



Government of Sierra Leone

COVID-19 National Response

Risk Communication and Social Mobilization Pillar

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) MESSAGE GUIDE

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ORIENTATION TO THIS GUIDE

Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to provide a reference guide of accurate, standardized, basic health information in simple language and key message format relevant to the prevention and management of zoonotic diseases. It aims to:

- Facilitate coordination across sectors and partners to ensure effective, consistent, and credible communication across numerous sources and channels.
- Inform activities and materials designed to raise awareness, promote healthy behaviors, and mobilize communities to take action to prevent COVID-19.
- Provide a foundation of information to which more detailed and specific information can be added throughout the response and recovery phases.

The primary intended audience of this **document** includes ministries, departments, agencies, and supporting partners designing or implementing programs, activities, or communication on COVID-19.

- This guide is also intended to support any individual or group providing health information at community level including, but not limited to: health facility staff, community health workers, animal health workers, local community radio stations, religious leaders, and community leaders.

The intended audience of the **messages** compiled in this message guide is communities at large.

Role of messaging in preparedness, response, and recovery

Risk communication is the real-time exchange of information, advice, and opinions between experts or officials and people who face a threat to their survival, health, or economic or social well-being from a hazard (such as a zoonotic disease outbreak)¹. Effective risk communication can manage people's expectations during an emergency and assist response efforts by increasing efficiency and minimizing duplication or contradictory information.

As evidenced during the 2014-2015 Ebola outbreak, an effective response can depend on behavioral and social norm changes. These changes require robust, trustworthy communication and commitment to community engagement to support those affected by an outbreak to:

- Define the issue or problems affecting them.
- Reflect on the causes of the issues including how their behaviors impact them.
- Identify their ability to improve the issue.
- Organize themselves to address the issue.

Engaging communities prior to an event fosters trust and strengthens feedback loops between communities and health facilities and can accelerate the community-led action needed to create a demand-driven response in an emergency situation. Community engagement helps to ensure

¹ WHO. Risk Communication Learning Course: <https://www.who.int/risk-communication/training/en/> Accessed: Nov 2, 2018

communities see the benefit in adopting the behaviors advocated in an emergency response and willingly cooperate with response teams.²

A strong and united voice heard through various sources at community level can determine whether an emergency spirals out of control or is brought into check as soon as possible. Messages are key in providing consistency to the communication response allowing multiple stakeholders to speak and engage with one voice in a clear and concise way across all channels of communication.

Principles for effective messaging

Technical information alone, even if formulated in simple, understandable language, is unlikely to prompt significant behavior change. In addition to providing accurate information that is actionable, it is important that messages and the interventions through which they are delivered are designed with respect of people's values; communicate care and concern; take into account the local context, culture, and potential stigma associated with the emergency; and be used as part of a responsive, two-way exchange with those at risk.³ Research also shows that messages that give specific information on an action, benefit, and risk are more likely to motivate behavior change than general messages.⁴ The messages in this guide are designed according to the following principles:

- Provide essential health information in a positive way, and encourage simple, doable actions for prevention and management of COVID-19.
- Present one main idea at a time that focuses on **what** people need to know and do, **why** they should do it (benefits and risks), and **how** they should do it.
- Acknowledge the concerns and/or emotions (e.g., fear, anxiety, sadness) that people may experience as a result of the emergency or information presented.
- Appeal to emotions and sense of individual and collective responsibility.
- Respect cultural beliefs and values.
- Recognize that animals are an important and valuable part of people's livelihoods and cultural lives.
- Focus on preventing person-to-person transmission of disease in the event of an outbreak.
- Focus on available facts.
- Use short words and common conversational language, limiting, wherever possible, technical and scientific words while maintaining accuracy and integrity of the concept.
- Maintain consistency in phrasing.

It is recommended these principles be used to guide further refinement and development of additional new messages for subsequent versions of this message guide.

² The Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (HC3). (2017) The SBCC Emergency Helix: A Framework for Strengthening Public Health Emergency Programs with Social and Behavior Change Communication. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs.

³ The Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (HC3). (2016). Social and Behavior Change Communication for Emergency Preparedness Implementation Kit

⁴ The Health Communication Capacity Collaborative (HC3). (2017). Malaria SBCC Evidence Literature Review. Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs.

Ongoing update of this document

As the COVID-19 pandemic and response continue to evolve on a global scale as well as in Sierra Leone, new research, global guidance, and feedback will be available to inform future versions of this guide. **This document will be reviewed, updated, and shared regularly as new information becomes available.**

How to use this document

It is recommended to consult this reference resource when designing communication tools, messages, and/or interventions for COVID-19. The messages can be applied through a full spectrum of communication activities and channels and in times of preparedness, response, and recovery.

These activities include but are not limited to:

- Public announcements and press conferences/releases
- Media communication (print, video, radio, and public awareness campaigns) and social media
- Social mobilization and partner engagement
- Interpersonal communication
- Community engagement

Social mobilization and community engagement may also include a number of complementary, mutually-reinforcing approaches such as:

- House-to-house visits and distribution of informational materials
- Community theater and story telling
- Community dialogues and action planning
- School-based activities
- Mobilization of local influencers such as traditional and religious leaders or local associations
- Mobilization of town criers

Selection and adaptation of messages

It is advised to contact the COVID-19 Communication and Social Mobilization Pillar before beginning the design or implementation of any communication interventions to ensure coordination with ongoing activities and to facilitate connection to existing materials or additional resources that are helpful.

It is recommended to identify your intended audience and understand their specific needs and barriers before designing interventions or selecting messages to use, as possible. Understanding the behaviors, knowledge, aspirations, and feelings of an audience can help identify messages and activities that resonate and motivate behavior change. It also informs the selection of approaches and delivery channels to which audiences are more likely to respond for the desired changes to occur.

Please note that not all messages are appropriate for every activity or channel of distribution. It is recommended to review the principles of effective messaging presented earlier in this document before tailoring messages.

Depending on the context of when, where, and how the messages will be used, the messages may need to be adapted for the intended audience, channel, or activity being designed.

The messages in this guide are written in simple, Standard English with reference to some common Krio words or phrases. It is recommended to translate the messages into the appropriate local language to increase understanding and facilitate peer-to-peer sharing.

Pre-testing of all adapted messages and developed materials is recommended, if possible.

Process for Requesting the Development of New Messages

Requests for new messages to be developed by or together with the Risk Communication and Social Mobilization Pillar should be submitted to the Messages and Materials Sub-Group co-leads Mr. Ben Coker (nyademohsese70@gmail.com), Ms. Fatmata Bakarr-Sesay (fatimabakarr.sesay@gmail.com), and Tina Dickenson (tina@jhuccpsl.org).

The request should include:

- A point of contact (name, organization, phone number)
- Target audience
- Desired key behaviors
- Relevant technical information
- Rationale for new messages

Process for Submitting Messages and Materials for Review

Review, approval and endorsement of draft messages and materials by the NACOVERC Risk Communication and Social Mobilization Pillar are required before they are used.

Submit a draft of all messages and materials along with a completed Material Submission Form (included in the annex of this guide) to the Messages and Materials Sub-Group co-leads Mr. Ben Coker (nyademohsese70@gmail.com), Ms. Fatmata Bakarr-Sesay (fatimabakarr.sesay@gmail.com), and Tina Dickenson (tina@jhuccpsl.org). **Submission of scripts for review prior to recording or filming is highly recommended to reduce likelihood of needing to rerecord or refilm.**

If possible, identify a representative to attend for presentation and discussion of the material. If not possible, feedback will be sent by email. Please allow two-working days from when materials are submitted for approval or feedback. Approved materials will be marked with the Government of Sierra Leone and “Corona fet na we all fet” logos and registered on a tracking list, held by the Risk Communication and Social Mobilization Pillar.

Kindly note that approval of materials does not guarantee funding for production and dissemination.

ABOUT CORONAVIRUS

General messages

- The 2019 novel coronavirus is a new virus that can make people sick.
- COVID-19 is the disease caused by this new type of coronavirus. 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease. The 19 comes from 2019, the year it was discovered.
- Coronavirus is real and it is here in Sierra Leone.
- For updates and information about coronavirus in Sierra Leone, please visit the websites for Government of Sierra Leone Ministry of Health and Sanitation Directorate of Health Security and Emergencies (www.dhse.gov.sl) and Ministry of Information and Communications (www.mic.gov.sl).

Transmission

- Coronavirus spreads easily from person to person.
- When someone coughs, sneezes, sings, or even talks, they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus.
- If someone is close to a person with coronavirus who coughs, sneezes, sings, or talks, they can breathe in the droplets and also get the virus.
- Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses that are on those surfaces. When your hand touches a virus and then you touch your eyes, nose or mouth, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.
- If one person has the virus and spreads it to others, and then each of those people spreads it to others, within a short time, the virus can spread throughout a community.

Signs and symptoms

- Coronavirus can cause different types of signs and symptoms in people.
- The most common signs and symptoms include fever, tiredness, and cough.
- Sickness from coronavirus can range from not too serious to very serious and even death. For most people, sickness from coronavirus is not too serious.
- Older people and people who have health conditions like diabetes or heart disease are at higher risk of getting severe form of sickness from coronavirus.
- Most people who get coronavirus have only mild symptoms or do not show any signs and symptoms at all. But people with mild or no symptoms can still spread the virus to others.

- Because **most people with coronavirus have only mild symptoms or no symptoms at all**, you cannot know for sure who has the virus.
- It is possible for you, **or the person near you**, to have the virus and not know it.
- **While most people who have the virus feel fine, some people can get very sick and even die, especially people who are older or have other health conditions.**

Survival and recovery

- For most people, coronavirus is not too serious.
- Most people who get sick from coronavirus recover.
- Currently, there is no marklate for the new coronavirus, but many of the symptoms can be treated.
- **There are many research studies going on now to find a marklate to prevent coronavirus and new treatments to help those who get it get better fast. Scientists and researchers are working hard and as fast as possible. These things take time for us to be very sure any marklate or new treatment is safe for people.**
- Getting early treatment can help protect your health and your chances of survival.

Prevention

- Coronavirus spreads easily from person to person. That is why it is so important to wash our hands frequently with soap and water, keep an arms-stretched distance from others, wear a cloth mask, and call 117 right away if you get fever, tiredness, and cough.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
 - Washing our hands with soap and water frequently kills germs, including viruses, and is one of the best ways to keep healthy and help stop the spread of sickness.
- If there is no water, use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol-based.
 - Using hand sanitizer kills germs, including viruses, that may be on your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up germs, including viruses, that are on those surfaces. When your hand touches those germs and then you touch your eyes, nose or mouth, the germs can enter your body and can make you sick.
- Cough and sneeze into your upper arm or sleeve.
 - When you cough or sneeze, you spray small liquid droplets from your nose or mouth which can contain germs, including viruses.

- Coughing and sneezing into your upper arm or sleeve helps stop the droplets from spreading to others and onto surfaces.
- Wear a cloth mask **when you leave your house**.
- Avoid close contact with any person who is coughing or sneezing.
 - When someone coughs or sneezes, they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus.
 - If you are too close to a person with coronavirus who coughs or sneezes, you can breathe in the droplets and also get the sickness.
- Avoid shaking hands. Use other non-contact ways of greeting others, such as a nod, wave, or bow.
 - Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up virus from those surfaces and spread it to other people through shaking hands. When your hand touches a virus and then you touch your eyes, nose or mouth, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.
- Avoid physical contact and keep safe distance (arms'-stretched length) from others at social and public gatherings.
 - Coronavirus spreads from person to person so avoiding places where there are many people close together will make it harder for the sickness to spread.
- Regularly clean and disinfect surfaces like doorknobs, toilets, tables and handrails with alcohol-based disinfectant or detergent.
 - Disinfecting surfaces kills viruses that are on those surfaces and helps stop the spread of sickness.

Use of cloth masks

- Cloth masks used alone do not stop the spread of coronavirus, but they can help when used together with other actions.
 - The most effective actions to protect yourself and others against coronavirus are to wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, cough and sneeze into your upper arm or sleeve, and keep a safe distance of at least 1 meter or arms-stretched length from others.
- **Wearing a cloth mask correctly over your mouth and nose helps catch the spray of small liquid droplets when a person coughs, sneezes, sings or talks from going into the air or onto surfaces that could then spread to other people and make them sick.**
- **Most** people who get coronavirus **have only mild symptoms** or do not show **any** signs and symptoms **at all**. But **people with mild or no symptoms** can still spread the virus to others.
- Because **most** people **with coronavirus have only mild symptoms or no symptoms at all**, you cannot know for sure who has the virus.
- It is possible for you, **or the person near you**, to have the virus and not know it.

- That is why wearing a cloth mask, even if **we** feel healthy, helps stop the spread of coronavirus and **protects our loved ones**.
- Masks made of cloth should be used by members of the public.
- Masks that you typically see worn by health workers in hospitals should only be used by health workers, **people with symptoms of coronavirus, people caring for others with symptoms of coronavirus, and people who are more likely to get seriously sick from the virus including older people and people with other health conditions**.
- An effective cloth mask should:
 - Be held to the head by ties or ear loops
 - Use multiple layers of fabric
 - Fit close against the face
 - **Fully cover your mouth and nose and not fall down when talking**
 - Allow for breathing without problem
 - Be able to be washed without damaging the mask
- There are different ways to make a cloth mask.
 - You can sew one yourself or give measurements to your tailor to make masks for you.
 - You can make one yourself that does not require sewing.
 - **Make sure the size of the mask will fully cover your mouth and nose even when you are talking.**
- It is important to know how to wear a cloth mask correctly and care for it safely.
 - Always wash a cloth mask before trying it on or wearing it.
 - Before putting on a cloth mask, wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol-based.
 - Cover your mouth and nose with the cloth mask and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the mask.
 - Tie the mask behind your head or place the elastic loops over your ears.
 - Make sure the mask fits well. Move it around using the ties or elastic loops to get the best fit. Do not touch the cloth part of the mask.
 - Once you have put on the cloth mask, do not touch your face again until you take it off.
 - If you touch the mask, wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.
 - Cloth masks should not be lowered when speaking, coughing or sneezing. **This is when they are most important!**
 - To take off the mask safely, undo the ties or loops. Do not touch the front of mask or your eyes, nose and mouth. Carefully fold the cloth mask inside out and hold it by the ties or loops.
 - Wash the cloth mask right away with soap and water or put it in a plastic by itself until you can wash it later. After removing the mask from the plastic, throw the plastic away.

- Dry the cloth mask well before using it again. Iron the cloth mask if possible.
- Use a fresh, clean cloth mask every day. If the mask gets damp from sweat or from talking or breathing, replace it with a clean dry one.
- It is good to have at least two cloth masks so you have a clean, dry one you can wear while the washed one dries.
- Masks should not be placed on young children under the age of two or any person who cannot remove it themselves or tell someone they need help.
- Do not share cloth masks with others.
- Place cloth masks that have tears, cuts, or holes in a plastic and throw away.
- While the use of medical masks for hours at a time can be uncomfortable, it does not lead to poisoning from carbon dioxide (CO₂) or a shortage of oxygen.

What to do if you have signs and symptoms

- If you have fever, tiredness, and cough, stay home and call 117 right away.
 - Getting early treatment can protect your family and loved ones from getting the sickness.
- Currently, there is no marklate for the new coronavirus, but many of the symptoms can be treated.
- Most people recover from coronavirus and getting early treatment can help protect your health and your chances of survival.
- Getting early treatment can also protect your family and loved ones from getting the sickness.

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION

Travel to and from Sierra Leone

See NACOVERC's Travel Advisory [here](#) and Additional Guide on COVID-19 Testing for Departing Passengers [here](#).

- If you plan to travel to any country where coronavirus is spreading, consider delaying your traveling until after the outbreak. If you must travel, it is important to follow advice for coronavirus prevention very closely to protect yourself and others.
- Avoid travel if you have a fever or cough.
- The Government has taken many steps to prepare for travelers coming in and going out of Sierra Leone and help keep everyone safe when traveling.
- All travelers flying into and out of Sierra Leone must test negative for coronavirus within three days before travel.
- If you have signs and symptoms while traveling, inform the transport staff so they can help you get the care you need.
 - Getting early treatment can protect and save lives.
- People flying into Sierra Leone will be tested again right after they land. The government will do two tests – one rapid test to get a result right away, and another type of test (PCR) to confirm the first result but which takes more time.
- Travelers who test positive for coronavirus with the rapid test will be taken to an isolation center for follow up.
- Travelers who have a negative test result with the rapid test can continue on their way and will be contacted with the results of the PCR test.
- If you have fever, tiredness, and cough, call 117 right away.
 - Make sure to tell 117 if you or someone you know has traveled from another country in the last 14 days.
 - Getting early treatment can protect your family and loved ones from getting the virus.

Inter-district Travel in Sierra Leone

- Travel is open between districts. Let's make sure coronavirus does not travel with us by washing our hands frequently with soap and water, wearing cloth masks correctly by covering our nose and mouths, keeping distance from each other in transport, and staying home and calling 117 if you have fever, tiredness, and cough.
- When packing your things for travel, don't forget to take cloth face masks. All travelers must wear a face mask to move between districts.

- When traveling out of a district and into a new one, all passengers must give their name, phone number and addresses for where they are coming from and where they are going. This will help coronavirus response workers know about and find people who had contact with a person who later tested positive and stop coronavirus from spreading to more people.

Transportation

- While the inter-district lockdown has been lifted, the earlier changes to operating and using public transport to help keep us all safe and prevent the spread of coronavirus remain in place.
- All transport parks must have hand washing stations. Use them to wash your hands when entering and leaving the park and before getting into any vehicle.
- All drivers, including okada and kekeh drivers, should carry and use hand sanitizer with at least 60% base alcohol.
- All kinds of motor transport will continue to help passengers keep distance from others. Coronavirus spreads from person to person so putting space between people will make it harder for the virus to spread.
 - Taxis will continue to be limited to three passengers at a time (one front, two at the back seat).
 - Kekehs will continue to be limited to two passengers at a time.
 - In poda-podas and buses, there will continue to be no middle row seat and no standing.
 - Ferries and boats must not carry more than half of their normal capacity of passengers at a time. Less people on board gives passengers room to keep safe distance of at least one meter, or arms-stretched length, from others.
- Always put on a cloth face mask when leaving your home and keep it on correctly when using public transport and riding in any private vehicle with more than one person.
- Wearing a cloth mask can help stop the spread of coronavirus but only if it is used correctly by covering your mouth and nose. Remember – coronavirus is not spread from our chins; it is spread from our noses and mouths. So please let us wear our cloth face masks over our nose and mouths at all times in public.
- Anyone using public transport, including drivers, who is not wearing a mask, may be fined one hundred thousand Leones (Le100,000) or detained by police. If a driver or passenger is found not wearing a mask for a second time, the vehicle will be seized.
- All seized motorbikes and tricycles may be reclaimed on payment of a fine of two hundred and fifty thousand Leones (Le250,000) and one million Leones for cars and buses (Le1,000,000).
- If a vehicle is not reclaimed within one month, it will be permanently impounded and disposed of.

BUSINESSES AND MARKETS

- All shops, pharmacies, supermarkets, and banks must make sure they and their customers are taking actions to stop the spread of coronavirus. Help shops, pharmacies, supermarkets, and banks that you visit stay open and serving customers by doing your part to prevent coronavirus.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol-based, before entering any shop, pharmacy, local market, supermarket, or bank.
- You may be asked to wait outside a shop, pharmacy, supermarket, or bank until someone inside leaves. Please be patient. This is to help keep you and others safe by limiting the number of people inside at one time.
 - Shops/pharmacies: no more than 3-5 customers at one time, depending on shop size
 - Supermarkets/banks: no more than 20-25 customers at one time
- When leaving your house for the shop, pharmacy, supermarket, or bank, don't forget to wear your cloth face mask. All employees and customers must wear a face mask when at any shop, pharmacy, supermarket, or bank.
- Any shop, pharmacy, supermarket, or bank found to have more customers inside than allowed or an employee not wearing a mask may be fined the first time and temporarily closed if found again.
 - Shops/pharmacies: five hundred thousand Leones (Le500,000) first time
 - Supermarkets/banks: one million five hundred thousand Leones (Le1,500,000) first time
- Any shop, pharmacy, supermarket, or bank found to have customers inside who are not wearing a mask correctly may be fined one hundred thousand Leones (Le100,000) per customer the first time and temporarily closed if found again.
- Periodic market days ('Lumas'/'Ndorweis') can reopen but must make sure sellers and customers take the same actions as local markets to prevent the spread of coronavirus.
- Washing your hands with soap and water and wearing a cloth mask when at the local market and market days not only help keep everyone safe from coronavirus, it also can save you money! If you do not wash your hands or wear a cloth mask, you may be fined twenty thousand Leones (Le20,000).

OFFICES

- Coronavirus is still a major threat to public health and safety. Government, private sector, civil society, media and the general public must continue to take all government-advised actions to stop the spread of coronavirus.
- The safety of your employees, customers, and partners from coronavirus is critical for the success of your business. All offices, big or small, must make sure all government-advised actions are taken to prevent the spread of coronavirus.
- All employees, customers, and partners in public and private office buildings must wear face cloth masks, keep a safe distance of at least one meter from others, and wash their hands with soap and water before entering the office.
- Any government official found not wearing a mask in a public office building may be fined five hundred thousand Leones (Le500,000) or suspended from duty.
- Any private business office found to have people inside who are not wearing a cloth mask may be fined five hundred thousand Leones (Le500,000) the first time and closed if found a second time.
- Meetings can be helpful for sharing information and making team decisions, but they also bring many people together in a close space. Help protect your employees, colleagues and partners by reducing the number of people in meetings and making sure there is enough space to keep a safe distance of at least one meter, or arms-stretched length, from each other.

RESTAURANTS, BARS, AND ENTERTAINMENT

- Bars and restaurants can open at 7am and stay open until 10pm.
- If you enjoy going to bars and restaurants, help them stay open by being a responsible customer. Their ability to keep serving you and other customers depends on staff and customers taking coronavirus prevention seriously.
- When going to any bar or restaurant, even if it is only for takeaway, make sure you wash your hands, wear a cloth mask, and keep a safe distance of at least one meter, or arms-stretched length, from others.
- Any bar or restaurant found to have employees or customers not washing their hands, wearing a cloth mask correctly, or keeping a safe distance of at least one meter from others may be fined five hundred thousand Leones (Le500,000) the first time and temporarily closed if found again.
- Sporting activities and large gatherings (any group more than 10 people) at the beach and sports/video centers are still not allowed at this time.
- If you go to any social gathering or the beach with friends, keep your group to as few people as possible, wear cloth masks, and keep a safe distance of at least one meter, or arms-stretched length, from each other.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

See NACOVERC's Guidelines for the Resumption of Congregational Worship [here](#).

- The Inter-Religious Council supports the regulations shared by the government and encourages all worshippers to follow the advice and stay safe.
- Coronavirus is real and it is in Sierra Leone. Let us honor our faith and be good examples by showing our love and care to protect one another.
- Washing our hands with soap and water before entering places of worship, and wearing cloth masks and keeping a safe distance from others before, during, and after worship are some of the best ways to make sure we all stay healthy.
- Traditional events like funerals, weddings, and naming ceremonies are times to show our love for one another. Let's help protect our loved ones by limiting such events to 35 people, wearing cloth masks, and keeping a safe distance of at least one meter or arms-stretched length, from each other.
- Let us support one another in taking all actions to keep all of us safe.
- Share with your family and friends what you learn from sermons about actions we can take to protect ourselves and our loved ones from coronavirus.
- Cleaning mosques and churches, even when there are no coronavirus cases in your community, shows we value life by doing everything we can to keep us all safe.
- Bring your own prayer mat to the mosque so when praying you do not have to touch where many other people have touched.
- We can stay physically distant, but spiritually united.

SCHOOLS

See the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) School Operation Guidelines for Examination (NPSE, BECE and WASSCE) Candidates [here](#).

- Reopening schools for only students taking NPSE, BECE and WASSE allows for more space for students and teachers to keep safe distance from each other and learn in a safe environment.
- Sick students, teachers, and other staff should not come to school. Stay home and call 117 if you have fever, tiredness, and cough.

Students

- Immediately tell your teacher if you are sick or your friend is sick.
- Work with your friends to look after the health and well-being of each other and other students.
- Share school health and other healthy behaviors with your friends.
 - Promote handwashing with soap and water or use of hand sanitizers that are at least 60% alcohol-based.
 - Cough and sneeze into your upper arm or sleeve.
 - Wear cloth face masks when you leave your house and are around people. Wear your mask when you use public transportation includes bikes, kekehs, taxis, and poda podas.
 - Always maintain a safe distance of at least one meter or arms-stretched length from others. Limit close face-to-face contact with others in school and other places.
 - Tell your parents, another family member, or a caregiver if you feel sick, and ask to stay home.
- Make sure to continue learning activities at home and listen to the radio teaching program.
- In a situation like this, it is normal to feel sad, worried, confused, scared or angry. Know that you are not alone and talk to someone you trust, like your parent or teacher so that you can help keep yourself and your school safe and healthy.
 - Ask questions, educate yourself and get information from reliable sources
- Be a leader in keeping yourself, your school, family and community healthy.
 - Share what you learn about preventing disease with your family and friends, especially with younger children
 - Model good practices such as sneezing or coughing into your elbow and washing your hands, especially for younger family members
- Don't stigmatize your peers or tease anyone about being sick; remember that the virus doesn't follow geographical boundaries, ethnicities, age or ability or gender.

Teachers

- Implement all COVID-19 prevention and control measures in the classroom and school grounds.
- Ensure that the school health measures are fully implemented in accordance with prevailing guidelines from the Government and its partners.
- Wear a cloth mask and ensure students wear theirs.
- Identify sick learners, isolate them, and inform relevant health authorities including your school's safety and emergency contacts. Each school has a trained staff.
- Call 117 if you suspect that a learner or colleague has symptoms.
- Always prioritize your safety and that of learners.
- Monitor classroom attendance daily and report absenteeism to the School Management.
- Ensure that all learners are given quality lessons and adequately prepared.
- Emphasize that students can do a lot to keep themselves and others safe.
 - Introduce the concept of social distancing.
 - Focus on good health behaviors, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing hands.
 - Remind students that they can model healthy behaviors for their families.
- Encourage students to prevent and address stigma.
 - Discuss the different reactions they may experience and explain these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Encourage them to express and communicate their feelings.
- Incorporate relevant health education into other subjects.
 - Science can cover the study of viruses, disease transmission and the importance of mask-wearing.
 - Social studies can focus on the history of pandemics and evolution of policies on public health and safety.
- Media literacy lessons can empower students to be critical thinkers and makers, effective communicators and active citizens.

Parents/Caregivers

- Ensure all in your home follow the COVID-19 prevention and control guidelines.
- Ensure that your child washes his/her hands frequently with soap and water, or uses a hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol-based before, during and after school.

- Ensure that your child wears a cloth face mask when leaving the house for school and that the mask is washed each day.
- Do not send your child to school if he/she is sick.
- Encourage your child to read his/her book and listen to the radio teaching program.
- Teach and model good hygiene practices for your children
 - Wash your hands with soap and water frequently. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol-based.
 - Cough and sneeze into your elbow and avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
 - Ensure that safe drinking water is available and toilets or latrines are clean and available at home.
 - Ensure waste is safely collected, stored and disposed of.
- Encourage your children to ask questions and express their feelings with you and their teachers. Remember that your child may have different reactions to stress; be patient and understanding.
- Prevent stigma by using facts and reminding students to be considerate of one another.
- Coordinate with the school to receive information and ask how you can support school safety efforts (through parent-teacher committees, etc.).

QUARANTINE

- Quarantine means separating a person or group of people who have come in contact with someone who has tested positive for coronavirus so that if you get the virus, you do not spread the virus to others.
- Some people who get coronavirus do not show signs and symptoms but can still spread the virus to others.
- Because some people do not show signs and symptoms, you cannot know for sure who has the virus. It is possible for you to have the virus and not know it.
- If health workers ask you to quarantine, it is important to do so.
- You are protecting your loved ones from coronavirus when you separate yourself from others until your quarantine period is over.
- When in quarantine, you are to remain within the compound until the health worker tells you it is safe to leave.
- A person who has been released from quarantine is not considered a risk for spreading coronavirus to others.
- A person is released from quarantine only after they have been checked by health workers for the required period of time and they did not get the sickness during that time.
- It is important for your health and the health of others to avoid all close contact with others while in quarantine. This means keeping at least 1 meter distance (arms'-stretched length) from others at all times. It is also good to wash your hands with soap and water frequently.
- Visitors are not allowed into the quarantine home. It is not safe to invite anyone into the quarantine home.
- Family and friends from outside are allowed to bring you food and other items. However, they should leave these items with the quarantine staff who will safely deliver them to you.
- Any delivered items that enter the quarantine home will not be allowed back out.
- Please share with the health workers information about any other health needs you have as soon as possible or when you enter quarantine. The health worker will take care of your ongoing health needs throughout your time in quarantine.
- Call 117 right away if you have any signs or symptoms.
- Others in your household should stay home until your signs and symptoms are checked by a health worker.
- It is good for everyone, especially those who have had contact with someone with coronavirus, to take actions to stop the possible spread of the sickness.
 - Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
 - If there is no water, use hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol-based.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Cough and sneeze into your upper arm or sleeve.
 - Keep at least an arms-stretched distance from others.
 - If you are coughing or sneezing or you are caring for someone who is coughing or sneezing, wear a cloth mask.
 - Regularly clean surfaces like doorknobs, toilets, tables, handrails with disinfectant or detergent.
 - Do not eat from the same bowl or share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your house.
 - Open windows or use fans or air conditioners to allow for fresh air.
- Quarantine is the separation of persons who may have come in contact with a sickness but do not yet show signs and symptoms or know if they have the virus.
 - Isolation separates sick people from healthy people to help stop the spread of sickness. Sick people are taken to a hospital where they can be tested and get the care they need.

COMMUNITY TESTING

- The Government COVID-19 Response is asking community members to get tested for coronavirus to help find people who are carrying the virus.
- If one person has the virus and spreads it to others, and then each of those people spreads it to others, within a short time, the virus can spread throughout a community.
- Many people who have the virus still feel fine so they can spread the virus to others without knowing it. Others can feel signs and symptoms but they are not too serious so they do not stay home.
- Some people, however, can get very sick and even die, especially people who are older or have other health conditions.
- The only way to know if a person has coronavirus is to get tested.
- Testing to know who has the virus helps those with the virus get the care they need to stay healthy and survive, and stop the spread to their family and community.
- By volunteering to testing, you are being a role-model in your community, someone who will inspire and motivate others not to fear testing either.
- By volunteering to be tested, you are protecting yourself, your family, and your community.
- By volunteering to be tested, you are saving lives.
- If you would like to get tested to know your status, walk-in testing is available at Special Court in Freetown.

CARE AND TREATMENT

Coronavirus Treatment Centers

- Treatment centers are where people who test positive for coronavirus and have serious signs and symptoms or are more likely to have serious signs and symptoms, go to be treated.

Type of care and treatment

- There is no special treatment for coronavirus, but many of the signs and symptoms can be treated.
- A trained health care worker will check you every day to see if your signs and symptoms are getting better and give you any care that you need.
- If you have other health conditions, before or while you are in the treatment center, you will be given the care that you need. If you take daily medication at home, please take your medication with you to the treatment center.
- Patients will also receive counselling and psychosocial services while in the treatment center.

Length of stay

- You will be in the treatment center until your signs and symptoms go away and you test negative twice for coronavirus. It is also possible that once your signs and symptoms have gone away, the health workers may move you to a community care center where you will stay until you test negative twice.
- Once your signs and symptoms have gone away and you have tested negative twice, a health worker will check you and say if it is okay for you to leave and go home.
- You will be given a discharge card which will detail the results of any tests performed. A vehicle may be arranged to take you home if possible.

Testing frequency

- If you had signs and symptoms of coronavirus, you will be tested after three days have passed without any signs and symptoms. If the test result is negative, another test will be done after 24 hours. If that result is also negative, you can be cleared to go home. If either test result is positive, you will be tested again in another seven days.
- The process is similar for patients without signs and symptoms. You will be tested seven days after your first positive test and will need to receive two negative results separated by 24 hours.

Keeping safe

- When in the treatment center, you are to remain within the ward room or compound until the health worker tells you it is safe to leave. It is important for your health and the health of others to avoid all close contact with others while in the treatment center. This means keeping at least 1 meter, or arms-stretched distance, from others at all times. It is also good to wash your hands with soap and water frequently. We ask you to wear a cloth mask when the healthcare workers and other staff come to look after you or clean your room/ward.

Visitors

- Coronavirus spreads easily to others through close contact. To protect family members and prevent spread in the community, family members will not be allowed to visit you inside the treatment center. In some treatment centers, there are outside areas where family members and patients are able to interact from a safe distance.
- For babies and young children who test positive, one caregiver will stay with them the whole time they are in the treatment center. The caregiver will not be allowed to leave until they and the child are told by a health worker that they are okay to go home and into the community.

Personal possessions

- You can carry personal possessions with you to the center. At discharge, all clothes and bed linen will be washed and returned to you to take home. Mobile phones and other items will be cleaned at discharge and returned to you.

Reinfection

- Researchers do not know yet whether someone can get sick again with coronavirus after they have recovered. For this reason, it is important for everyone to take actions to prevent coronavirus.

Point of contact for questions and concerns

- If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, call 117. Please also visit www.dhse.gov.sl for more information on coronavirus in Sierra Leone.

Community Care Centers

- Community care centers are places where people who test positive for coronavirus but do not have any signs or symptoms or their signs and symptoms are not too serious can stay until the health workers say it is safe for them to go back into their community.

Who are they for

- Most people who get coronavirus do not show signs and symptoms or their signs and symptoms are not too serious. Because they are not very sick, they do not need to stay in a hospital and can instead get the care they need in a community care center.
- Even if a person with coronavirus looks and feels healthy, they can still spread the virus to others until they test negative twice for the virus. By staying in a community care center until a health worker says it is okay to go back to your community, you are protecting your community and loved ones from getting the virus and possibly getting very sick or dying.
- Community care centers are also places for patients who were in the hospital but are recovering and do not require the level of care provided in the hospital.

Type of care and treatment

- A trained health worker will check you every day for signs and symptoms of coronavirus and give you any care that you need. There is no special treatment for coronavirus, but many of the symptoms can be treated. Patients will also receive counselling and psychosocial services while you are in the community care center.
- If you take any daily medicine at home, please take this with you to the community care center.
- If you have signs and symptoms and they become serious or you have other health problems, your health situation will be assessed and you may be moved to a hospital for further care.

Length of stay

- You will be in the community care center until you receive two back-to-back negative test results for coronavirus and a health worker says it is okay for you to leave and go home.
- For patients with no signs and symptoms, you will be tested again for coronavirus after seven days in the community care center. If the test result is negative, another test will be done after 24 hours. If that result is also negative, the patient can be cleared to go home. If either test result is positive, the patient will be tested again in another seven days.
- For patients who had signs and symptoms, you will be tested once three days have passed without any signs and symptoms. If the test result is negative, another test will be done after 24 hours. If that result is also negative, the patient can be cleared to go home. If either test result is positive, the patient will be tested again in another seven days.
- When you are cleared to go home, you will be given a discharge card and a copy of the results of any tests performed. A vehicle will be arranged to take you home.

Keeping safe

- When in the community care center, you are to remain within the compound until the health worker tells you it is safe to leave. It is important for your health and the health of others to avoid all close contact with others while in the community care center. This means keeping at least an arms-stretched distance from others at all times. It is also good to wash your hands with soap and water frequently. Please wear a cloth mask when health care workers come to care for you or to clean your room/ward.

Visitors

- Coronavirus spreads easily to others through close contact. To protect family members and prevent spread in the community, family members will not be allowed to visit you in the community care center. For babies and young children, one caregiver will stay with them the whole time they are in the community care center. The caregiver will not be allowed to leave until they and the child are told by a health worker that they are okay to go home and into the community.

Personal possessions

- You can carry personal possessions with you to the center. At discharge, all clothes and bed linen will be washed and returned to you to take home. Mobile phones and other items will be cleaned at discharge and returned to you.

Point of contact for questions and concerns

- If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, call 117. Please also visit www.dhse.gov.sl for more information on coronavirus in Sierra Leone.

LOCKDOWN

- The coronavirus does not travel alone, it goes with people. By limiting the places you go, you limit the chances you and others will get and spread coronavirus. Let's obey the district lockdown and stay safe at home.
- The government knows that lockdowns are very difficult and thanks you for the sacrifices you are making to help protect yourself, your family, and your neighbors.
- Sierra Leone has fought and won against Ebola before, and can fight and win against coronavirus too, if everyone works together. Every man, woman and child can make a difference.
- To stay safe while you are at home:
 - Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
 - Regularly clean surfaces and items that more than one person might have touched, such as doorknobs, toilets, tables, handrails, and phone chargers, with disinfectant or detergent, or if you don't have these things, then soap and water.
 - Open windows or use fans or air conditioners to allow for fresh air.
 - Do not eat from the same bowl or share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, or bedding with other people in your house.
 - While everyone is at home together, keep a physical distance of at least 1 meter (arms-stretched length) from any person who is coughing or sneezing.
 - Do not accept any visitors into your house (except health workers).
 - If you or a family member has fever, tiredness and cough, stay home and call 117 right away.
- Exercise at home, eat healthy food, take time to relax, and keep regular sleep routines.
- Keep in touch with your friends and family by phone or social media.
- During times of stress, pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Talking to people you trust can help.
- If you are worried about your any kind of sexual abuse or gender-based violence, call 116 for free.
- While staying at home is one of the best ways to help stop the spread of coronavirus, it is also important to still go to the hospital for regular health services. When we are healthy, our bodies can better fight coronavirus.
- Help look after each other. We can get through this together. If you have something to share with your neighbor such as water or food, please do so. Check in on friends and family via phone calls and social media, especially the elderly, those with health problems, and those who are vulnerable.
- The government is working through the ministries to provide national water supply and food to quarantined homes and vulnerable groups.
- If you have any issues in your community, please report them to Community Mobilizers working during the lockdown or the police.

RUMORS, STIGMA AND MISINFORMATION

Stigma of people suspected or confirmed to have coronavirus

- Let's save our society from coronavirus by not sharing personal details or photos of persons who have or may have coronavirus.
- Sharing a person's name, photo, location or other personal details without their consent is unlawful and can lead to stigma towards the person, their family and their community.
- Stigma and rumors put our safety at risk and make government response efforts more difficult.

Misinformation and rumors

- Knowledge is power, but when information shared is not based on facts and evidence, it can spread rumors and cause fear, panic and even harm.
- It is important to always make sure information is from a trusted source before sharing.
 - Key trusted sources include the Government of Sierra Leone, World Health Organization (WHO), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
 - It is good to cross-check with the website of the source to make sure what is being shared is actually true.
- You can help others stay healthy and prevent coronavirus by sharing messages on coronavirus put out by the Government of Sierra Leone.

CARE SEEKING BEHAVIORS

- Taking good care of yourself and your family is even more important now with coronavirus. Visit hospitals/clinics for health checks, treatment and care.
- Delaying routine health checks, care, and treatment can put your or your children's health and lives at risk.
 - Early treatment saves lives! If you, your child or anyone start feeling unwell and showing signs of sickness such as fever, diarrhea, swelling, call 117 right away or get advice from your Community Health Worker on where to go to get the care you need.
 - People with existing health conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma, TB HIV or any other condition should take extra care and watch their health closely during this time of coronavirus. People with these conditions have greater chance of getting seriously sick from coronavirus. It is very important for people with these health conditions continue their treatment, refill their medicine and call 117 right away if they feel unwell.
 - For children and pregnant women, make sure to take children for their marklate and go to the hospital/clinic for ANC, safe delivery, malaria testing and treatment, and other regular care to stay healthy.
 - Health and nutrition services for children and pregnant and lactating girl/women are essential services and all government-owned hospitals/clinics continue to provide free healthcare and medicines for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under 5.
- Hospitals/clinics remain the safest place to go for health checks, treatment and care. For our safety and the safety of our health workers, special steps and actions have been put in place to make sure we can all stay safe. Make sure to go to the hospital to get the help you need.
- As fever and cough or difficulty in breathing are common symptoms to both coronavirus and other common but still dangerous diseases, if you feel you might have coronavirus symptoms, call 117 first and right away for advice.
 - For children, fever and cough or difficulty in breathing are common symptoms of childhood disease. Given children vulnerabilities, parents/caregivers should not wait and seek immediate care from a community health worker or a health worker at the hospital if the child is experiencing these symptoms.
 - If you are an adult and you have both fever and cough or difficulty breathing, call 117 right away to seek advice.
- Remember health workers and community health workers are skilled and ready to take proper care of you and your baby and are doing their best to look after you. Let's continue to trust our health workers about our health and the health of our family.
- The ambulances used for people who have or might have coronavirus are different from those used for other patients. All Government of Sierra Leone NEMS ambulances are disinfected and safe always.

TARGETED HEALTH CARE MESSAGES FOR SPECIFIC GROUPS

People with underlying existing medical conditions

- People with existing health conditions, such as diabetes, hypertension, asthma, TB, HIV or any other condition should take extra care and watch their health closely during this time of coronavirus.
- Sometimes, people do not know they have other health conditions until they get worse and they get sick. Those other health conditions, even when we do not yet know about them, can make our bodies weaker in fighting other sicknesses, like coronavirus.
- People with these conditions have greater chance of getting seriously sick from coronavirus. It is very important people with these health conditions continue their treatment, refill their medicine and call 117 right away if they feel unwell.

People with TB and HIV

- Ensure you are taking your medicine as told by your health worker.
- Ensure you have enough refill of drugs.
- Ensure you go to the hospital/clinic to get your refill of drugs on the scheduled date. The hospitals/clinics are open and functioning.
- Ensure to engage with community and peer support groups.
- Call 117 right away if you feel unwell.

NCDs like Diabetes, Hypertension, Asthma

- Ensure you are taking your medications as told by your health worker.
- Ensure you have enough refill of drugs.
- It's very important that you take your drugs regularly and take all the actions advised by the government to prevent coronavirus. People who have these health conditions have higher chance of becoming seriously sick or even dying if they get coronavirus.
- Call 117 right away if you feel unwell.

Pregnant women/girls and lactating mothers

- Health and nutrition services for children and pregnant and lactating girls/women are essential services and all government-owned hospitals/clinics continue to provide free healthcare and medicines for pregnant girls/women, lactating mothers and children under 5.

- If you are not sure of where and when to go for care, contact the Community Health Worker (CHW) in your community. He/she will advise you about your health and the health of your family and when to go to the hospital/clinic.
- Community Health Workers (CHWs) are skilled and ready to check your sick child, give treatment for some sicknesses, and make referral to the hospital/clinic for other care. Community Health Workers can treat children with malaria, diarrhea and pneumonia and those suffering from malnutrition.

When pregnant:

- Antenatal and Postnatal Care are important for pregnant women. Make sure to visit the hospital/clinic for regular check-up and complete at least the 4 visits at the hospital/clinic to check on your pregnancy, your health and the safe growth of your baby.
- Talk with your health worker to prepare for and plan well for giving birth to your baby at the hospital/clinic, including keeping money for transport for when the time comes. For their safety, pregnant women should deliver their babies at the hospital/clinic in the hands of experienced and qualified health workers who have been trained on how to take good care of pregnant girls/women in case of emergency.
- Continue to sleep under a treated mosquito net. You will be given one when you go for your ANC check-ups.
- If you feel unwell or that something is wrong with you or your baby at any time in your pregnancy, go to the hospital/clinic right away to get the care you need.
 - The most common danger signs to look for during pregnancy are severe headache, blur vision, convulsion, swelling of the face and hands, severe lower stomach pain, bleeding, and fever.
 - The most common danger signs to look for during time of labor are labor pain more than 8 hours, heavy bleeding before or after the birth, convulsion, and if any hand, leg or cord comes out of the birthing channel.
 - The most common danger signs to look for during postpartum period are fever, smelly discharge, bleeding, severe headache, blur vision, and convulsion.
 - The most common danger signs to look for in a newborn are fever, weakness, not able to suck mother's milk, difficulty breathing, fast breathing, body very cold, and navel infection.

Children under 5

- Coronavirus is a dangerous sickness that children can get and can even lead to death of young children. Currently, there is no marklate for the coronavirus sickness. But caregivers can still protect their children's health by taking them, with their under-five cards, to the clinic for their marklate and to check the growth of their children.

- Marklate save lives and will help babies and children to be strong to fight off sicknesses. Remember to get your child marklate to protect them from getting dangerous sicknesses such as polio (die foot/ die hand) and measles (rash on the skin with fever), tetanus, TB. Routine marklate are at 6 week, 10 weeks, 14 weeks, 9 months and 15 months
- There is no marklate for coronavirus developed and approved yet. Injectable contraceptives are not coronavirus marklate. The health workers will not give you anything that is not safe for you or approved for use.
- Breastfeeding for children below the age of two must continue and babies between 0 - 6 months must be exclusively breastfed, with only milk and nothing else. If your baby is malnourished or sick, go to the hospital to get special care.
- To save the life of your baby, go to the clinic or the Community Health Worker at the first sign of body temperature, either fever or drop in temperature/cold body.
 - If your baby has fever (warm body), diarrhea with 3 or more loose stools in a day or difficult breathing, bring your child to the CHW or hospital/clinic right away.
 - i. Signs of malaria include fever, not feeling hungry or eating, weakness, headache, sweating, dizziness, and vomiting.
 - ii. Signs of pneumonia are fever, fast or difficulty breathing, or difficulty breathing.
 - iii. Signs of diarrhea and frequent loose/watery stools.
 - Bring your child to the CHW or hospital/clinic right away if your child has trouble feeding/cannot suck the breast, is unable to drink, has infected navel cord, infected eyes or skin, fever or cold temperature, fits/convulsions, is too weak/lethargic, has yellow hands, eyes, lips or feet, and is not moving much.

Family planning

- All the Government hospitals/clinics continue to provide family planning services.
- Family planning services are free at the hospital/ clinic. Talk with a health worker to learn more about the different methods of family planning. They can help give advice on which one will work best for your needs.
- Leaving 2 years (24 months) between each pregnancy helps families because:
 - It gives the mother more time to recover so she is stronger and has more time to breastfeed and care for each child.
 - It helps the family save money for food, clothes, medicine and school fees until the family is ready to have more children.
- Pregnancy at a young age threatens the health of the girl, deprives her of her childhood and threatens her future. Pregnancy at a young age is harmful and dangerous to a girl's growing body and young mothers also have a higher chance of getting sick and dying during pregnancy.

This is also why it is important to support adolescent girls and boys to access family planning services.

GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Below are select messages from the document *Key Messages on Gender Based Violence, Teenage Pregnancy and Child Protection in the Context of COVID-19* by the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy's Message Guide. Find the full version [here](#).

- Men and boys can choose to avoid violence and treat women and girls with respect. If they are angry about something, they should step away from the situation breathe, and think before acting. This helps to calm them down.
- Violence is mostly carried out by people children know and should be able to trust and look to for protection. These may include parents, stepparents or a parent's partner, relatives, caregivers, boyfriends and girlfriends, schoolmates, teachers, religious leaders and employers. Violence of any form is never okay!
- Stay at home is important to reduce the spread of COVID-19, but home is not always a safe place. We are all collectively responsible for protecting and creating a protective environment for women, girls and boys in our community by reporting acts of violence and abuse.
- If you are harmed or feel threatened, intimidated or harassed, you have the right to reach out to seek help. Do not keep quiet! Go to the nearest FSU or hospital; discuss with someone you trust and report to your local authorities including the Child Welfare Committee and religious leaders. The FSU are specialist units attached to police stations nationwide, with a mandate to investigate all forms of abuse.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Below are select messages from the document *Key Messages on Gender Based Violence, Teenage Pregnancy and Child Protection in the Context of COVID-19* by the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy's Message Guide. Find the full version [here](#).

- Most of the violence against girls happen in their own homes and girls are specifically exposed to violence if they are left unsupervised. The person who uses violence is always the one to blame! We should support women and girls who have experienced violence – not blame them!
- When a woman or girl tells us that she experienced violence, we should believe her and help her access Health or FSU services. In case of a rape, she needs to go to the hospital to get medicines within three days (72 hours) to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, like HIV.
- If you notice or witness any act of sexual violence happening in your community, you must SPEAK out to help the survivor and punish the perpetrator. Report ALL cases of sexual violence to the nearest FSU or hospital, your local authorities including the Child Welfare Committee or religious leaders or call the 116 Rape hotline for free on Orange, Africell or Q-cell at any time of the day.
- As a parent or caregiver, when a child comes to you with such information, you must take the child's claims seriously and immediately ensure that the abuse stops. You must report the abuse to the FSU, 116 rape hotline or the local authorities, and you must ensure the child receives protection services.
- For psychosocial services, call the 116 Rape hotline to receive information on how to access psychosocial care or go to Ministry of Social Welfare Office in your district.
- All victims of sexual and domestic violence should receive free medical examination, treatment and follow-up, as well as other social services like psychosocial support, protection and legal counseling.

CHILD MARRIAGE AND TEENAGE PREGNANCY

Below are select messages from the document *Key Messages on Gender Based Violence, Teenage Pregnancy and Child Protection in the Context of COVID-19* by the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy's Message Guide. Find the full version [here](#).

- Marriage below the age of 18 years is against the law. Younger people below this age have not developed the maturity and practical skills for a successful marriage and to make informed decisions.
- During crisis situations such as COVID-19, some families may want to encourage their girls under 18 to get married to get quick money from bride price or to avoid issues such as rape from the community or simply to pave a better opportunity for the girl. When girls get married under 18, they are at higher risk of violence, and of injury and death during childbirth.
- During the Ebola period in Sierra Leone, over 14,000 girls got pregnant forcing them to drop out of school and driving them, their families and communities further into poverty.
- Pregnancy at a young age is harmful and dangerous to a girl's growing body. Abstaining from sex is the safest way to avoid pregnancy, and dangerous diseases like HIV.
- Abstaining from sex until you are older and ready will help you focus on your dreams and goals and will spare you a lot of worry.
- Boys and men, fathers and sons, have a big role to play in preventing child marriage. They should try to learn more about the dangers of child marriage and take responsibility not to exploit women under the age of 18.

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT & MANAGING STRESS

Below are select messages from the document *Key Messages on Gender Based Violence, Teenage Pregnancy and Child Protection in the Context of COVID-19* by the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy's Message Guide. Find the full version [here](#).

- The COVID-19 pandemic has created a wide range of problems for people, limiting our daily interactions with families and loved ones and making us feel more and more lonely, anxious and vulnerable.
- Situations of anxiety and stress often creates tension even within the family – do not take it out on your loved ones or others. By making each other feel safe and secure, caregivers can help to reduce the tension.
- Taking care of yourself will help you to care for others in need:
 - Don't be ashamed to ask for help from family and friends or discuss with a trusted person. It's important that you take care of yourself, so you can help others.
 - Focus on the things you do well and be patient with yourself.
 - Try to re-establish your daily routines such as sleeping, eating regularly
 - Do not consider taking drugs or alcohol to bring your stress down. They could cause you to act irrationally or violently to your loved ones. Violence in any form is NOT useful to help people to recover.
- To reduce stress levels and make the most during such hard times:
 - Take breaks from reading or listening to news stories, especially social media
 - Spend less time with people who create fear in you
 - Connect with other people. It is very important to stay in touch with friends and families that don't live in your home. Call, text or WhatsApp to talk with people you trust about your concerns and feelings
 - Be kind to yourself and others. Reach out to those who are most affected including young and elderly people, pregnant women, people with disabilities, widows and children who have lost their parents.

PARENTING AND FAMILY STRENGTHENING

Below are select messages from the document *Key Messages on Gender Based Violence, Teenage Pregnancy and Child Protection in the Context of COVID-19* by the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and National Secretariat for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy's Message Guide. Find the full version [here](#).

- Being a parent is the most important job in the world. It means spending time to play, listen and talk with your children. This makes them happier and smarter so school shutting down is also a chance to make better relationships with your children.
- A family is the first line of protection for children. Parents or other caregivers are responsible for building a safe and loving home environment. When parents and their children talk openly and freely about issues, sharing information and ideas from the home, school and community, they are more likely to assume responsibilities, develop confidence and good communication skills, and make informed decisions as they grow.
- Your child may be scared or confused. Explain that COVID-19 has nothing to do with the way someone looks, where they are from, or what language they speak. Talk to your children about the disease, listen to their suggestions and take them seriously.
- All children misbehave and that is NORMAL and okay. Parents need to be understanding and compassionate to ALL their children during these times. By acknowledging, respecting and supporting your child's ideas, actions and contributions, parents can develop a healthy bond with their children.
- Hitting or shouting at your child will make you and them more angry or sad. Children are much more likely to do what we ask if we give them positive instructions and lots of praise for what they do right.
- Young people especially need to be able to communicate with their friends. Help your teenagers connect through radio programs, mobile phones, social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.) and other safe distancing ways.
- Connect with them, talk about something they like sports, music, celebrities, friends, cook a favorite meal or exercise together. Encourage them to talk to you or someone they trust about their feelings.

UNIFIED EFFORT AND SOCIAL COHESION

- We fought and drove away Ebola, so we can fight and drive away coronavirus too.
- It is not easy, but we will come out of out of this. Let us support each other in this fight against coronavirus.
- Stopping coronavirus starts with my own actions.

Annex



National COVID-19 Emergency Response Centre (NACOVERC)
Risk Communication & Social Mobilization Pillar
Material Submission Form

Point of Contact

Date of submission:

Name:

Organization/Group:

Email address:

Phone number:

Material Type

1. Title of material:

2. Description of material:

Radio spot/jingle

Poster

Banner

Song

Brochure

SMS text

Video

Training tool

Drama

Job aid

Other (please specify):

Language of Material/Messages

English

Temne

Fula

Krio

Loko

Madingo

Limba

Kono

Mende

Susu

Other (please specify):

Intended Use

1. What is the objective for the material/messages?

2. Who will use the material/messages? Check all that apply:

Health facility worker

Volunteer

Radio station

Community health worker

Religious leader

Journalist/media

Animal health worker

Environmental officer

Teacher

Traditional birth attendant

Government official (specify Ministry and level):

Traditional leader or influencer (specify):

Community group (specify):

3. How will the material/messages be used and for how long?

4. Where will the material/messages be used? Check all that apply:

Nationally (all districts)

In select districts (please specify below):

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| ○ Northern Region: | <input type="checkbox"/> Bombali | <input type="checkbox"/> Koinadugu | <input type="checkbox"/> Tonkolili |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Falaba | | |
| ○ North-west Region: | <input type="checkbox"/> Kambia | <input type="checkbox"/> Karene | <input type="checkbox"/> Port Loko |
| ○ Eastern Region: | <input type="checkbox"/> Kailahun | <input type="checkbox"/> Kenema | <input type="checkbox"/> Kono |
| ○ Southern Region: | <input type="checkbox"/> Bo | <input type="checkbox"/> Bonthe | <input type="checkbox"/> Moyamba |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Pujehun | | |
| ○ Western Area: | <input type="checkbox"/> WA Urban | <input type="checkbox"/> WA Rural | |

Target Audience

1. Who is the target audience for the material/message?

Gender: Female Male

Age: Youth/Teens Adults Elders

Role (specify):

Culture/Language group (if any):

Religion (if any):

2. Additional comments:

Field Testing

1. Has the material/messages been field-tested?

No

Yes. Please provide a summary here of the results, including date and location:

2. Additional comments or information: