

## COVID-19: Encouraging Knowledge Translation with Seniors in Ethiopia Kaleigh Beauvais



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COVID-19 has affected all corners of the globe, leaving many in precarious and/or dangerous situations. Ethiopia is no exception: Africa's oldest independent country, and second largest in terms of population, the country's healthcare system is ill equipped and difficult to maneuver for most.

The availability and accessibility to healthcare systems is difficult even for young people and those living in urban areas. As such, people living outside of the capital cities who are older and less privileged become increasingly vulnerable when disease is spreading. Citizens who end up contracting COVID-19 have to jump through numerous hoops just to get a COVID-19 test let alone treatment, and if they don't have a means of transportation or are older and have no support, the prospect of help becomes seemingly impossible.

In Ethiopian rural communities, there is little access to clean water to practice hygiene routines to mitigate sickness and disease. However, along with this there is little communication and understanding of how much these practices can impact the health of senior citizens. When it comes to knowledge translation and information dissemination, seniors are considered less frequently than younger populations, which impacts how they see illness and ways to treat it. Elderly persons are also increasingly forgotten during developmental and charity fund raising movements which exacerbates their vulnerability and the challenges they face.

To meet the global expectations of vaccination rates, and healthy hygiene practices, the importance of ensuring healthcare workers in Ethiopia are trained in teaching hygiene practices is crucial. This step *may* help in getting seniors to understand how infections can be transmitted and how proper hand washing techniques could benefit them in the long run. This also helps with ensuring knowledge of these safe hygiene practices can be transmitted to other members in neighboring communities.

Though *daily* washing might not be available in rural communities, the importance of hygiene concepts and regular communication of information regarding hygiene with senior citizens could have a significant role in reducing the prevalence rate of the disease (HelpAge, 2020). Even if urban citizens visit their rural family members, taking the information of the importance of hygiene with them could help vulnerable seniors. Many people are turned away from care due to the overwhelmed, underfunded, and expensive healthcare system, so the importance of sharing this information is crucial.

Seniors are a vulnerable community in Ethiopia and need the utmost of support during these extensively trying times. Sharing as much knowledge and education as possible can be a great first step in the right direction.

If you're interested in learning more, check out these sources:

- Vulnerability of Older People in Ethiopia:  
<https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5301dd884.pdf>
- AllAfrica: Ethiopia: Curbing Senior Citizens' Challenges During Covid-19  
<https://allafrica.com/stories/202104220803.html>

## References

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*About the Author*



Kaleigh Beauvais is a Performance and Risk analyst at Global Affairs Canada and a Professor of Communications at Algonquin College. She is passionate about global health and international development especially as it relates to migrants and refugees. Kaleigh's goal is to create change, however small, for the betterment and peace of the planet.

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