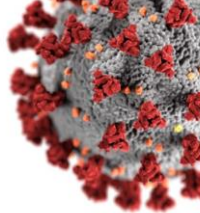# WASH and COVID-19 in Humanitarian Settings:
How can we improve hygiene behaviors?

Moderator: Les Roberts
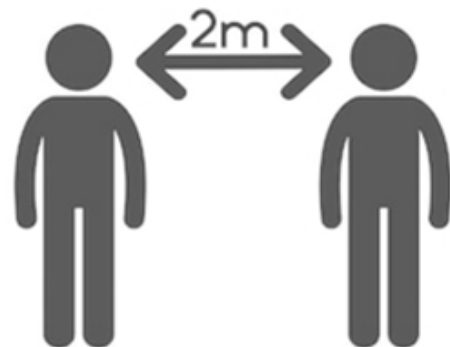Speakers: Sian White, Caroline Muturi and Hani Taleb

WASH & COVID 19

- Handwashing infrastructure
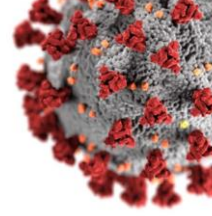- Handwashing products
- Handwashing behaviour

- Cleaning more often
- Disinfecting frequently touched surfaces

- Maintaining 2m distancing
- Reducing unnecessary travel
- Protecting vulnerable individuals

# What makes COVID-19 response programmes in crises so important?

Crisis-affected populations may have

- Greater difficulties accessing health, social and economic services
- Limited access to water, sanitation, and hygiene infrastructure
- Limited engagement with mass or social media
- Greater likelihood of living in crowded environments
- More likely to be marginalised and stigmatised

Photo: Tom Heath, ACF

Learning from previous outbreaks
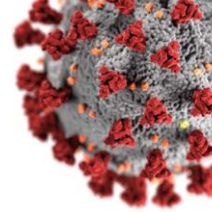
Increased exposure and messaging
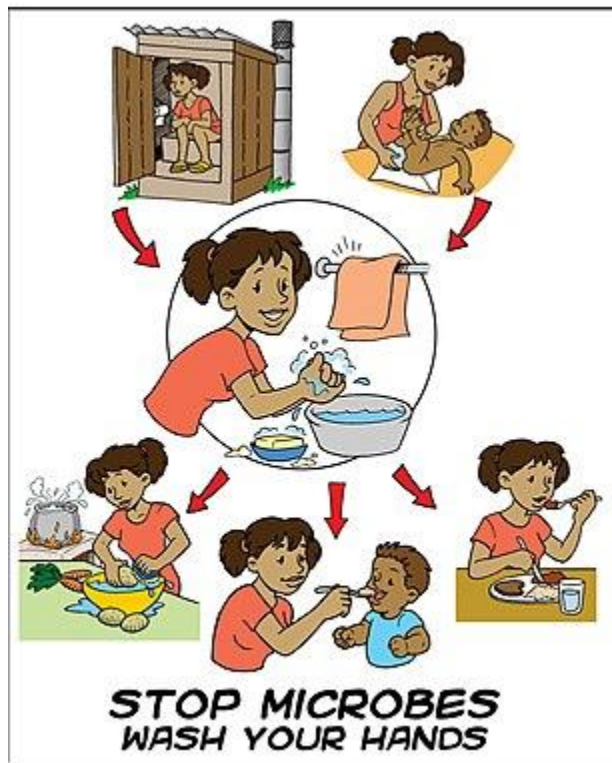

Perceptions of risks change

New norms emerge

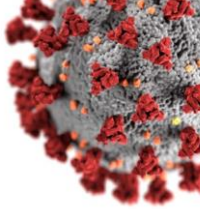Preventative hygiene behaviours increase

Clearly define behaviours

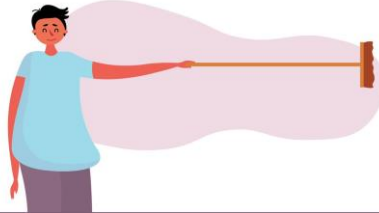# Enabling behaviour in difficult circumstances:
Make guidance relevant to the context & population

To protect yourself and your family from the Coronavirus, keep a distance of **2 metres** from others.

2 metres = 200 cm = 6 feet 7 inches

WaterAid Broom out at arms length

To protect yourself and your family from the Coronavirus, keep a distance of **2 metres** from others.

2 metres = 200 cm = 6 feet 7 inches

WaterAid About a length of a cow

للوقاية من كورونا
أفطر في بيتك

Fully stretch out your arm. When you are about 2 meters* away from someone, their face fits into your hand roughly like this.**
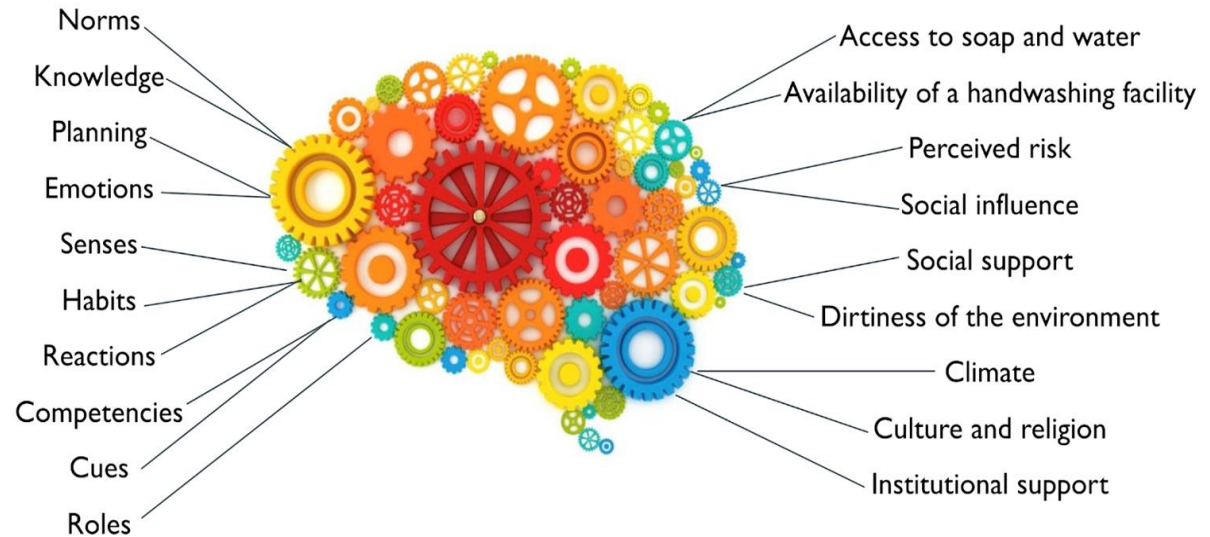
*Minimum distance required to prevent person-to-person spread of Covid-19.
**Based on adult averages.
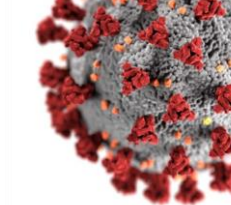
Enabling behaviour in difficult circumstances:

Address all barriers to behaviour

In outbreaks we tend to rely on knowledge and fear to drive behaviour - overlooking many other key determinants.
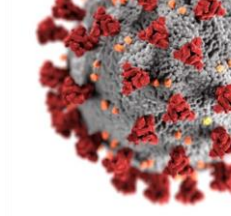
Enabling behaviour in difficult circumstances:
Make it easy and desirable to do

Get people's attention

Crisis populations may be hard to reach this means you need to be more creative.
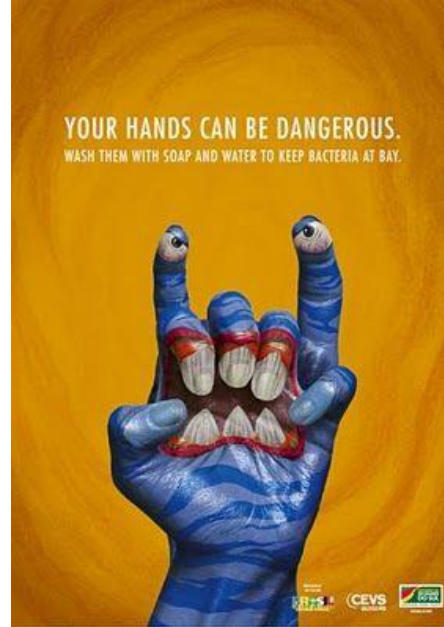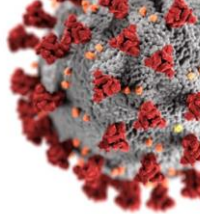
Other general principles for hygiene promotion during COVID-19 response
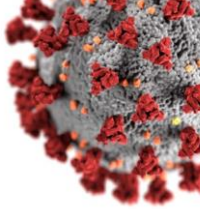
- Plan for a range of circumstances and continue to assess risks
- Make the most of 'windows of opportunities'
- Coordinate with others (including non-traditional actors)
- Engage with communities throughout the response
- Acknowledge and address other needs
- Encourage community level action and a sense of community spirit

Case study 1: Democratic Republic of Congo

- **Number of cases:** 1,102 (94% in Kinshasa - 1,032)
- **Number of deaths:** 44
- **Access to basic handwashing facilities:** 4%
- **Literacy:** 77%
- **Number of people in need:** 13.1 million
- **Number of displaced people:** 3.8 million
- **Context:** Ongoing Ebola response + COVID-19 preparedness in North Kivu (8 cases, 0 in Butembo & Mangina)
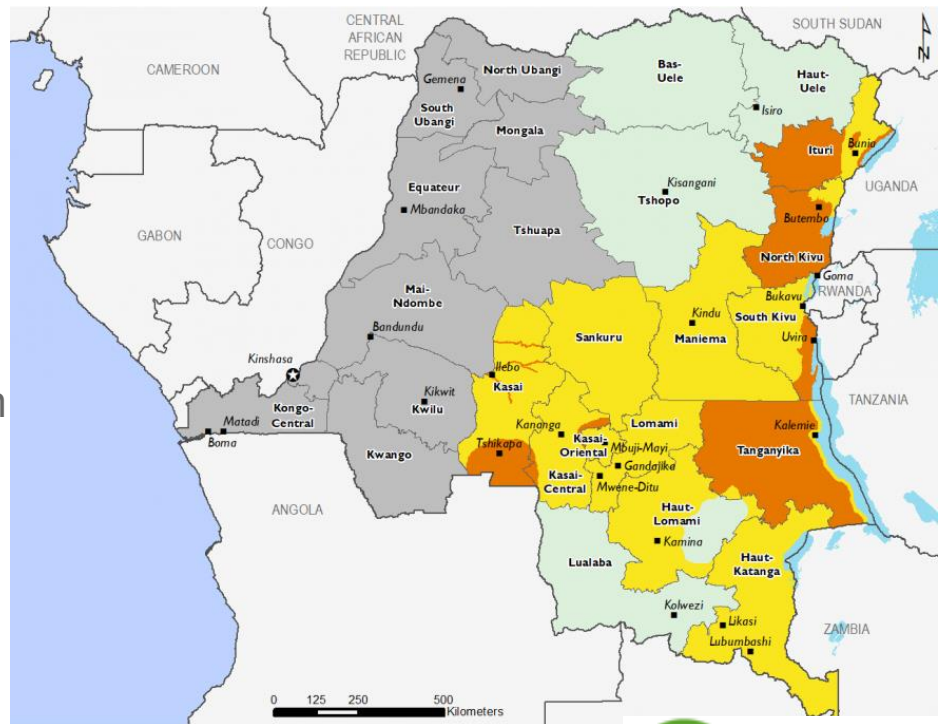
Community perceptions

- Confusion on symptoms, transmission and severity between Ebola and COVID-19
- COVID-19 perceived as a disease of the rich
- COVID-19 seen as something to keep politicians and humanitarians in business following the reduction in Ebola cases
- Perception that there is a COVID-19 vaccine but that this is being withheld from the community
- COVID-19 is associated with witchcraft

What is being done by our organisation?

- Capacity building of staff and community groups on COVID-19
- Regular dialogues with targeted community groups on COVID-19 related risks and prevention behaviours
- Installation of hand-washing stations in public places
- Increasing soap distribution
- Community perception tracking using a tool on mobile phones

OXFAM
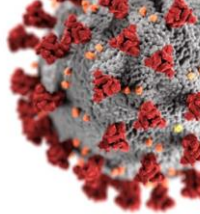
What else is being done?

- Increasing access to information on COVID-19 using culturally appropriate channels such as local radio stations
- And preferred languages French, Lingala and Swahili (orientation of journalists)
- Working with local artists and religious leaders to develop songs and key information on COVID-19 in other local languages such as Kinande
- Plans to do interactive shows through local television stations

OXFAM

What had to be considered for COVID-19 programmes given the fragile context?

- Community-centred approach is critical
- Regular risk analysis by the team & community groups
- Integration of the hardware and software in the hotspots or high-risk areas
- Focus of WASH activities in Health Care Facilities
- Greater engagement with women because they are primary caregivers

What is working well?
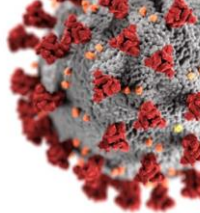
INCREASED COMMUNITY TRUST:
- A well-established community network comprising of the CACs (Cellule d'Animation Communautaire), women groups and religious leaders
- Oxfam's community engagement strategy: advocacy done at MOH led Ebola/ COVID-19 taskforce level to adapt response activities by different pillars based on the community feedback
- Oxfam's presence in the province for several years has availed the 'time' to build trust with the communities

TROIS CELLULS DANS AIRE DE SANTE DE MUKUNA : 27 JUIN 2019

— TROIS CELLULS DANS AIRE DE SANTE DE MUKUNA : 27 JUIN 2019 MULEMYA (7)
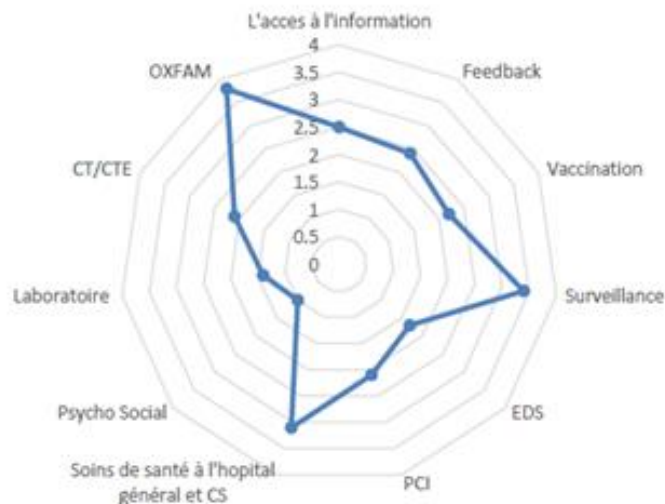
What are key challenges?

- Lack of an enabling environment to support handwashing behavior - water scarcity & inadequate handwashing devices
- Poor enforcement of guidelines - business as usual with continued mass gatherings makes it hard to encourage physical distancing
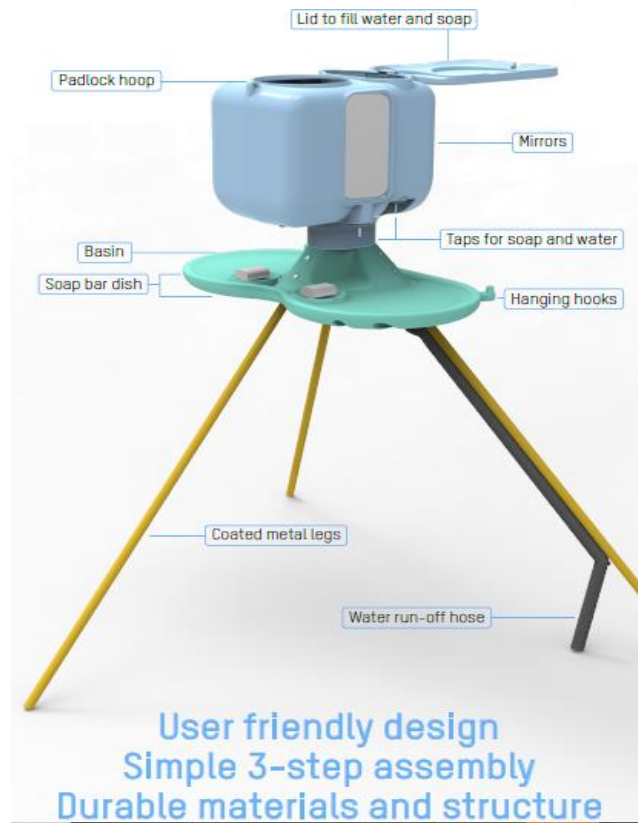- Misconceptions about the similarity and differences between Ebola & COVID-19
- Variations in implementation packages due to attempts to adapt the current Ebola response in line with the COVID-19 reality
- Lack of knowledge transfer between staff involved in Ebola (in Nord Kivu) and those implementing COVID-19 response in Kinshasa

Lid to fill water and soap
Padlock hoop
Mirrors
Basin
Taps for soap and water
Soap bar dish
Hanging hooks
Coated metal legs
Water run-off hose

User friendly design
Simple 3-step assembly
Durable materials and structure

OXFAM

Case study 2: North West Syria

- **Number of cases:** 0 cases in NWS (47 in other parts)
- **Number of deaths:** 0 deaths in NWS (3 in other parts)
- **Access to basic handwashing facilities:** 71%
- **Literacy:** 81%
- **Number of people in acute need:** 1.1 million out of 4.1 (27%)
- **Number of displaced people:** 2.7 million out of 4.1 (66%)

UDER
**Relief Experts Association**
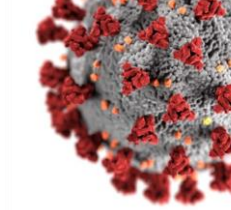
Community perceptions

- Not dangerous according to 10% of community v.s 20% of leaders.
- No COVID-19 cases yet in NWS, no need to take precautions.
- First time we have skies with no warplanes and bombs, we can't stay home now!
- We suffered death since 2011 because of war, why bother if few more die?
- Authorities and international community do not care, why should we?
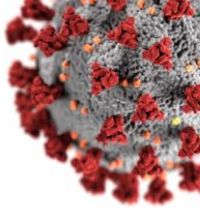
What is being done by our organisation?

The Corona Awareness Team with WHO and UNICEF support is:

- Dispatching awareness teams
- Organizing public campaigns
- Utilizing existing aid networks
- Training aid workers
- Increasing water and soap access
- Improving communication with religious leaders and de facto authorities
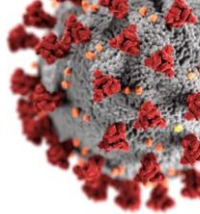

UDER
Relief Experts Association
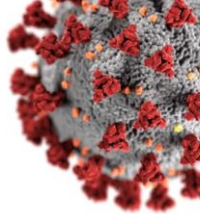
What else is being done?

- Disinfection of public facilities
- Change in aid distribution mechanisms
- Pilot distant learning
- Recreational activities for children
- Enhancing use of social media

What had to be considered for COVID-19 programmes given the fragile context?

- **Weak/destroyed health infrastructure:** A plan to enhance hospital capacity and add community isolation centers
- **Lack of community knowledge:** Enhanced RCCE activities
- **Beaten economics:** A plan to scale up aid in non-health sectors
- **Ideas to improve social distancing.**

Anadolu Agency

UDER
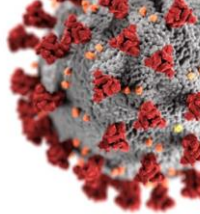Relief Experts Association

What is working well?

- **Border crossing restriction both within and outside Syria:** main reason for 0 cases in NWS, although Syrian government-controlled area and other parts has 48 cases, and Turkey has about 140,000

What are key challenges?

- Fragmented authorities and different reactions to COVID-19 threat, more is required from UN negotiators.
- Week infrastructure.
- Lack of proper housing.
- Lack of prevention material and financial resources.
- No cases of COVID-19 in the area despite testing by EWARN.
- Insufficient community knowledge.

UDER
Relief Experts Association

Want more information about hygiene programming as part of COVID-19 response?

COVID-19
HygieneHub

Connect with experts who can answer questions and provide advice in real time

Search resources which summarise evidence and make recommendations appropriate for low-resource settings

Share what is working with other organisations and governments

hygienehub.info
#COVID19HygieneHub