

In The Loop

Refugee Voices Bulletin

“In The Loop” is a bi-weekly data-driven humanitarian feedback newsletter, produced to inform organizations and local authorities delivering services to refugees, returnees, and host communities in Dadaab. Internews aims to achieve two-way humanitarian communications for closing feedback loops to support the humanitarian community’s effort to put the concerns and feedback of the affected populations at the forefront of their service delivery to enhance accountability. The Community feedback used in this report is sampled from recorded Vox pop interviews, social media platforms, virtual community roundtable discussions and other feedback collected from the weekly live radio call-in show (Bilan) broadcasted in Dadaab by Nairobi’s Star FM’s Radio Gargaar 97.1FM. The topics of discussion for the period mapped were the impact of school closure on teenage girls and concerns around Quarantine facilities in Dadaab Refugee Camp.

A total of 52 interactions were recorded in the week of June 22 -July 5, 2020.

Data collected from 52 persons



19 Female
37%



33 Male
63%

Methods of data collection



ONLINE



ON-GROUND



ON AIR

EDUCATION

Concerns about School Closure on Girls' Education

In the refugee setup, parents have the final say over the future of their daughters at any circumstances. In the event you are idle at home, they will marry you off without your consent hence threatening to cut short the pursuit for education among school-going girls.

Adult, Female, Hagadera camp.

The schools and all other learning institutions are closed. Most girls are at home doing home chores without getting time to revise their books since schools closed indefinitely.

Adult, Female, Hagadera camp.

Those who were forced to marry by their parents have no other alternative but forget their education because no husband will allow his wife to be a student, they say it is shame. Despite this, other girls are on WhatsApp groups following their lessons. Thanks to the partners for making such platforms possible for our girls to continue with their education.

Adult, Female, Hagadera camp.

All learning institutions remain closed. Girls are always vulnerable when it comes to situations like this. Without school, we do not feel at ease. You can be married-off at any time. They say whether you educate a girl or not, she will end up in the kitchen. When the schools were closed, a lot of school-going girls were married-off. We are requesting the agencies and the government to re-open the schools for us.

Adult, Female, Dadaab.

The rate of child and teenage marriage has increased. The frequent encounters between teenagers due to the prolonged stay at home because of school closure is the major contributing factor.

Adult, Male, Mandera.

I do not see any problem with the girls being at home, their minds have freshened up because learning overwhelms students as it comes with headaches and stress.

Adult, Male, Hagadera Camp.

The closure of schools has contributed to many girls getting married. If circumstances continue like this, the overall girl's education will be affected, it could also undo lots of investment and efforts to increase girl's enrolment in schools.

Adult, Female, Dagahaley Camp

Girls are affected differently. Some are forced to get married in the pretense of schools remain closed, and no one knows when it shall resume. Others engage in bad relationships leading to pregnancies.

Adult, Female, Dadaab

Girls used to learn at schools only, and whenever they come home, they would do house chores. Since schools remain closed, they are not given a chance to study. The issue of getting them married off does exist. I would urge parents not to strip of educational opportunities for their girls.

Adult, Male, Dadaab.

School closure brought a lot of consequences. When it comes to girls, they do not get the chance to follow ongoing lessons online via Radio, rather; the girls are subjugated to unending house chores.

Adult, Male, Dagahaley Camp.

I welcome the idea of discussing this topic. We cannot blame the parents only; the girls also play a role by not taking their education seriously. I would like to tell the girls to be serious and value their education because their future is pegged on it. There is a rise in teenage pregnancies and increased pressure to marry, which is heartbreaking.

Adult, Male, Hagadera Camp.

We all understand the closure of schools has left girls vulnerable because schools protect girls from early marriage and unwanted pregnancies. Nonetheless, it is not proper to marry off our daughters under any circumstance. Let us leave the girls to pursue their education.

Adult, Female, Dadaab.

In the quarantine centers, you will be locked in a dark room alone whereby you will be separated from your family. The community perspective is that once you are put in the quarantine center, you have the virus, and that thought alone brings a lot of stress and pressure on the individual and his family. We are also afraid of staying in the same place with people you do not know who may have the virus.

Adult, Female, Hagadera Camp.

People fear the quarantine centers as they perceive it as a prison. We heard you will be guarded by police just like in prisons. Moreover, we heard you are put in a lonely darkroom which can make someone develop mental health problems due to loneliness. I, therefore, request organizations to keenly look at the situation of the quarantine centers including the food people get in terms of quantity and quality as well as the hygiene status. It is also paramount they get counseling services.

Adult, Female, Hagadera Camp.

Even though being quarantined is only for a short period, the only reason why people are so disturbed about is that they fear discrimination at the end of the quarantine period. To mitigate this, there needs to be extensive community sensitization on the importance of quarantining people.

Adult Male, Dadaab.

I would say, those people who oppose quarantine is because of ignorance and do not understand its importance which is to protect the rest of the community from contracting the potentially deadly virus. I support quarantine.

Adult Male, Ifo Camp

The current way of quarantining people in Dadaab is not the best way to go about it. You would see organizations accompanied by police officers coming to take away individuals from their house without prior notification, and everyone in that family is taken away. This is the main reason people resist quarantine. I would appeal to UNHCR to consider coming up with suitable modalities to quarantine.

Adult, Male, Dagahaley Camp.

I would advise members of the community to embrace quarantine because it is intended to contain the spread of COVID-19, which is to safeguard community members' health.

Adult, Female, Ifo Camp.

The reason why people resist quarantine is that the facilities lack proper sanitation, protective equipment, and food. I would like to tell the concerned stakeholders to accord people proper care.

Adult, Male, Garissa.

If a person needs to be quarantined, he/she should be given an assurance that in his absence, his family will be supported so that they do not suffer.

Adult, Male, Hagadera Camp.

I do not support quarantine because it based on suspicion, once quarantined, you will mix with people who might have the virus. Those people who are majorly put in quarantine are those who come into the camps from other areas. I would tell those in charge of quarantine to only quarantine those who have signs and symptoms and not everyone.

Adult, Female, Hagadera Camp.

We understand COVID-19 is real and with us. Furthermore, quarantining people is critical on the condition that the health experts are sure of the person's condition but, what we would like to condemn is the forceful quarantine of people who do not manifest any symptoms and mixing them with others who may have been exposed to the virus.

Adult, Male, Dagahaley Camp.

In our area, it is the family who takes food to those in quarantine, which is both inconvenient and expensive. I believe Dadaab people are in a way better situation as they are at least sure their people in quarantine are getting food.

Adult, Male, Mandera

Quarantine is a sure way to protect the public against the transmission of the virus, and we embrace it. What we request are specific considerations to be adopted for vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly.

Adult, Female, Ifo Camp.

Quarantine is employed to tackle the spread of the disease but, we are poor people who cannot afford to leave enough for their families during their absence, particularly when the breadwinner is quarantined. Organizations must explore means of supporting vulnerable households during such instances.

Adult, Male, Dadaab

Community Concerns During the Virtual Roundtable Discussion Conducted on 25th June 2020

HEALTH

Provide us with regular updates!

We need regular updates from the partners with regards to COVID-19 cases in Dadaab refugee camp.

Youth Leader, Hagadera Camp

Is It Safe to Use the Same Soap? We Need to Know.

We used the same soap to wash our hands during food distribution. We would like to know the safety of this practice.

Youth Leader, Hagadera Camp

We avoid seeking health care due to discrimination

Every time we visit the health centers, we feel we are discriminated against on the assumption that we could be having COVID-19, which hinder access to health services because we fear being quarantined.

Youth Leader, Hagadera Camp

Hygiene standards at the butcheries are very poor. People mix quite a lot without keeping physical distance. We fear this might contribute to the spread of Coronavirus.

Youth Representative, Hagadera Camp.

We request for masks and protection gears.

Youth, Dagahaley Camp.

At Hagadera's main hospital, you would see many people gathered at the hospital entrance waiting for visiting hours. They mix, do not wear masks, and do not keep physical distance. This needs to be addressed.

Youth Representative, Hagadera Camp.

Call to improve food quality at the quarantine centers

We have received reports that the quality of food at the quarantine center is poor. It will be hard to convince people to go to the centers.

Camp Leader, Dagahaley.

Requests for adequate airtime

As the COVID-19 emergency committee, the amount of airtime provided is barely enough to share information constantly. We have raised the issue with UNCHR many times with no feedback. We are requesting for the provision of adequate airtime to convey the reports we receive.

Coronavirus Team, Chair lady.

EDUCATION

PROTECTION

Request for Video learning option

There are on-going lessons on Radio, but we would like to request if there can be a possibility of giving lessons in video clips rather than the audio particularly mathematic subject which can be understood better in a video format.

Youth Representative, Hagadera Camp.

Rumours on relocation of refugees

Reduction of intervention activities on the ground by UNHCR and rumours of relocation of refugees from Dadaab.

Camp Leader, Dagahaley.

Our alien cards need renewal!

Our alien cards have expired, and RAS is not working. We can be arrested anytime. Tell us where to get a replacement.

Leaders, Dagahaley, Camp

Humanitarian Actors' Responses Which Was Aired on Radio Gargaar on July 4, 2020 to Close the Feedback Loop

- We have established an emergency COVID-19 committee made up of various community leaders who share information with community members.
- The community has the responsibility to ensure that they do not stigmatize anybody that has been to the quarantine center or isolation center or having tested positive for COVID-19. The virus is just like any other disease and of course, people get cured.
- Care hygiene promoters are placed at handwashing stations to provide information during food distribution time to advise the community on how to wash their hands. We will reassure the community and enforce the same idea in the forthcoming food distribution cycle.
- On production of masks, it is not something that can be done at once, we are doing it in stages. We have so far provided over 50,000 masks. We are on the process of producing re-usable masks enough for the whole refugee community and we will ensure each household receives.
- It is the responsibility of the county government to ensure public health standards are maintained, nonetheless, UNHCR will raise the issue with RAS and the county government so that public health officers can do awareness creation for people operating the butcheries to improve hygienic environment.
- We shall discuss the airtime issue and get back to the community. In addition to the emergency committee, section and camp leaders also receive airtime.
- No one is resettling people due to the prevailing circumstances.
- Regarding protection and community services, we formed an emergency committee with whom we are in contact with and were tasked to communicate if there are pertinent cases that need urgent address by UNCHR we usually sort it over the phone. Face to face interaction have reduced given the current situation.
- Traveling is not allowed but, if there is any special reason for someone to travel from the camps to any other parts of Kenya, it will be facilitated. RAS is aware some people are holding expired alien cards, which must be renewed. We will take up with them especially for anyone with special need to travel.

David Magolo- Field Officer, Dagahaley-UNHCR

- We continue to make announcements at the camp and block-level whereby we involve youth, religious leaders, and community protection policing team (CPPT). The announcement does not single out COVID-19 alone as we also do share messages on protection such as GBV. We have been sharing information and messaging through our different platforms and bulk SMS to disseminate information to demystify perceptions on quarantine facilities in Ifo and Hagadera camps.

Fatuma Roba-Field Manager, Dadaab, FilmAid Kenya

- As partners, we can liaise with Radio Gargaar to give us a slot during prime time, so that we share updates and the latest information on COVID-19 in Dadaab. For instance, how many new cases we have admitted at the isolation and quarantine centers, how many have been cured and discharged. Oftentimes, as agencies, we do involve community leaders and youth leaders but, we do not have the guarantee that the information is disseminated to the people at the camp level. Therefore, it is critical to look and explore into a way we can disseminate this information to achieve a wider reach and coverage. I think Radio is an essential platform to achieve this.

Mohamed Jimale- Health Promotion Activity Manager, MSF

- The community should not see the quarantine center as a prison because when we admit new people, we see a lot of fear in them, and they just wonder what the situation could be. I want to insist that the centers are just like any other health center. The police who are there are to provide protection and 24-hour security.
- We provide briefs to persons who are brought to the quarantine centers, they are rules and procedures they should abide by. We are still strengthening the awareness of the risks of mixing and coming together to reduce transmission. Such awareness includes everyone to eat in his/her room. So far, there are some improvements noted.
- The staff have been trained on how to use PPEs. We also minimize interaction with people at the quarantine centers. Most of the time, the interactions are done by the health partners while keeping the necessary distance to minimize risks.
- We provide vegetables and other dry foods and milk for children. We are hoping we will do the necessary change as requested by the community.

Vitalis Koskei-Head of Community Service, LWF

- LWF education sector is trying as much as possible to reach all learners. We are doing a homeschooling strategy where we divide teachers into blocks and each teacher is responsible for 12 learners.
- We have put teachers on WhatsApp groups, they are in contact with learners, and in case any learner has any challenges, they can contact the teacher who is closer to him/her.
- We agree that mathematics is a very challenging subject, we understand it requires more than an audio clip because an audio clip takes a shorter time, and the learner will not have understood the formulas. We advise that the teachers who are within the different blocks to have a session with one learner at a time while keeping physical distance. Otherwise, it will be very hard to use video learning because it is very expensive to develop and maintain.

Lawi Malenje- Education Coordinator, LWF

- We advise the community not to overthink. Soap is a disinfectant. When it comes to killing the germs, any disinfectant of a given quantity would kill the germs. We advise that whoever is using the soap should use the soap and water at the same time.

Nelly Saiti-Community Health Coordinator, Kenya Red Cross Society

- Currently, the policy we are using is one patient one visitor. Chances are those people who crowd there have been denied access because we only allow one caretaker and one visitor. It is possible the patient they were visiting has already been visited or it is past the visiting hours. This is one of the challenges we are facing. We call upon the community to avoid unnecessary visits to the hospital because it is quite hectic for us. We will investigate the issue as a team and discuss with the committee on when to visit and who is supposed to visit while observing visiting hours.

Harun Mwadali- Health Manager, IRC

- Internews will continue building the capacity of journalists and community correspondents to improve the quality of reporting, especially now during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stellar Murumba- Humanitarian Project Director, INTERNEWS

SUGGESTIONS

How should UNHCR and partners respond to community feedback?

- Community sensitization campaign on the harmful impact of child marriage, teenage pregnancies to help enlighten girls and the society on the need to ensure rights of all children are protected and to overly encourage open, inclusive, and informed discussion at the community level. At a time of social distancing, these campaigns can be done as PSAs, radio segments, WhatsApp campaigns through community leaders.
- The feedback we gathered indicates that the community has a divided perception towards quarantine, which may hamper or risk reporting of suspected cases of COVID-19. This, therefore, necessitates community outreach to provide insights into community perceptions and practices around COVID-19 to help reduce stress and anxiety as well as contain further transmission of the virus.