

## COVID-19

### Preventing and addressing stigma

Reducing stigma associated with Covid-19 can save lives

What you say matters – use inclusive language and avoid stigmatising terminology

Share information and facts from **qualified** and **authoritative** sources

Share stories that humanise the experiences and struggles of individuals or groups affected by the new coronavirus

### What you can do to help prevent and address stigma

#### Use inclusive and non-stigmatising words

- Counter and challenge negative stereotypes, myths and misinformation
- Correct misconceptions and harmful assumptions
- Communicate support for the **whole** community, specifically including:
  - people who have or may have Covid-19
  - health workers, volunteers and community leaders
  - vulnerable and marginalised sections of the community.



#### Share verified facts

- Focus on communicating information from qualified and authoritative sources such as the World Health Organization and the Ministry/Department of Health.

**Amplify the voices, stories and images** of local people who have experienced the new coronavirus (Covid-19) and have recovered, or of those who have supported a loved one through recovery, to emphasise that most people do recover from Covid-19.

For more information on why and how to prevent and address social stigma associated with Covid-19, please see this guide from UNICEF:

<https://www.unicef.org/documents/social-stigma-associated-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

## Examples of putting this into practice

- **Do use** the official name – Coronavirus disease, or Covid-19.

**Do not use** ‘Wuhan Virus’, ‘Chinese Virus’ or ‘Asian Virus’.

- **Do refer** to people as **having, are being treated for, or are recovering from** Covid-19.

**Do not refer** to people as Covid-19 ‘cases’ or ‘victims’.

- Implement a ‘hero’ campaign (photographs of people holding signs of thanks) to honour caretakers and healthcare workers who may be stigmatised. Community volunteers also play a great role in reducing stigma in communities.



- Support people who have recovered from Covid-19 to share their stories with the community using social media and non-physical interactions. Have trusted community leaders (religious leaders, local doctors and healthcare professionals) help them do this.

- Call upon your friends, family and communities to engage socially with people who have recovered from Covid-19 through non-physical forms of contact.

- Only promote advice and information from the WHO and the Ministry/Department of Health, such as:

- advice on frequent handwashing
- guidance on ‘social distancing’
- information on the symptoms of Covid-19: fever, continuous cough, and difficulty breathing are the only confirmed symptoms
- information about screening and seeking medical advice early.

Further information and advice is available from:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

**For more information please contact Tearfund [insert country name] at [inset country office contact information]**

## Ideas of activities for church leaders and their communities

### Interviews

If you have some kind of video link or online church gathering or service each week, hold an interview with:

- a healthcare professional working on treating people having coronavirus. Ask them about their experience. Ask them what the challenges are. Ask them how the church can be praying for them and the healthcare systems in your area.
- someone who has recovered from coronavirus disease.

Note: always ensure that the person is happy to be interviewed and has given their consent. Also prepare what questions you are going to ask in advance with the interviewee, so that you only ask them questions they are prepared to answer.

### Communications network and calling list

- Identify who in your community is at risk of being stigmatised. Set up a communications network that ensures those who are vulnerable and isolated, in particular those that are at risk of being stigmatised, are kept in contact with the church and the community.
- Have a list of people to make a phone call or video call to on a daily/weekly/monthly basis. Involve your church members in making these calls to share the responsibility.

### Bible studies

Hold Bible studies on parts of scripture that speak to issues of stigma and marginalisation.

- **Luke, Chapter 8: Verses 42a–48**

Study resource:

[https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps\\_81-90/footsteps\\_86/bible\\_study/](https://learn.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_81-90/footsteps_86/bible_study/)

- **Acts, Chapter 6: Verses 1–7**

Study resource:

<https://learn.tearfund.org/~media/files/tilz/covid19/bible-study-mainstream-and-margin-with-concept-intro.pdf?la=en>

### Preach about compassion and care for the poor

- Speak to your church and your community about being kind to the poor and caring for them, regardless of race, ethnicity, age and gender.
- Call on your communities to support those who cannot live without interacting with others, such as those who live by selling items each day. Ask them to pray for the safety of those that do not have any option but continue to go out and work against the advice of governments.
- Encourage your community to speak kindly of those who have suffered.