OSSREA

Proceeding of Project Inception Webinar

COYOQA Project, Ethiopia

MARCH, 2021

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CCRDA
Consortium of Christian Relief &
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Acronyms

CCRDA - Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Association

COSSREC - COVID-19 Social Science Research Coalition

COVISAF - Vertically Integrated Social Accountability Framework

COYOQA - COVID-19 and the Youth Question in Africa

CSO – Civil Society Organization

IDRC - International Development Research Centre

IGAD - Intergovernmental Authority on Development

MOU - Memory of Understanding

RRS - Regional Response Strategy

OSSREA - Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa

Introduction

The COVID-19 crisis has severely disrupted youth livelihoods, access to education, employment and participation in governance processes, decision-making and public life. It is envisaged that the long-term impact of the crisis will include increased levels of youth unemployment and exacerbation of their vulnerability and exclusion. At the same time, the COVID-19 crisis has the potential to promote youth agency by encouraging innovation, strengthening intergenerational dialogue and promoting social accountability.

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by establishing a Regional Response Strategy (RRS) for COVID-19 Pandemic as a call of action. Member states were tasked to use their National Response Strategies to monitor the performance of RRS and formally conduct COVID-19 surveillance at the national level. This emphasized the top-down strategy in communicating World Health Organization guidelines to communities.

However, the RRS omitted youth-led civic engagement in tracking its implementation for strengthened public health delivery, increased accountability and responsiveness to community needs. Throughout the region, the fight against COVID-19 has taken a top-down communication approach thereby side-lining community engagement as a critical operational tool. The communication has also been centralized thereby excluding the peripheries.

The increasing spread of decentralization reforms is seen as a driver of social accountability initiatives because it offers opportunities for greater civic engagement in the management of public affairs. It calls for rigorous advocacy campaigns so as to inculcate into the residents and youth groups the culture of mutual respect and constructive engagement between citizens and state actors.

To enhance social accountability and youth engagement in 3 IGAD regions – Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, five institutions formed a consortium to implement a project named "COYOQA" from a grant secured from International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The main goal of the project is to take the initial steps towards improving and enhancing youth engagement in social

accountability and advocacy of the COVID-19 pandemic by better understanding young people's own perspectives on the barriers they are facing and their needs to effectively advocate and enhance their engagement, within the context of existing principles and practices.

Accordingly, Organization for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA), the project lead organization has signed Memory of Understanding (MOU) with CCRDA to implement the project in Ethiopia in 3 selected sites, namely, in Addis Ababa city, Sidama region (Hawassa city) and Somali Region.

Based on the operational plan of the project, one of the activities scheduled was to conduct a virtual "Project Inception Webinar" meeting with relevant stakeholders. As part of this initiative, CCRDA and OSSREA have jointly planned to conduct a virtual "Project Inception Webinar" meeting with relevant stakeholders. Accordingly, the project inception webinar was held on 17th, February, 2021 with zoom meeting platform with the overall objective of ensuring engagement of all relevant stakeholders in the implementation of the project through enabling them understand the overall purpose and implementation plan of the project.

Welcoming

The webinar started at 10:00 a.m. and W/ro Tsehay Admassu, Program Director of the CCRDA, delivered welcoming speech and acknowledged participants for taking part in the meeting. She conveyed the purpose of the meeting and framed expectations of participants from the session. Then, she invited the participants to introduce themselves and the organizations that they were representing. Accordingly, the participants have briefly introduced themselves and the organizations that they have represented. Overall, 17 participants from different stakeholder organizations (7 female and 10 Male) have attended the webinar.

After that, the moderator thanked again the participants and invited Dr. Truphena Mukuna, Director of OSSREA, to make a welcoming remark.

Accordingly, Dr. Truphena Mukuna thanked all the participants for finding time to attend the inception webinar meeting for COYOQA project. She also thanked CCRDA for organizing the meeting. She remarked that the project was designed to be conducted by 5 organizations forming a consortium (namely, OSSREA, CCRDA from Ethiopia, OSSREA Chapter Officer from Kenya, Makerere University from Uganda and C1 for EGAD).

Dr. Truphena Mukuna noted that the project was funded by IDRC with the purpose of conducting a research on COVID-19 and Youth Question in Africa: the response, impact and protection. She added that the project has intended to pilot "Vertically Integrated Social Accountability Framework" in three identified sites in each of the three counties.

She stressed that the forecast of the project was unique because rather than the epidemiological research it would focus on the indirect effect of the pandemic on youth, since they were the most who have suffered and continued to suffer from its economic and livelihood impact as they were excluded from matters that concern them.

She emphasized that the research would be concerned on evaluating how the pandemic has affected the 5 sectors of the economy; thus helping IGAD to develop evidence based early warning system by analysing results generated from a COVISA framework.

Finally, she welcomed all the participants by the name of OSSREA as a lead organization; and expressed the interest of OSSREA to work with CSOs by making a remark acknowledging the efforts of CSOs in conducting informal social accountability to harness the synergy with the formal accountability done by governments.

She added that the COVID Vertically Integrated Social Accountability Framework (COVISAF) proposed to be piloted by the project would focus on seeing youth on board as agents of change; gate keepers of their community who bring the community together and empowered; and capable of conducting social accountability. She also highlighted on the phases of the project and the major expected milestones with in each phase.

After that the moderator invited Dr. Nigussu, Executive Director of CCRDA, to make key note speech. Accordingly, Dr. Nigussu, forwarded his gratitude for OSSREA for inviting CCRDA to be part of the consortium team implementing the project. He also expressed his gratitude for IDRC for funding the project.

He highlighted on the direct and indirect impact of the COVID-19 pandemic together with the major prevention and control strategies undertaken by governments. He noted that many countries have designed top-down approaches missing out an opportunity to meaningfully engage communities to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. He also noted that the pandemic has put stress on the government systems that were under pressure from existing problems and shortcomings.

He explained that young people in Africa have significant challenges in realizing their rights especially during the pandemic of COVID-19 despite the reality that they constituted significant proportion of the community and had substantial impact on socio-economic and other aspects of life for their community.

He also explained on the role of the project in enhancing youth engagement in social accountability and advocacy during COVID-19 pandemic. He stressed on the existence of urgent need to shift response from awareness raising and health education approaches to deeper dialogue in community engagement approaches. Finally, he thanked the participants for participating in the webinar and left the floor.

After that, the moderator invited Mr. Melkamsera Abera, the Country Research Lead of the project for Ethiopia, to make presentation on the overall situation of COVID-19 in Ethiopia.

Presentation

Mr. Melkamsera Abera thanked the participants for taking part in the webinar and made a brief presentation highlighting on the following key points:-

- The global and national magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Measures taken by the government of Ethiopia against the pandemic (such as declaration of state of emergency, mandatory quarantine requirements, information dissemination mechanisms and platforms, laboratory testing, measures taken to stimulate the economy, measures to mitigate the economic effect of the pandemic)
- The social, political and economic impact of the pandemic
- Social accountability in the service delivery sector

After that, the moderator invited Mr. Alemu Tesfaye, Knowledge & ICT Manager of OSSREA, to make presentation on the work plan and overall approach of the project.

Mr. Alemu thanked the participants for taking part in the webinar and added a reminder note to the participants to raise questions and reflect their views, comments and suggestions so that they could enrich the project plan.

He delivered his presentation by highlighting the following key points on the work plan and overall approach of the project:-

- The project is funded by IDRC and implemented by 5 organizations form Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda forming a consortium

- The project duration is 3 years (starting from 1st, September, 2020)
- All activities planned to be implemented in the first two quarters has been conducted on time (i.e. consortium planning webinar, stakeholder analysis webinar and stakeholder mapping)
- Displayed all the planned activities of the project on Gantt chart and explained them
- Baseline data collection would be on Survey-Monkey and Survey-CTO due limitation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic
- The intended purpose of the COVISAF along with issues related to data collection using the framework

He finally displayed the addresses of various social media channels, the COYOQA page on the OSSREA website and Youtube Channel and conveyed an invitation message to the participants to visit the channels and work together.

After that, the moderator invited Dr. Turuphena Mukuna to add on Mr. Alemu's presentation. Accordingly, Dr. Turuphena capitalized that the project was mainly interested in social accountability rather than horizontal accountability. She added that gender would be a strong pillar to be looked at in evaluating the impact of COVID-19.

She conveyed that the information generated from the COVISAF and other sources would be availed on an innovation platform for continuous learning named COVID-19 Social Science Research Coalition (COSSREC) that would allow cross learning for better governance. She also briefly explained the strategies employed by the project.

Discussion and Reflection

During the discussion session, Mr. Dagmawi from The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) of Ethiopia expressed his appreciation for the organizers for taking the initiative to implement a timely and interesting project. He also expressed his fear that the impact of the pandemic might continue for some time in the future affecting the livelihood, employment, education and health of the young people.

He shared the experience of YMCA in the prevention and control of the pandemic through engaging youth. He stressed on the importance of the issue of social accountability and expressed

his hope that the COYOQA project would be useful to produce evidences for policy decision making. Finally he congratulated the organizers that the launching was successful and of a great start.

After that, Mr. Melkamsera highlighted on the status of the project in Ethiopia and on the activities planned to be conducted in the next few months. He stressed on the importance of engagement of youth-led CSOs in the project.

Then, Dr. Nigussu shared some experience on the role and contribution that CSOs had in COVID-19 response. He pointed that CSOs have contributed more than 5.5. Million ETB for the COVID-19 task force to show their solidarity with stakeholders including the community. He added that CCRDA members have collectively spent over 680 million birr on different parts of the country on COVID-19 response. Finally he capitalized on the importance of youth engagement in social accountability issues.

In response to a question raised by a participant, Mr. Alemu made a clarification on the various information sharing ways of the project. He added on the importance that the COSSRC platform would have in creating learning opportunity.

Finally, the moderator summarized the event and presented the following points as a way forward:-

- Preparation to participate on data collection
- Create information-sharing platforms

Annex: Attendance of Participants

S.No.	Name of Participant	Sex	Organization
1	Dr. Nigussu Legesse	M	CCRDA
2	Dr. Turuphena Mukuna	F	OSSREA
3	Tsehay Admassu	F	CCRDA
4	Alemu Tesfaye	M	OSSREA
5	Muhidin Ahmed	M	OWDA
6	Alemnesh Seboka	F	Ethiopian Orthodox Church /Children and Youth Affairs/
7	Lidia Gebru	F	Federal Ministry of Health of Ethiopia
8	Fasikea Getu	F	OSSREA
9	Melkamsera Abera	M	CCRDA
10	Ephrem Berhanu	M	Talent Youth Association
11	Dagmawi Selamssa	M	The Young Men's Christian Association of Ethiopia
12	Belachew Yihunegn	M	Addis Ababa Youth Association
13	Assefa Getaneh	M	Center of Concern
14	Mistre Zergaw	F	OSSREA
15	Genet	F	Addis Ababa Women, Children and Youth Bureau
16	Fesseha Gedamu	M	OSSREA
17	Masresha Kibret	M	JECCDO