

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE WEBINAR: EFFECTIVE MESSAGING AROUND SRHR AND COVID-19

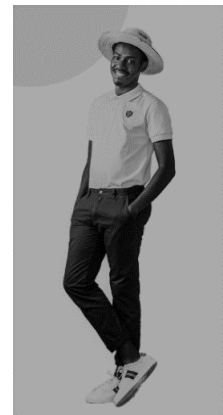
On August, 4<sup>th</sup> 2020, the Share-Net Netherlands (SNNL) CoP on SRHR messaging organised a [webinar](#) to discuss: **How can we maintain our strong narratives around SRHR and positive sexuality during the current pandemic?**

This summary is informed by the experts that were interviewed live on stage during the webinar:



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## INTRODUCTION

### What are we talking about when we talk about messaging?

Message communication is actually made up of four components which include narrative, story, framing and messaging:

Narratives	Stories	Framing	Messaging
Narratives are related to broad public and political discourse. They are often deep-rooted and are something we can all in some way relate to, even if we do not agree with it. Narratives can shift over time and here lies a roles CSOs.	Narratives are made of stories.	Framing is how we tell that story. This is done through different tactics such as emphasising on different parts of a story and focusing on different values and different emotions.	Individual communication pieces are the messages. It's about how we apply our framing (by using specific words and sentences) to particular communications, to emphasise or shift the narrative.

Framing and narrative work are about connecting with the internal emotions and values of people purposefully.

## RECENT SRHR AND COVID-19 FRAMING EXPERIENCE

- COVID-19 framing in both the UK and Uganda was initially focused on *crisis emergency framing* which included messages on staying at home, that we are all in this together and how to avoid contracting COVID-19. “War” language was used (crisis, threat, fighting together against the virus) and created an atmosphere of unity and common goal, and a sense of governments being in one boat with the population. Framing also focused on resilience and caring for each other and on the security values as there was a lot of anxiety amongst the general public. In the UK a tendency to prioritize economy over health derived in the government framing, which resulted in an erosion of trust by the general public. A reaction to that was the campaign Build Back Better, initiated by several CSOs to promote a ‘new normal’ in which health, equality and climate are central.
- In Uganda, messaging changed when they noticed the severity of the impact of the disruption of SRHR services. They:
  - Framed the conversation about the prevention of COVID-19 in combination with the conversation about the importance of SRHR
  - Changed the way they communicated about SRHR, with ‘keep calm’ and ‘protect yourself’ as key messages
  - Collaborated with the government and partners. They created a consortium to collaboratively work on messaging and communication
  - Went digital and started using voice messages with information, combined with radio and TV commercials
  - Used media as an important ally where they did a training for media actors on how to report on SRHR and how to report cases of gender-based violence
  - Messaging included: prevention, control, safety, social distancing, relationships, safe sex and SRHR.
- The momentum around COVID-19 and its implications were used as an opportunity to remind the government about the shadow impacts of COVID-19, such as an increase in GBV and unplanned pregnancies. This was levered to include SRHR messaging which opened the eyes of people who were not aware about the impact of COVID-19 on SRHR.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE SRHR MESSAGING

**Cultivate awareness for emotions and values of affected populations and be sensitive to inequalities that exist in societies!**

COVID-19 is a real opportunity to think about our emotional lives as we are in a moment of collective grieving. It is important to bear this in mind and be sensitive in the messaging around COVID-19 and SRHR to ensure they are appealing for everyone and not harmful for (vulnerable) target groups.

**Avoid threats, intimidation and shaming!**

In times of insecurity and anxiety, people shut down psychologically. Anxiety and fears of people need to be acknowledged as valid feeling, whereas you can reach a better effect by using positive frames.

**Build collaborations in times of crisis!**

Working in alliances with all relevant stakeholders; government, CSOs, media, creates dialogue and shared responsibility for communication!

**Build on positive messages!**

Celebrate the things that people are already doing well, reflect and encourage healthy behaviours, use humour and interesting forms of media!

**Messages need to be tested and evaluated!**

You want to know that your messages are effective and learn what works and what doesn't. PIRC has, for instance, developed a [guide](#) on how to test your communications.

**Use clear and inclusive language!**

Your messages should be concrete, understandable and not judgmental to everyone, including young people, as well as speaking to a variety of identities!

**Reach your audience through creative means!**

For instance, include influencers and celebrities when targeting young people with messages

## Join Share-Net!

and become part of the knowledge platform on SRHR as either a member or a sponsor. When joining Share-Net, you will not only be contributing to our mission and vision, but you will also be able to enjoy specific member benefits:

- Have free access to all the meetings that we organise. (Non-members participate at cost-price)
- Participate in our working groups or CoPs, which is exclusive for members. These groups are crucial for agenda setting, organizing meetings and executing small research projects. For more information on the Share-Net Netherlands working groups and thematic groups please visit [www.share-net.nl/working-groups](http://www.share-net.nl/working-groups).
- Be elected in one of our governing bodies, the Steering Committee of the Netherlands or the Board of Share-Net International. All members are invited to our annual business meeting.
- Be eligible for our yearly call for proposals for the Share-Net International Small Grants facility.

For more information about our work and how to get involved, please contact us at [info@share-net.nl](mailto:info@share-net.nl)