

From being prepared to responding

How Scouts were empowered to support the advocacy efforts on COVID-19 prevention measures.



Leadership scouts interact with a resident of Mongar town on COVID-19 prevention measures and safety protocols. Photo: UNICEF/Bhutan/2020/SPelden

“After I return home, I will reach out to my community and share with my class and scout members the importance of following the COVID-19 safety protocols,” said Sonam Lhaden, a student of Bartsam Central School in Trashigang. “I will talk to my family and friends about staying safe and the importance of handwashing,” adds Tshering Dema, 21, a trainee of Paro College of Education.

As a desuup, Yeshey Tshogyal Lhamo, from Bumthang has been on COVID-19 duty for three months. “But I want to do something as a scout. I plan to conduct an online advocacy campaign to address the complacency towards COVID-19 safety protocols.”

She said people were aware of the prevention measures and following the safety protocols when the pandemic started but they have today become complacent. “They wear the masks when they see the front liners.”

Pema Jamtsho, 19, a grade 12 student in Trashiyangtse said he pleaded with his district’s scout secretary to attend the orientation on COVID-19 messaging. “I told him that if I were to choose

between gold and the orientation, I would opt for the orientation session. That's because there is so much to learn and this opportunity is better than gold.”

After returning home, he will advocate on the usage of masks and physical distancing among students at his school.

Jigme Wangchuk from Bayling Central School in Trashiyangste, 16, is a class 11 student. “I want to sensitize the scouts at my school and on coping with the pandemic.”

Pelden Tshomo, 17, Class 11 from Jigme Sherubling Central School in Khaling, Trashigang said she learnt about COVID-19 pandemic and issues triggered by the pandemic. “Violence against children exists and we as agents of change must help keep children safe. If we don't act on this, we will have no leaders in future.”

The leadership scouts will each implement the plan in the six eastern districts. The 27 leadership scouts and six scout secretaries from the six eastern districts are among the 173 scouts (89 female) between 10-24 years that UNICEF in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education engaged with to advocate on COVID-19 prevention measures.



UNICEF Bhutan Representative Dr Will Parks explains the role scouts would play in behaviour change and support the government's COVID-19 prevention efforts. Photo: UNICEF/Bhutan/2020/SPelden

In groups, the scouts from the western, central, southern and eastern regions were oriented to become advocates on COVID-19 prevention measures. As part of the orientation, UNFPA also joined the efforts and briefed the leaders on gender based violence. School guidance counsellors

also highlighted the psychosocial impacts of the pandemic on children and young people and as a potential front liners, the scouts were briefed on referring such issues to the service providers.

The Risk Communication and Community Engagement activity with the scouts, which has a network of 59,000 scouts was led by the Communications for Development (C4D) section in partnership with Adolescent Development And Participation (ADAP) and Communications sections to advocate on COVID-19 prevention measures, reinforce the safety protocols and address complacency issues among the people.

Following the orientation, 234 leadership scouts (127 Females) sensitized family members, peers and community members on the prevention measures reaching 7,617 (4,276 females) people to date, records with the Scouts Division show.



Leadership scout Yeshey Tshogyal Lhamo plans to conduct a digital campaign on addressing complacency around COVID-19 safety measures. Photo: UNICEF/Bhutan/2020/SPelden