



Hot Line
15322

MENTAL HEALTH AND PRIMARY HEALTHCARE: OUTREACH INITIATIVES THROUGH COVID-19

Egyptian Red Crescent

Investing in disaster preparedness is valuable - both in terms of lives saved and economic returns. In this story we learn how the Egyptian Red Crescent adapted their services to respond to the increasing demand for health care, alleviating the burden of the national healthcare system during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mobile Medical Units

The Egyptian Red Crescent (ERC) provides primary health care services through Mobile Medical Units. These units target the most vulnerable people in hard-to-reach areas and those on the move with limited access to regular health services. Services provided include consultations, diagnosis, and treatment. They also engage in community health activities through health awareness sessions, first aid workshops, psychosocial support, and hygiene promotion.



Over the past decade, learning from the 2009 A(H1N1) influenza pandemic and through close collaboration with the ministries of Health and Social Solidarity, the ERC has strengthened its preparedness for health emergencies, through the development of protocols for medical supplies management and Infection Prevention and Control, among others. In response to COVID-19, the ERC was able to increase the number of its Mobile Medical Units, adapt their services to also provide COVID-19 vaccination, and develop campaigns against vaccine hesitancy. The National Society also launched a COVID-19 virtual clinic, allowing medical professionals to provide telemedicine services targeting community needs, especially in remote areas lacking primary health units.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

The severe consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic have affected Egyptian communities, including people on the move, leading to an increase in the prevalence of mental health conditions, especially anxiety and depression.

Since the early days of the pandemic, the ERC has adapted its capacity to provide remote Psychological First Aid (PFA) and counseling sessions. Using the existing infrastructure from the Emergency Operations Centre, which was launched six months before the start of the pandemic, the ERC built a Helpline to provide 24/7 mental health support over the phone, alongside with telemedicine services and health awareness sessions, as part of the COVID-19 virtual clinics. The ERC also created and shared information in several local languages and formats to help people cope with the mental health impacts of COVID-19.



PREPAREDNESS AREA &
COMPONENT RELATED

OPERATIONAL CAPACITY



Health in
Emergencies

KEY STATS



At the end of 2021, medical care
had been provided to **86,343**
people through Mobile Medical
Units in 14 regions.



The ERC trained **psychologists**
and volunteers answered **24,260**
calls to their psychosocial
support helpline in 2021.

2,000 volunteers were trained in
Psychological First Aid and use of
PPE using digital platforms.

Keys to success



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- Use of digital technology to further expand the reach of the ERC's health services through the development of a Virtual COVID-19 Clinic, providing mental health support and telemedicine services to communities in need.
- The ERC's strong role and its relationship with the Ministry of Health and other partners allowed the National Society to advocate for mental health and participate in health-related working groups at the national level.
- Previous training of volunteers and staff in PFA and the use of PPE as part of the National Society's onboarding package ensured a better response. This was further enhanced by the adaptation of refresher training using digital platforms.
- The capacity to adapt existing tools to new contexts and scale up health services, while strengthening preparedness and response strategies.



"We appreciate the role that ERC has played in providing healthcare services to vulnerable communities and decreasing the overburden on secondary healthcare facilities. (...) With the increase in the community needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ERC Mobile Medical Units model, which had begun at a very small scale, snowballed and provided various health services to decrease the burden on secondary healthcare facilities".

Officer, Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population

Additional resources:

- [A tour from inside the Mobile Medical Units explaining the steps in turn for the services provided to the beneficiaries](#)
- [Mobile Medical Units in remote areas](#)
- [Important steps to maintain your wellbeing](#)
- [Providing messages and ways to cope with fears of COVID 19 infection in various ways through sign language](#)
- [Egyptian Red Crescent Learning Platform](#)
- [Egyptian Red Crescent Hotline - 15322](#)

- **For more information:**
- Egyptian Red Crescent: <https://www.egyptianrc.org/Home>
 - National Society Preparedness: www.ifrc.org/disaster-preparedness
 - Epidemic and Pandemic Preparedness: www.ifrc.org/epidemic-and-pandemic-preparedness

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