



# COVID-19: HOW TO ADDRESS SOCIAL STIGMA

Evidence clearly shows that stigma and fear around communicable diseases hamper the response

Facts, not fear will stop the spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19)

# WORDS MATTER



**Encourage your team and MOH to use the appropriate terminology:** “people who have”, “people who are being treated”, “people who have recovered”, “people who died after contracting” COVID-19

**Emphasize** the effectiveness of prevention and treatment measures as well as early screening, testing and treatment.

**Correct misconceptions through clarifying common myths based on local culture.**

# Spreading the facts (I)



**Social media can be very useful for disseminating accurate information by WHO Country Offices** Prioritize the collection, consolidation and **dissemination of accurate information** about affected areas, individual and group vulnerability to COVID-19, treatment options and practical information on where to access health care and information using simple language.

**Share sympathetic local narratives; we feel closer to people when we hear their stories from them.** Amplify the voices, stories and images of people in your country who have experienced the new coronavirus (COVID-19) and have recovered or who have supported a loved one through recovery, and are willing to share their story.

**Engage social influencers in your country** on prompting reflection about people and health care staff who are stigmatized and how to support them.

## Spreading the facts (II)



National Center for Disease Control Libya/ Abd el Razak  
ben Halim

Make sure you **portray different ethnic groups**

Promote **ethical journalism** through working with media that displays content around prevention practices and when to seek health care. Share with media in local language the correct information from WHO resources.

**Create** a positive tone with the media that shows care and empathy for all and don't blame specific individuals for infecting others. This may create stigma and discrimination.

# Stigma towards health staff

Some health workers may experience avoidance by their family or community. Encourage workers to stay connected with loved ones including through digital methods if needed to maintain contact. Turn to colleagues, manager or other trusted persons for social support.

Implement a “hero” campaign **honoring caretakers and healthcare workers** who may be stigmatized. Communicate support and encouragement for those who are on the frontlines of response. Acknowledge the role they play to save lives and keep your loved ones safe through your social media and media statements.

Encourage team leader or managers in a health facility, facilitate access to, and ensure staff are aware of where they can access mental health and psychosocial support services during stressful times.

The following tools can help you and your team to combat stigma related to COVID-19

[Myth buster](#)

[Addressing Social Stigma](#)

[Coping with stress during COVID-19 outbreak](#)

[Mental Health and Psychosocial Aspects of COVID-19](#)

