or a situational analysis. With a sense of the community's needs in hand, what feels possible and/or appropriate, given your organization's capacity and relationship with the community at this time?

EXAMPLE

Women's Justice Initiative, a WomenStrong partner in Guatemala, used three principles to guide its development of remote programs during COVID-19: 1) listen to the community and to women; 2) build on organizational strengths and existing community networks; and 3) partner with other organizations where Women's Justice Initiative does not have capacity or expertise. When the Guatemalan town of Patzun was placed under a strict lockdown, Women's Justice Initiative gathered input on residents' most urgent needs through outreach by community advocates and volunteers via WhatsApp. The organization recognized that it did not have the capacity to meet all of these needs alone and that trying to do so would lead to lower quality programs and outcomes. Instead, Women's Justice Initiative formed a coalition with other community-based organizations better able to address these urgent needs. This coalition created radio scripts to deliver timely information to residents about COVID-19 and violence prevention; set up a violence against women and girls hotline; and developed and shared videos in local languages about how to wear mask safely, using WhatsApp and other social media platforms. The organization worked with local women leaders to connect survivors of violence with legal and psychological services and to coordinate deliveries of emergency food assistance in rural communities, helping to meet the communities' most urgent needs and reducing the risk of increased violence against women and girls.

ASSESS CONTEXT AND POTENTIAL RISKS

Consider the following questions related to alternative programming and technology as you assess the potential unintended consequences and contextual factors of implementing your project:

▶ What kind(s) of technology is available to your target audience during this crisis? It's possible that your participant's access has changed if she cannot leave her home. For example, her internet use may depend on access to an internet café or university, which may be closed or unaffordable.

▶ What are the appropriate channels and approaches for reaching women? Reaching men? How do they differ? Which channels (e.g., internet, phone, radio, TV, WhatsApp) do women, men, girls, and boys access for information? Does this differ by age, education, income, or residence?

▶ Does your target audience own and have full access to this technology independent of others, or is it accessed through another person? This can impact privacy and safety if messages can be read by another relative, friend, or neighbor.

▶ Does the use of this technology increase the likelihood of violence in the home or family? The use of technology in an already tense household situation could raise suspicions among others and lead to backlash against the participant.

▶ Does the use of this technology increase the person's risk of online harassment, exploitation, or abuse? This is particularly important to consider when working with young people, as they might not know the risks of online activity.

▶ If working with youth, how will you engage parents, to garner their support? What requests will you need to make of parents, and what do parents need to know and understand, to ensure the success of your program?

▶ Does this technology store personal data and information, or make a participant's personal information available to others in the group without their consent? How will your organization protect the data? Be sure to follow local data protection regulations and laws, and use best practices when possible.

▶ How will your organization create community guidelines and values, when creating online or digital spaces in which participants can interact? How will your organization ensure that those guidelines and values are honored? At least one staff member will need to monitor the group. Participants can also be invited to take on this moderation role.

RESOURCES

The international law firm **DLA Piper** publishes the online *Global Data Protection Laws Database*, which includes updated data protection laws and regulations.

Girls' Education Challenge produced guidance to highlight critical considerations for safeguarding girls when using remote programming and technology. This includes: *Keeping in Contact with Girls: COVID-19 Communication and Safeguarding Guidance* and *Keeping in Contact with Girls: COVID-19 Communication and Safeguarding Template Standard Operating Procedures*.

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children created a website, *Net Aware*, that provides detailed guidance on the risks and solutions associated with social media sites and apps.

LEVERAGE PARTNERSHIPS TO EXPAND CAPACITY

Given the dedication to serving the needs of your participants, your organization may be tempted to react to each urgent request from the community. However, this can stretch your organizations' already tight resources and staff capacity and may even lead to worse outcomes for the community. No single organization can meet every need, whether there is a crisis or not.

Once your organization understands community needs, map the actors with existing expertise or experience in addressing these issues through a formal stakeholder mapping process, conversations with individuals, or existing networks and/or coalitions. Include in this analysis those stakeholders with experience serving women and girls and other populations that are marginalized. Identify how your organization fits into this ecosystem of actors.

In addition, conduct an honest assessment of your own organization's capacity to meet community needs. Your own staff members are likely impacted by this crisis, and other aspects of your organization's management, such as funding stability, may be at risk, making operating within your existing capacity even more important. Depending on the modality of programming your organization chooses, your organization may also require specific resources, skills, and knowledge.

Consider the questions below to evaluate your organization's capacity to engage in remote programming:

► How does this proposed program fit into the larger mission of your organization?
► Are there any other organizations or institutions already working on this objective or that might be better suited to deliver this program?
► Is this program the best way to meet your organization's objective(s)?
► Do your staff have the technical knowledge and skills to deliver this program?
► What does your organization need to do to ensure your staff's safety in delivering this program?
► What impact is this crisis having on the mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing of your organization's staff, and how can your organization maintain adequate collective and self-care for staff with this program?
► Does this use of technology mean your organization's staff will be "on call" at all times?
► Are staff expected to use their personal devices for any part of this program, such as texting with participants?
► Does your organization have sufficient budget to run this program, without impinging on any other top organizational budgetary priorities?
► What is your organization's existing relationship with this community and these participants? Has trust been established between your organization and those whom you wish to reach?

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) developed the *Rapid Assessment: Remote Service Mapping Template*, a draft tool to map existing services and to determine how to select the best remote programming modality for the target audience, given the other services already available.

UNFPA's Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) produced webinars in English and French on the *Rapid Assessment: Remote Service Mapping.*

After considering these questions and mapping the landscape of key stakeholders, your organization and these actors can partner to create an organized and efficient response, especially in a time of crisis. Partnerships could include referring participants to other organizations, or delivering essential care packages, informational pamphlets or flyers, or other resources, through existing community partner distribution channels.

Additionally, many organizations have already established a robust relationship with the communities in which they work, including recruiting community volunteers to take ownership and lead the implementation of their programs. These organizations can now build on these existing community relationships to shift and respond more rapidly to the needs of the community. For example, community volunteers may be integral to keeping in touch with participants or willing to play a different role in remote programming than they do in in-person programming.

CHOOSE A PROGRAMMING APPROACH

With a clear understanding of your target audience, community needs, organizational capacity, and available resources, you are ready to choose a programming approach. Each approach will impact how you design and implement your activity, including which modalities will be most appropriate.

The following are possible areas of focus during COVID-19:

OPTION 1: Mitigate the emergency through risk communication, public health messaging, and social behavior change communication (SBCC).

Many organizations have redeployed resources to amplify public health messaging in response to the rapidly unfolding pandemic. Coordinated, consistent, and accurate messages are critical to providing an effective communication response. Examples of this remote programming approach include sharing information in local languages about how to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus or about how to respond to violence against women and girls (VAWG) during home isolation. However, technical information alone in the local language is unlikely to prompt significant behavior change. Messages will need to be contextualized to ensure that they are culturally and linguistically relevant and to consider current behaviors, practices, attitudes, concerns, stigma, and misinformation. Identifying the targeted audience and the delivery channels (e.g., television, radio, videos, etc.) to which audiences are more

likely to respond for the desired changes is also important. Pre-testing is a critical component of communication messages and materials and ensures that what is designed is culturally and contextually appropriate for the intended audiences.

RESOURCES

Breakthrough ACTION produced the _Synthesized Guidance COVID-19 Message Development_, which reviews best practices of SBCC and includes a comprehensive guide to health messaging content about COVID-19 and related topics, including VAWG, education, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and mental health.

FHI 360's blog post, _Did You Get the Message? My Favorite Behavior Change Studies Can Inform the COVID-19 Response_, summarizes SBCC best practices and how to apply those within the context of a COVID-19 response.

UNFPA's Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) memo, _Developing Key Messages for Communities on GBV & COVID-19_, provides guidance on developing social behavior change messaging related to gender-based violence (GBV) and COVID-19.

OPTION 2: Continue with existing programming, but remotely.

You may discover that it is appropriate – and you are able – to continue existing programming but using an alternative platform. For some organizations, this has included delivering girls' club programs over radio, conducting midwifery trainings on WhatsApp, or moving formerly in-person men's groups online. (See the second section for discussion of various modalities for remote programming.)

RESOURCE

The Citizens Foundation's webinar, _Learning Without Schools? Education, Relief, and Government Partnerships during COVID-19_, explores the response of school systems, educational organizations, and governments in Pakistan and West Africa to the closure of schools due to COVID-19. It includes tangible implementation solutions to the challenge of keeping young people engaged in learning from home. It is also applicable to those working in sectors other than education.

OPTION 3: Add new remote programming or adapt existing programming to address emerging needs. Some organizations have shifted their work to provide emergency relief to help meet basic needs, such as supplying food and other basic supplies, and/or access to services and resources. These services should be provided in a way that decreases risk to staff and participants.

As you revise and refine your programming approach, consider the questions below:

- ▶ How does the program address the unique needs and priorities of women, men, girls and boys?
- ▶ Does the program need to be implemented for women, men, girls, and boys differently in different contexts? If so, how will the project accommodate that?
- ▶ What gender-related barriers have been identified in access and participation in program activities? What changes need to be made to address these gender-related barriers?
- ▶ How does the program take into consideration that individuals are part of social relationships that are affected by gender norms?
- ▶ How will the project ensure that the program does not lead to unintended consequences?
- ▶ How can the program be improved to address gender norms?

SECTION 2: REMOTE PROGRAMMING MODALITIES

MEET PARTICIPANTS WHERE THEY ARE   **LOUDSPEAKERS**   **MASS MEDIA**   **SMS**   **HOTLINES AND PHONE CALLS**   **DIGITAL TOOLS**   **VIDEO CALLS**

Included below is a list of possible remote programming modalities, in order of low- to high- resource interventions, with related examples and resources. As noted in the introduction, "remote" does not always mean virtual, digital, or even online. WomenStrong defines remote programming as a shift from the usual, often in-person delivery of services to a new approach in which programs are managed and/or implemented remotely to meet emerging participant needs and to reduce risk for all during a crisis. "Remote" in this context means that there is a physical or social distance between staff and participants, and/or services are delivered in a location that is "remote" to the program's usual site, such as in a school or office.

Many organizations have found that combining remote modalities allows them to reach as many participants as possible and enables them to better meet their programming goals. Refer to the questions and considerations in the previous section to determine which remote programming modality is most appropriate and effective to meet your organization's program goals.

MEET PARTICIPANTS WHERE THEY ARE

An efficient way to reach your organization's target audience, if technology is not available or safe to use, is to meet participants where they are in their communities. For example, your organization could post leaflets and flyers on the door or wall of a local convenience store, tortilla shop, or on the side of a vendor's cart, about how to reach a hotline or to access other services. Your organization might also consider working with pharmacies, social service centers, non-COVID treatment medical facilities, local government centers, or religious institutions to set up a centralized help desk for women and girls to quickly access specialized information or resources.

Some organizations are even holding socially distant meetings at these essential sites where they can check in with participants, engage in remote learning, or simply talk and play together. Given that women and girls are frequently tasked with fetching water, firewood, medical supplies, and food, this method of connecting with participants is particularly effective if an organization is aiming to engage women and girls.

In some cases, an individual seeking sensitive and/or confidential support and care may not be able to ask openly for what she needs in these public settings. In this case, the use of a "code word" can be used to connect her with the services she needs. For example, a girl could ask for a tutoring session with "Aunt Mary," or a woman could request a "skin care package" from the pharmacist; these code words indicate that what the girl or woman really needs is urgent help from the police or another service provider.

There may also be women and girls who are unable to leave their home at all but who need urgent support. Alerts can also be created to meet such need, such as by leaving a

red handkerchief outside on a clothesline or placing a bucket by the front door. In these particularly sensitive situations, it is critical to revisit the Assess Context and Potential Risks section above to ensure the safety of your organization's staff and the participants you serve.

WomenStrong partner **Girl Up Initiative Uganda (GUIU)** launched the COVID-19 Survive & Thrive Fund to support families in communities in Uganda with basic necessities. The organization purchased emergency supplies and created family relief packages that consist of posho (ground corn) and beans, soap, salt, and sanitary pads. Together with local authorities, staff have been safely distributing these packages to parents of the girls in the organization's adolescent girls' program.

Rwanda Women's Network, another WomenStrong partner, developed flyers with information about available resources to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls and included these in food aid packages delivered by the local government.

UNICEF's resource, _Not Just Hotlines and Mobile Phones: GBV Service Provision during COVID-19_, provides tangible solutions for how to provide services to survivors of gender-based violence in low-resource settings during COVID-19. These solutions can also be adapted for non-GBV programs.

LOUDSPEAKERS

A truck or car outfitted with a loudspeaker can disseminate short messages while driving through neighborhoods with vital public health information, including information about how or where to access critical resources.

Centro Mujeres, a WomenStrong partner in Baja California Sur, Mexico, advised a system of government agencies on how to disseminate important information about preventing violence against women and how to access services, using speaker trucks and specific ways of distributing flyers in communities – methods the organization has used successfully in its own past work.

Girl Move Academy, a grassroots organization in Mozambique, used a megaphone and drove deep into communities to disseminate information about Covid-19 and related services. Through ongoing weekly phone calls, Girl Move kept connected with girls and developed new safe spaces, while gamifying learning processes around reading skills and girls' changemaker potential, to improve their communities.

Girl Move Academy's Powerpoint, _Response to Crisis, Strategies and Impact Proposals to Fight COVID Challenges_, provides more details on the organization's COVID-19 response.

Population Council's webinar, _Adaptations in Crisis: Stress Testing our Intentional Design Model for Girls' Programs_, includes a short presentation of Girl Move Academy's work.

MASS MEDIA: RADIO, NEWSPAPER, TELEVISION

Mass media can be a very valuable platform for reaching large audiences, but each media format should be assessed for the prevalence of that media form in the community and whether it is best for the content your organization is seeking to disseminate.

Some organizations using radio have adapted existing training materials and curricula to be broadcast on local stations. Some provide the radio station with a script to read, while others invite participants, such as girls' club members, to read the material on air. Radio is particularly well-suited to broadcast public health messages, information about how to access services, resources, and educational content.

If the target audience reads (and has access to) local newspaper(s), whether in print or online, or has access to a television and reliable electricity, newspaper and television can be very effective at reaching a large geography of people. Newspapers and television will run public service advertisements, either as paid advertisements, or sometimes for free, as part of their community relations. Organizations can also amplify their information in news stories in print or on television, working directly with reporters and editors to suggest a story, to include information for a story that is being written, or by writing their own take on a topic, through an opinion column or a letter to the editor.

Additionally, organizations should air programs at times and on stations (both radio and television) where the target audience is likely to listen and to be able to take action as needed. For example, one organization that aired information about a domestic violence hotline chose a radio station with many female listeners. The station aired the hotline number during musical breaks in the late morning, when women were alone in the kitchen and could call safely at that moment.

EXAMPLES

Wangki Tangni, a community development organization run by and for indigenous people in Nicaragua, has been using radio to reach 115 remote communities with actionable information on how to keep safe from COVID-19. In addition to using media to disseminate public health messaging, the organization has equipped local midwives with supplies to prevent spikes in maternal and

infant mortality as the area's hospitals become overburdened by COVID-19. Wangki Tangni has also implemented seed preservation and organic agriculture initiatives, to ensure that disruptions in food supply chains would not result in widespread hunger.

Batonga

The **Batonga Foundation**, which has been implementing programs for adolescent girls and young women in Benin for over 10 years, is reaching program participants with radio and other methods during the pandemic. First, it provides ongoing learning and support to girls in its leadership clubs by delivering an adapted curriculum via radio in 30-40-minute segments during the time girls normally meet in person. This included contextualizing the curriculum to be relevant to girls' needs during this global crisis. Batonga mentors are also holding socially distant, outdoor mini-club meetings with groups of 5-10 girls, to check in and review lesson content for those able to meet. The Foundation is also using radio to disseminate basic health information to the communities in which it works, and these messages are recorded by program participants, all women and girls, so as to boost the visibility and credibility of girls and women in their communities' COVID-19 response.

RESOURCES

Batonga Foundation's *Radio Lessons* provide lesson plans in English and French for radio.

Breakthrough ACTION's literature review, *Family Planning and Youth in West Africa: Mass Media, Digital Media, and Social and Behavior Change Communication Strategies*, summarizes evidence about the use of mass and digital media in effecting behavior change in youth family planning practices. Findings can also be adapted for other program types.

Family Planning High Impact Practices (a partnership between USAID, UNFPA, Family Planning 2020, WHO, and International Planned Parenthood Federation) produced a report on *Mass Media: Reaching Audiences Far and Wide with Messages to Support Healthy Reproductive Behaviors*. This brief contains challenges, evidence, implementation guidance, and additional resources on using mass media for SRHR-related behavior change.

PACE Project's *Media Toolkit: Helping Journalists Get the Story, and Get it Right* documents how project partners, including the Population Reference Bureau, worked with hundreds of journalists from the Global South to help them understand issues related to population, reproductive health, and gender status, to help them report accurately and comprehensively.

SMS
(SHORT MESSAGE SERVICE, OR "TEXTING")

SMS can be used to reach out to individual participants and has also been a valuable way to reach a group of people easily and all at once. SMS can be used for "one-way" communication, in which the sender is pushing out information to recipients, or it can be used for "two-way" communication, in which the sender would like to interact with the recipient. Two-way communication can be quite effective when short and simple questions are used. Questions with a closed set of answers (yes/no, or multiple choice) tend to get the highest response rate, and offering incentives, such as making responses free, will also increase the response rate. Be aware of "texting fatigue"— it is recommended to send no more than four questions in a row. This may make it challenging to deliver an entire training or lesson via SMS, but this platform can provide simple feedback on whether material had been received and understood.

EXAMPLES

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the **New York City Department of Health** used a daily SMS program to send public health information and resources to New York City residents. Residents received information on the latest New York State COVID-related regulations and guidelines, how to access gender-based violence services, where to access COVID-19 testing, recommended mask-wearing techniques, information on safe sex amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and more.

Educate!, an organization working to tackle youth unemployment and deliver education solutions to young people in Africa, has employed several remote programming methods to meet the needs of its participants, including SMS. In Uganda, Educate! have adjusted its Educate! Experience model in the time of COVID, now delivering skills courses to youth remotely via radio (Educate! On Air) and SMS. It includes two-way engagement through SMS learning prompts and intensive virtual mentorship offered via phone by trained mentors. They also have partnered with the **Rwanda Education Board** (REB) and Wabumuzi Entrepeneurship Challenge to broadcast radio lessons to Rwandan youth, and in Kenya, Educate! has launched NawiriPro ("thrive professionally" in Kiswahili), an e-learning skills learning, financing, and business advisory platform.

RESOURCES

Chemonics and USAID Lecture Pour Tous Program hosted a webinar, *Piloting and Scaling Interactive SMS for Teacher Development*. This webinar, available in English and French, discusses the details of using SMS in programs and provides specific advice and a case study for using SMS in teacher training programs. This could be readily adapted for other programs in which there is a body of content to be delivered.

Forthright Advisors' *Guide to Reaching Families Without Internet Access* provides practical guidance to organizations seeking to reach families without internet through texting, phone, direct mail, and radio, based on U.S. audience-specific technology usage data.

HOTLINES AND PHONE CALLS

Hotlines can provide remote access to information, counseling, professional services (such as telehealth or legal aid), and more; automated phone calls that play a recorded message can be another way to deliver "one-way" audio content to participants.

If a program requires one-on-one engagement with participants, individual phone calls can be an effective way to deliver remote programming and to check in on the wellbeing of program participants. However, it may not always be safe, convenient, or accessible for participants to talk on the phone. Also take into consideration any costs for participants in using this modality, and explore ways to make it cost-effective for your organization and participants, such as through a partnership with wireless providers or phone companies.

EXAMPLE

A **Population Council** program in Ethiopia conducted a pilot test on whether it could continue a girls' empowerment program via phone. For the pilot, staff contacted those participants who said they owned their own phones and who provided their phone numbers when they registered for the program (only 13% of their starting participants). Of the girls called, only 31% answered and were interested in continuing with education sessions via phone. The other 69% did not answer after several attempts, or someone other than the girl answered, sometimes in a hostile manner. This program concluded that phone-based programming for this population was not appropriate and could result in violence or harassment for these girls.

RESOURCE

Girl Effect's report *Real Girls, Real Lives, Connected*, presents findings from a study with over 3,000 girls and boys across 25 countries about adolescent girls' access to and usage of mobile phones. The report discusses opportunities for mobile phone use with adolescent girls, as well as the lack of universal access.

DIGITAL TOOLS

In contexts where participants have access to a smartphone or computer, there are many options for conducting remote programs. With digital tools, it is important to consider the digital literacy of participants, including their knowledge of internet safety and browsing.

Phone and computer-based apps, such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, iMessage, Signal, and SnapChat, offer the ability to individually and group message participants with text, photo, video, audio, and sometimes files. Some social media platforms have the option to livestream a video to followers, allowing followers to "like" and/or comment in real time. Livestreaming is similar to a webinar, in that there is a presenter, likely a staff member, delivering content to an audience that is

able to interact via a chat. Common platforms include Instagram Live, Facebook Live, and TikTok. Additionally, platforms such as Google Classroom allow organizations to create online courses and trainings that enable participants to interact. Online skits, videos, and audio podcasts are more great ways to disseminate information to participants. This can be done by sharing links or files through any messaging service, as long as the recipient has a smartphone.

EXAMPLES

WomenStrong partner **Visionaria Network**, which works with educators in Peru, had planned to hold an in-person teacher training as part of its project to promote gender-sensitive teaching methods in classrooms in Cusco, Peru. As in-person workshops were not possible during the COVID pandemic, Visionaria moved its entire teacher training program online to Google classroom. They also had a workshop using Facebook Live with teachers on how to use WhatsApp as a remote learning tool.

Roots of Health, a WomenStrong partner in the Philippines, uses Facebook Live to answer sexual and reproductive health questions online. Viewers of the livestream can ask questions and leave comments in real time, which Roots of Health staff answer via livestream video. Given how popular Facebook is in the Philippines, Roots of Health has found this to be an effective way of engaging the community in public conversations about sexual and reproductive health, including dispelling myths.

A **Population Council** program working with indigenous communities in South Dakota, U.S., is using digital tools, such as SnapChat, Facebook groups, TikTok, and Zoom, to stay connected with its program participants to combat public health myths and to share information about healthy living and mental health. The program is also preparing radio scripts to run on local radio stations.

UNICEF launched the _#LearningAtHome initiative_, which consists of daily games and activities posted on Twitter for kids to stay healthy and engaged in learning. In addition, UNICEF has supported numerous initiatives to support remote learning: the agency worked with the government of Northern Macedonia, to create TV-classrooms and E-classrooms; with the government of Côte d'Ivoire, to film lessons taught by public school teachers that can be aired on TV; and with the government of Vietnam, to record short public health messages in sign language, to distribute online via video. UNICEF is also working with Microsoft to develop the _Learning Passport_, which is piloted in Kosovo, Ukraine, and Timor Leste.

AkiraChix created this very practical 5-minute video, *codeHiveLite: Learning During a Pandemic (COVID-19)*, to show how the organization has adapted its coding classes to WhatsApp.

MADRE, and a coalition of organizations, developed this guide, *From Global Coordination to Local Strategies: A Practical Approach to Prevent, Address and Document Domestic Violence under COVID-19*, which provides examples of how to utilize social media, podcasts, and online videos disseminated via messaging apps to reduce domestic violence during COVID-19.

UNICEF's *#LearningAtHome initiative* examples are all available on the agency's webpage, *Keeping the world's children learning through COVID-19*.

Visionaria Network's workshop, *Sacándole el jugo a mi WhatsApp*, explores using WhatsApp for remote learning.

WhatsApp created this *Guide for Educators* on remote learning.

VIDEO CALLS

Individual and group video calls allow organizations to connect with participants (and staff) in a near "face-to-face" manner, making it a highly engaging platform. Video calling does require a strong internet connection, which may limit accessibility. There are many programs for video calls, conferences, and webinars, including Zoom, Google Hangouts, Skype, Facebook Rooms, and WhatsApp calling.

Men Stopping Violence
Working together for a change.

When the COVID-19 related restrictions began in Atlanta, Georgia, WomenStrong partner **Men Stopping Violence** began a weekly online program, hosted on Zoom, called, *The Huddle*. These calls, led by Men Stopping Violence staff and guest speakers, are a way for men to "huddle," or to gather together (online) and to talk about the stress they are experiencing so as to give them an outlet other than violence.

APPENDIX: FEMINIST RESPONSES TO COVID-19

We include below key statements and resources from feminist organizations and activists that have come together in a moment of collective organizing to outline principles, track responses, advocate with governments, and uplift collective action of feminists around the world for a just and resilient recovery from the global COVID-19 pandemic.

▶ **Feminist COVID Response**, more than 400 feminist organization and 700 individuals across the globe, released a joint statement, *Principles of a Feminist Response to COVID-19*, outlining how governments can bolster equality in their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

▶ **CREA**, a feminist human rights organization based India, created a position statement, *CREA Reflection on COVID-19* and is organizing a series of online conversations to discuss the issue.

▶ **Focus on the Global South**'s website resource, *Focus on the Global South COVID-19 Resources*, provides a variety of resources, including articles, statements, videos, and webinars, that provide information on both the impact of COVID-19 across the Global South and the global response.

▶ **Asia Pacific Regional Civil Society Organizations Engagement Mechanism** released a statement, *Solidarity and System Change – The Antidotes to COVID-19*, that provides recommendations on ways of working with governments to respond to COVID-19 that can promote solidarity and systems change.

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www.akirachix.com

Asia Pacific Regional Society Organizations Engagement Mechanism
www.asiapacificrcem.org

Batonga Foundation
www.batongafoundation.org

Black Women's Blueprint
www.blackwomensblueprint.org

Breakthrough ACTION
www.breakthroughactionandresearch.org

Centro Mujeres
www.proaci.org

Chemonics
www.chemonics.com

The Citizens Foundation
www.tcfusa.org

CREA
www.creaworld.org

Democracy Now!
www.democracynow.org

DLA Piper
www.dlapiper.com

Educate!
www.experienceeducate.org

Family Planning High Impact Practices
www.fphighimpactpractices.org

FHI 360
www.fhi360.org

Focus on the Global South
www.focusweb.org

Forthright Advisors
www.forthrightadvising.com

Girl Effect
www.girleffect.org

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www.girlmove.org

Girl Up Initiative Uganda
www.girlupuganda.org

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www.girlseducationchallenge.org

MADRE
www.madre.org

Men Stopping Violence
www.menstoppingviolence.org

Mujeres Aliadas
www.mujeresaliadas.org

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
www.nspcc.org.uk

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www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/index.page

PACE Project
www.thepaceproject.org

Population Council
www.popcouncil.org

Roots of Health
www.rootsofhealth.org

Rwanda Education Board
www.reb.rw/index.php?id=6

Rwanda Women's Network
www.rwandawomennetwork.org

Solidarité Féminine Pour La Paix et le Developpemente Intégral (SOFEPADI)
www.sofepadirdc.org

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
www.unfpa.org

UNFPA's Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility
www.gbvaor.net

UNICEF
www.unicef.org

Visionaria Network
www.visionarianetwork.org

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WomenStrong International is building a global community of organizations better equipped to advance the rights and wellbeing of women and girls. We find, fund, strengthen, and share women-driven solutions that can transform lives.

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