

We shall overcome COVID19 #Lockdown

“We are committed to ensure that everyone, especially girls and women who need sexual and reproductive health services get them in every situation”

- SONAL MEHTA, Regional Director, IPPF SARO



While the agencies and governments are yet to come up with the exact socio-economic cost of COVID19 pandemic, women and girls will be disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, as happens in all disasters. As one of the largest sexual and reproductive health service providers globally, we are witnessing its impact on SRH services, information and commodities, including those related to contraception and menstrual health. We are also experiencing evolving scenarios due to social distancing, lockdown and controlled mobility that are leading to increase in sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), unmet needs for contraception, restricted access to safe and comprehensive abortion care, compromised SRH services, and a lack of comprehensive sexuality education. Life is even more difficult for groups such as LGBTQI+ people, refugees, migrants, people living with disabilities, elderly, adolescents and young people and those living in conditions of extreme poverty.

In South Asia, IPPF Regional Office support 9 countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, while the Family Planning Associations or Member Associations provide services at the forefront. We are proud to share these inspiring stories of our doctors, health workers and team members who are continuing to provide sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in these difficult times. Because we know that irrespective of the pandemic, women and girls will continue to require maternal health care, safe abortion care, family planning measures, SGBV response and menstrual health supplies. While undertaking the precautions for COVID19 response, we are making provisions to provide SRHR services through targeted operational hours of our clinics, tele counselling and community outreach while maintaining social distancing.



SRHR SERVICES

During the COVID19, IPPF and its MAs are continuing to provide a package of services that includes –

- Contraceptive services
- Safe Abortion service
- Maternal and Child health Care including normal delivery service
- RTI/STI services
- Ambulance service
- Community awareness on COVID 19
- Counseling (including telephonic)
- Distribution of masks, soaps and sanitizers

(*availability of service will vary as per the location/country)



Community Reach and Masks for protection

Government of India imposed a nationwide lockdown since 24th March 2020 to prevent spread of COVID19 infections. During this period 28 out of 40 branch clinics of Family Planning Association of India are continuing the operations though for limited hours to abide by local regulations. In addition, one of the tailoring unit at Madurai Branch of Family Planning Association of India has taken the initiative of producing face masks to ensure that the clinics and the healthcare facilities in the city don't run out of stock. Similarly, the Kalchini branch, functioning in one of the remotest regions of India, has been instrumental in spreading awareness and dispensing clinical services in such trying times to communities living in border towns and villages.

Birthing centers and other essential SRHR services in hard hit areas

In Nepal out of five, two of our birthing centers are functioning to ensure that women have access to quality maternal and reproductive health care services. With the same spirits in Afghanistan, six of our clinics are continuing to provide essential SRHR services. There are reported cases of increased gender-based violence cases and our Member Association in Afghanistan – AFGA (Afghan Family Guidance Association) will soon be establishing tollfree numbers for gender-based violence counselling.

Frontline services and large-scale coverage

In Pakistan, Rahnuma -Family Planning Association of Pakistan is supporting the state health authorities to provide emergency relief to the worst-hit areas. FPAP is providing services through its 10 fully equipped Family Health hospitals, more than 100 Family Health Centers and around 1000 community-based distributors and private practitioners. Availability of PPE was ensured for more than 2000 service providers to continuously provide SRHR and FP services across Pakistan. The MA is also supporting a toll-free help line number to support all its clients in need of consultation.



Menstrual Hygiene and Domestic Violence Counselling

RENEW Bhutan, Association partner of Bhutan provided essential sanitary napkin with basic information on COVID 19 and maintaining menstrual hygiene to all the young girls living in Gawailing Happy Home. The young girls are staying at the happy home till the schools re-assume after the COVID 19 pandemic. During the pandemic, domestic violence cases are likely to increase, and long hours of curfew and disruption to normal life and freedom will further aggravate the issue. RENEW is providing 24/7 telephonic counseling services and is facilitating GBV services through Multi Sectoral Task Force (MSTF) represented by Community Based Support System, National Commission for Women and Children and Royal Bhutan Police in districts.



Preventing stock outs and digital outreach

The social marketing programme of FPA Sri Lanka is the largest contraceptive social marketing programme in the country. FPASL will support Government of Sri Lanka with its existing Depo Provera stocks to address potential stock out of the product within the country. Using the mobile phones and well-built network with the Midwives through 300 Ministry of Health service centers, FPASL is ensuring that their clients continue to receive FP services. In addition, FPASL is providing online counselling and referral through its Happy Life Centers.



Support & Services provided by FPA Sri Lanka during the COVID-19 Health Crisis



- Provided 5000 sanitary napkins to 6 quarantine centres run by the state for returning migrants.
- Provided 2000 face masks to the birthing centre staff of a leading maternity hospital
- Loaned 10000 vials of Depo Provera from FPAs marketing stock to the government agency for family planning to continue services for poor and underserved
- Made a reallocation of The Global Fund grant savings of USD 350000 to enable the government to procure safety garbs for Covid treatment centres
- Will be providing a stock of contraceptives, condoms, pills and ECP to Maldives through UNFPA to meet their urgent demand



Supporting governments response in the country

SHE, Member Association of IPPF in Maldives is part of the national Rapid Response Teams (RRT) and working with the Health Protection Agency (HPA). The current lab and bio technicians of the clinics run by SHE Maldives are working at the national testing facility and staff counsellors are a part of psychosocial support taskforce formed by Government of Maldives.

SERVICE PROVISION OF SOCIETY FOR HEALTH EDUCATION DUE TO THE EXTENSION OF PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY IN THE COUNTRY

As a precaution against the spread of the global pandemic COVID-19 the government has decided that all government offices be closed for an additional week, from 29th March 2020 to 02nd April 2020.

During this time period, we will be open **every Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday between 11:00am and 01:00pm** and will continue to provide the following services.

- Family Planning services
- HIV Testing services
- Results of pending laboratory investigations
- Psychosocial support through telephone

During this public health emergency, we urge everyone to call us if there is a need to clarify information regarding our service areas, and only visit us if it is absolutely necessary.

You can contact our service departments through their helplines during the following times.

- Counselling and Psychosocial Support - 3318804 between 08:00am and 05:30pm
- Laboratory Services - 7976324 between 11:00am and 01:00pm
- Sexual Reproductive Health Services - 7976326 between 08:00am and 10:00pm

We will be posting further updates on our social media should there be a change in our operating hours.

In the meantime, we urge everyone to strictly follow the guidelines and precautionary measures advised by the healthcare professionals, due to the spread of COVID-19 in our country and how the pandemic has unfolded globally.

Thank You!



The SHE Maldives staff is also representing at the TV shows to provide information on the laboratory testing for #COVID19 and the work of laboratory staff in providing accurate and timely diagnosis at national laboratory.



At the times when services are getting stretched due to limitation of human and financial resources and individuals are grappling with the questions on whether pregnant women can travel outside for regular checkups during lockdown, or whether the infection can be sexually transmitted or how to access regular family planning methods, the services provided by the member associations are essential and lifesaving in many cases.

Acknowledging that SRHR services are essential, we urge Governments and all international, national agencies at the forefront to-

1. Intersectional and gender-responsive approach to address the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on women, adolescents and girls, as well as addressing the needs of women health workers.
2. Continue to support activists and civil society organisations (CSOs), who play a key role in realizing and defending SRHR and human rights for all.
3. Ensure access to essential SRH services and information, including CSE during the response to the pandemic and in its aftermath.
4. Ensure access to safe and comprehensive abortion care, including self managed medical abortion as part of health policy, ensuring that commodities on the Essential Medicines list are available and of quality, and that women have access to quality information either digitally or through community health providers.
5. Ensure that services and resources are available and accessible for victims and/or survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) while ensuring that SGBV services are included in the 'essential services' category, such as food, hygiene and health services
6. Urgently mobilize and ensure adequate resources for SRH services, and for the provision of essential SRH commodities and supplies.
7. Ensure that gender-related indicators are included in country -level response systems and that robust data disaggregated by sex and age are routinely collected.
8. Ensure that commitments to universal health coverage (UHC) are upheld, hence contributing to strengthening health systems with adequate resources for SRHR during the response to COVID-19 and to mitigate the impact of future outbreaks.
9. Ensure a human rights-based approach in the response, specifically in relation to the provision of SRH services and the protection and respect for civil liberties.

