



SMEPS COVID -19 Response

■ — 2020 — ■

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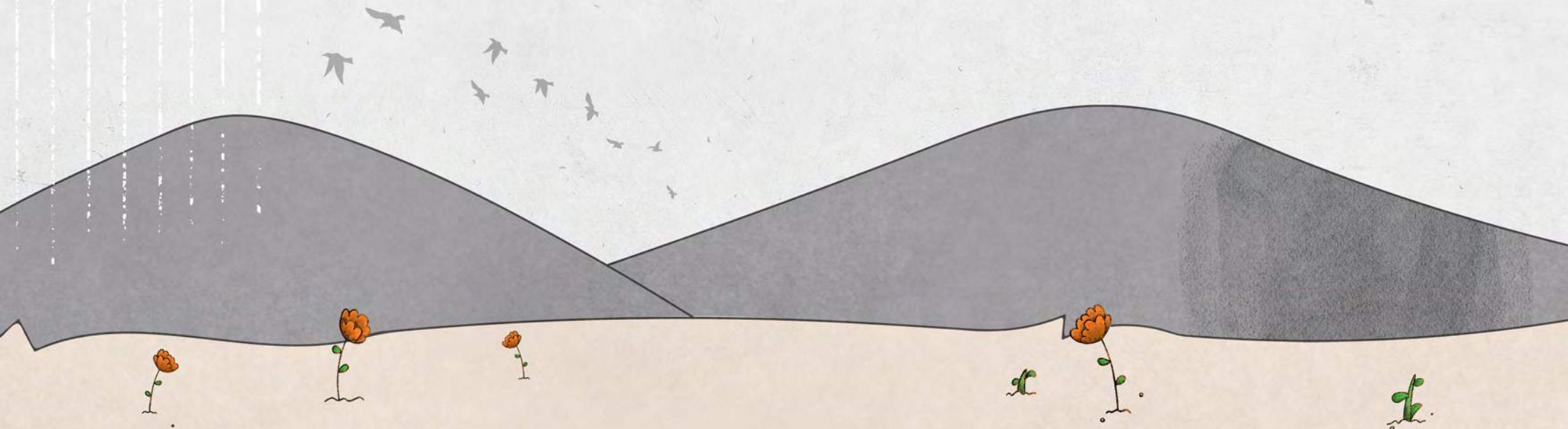


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Announcements

Even prior to the report of the first COVID19 case in Yemen, SMEPS developed its business operational plan and adapted all its projects to include COVID19 activities. The below sections will briefly highlight the work of SMEPS during these difficult times.





Policy Briefs

Rethinking Yemen's Humanitarian Response Plan

In the face of COVID19- and strict physical distancing measures can the Yemen Humanitarian Response ...



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Private Sector Health Support

The Life Support Machine to the Health Care System..



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Since 2005, The Small And Micro Enterprise Promotion Service (SMEPS) has fostered entrepreneurship and financial sustainability in Yemen. We do this by linking development and humanitarian projects together in order to create sustainable jobs that influence social good. As such, we strengthen food supply chains and associated small businesses across the country. SEMPS hopes to see small and medium businesses expand into new areas of the market and introduce new products.

In Yemen, COVID19 is an evolving disaster that is further challenged by ongoing conflict. The context and needs keep changing, so we have to remain nimble in our response. Even though much of the population lacks reliable access to information, and the changing circumstances of conflict prevent consistent outreach, SMEPS has launched several successful initiatives aimed at keeping people informed and safe.

Here are the three things that helped SMEPS respond and adapt rapidly during COVID 19

We already had trust with the communities.

Our early response to COVID19- was enabled by our existing good relationships with the communities we serve. Before COVID19, we were in the field as much as possible and people came to know and trust us. Our Communications Team was responsible for going into the field to connect with people and hear what more we could do to help. We always tell people, “don’t thank us.

Share your **honest feedback**”,



which opens up space for an honest conversation. Over the years, people came to see that we were there to serve and had good intentions, and they began to open up to us. Once, during a field visit, a farmer mentioned to us that even though he was happy with the support, it had come too late in theseason. We used his feedback in our other projects to ensure we consider farming seasons in our planning. Such feedbacks are posted under #SMEPSLearning on public platforms to inform on our learning.

Public addressing such as critical feedback showed people that we seek to be of service and can be trusted. As a result of this continual effort, we’ve built meaningful, mutual relationships with our constituents.

These relationships with the beneficiaries, donors, partners, stakeholders and community proved paramount in our COVID19 response. When the first case of COVID19 was still announced in the neighboring country Jordan, we could tell things were going to get bad and we immediately started our response planning. Since many of the people we serve live in rural settings and do not have access to reliable information, we figured that the best way to reach them would be to go through their social network. We went door to door in communities raising awareness to people like housewives (who see a lot of people each day) about COVID19. We also called people

who are well connected and got them on board to share information about the virus with their communities. We wouldn’t have known who to go to, or have been able to gain the trust of those well-connected community members if we hadn’t already worked to build

a mutual relationship with them. At a time where we had to all be “socially distant”, most certainly relationships matter more than ever.

“SMEPS COVID19 response: Hearts open, ears open”

We adjusted our communications to the cultural context. Some communities lack access to typical communication channels such as the news or social media. At the beginning of the pandemic, we reached these communities through door to door visits. Often, we would show up and discover that they did not even know about COVID19-. When working in this context, we decided to take an approach of kindness over fear. We wouldn't frighten them with news of death but instead explain what COVID19 was and how they could take precautions.

To reach digitally active communities, we use a lot of social media (especially videos) to educate people about COVID19. We reached about 30 million people on social media with simple messaging and a simple video that had the main COVID19 prevention measures in it and that message spread. This video was done in-house by the communication team and several colleagues from SMEPS. There are lots of people who do not use social media or do not have access to social media. For this audience, we started using TV as another way of reaching people, and reached 1 million views so far. Radio is another effective way of reaching people outside of cities.

We asked one livestock breeder what she listens to, and she said she and a lot of other agricultural workers use radios while they are working. We had never thought radio would be an effective tool, but it now allows us to reach new audiences.

No matter the method of communication, there are a few communication rules we always follow. We use simple language when talking about COVID19 and preventative measures so that anyone can understand our message.

And we always communicate with kindness so that we do not contribute to fear or hysteria in an often-fearful time. We want to be a positive source of information and guidance for the communities we serve during COVID19.

Being able to reach people is essential during a public health emergency, and our multi-channel, flexible approach has helped us connect with a wider audience that otherwise may have never heard of the virus until it reached their town.

We gave people choices and opportunities for feedback. At the start of the pandemic, we continued our typical site visits where we collect feedback. Beyond collecting general data about the health and success of our projects, our Monitoring and Evaluation team operates a grievance system which people we work with use if they have a complaint. We respond within three days to make the problem right. It is a simple way of showing people we care and are willing to help. As COVID19 spread across the country, this feedback system proved critical. After a few weeks of spreading the word and delivering supplies based on feedback, lockdowns between cities started and movement became restricted. We anticipated this happening but we were happy to use the window of opportunity reaching hundreds of rural households with the awareness campaign. In response to the lockdowns, we dropped projects we could no longer run and shifted all of our funding towards emergency cash transfers to the people we serve. But we did not stop listening to feedback. We heard from communities that they had three main needs: food, hygiene materials (a result of the awareness campaign that we conducted!),

and agriculture inputs like feed or seeds. The cash transfers supported them to procure these items.

Our communities had the choice of utilizing the cash to ensure we had the best outcomes. If we had just provided them with food, or our choice of agriculture/livestock inputs, some people would surely have sold it to get the other supplies they needed. Even though we had to drop some projects, feedback pushed us forward to continue making an impact.



COVID19 has undoubtedly changed the world and our work. Though these times are stressful and present new challenges, SMEPS has been able to adapt effectively throughout, with both our communities and even with our staff. Our staff continued working even during the spread, following all precautionary measures to ensure that we truly made a difference to the thousands of people we serve. We also supported our staff with continuous medical check-ups & health support as well as nutrition through meals in the office. This support made us better prepared to face the challenges of the pandemic in our community.

We are nimble because we have deep relationships with the communities we serve, flexible, multi-channel communications, and a feedback system in place to notice and adjust to needs as they occur. Through these methods, we were able to develop a response that truly reflects the unique needs of the communities we serve in Yemen.

As COVID19 continues to unfold, but we will continue to support our beneficiaries with adaptability and an open ear.



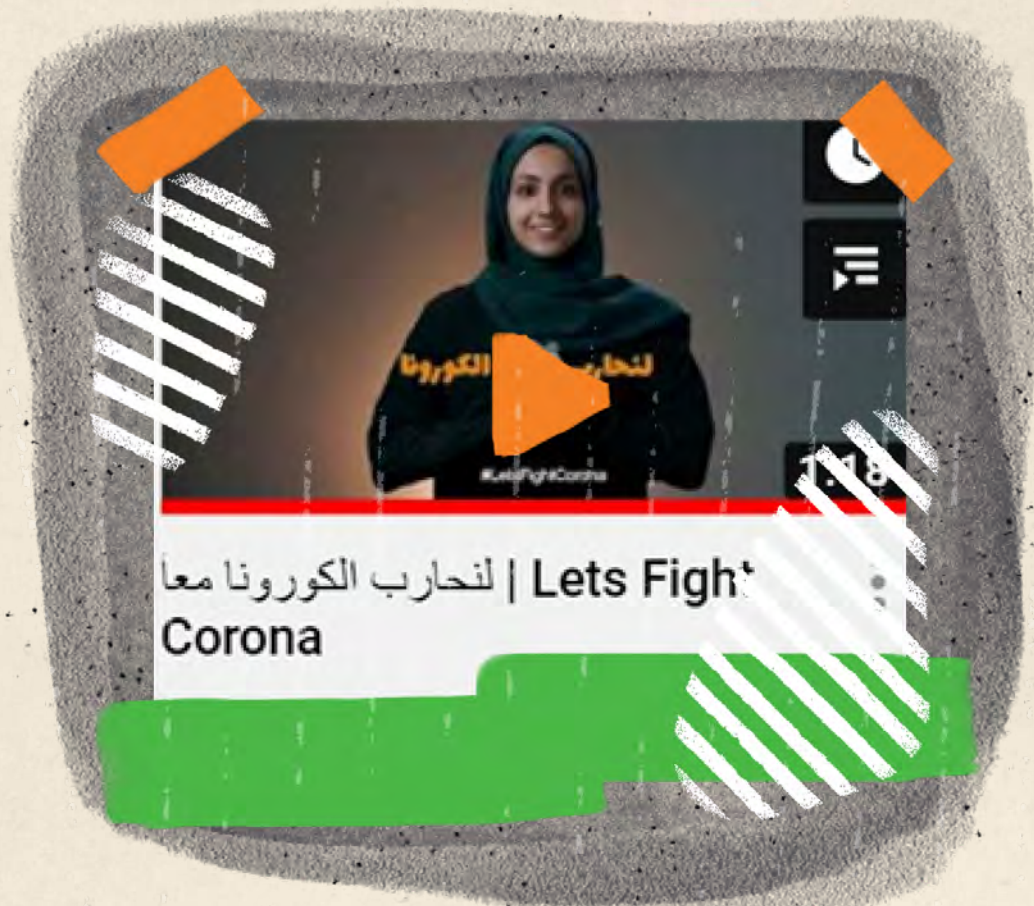
@FeedbackLabs

Website: <http://t.co/OV8JeSJpt7?amp=1>





This section will highlight
4 most watched / **important**
videos we produced in
the last 5 months.



Lets Fight Corona



Podcast: Social Distancing in Transportation



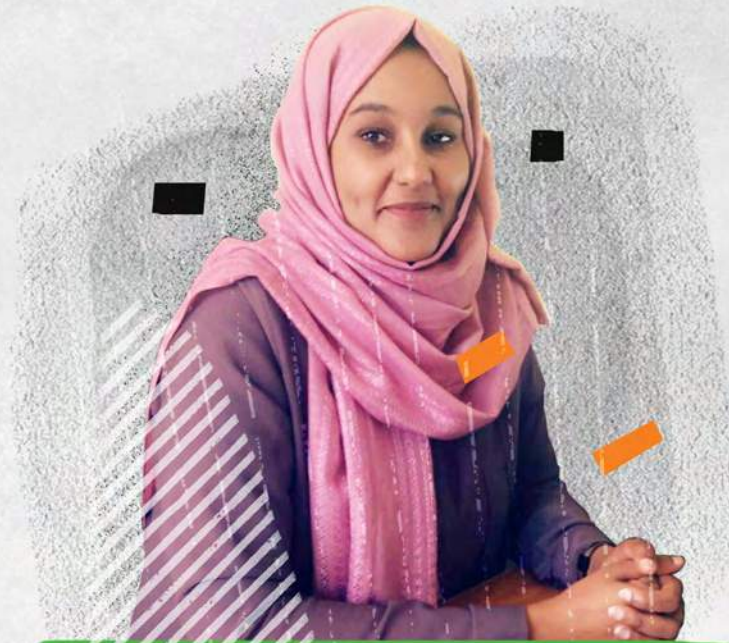
Livestock Breeders Occupational Health & Safety



Livestock Breeders COVID19 Awareness



Numbers with Meaning



Safiya Al-Jabry
Executive Director

“

To have stopped working during the **COVID19** spread leaving the people we serve without sufficient support would have been inhumane. Our brave teams in the offices and on the ground worked tirelessly to reach thousands of rural households with awareness and hygiene materials. The **communities** we serve are at the heart of our work, we prioritize them and we work hard to ensure that humanity is a core principle in our work.

”

As a response to the **COVID19** spread, **SMEPS** adapted its projects to include four main activities:



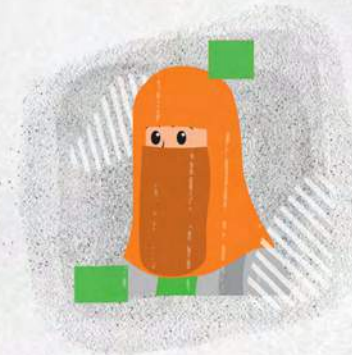
Conditional Cash Transfers



Distribution of protective materials such as gloves and face masks



Awareness sessions



Consultation to beneficiaries on sustaining their activities with precautions.



Livelihoods support during **COVID19**

14,026 households have been supported with **COVID19** preventive materials

5,514 beneficiaries were supported with cash grants to sustain their work

We reached **19** governorates and **134** districts during our awareness campaign.

Cash Utilization

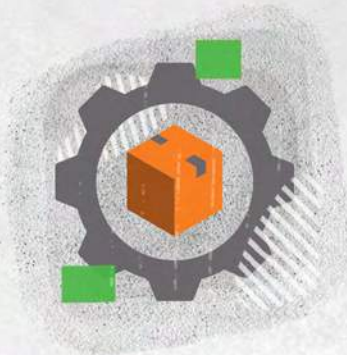
SMEPS teams worked to understand the needs of beneficiaries during this period and how beneficiaries used the cash provided.

The findings show:



27%

Food



51%

production
materials



8%

hygiene
material



14%

Other
(Paying Debts..etc)



At the same time, SMEPS worked to support the role of the private sector in adapting and combating COVID19. Some of the outcomes include:

- Training of **534** health workers in **126** hospitals on case identification, management and treatment.
- Training of **19** schools on on-line schooling.
- Supporting women-owned businesses to produce masks and PPE suits for community settings
- Distribution of **1,500** medical grade PPEs and masks to isolation centers and testing facilities



Nadia Ali
Jana Sewing Workshop

Confronting COVID19



In light of the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID19) in Yemen, which forces upon its population additional ravishing hardships due to the continued conflict that has devastated the country since the year 2015. The necessity to think of rapid and alternative solutions that could support the awareness and preventative response efforts to combat the pandemic, especially with the realized in-country shortage of COVID19 recommended Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and due to the added bottlenecks the pandemic has created in the international supply chains as well as the closure of some of Yemen's vital entry ports.

The current status quo of civil unrest, fragile health system in Yemen besides the distorted global coordination; Yemen was left unprepared to face the challenges of a global pandemic. The first line of defense such as medical personnel sustained major casualties due to the lack of adequate PPE. The humanitarian community rushed to import as much as possible of protective gears, yet the gap in the supply was unmatched to suffice for the scale of demand by the governmental health sector, the private health sector in addition to the masses. The increase in the price of PPE was three folds if not more and the market was saturated with various counterfeit and unqualitative PPE.

Amidst this uncertainty, Nadia, a **'BRAVE' Business Woman**, like other business women that were technically and financially supported through one of SMEPS 'Business Resilience Assistance for Value-Adding Enterprises ("BRAVE")'. Nadia was able to prevail through the pandemic adversity and developed her protective equipment fabrication workshop through the 'Business Continuity Training'. Nadia identified the gap in the market and tailored her business plan in line with the needs of the market.

Nadia's Business Continuity Plan is one of the vital components of **'BRAVE Women Project'**. The Project trains women on how to adapt and position her ideas within a volatile market and mitigate any future risks. She was able to build good business relationships with other businesswomen working in the medical field as well as expand her work connections to include the private and public hospitals in more than one governorate within Yemen.

"Our start was simple and humble as a medical clothes sewing workshop. I was encouraged to join the BRAVE Women Program to develop my business. The business plan was focusing on increasing the production capacity of the business by purchasing assets, which are additional sewing machines. Once I received the assets, I felt happy that yesterday's dream became a reality today and that I am able to develop my business better" Nadia commented.

During the early stages of COVID19 outbreak in Yemen; Nadia was able to acclimate to the emergency needs of the medical sector and began with her team to produce medical facemasks as well as virus protection suits (PPE) with high standards. Her motivation to embark on her entrepreneurial journey was not driven by the financial gain.

Nevertheless, because of her sense of social responsibility towards the society, and to support by all means the medical personnel who are sacrificing their lives in the health facilities across the country.

Business woman Nadia adds, "I added new machines to my sewing workshop, as well as hired new workers, and we started developing our production. We were in a real race against time, especially since the number of COVID19 victims' increases in the world drastically. **COVID19 pandemic** might knock every house and we might lose a lot, so time was a decisive factor. Thank God we were able to contribute with a helping hand".

We continued to provide everyone with medical masks and protective suits (PPE), and the demand continues until this moment. "I feel very proud that I actively contributed to saving the lives of frontline responders during this pandemic as well as patients who need to protect themselves and isolate themselves until their full recovery".

The Yemeni private sector has been able to support the local efforts in combating the

Coronavirus Pandemic, despite the difficult challenges it is going through; starting with the unstable and volatile business environment that suffers from scarcity of services (electricity, fuel ...etc). In addition, the fluctuation of the Yemeni currency rates and the scarcity of qualitative raw materials. The efforts of Nadia's business as a private sector contributor, were realized and able to support on the fight of the COVID19 pandemic. This proves that the local efforts are the best rapid, most sustainable and effective methods for such scenarios.

Nadia was able to produce about 1500-1000 masks per day and 150-100 protective suits (PPE). She moreover, was able to sign contracts with ten private hospitals in Yemen in four governorates, four pharmacies, as well as seven medical suppliers to supply them with PPE according to the production specifications approved by the Supreme Board of Medicinal and Medical Equipment Authority.


We need more '**BRAVE Women**' just like Nadia, who took actions into her hands to adapt and contribute to help during a crisis. We need more of her caliber to enrich and sustain a vibrant business environment that is built on markets inclusion and business connectivity. Such success stories need to replicate to other BRAVE Women who are willing to overcome the odds.



Nadia Ali
Yemeni Business Woman

BEST PHOTO OF 2020



 Albaraa Mansoor

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