# Annual Report 2020



#### INTRODUCTION

MEDBOX – The Aid Library is an open-access online library aiming to increase the quality of health care worldwide.

Quality assurance and accountability are important values in humanitarian action as well as healthcare settings, which receive growing attention by affected populations, health care workers, humanitarian actors, donors and the public. The easy-to-use structure of MEDBOX facilitates the application of common health standards increasing the impact as well as the quality of the different interventions carried out by health workers.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Since its launch in October 2013, MEDBOX has achieved a remarkable reputation. The growing numbers of views, downloads, and an enormous increase in users, are an excellent testament to our work in terms of quality and utility.

COVID-19, like everywhere else in the world, was the main theme in 2020. In February 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic, the MEDBOX team realised that they would have to publish a toolbox on this topic to collate the important and trustful documents. It became apparent early that SARS-CoV-2 is different than SARS, MERS etc. Therefore, in April 2020, MEDBOX launched the COVID-19 TOOLBOX www.covid19box.org.

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is the first pandemic in history that affects almost all countries in the world at the same time. Technology and social media are being used on a massive scale to keep people safe, informed, up-to-date with the latest research and clinical findings.

An infodemic is an overabundance of information, both online and offline. It includes deliberate attempts to disseminate wrong information to undermine the public health response. Mis- and disinformation can be harmful to people's physical and mental health; increase stigmatization; threaten precious health gains; and lead to poor observance of public health measures. Misinformation costs lives. Without the appropriate trust and correct information, diagnostic tests go unused, clinical treatment will not be accurate, public health measures and immunization campaigns will not meet their targets, and the virus will continue to thrive.

The flood of information was an enormous challenge for the MEDBOX team. Keeping an overview of trustworthy information, checking all important sources at all times, keeping track of updates from all countries, keeping track of the latest important publications that have already been published online on preprint servers.

In March 2020, MEDBOX 2.0 went online! MEDBOX is now available in French, Spanish and Russian. This will make it easier for users from francophone Africa, Latin America, Central Asia or Eastern Europe to use MEDBOX, as it will eliminate any language barriers when navigating or searching in MEDBOX. Not all features could be implemented at this stage, but MEDBOX continues to work on improving its user-friendliness.

#### CURRENT STATUS – IN NUMBERS **AND FACTS**

The numbers of users, downloads and views have steadily increased since the launch. MEDBOX has collated more than 22,000 documents in various languages in nearly 800 sections and categories.

Unfortunately, the launch of MEDBOX 2.0 caused some technical challenges with the web analytic tool. Therefore, we were not able to provide an exact assessment of visitors and countries for the year 2020. Our team is striving to solve this problem and will present to you the visitor numbers in the next annual report. Our sincere apologies!

Our MEDBOX team continuously works on keeping the categories up to date.



Figure 1: Highlights of key statistics

MEDBOX has become an important platform for quality resources in humanitarian aid and health action worldwide. Staying up to date, always reacting immediately to new crises and challenges has certainly contributed to the success story of MEDBOX.

Looking back on the goals set last year, we can thankfully say that many of them have been achieved, some of them are on their way and some others will be successfully carried out in the upcoming months with the great help of our partners and users around the world.

#### **MEDBOX WEBSITE 2.0**

In March 2020, MEDBOX 2.0 went online!

The new website supports additional languages, includes significant enhancements in the backend and improved search.



Image 1: Look and feel of the new MEDBOX 2.0 landing page.

## **RANKING OF CATEGORIES**

As in the last years the MEDBOX Team revised the existing categories, reorganized some subcategories and removed outdated information in order to maintain the high quality of information.





#### **1. COUNTRIES**

As in previous years the COUNTRIES section ranges among the MEDBOX top categories. In the COUNTRIES category there are more than 7,900 documents included for almost all countries in the world which have been viewed more than 4.7 million times and downloaded more than 3.8 million times.

Since the launch of MEDBOX 2.0 in March 2020, countries can now be selected in different ways:

- by clicking on the world map and choosing a country or a region
- by selecting a country from the drop-down list
- by directly entering the desired country in the search field
- by opening the individual sitemap with clicking on the navigation arrow



Image 2: The new country navigation with an interactive world map

#### 2. TOOLBOXES

The TOOLBOXES are the special feature of the MEDBOX online library. The TOOLBOXES contain practical, up-to-date information on select topics in a single page. This enables users to guickly get an overview of and access the different types of documents ranging from clinical guidelines, community health work papers, disabled people information, IEC material to policy papers. Currently, the 18 TOOLBOXES cover epidemic outbreaks, disasters, diseases and other aspects such as: GLOBAL HEALTH EDUCATION, MENTAL HEALTH, EBOLA, NATURAL HAZARDS, CONFLICT, ZIKA, TB, CHOLERA, HIV, LEPROSY, POLIO, RAPID RESPONSE, REFUGEE, DISABILITY, and SPECIFIC HAZARDS.

#### In 2020, MEDBOX launched three new TOOLBOXES:

- COVID-19 TOOLBOX in March 2020,
- AMR (Antimicrobial Resistance) TOOLBOX in May 2020,
- SOCIAI ETHICS TOOLBOX in August 2020.



Figure 3: Views and downloads of the different Toolboxes since their launch



### MEDBOX ISSUE BRIEF

In May 2020, the MEDBOX team started a new feature: the MEDBOX Issue Briefs. These will focus on a selected topic from time to time and briefly present the resources available in MEDBOX. The flood of information made it difficult for both, the MEDBOX team and the users, to keep up-to-date on a specific COVID-19 topic. Especially in the early months of the pandemic, new guidelines for treatment, infection control etc. were constantly being published or updated. Therefore the MEDBOX team decided to publish an Issue Brief on various topics around COVID-19, which summarises the most important documents.

Issue Brief No. 1 focused on "<u>Masks and COVID-19</u>", No.2 highlights important resources to promote <u>Hand hygiene in times of COVID-19</u>, At the beginning of the pandemic, there were numerous discussions about adequate protective measures: Are community masks a tool to protect myself and others? Is hand washing sufficient or do I need to disinfect hands and surfaces? What kind of educational materials can help to inform the different audiences adequately? **MEDBOX** had already uploaded numerous guidelines, posters, videos, etc. to find an answer on all these questions. The most important ones were presented in new feature "Issue Brief" at a glance. Simply structured, clearly arranged and directly clickable! These two Issue Briefs have also been translated into French and Portuguese.



The Corona pandemic is exacerbating poverty and need in many countries. The Corona virus causes severe devastation in developing and emerging countries. And illness and death caused by Covid-19 have devastating economic consequences there. At the beginning of the year, the United Nations predicted that 168 million people would need humanitarian aid in 2020. In fact, 250 million people are already dependent on humanitarian aid today. This is the highest increase ever recorded in the course of a year and is mainly due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

One of the consequences of the pandemic and the associated lockdown measures is a severe global recession. The most vulnerable countries in the world are the most affected, which has further aggravated existing humanitarian crises worldwide. New crises have also emerged.

The crisis is expected to have the greatest impact in conflict regions, as the pandemic is hitting countries such as Syria, Yemen and Libya with existing high humanitarian needs. Migration and displacement as well as poverty and hunger make large parts of the population particularly vulnerable. Health and supply infrastructures, which were often inadequate even before the crisis, have been weakened even further. Refugees, who often live in overcrowded, cramped and poor conditions, are particularly vulnerable. In addition to lack of access to health services and poor hygiene conditions, increasing hunger and poverty are acute challenges. Outbreaks of COVID-19 are increasingly reported in refugee accommodation centers in Germany. Here too, the refugees live in cramped and very difficult conditions. Physical distancing is usually not possible!

For this reason, MEDBOX has compiled a wealth of information for administrative staff, social workers and volunteers to find out more information about transmission, infection protection and quarantine measures. For refugees and migrants, a large number of flyers, posters and videos on COVID-19 have been uploaded in many languages, i.e. Arabic, Farsi, Kurdish, Tigrinya, Russian.

MEDBOX has gathered a selection of over 70 African hits from different countries into a play list with the aim of raising awareness on the diverse ways to fight COVID-19 in addition to the COVID-19 Toolbox. The poster can be printed and used in different settings such as cultural centers, hospitals and refugee camps.

The Issue Briefs No. 3 and 4 focuse on COVID-19, humanitarian aid and refugees: Migranten und Geflüchtete & COVID-19 in Deutschland, "Refugees, Internally Displaced People IDPs, Migrants & COVID-19".

Issue Brief No. 5 focuses on the mental health and psychosocial support issues around COVID-19 "Mental Health and Covid-19".

According to a new WHO survey<sup>1</sup>, the COVID 19 pandemic has disrupted or stopped critical mental health services in 93% of countries worldwide, while the demand for mental health is rising. The 130-country survey provides the first global data showing the devastating impact of COVID-19 on access to mental health services, and highlights the urgent need for increased funding.

COVID-19 increases the demand for mental health services. Grief, isolation, loss of income and fear trigger mental illness or aggravate existing conditions. Many people may be exposed to increased alcohol and drug use, insomnia and anxiety. Meanwhile, COVID-19 itself can lead to neurological and psychological complications such as delirium, agitation and stroke. People with pre-existing mental, neurological or substance-use disorders are also more susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 infections - they may be at higher risk of serious consequences and even death.

Maintaining good mental health is, therefore, a prerequisite for public health. Special considerations need to be payed to vulnerable groups, such as children or people with mental health preconditions, and certain settings, such humanitarian emergencies. Digital solutions may be a handy support for carers and patients

For this reason, the MEDBOX team has posted helpful manuals and brochures in the Mental Health & Psychosocial Support category of the COVID-19 TOOLBOX to support and guide people with COVID-19.

In recent years, MEDBOX has already been focusing on Mental Health and thus launched the MENTAL HEALTH TOOLBOX two years ago. In this toolbox, clinical guidelines, educational material, training manuals and background documents can be downloaded, among others on mental disorders, neurological disorders, addictions, post-traumatic stress disorders.

The feedback of our users was very positive and for this reason the MEDBOX team has decided to address other topics in these issue briefs. Issue Brief No. 6: "Key Resources Humanitarian Aid" is intended to give humanitarian aid workers a guick overview of key resources and standards on humanitarian aid, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), latrine constructions, camp management, cholera outbreak management & prevention, waste management and psychosocial support in disaster conditions.

#### **COVID-19 TOOLBOX**

By Piet Reijer

Many years ago, Mr Richard Leakey, paleoanthropologist and ecologist, born and bred in Kenya, warned that the more we destroy nature, there will be a possible increase in (fatal) pathogens. Although not proven, we could say that HIV was, in fact, man-made, SARS and H5N1 avian flu may be also. The origin of COVID-19 is most likely linked to human behaviour, by putting different species of animals literally on top of each other in so-called wet markets in China.

The year 2020 will be remembered by many people all over the world as the COVID-19 year. We have not experienced the effects of an infectious disease in modern history like COVID-19. A new disease, first seen in 2019 in China, has spread to every corner of the world. A new disease that has disrupted the economy of many countries and caused unemployment and poverty of millions of people. A new disease that has divided people, resulting in mass demonstrations (against non-pharmaceutical interventions). A new disease that started fierce political debates, full of fake news and misinformation. A new disease that went from outbreak to epidemic and was declared a pandemic and that has caused an infodemic<sup>2</sup>. This infodemic is not only an avalanche of correct information but includes the deliberate spread by individuals or groups of misinformation that will undermine the public health measures.

Soon after the first reports about this new disease were published, the MEDBOX team decided to open a new Toolbox, entirely dedicated to COVID-19.

There is an unprecedented increase in the number of publications on COVID19 since the disease started. Several organisations produce one or more "weekly updates". The World Health Organisation has produced a lot of materials, often updating this information after a few weeks. For instance, the WHO has produced in 2020 till the middle of November over 200 "Technical Guidelines" and 136 videos, some of them in several languages. It is a challenge for the MEDBOX team to have the latest updates and latest revised guidelines included and remove previously published and sometimes revoked publications from the Toolbox.

Another challenge is to judge the validity of claims about treatment successes, even published in peer-reviewed journals. As an example, we can mention the use of hydroxychloroguine in the treatment of COVID-19. The WHO, after an extensive study and review of available literature, concluded that the use of hydroxychloroguine as a treatment for COVID-19 was not recommended. But that is not necessarily a reason for the MEDBOX team to remove all publications that speak in favour of its use from our collection, especially when published in a peer-reviewed journal. However, it can be confusing for the readers to find publications with opposite opinions in the collection. The MEDBOX team tries as much as possible to follow the guidelines published by the World Health Organisation, but with the enormous number of new publications, it is not always preventable that we miss a new publication or that we did not remove a revoked publication.

The MEDBOX team will continue to collect correct and up-to-date information on COVID-19. There might be additional folders needed, e.g. for aspects around the use of vaccines. Another aspect that will receive more attention in the (nearby) future concerns the effects of the pandemic on general health care provision, e.g. in countries that opted for a strict lockdown strategy. The first reports about PLHIV not taking their ART due to restriction in travelling or closure of health facilities. It is also



Quickly spreading in the news, online, and through social media, this information fuels fear and speculation, making the problem worse, not better.

possible that we have to include combinations of COVID-19 with another disease, like as it happened in the past with HIV and Tuberculosis.

At the moment, the COVID-19 Toolbox holds more than 2,900 documents. The documents are viewed more than 400,000 times and downloaded more 120,000 times. The most favourite category is "Infection Control & Prevention (IPC)", followed by "Country-specific Documents".

MEDBOX was able to realize the COVID-19 TOOLBOX thanks to the generous support of our various partners, e.g. Misereor, Plan:g Partnership for Global Health, Renovabis, as well as two Dutch foundations.



Figure 4: Views by subcategories (March -Dec. 2020)





Clinical Guidelines

- Public Health
- Infection Control & Prevention IPC
- Humanitarian Aid
- Risk Communication & Community Engagement
- Information & Training Material
- Resource Platforms
- Advice for different Audiences
- Country-sepcific documents



- Mental Health
- Clinical Guidelines
- Public Health
- Infection Control & Prevention IPC
- Humanitarian Aid
- Risk Communication & Community Engagement
- Information & Training Material
- Resource Platforms
- Advice for different Audiences
- Country-sepcific documents

# AMR TOOLBOX

by Andreas Wiegand from Apotheker helfen e.v.

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) towards anti-infective medicines is a growing phenomenon all over the world. The growing extent of antimicrobial resistances reduces our "weapons" against infectious diseases tremendously. It is estimated that about 700,000 annual deaths are caused by AMR (Dr Marc Sprenger, WHO). We cannot wait for new antibiotics and other anti-invectives to be developed. Prevention is key to overcome this threat. Better hygiene can reduce infection rates and rational use of anti-invectives prevents AMR. Using the right anti-infective for the specific infection, with the right dose, with an adequate dosing form, with a correct dosing interval and for the correct period of time. Similar to the current pandemic is that individual approaches will not solve the problem. All stakeholders within the health system and care takers need to develop common concepts and strategies to collectively fight AMR.

The AMR TOOLBOX does provide instruments and examples of strategies to support your effort, developing individual plans for your institution or medical environment. The selected tools available will provide easy access to key documents to help you to easily identify relevant literature without hours of boring searches in huge amounts of databases and research platforms. Beside strategies and action plans further chapters cover stewardship, IEC material, knowledge hubs and some research and development. As the highest consumption of anti-invectives is recorded in meat production essential literature relevant to the agricultural sector is also covered. The miss-use of anti-invectives in humans and in animals (but humans are the treating and feeding the animals) are the main cause of AMR.

Quality of health care depends on gualified personnel, good standards of health care within an institution with all departments of the institution contributing for a good treatment outcome. Volunteers from the NGO APOTHEKER HELFEN e.V./German Pharmacists' Aid with different professional experience from hospital, retail, industry and global health contributed to the selection of the offered tools.

The knowledge and experience to prevent the AMR is proven. We need to utilise what we know.

The launch of the AMR TOOLBOX in May 2020 was publicised via various social media, email distribution to other organisations and networks, and with printed flyer distribution nationally and internationally.



Figure 6: Currently (as of Dec. 2020), 445 documents have been uploaded to the AMR Toolbox. These have been clicked on almost 125,000 times and downloaded 110,000 times.

Figure 5: Downloads by subcategories (March-Dec. 2020)

#### **REFUGEE TOOLBOX**

#### Refugee health, child protection and child mental health

#### By Nadja Rupp

COVID-19 has been and so far, still is a big part of our daily life, a life that looks quite different from ordinary and most of us often wonder whether it will go back to "normal" again. Parents and caregivers alongside educators and health workers are striving to deal with the high demands while working in new ways of going through their daily routines as successfully as it is possible. The world keeps on changing, new and old problems are blending and it is now the time to find solutions to the diverse challenges and "secondary effects" of the COVID-19 crisis. Sadly, as it is often the case, the most vulnerable and affected population are those in low-income communities which being less protected against the virus, present higher mortality rates and receive lower-quality health care alongside plenty of other challenges deriving from this event.

The pandemic affects children in a big scale even when majority of people may think of COVID-19 as an issue that affects mostly the elderly or that is limited to the adult population. This kind of thinking can be expected since children who contract the virus seem to go through less severe symptoms. However, the far-reaching and long-term negative impacts that COVID-19 has on childhood globally must not be ignored: lack of access to education, increases in poverty, child labour and child marriage. Not to mention sexual exploitation, all forms of child trafficking, in addition to the obvious limitations in health care, the psychosocial stress and mental health issues, and all the other dangers that children around the world are facing, even more the most vulnerable such as refugee, migrant, internally displaced children, and children with disabilities.

In 2020, a new project was started in cooperation with the Medical Mission Institute Würzburg and the Government of Lower Franconia on the topic "Medical care for refugee children in Lower Franconia". This project was supported by Bavarian State Ministry for Family, Labor and Social Affairs. The aim was to assess the physical and mental health of refugee children in accordance with the UN Conventions on Children's Rights and to develop strategies for improvement. COVID-19 has increased the urgency of dealing with this issue in refugee shelters in Germany.



Image 4: Nurse N.Rupp is checking the vaccination passports of the children inin a refugee shelter

It has been found that access to medical care is seriously lacking in many districts. Long distances to paediatricians and additional supporting structures, such as therapeutic services or kindergartens, often present insurmountable hurdles for the refugee children and their families, as paediatricians in particular are working to full capacity and in some districts, vacant paediatric positions cannot be filled. Travelling up to 2 hours by public transport for an appointment for vaccination is not uncommon! This is exacerbated by the excessive demands placed on many of the players involved, such as welfare associations and government agencies. Since the beginning of the Corona pandemic, the respective local management and government employees have been the only contact persons in most communal accommodations. They have to take on considerably more tasks, provide psychosocial support through their presence

at the same time and, on the other hand, have to endure the frustration of the refugees. Due to restrictions imposed by COVID-19, the welfare organisations had to cancel their on-site consultations and could only be reached by phone, which is usually not sufficient for complex asylum issues. The situation has become particularly precarious when positive COVID-19 cases have led to the need to quarantine the entire accommodation. As a result, sometimes whole families had to spend two weeks in a single room and were not allowed to leave it. Many good and meaningful projects came to a standstill, had to be paused or abandoned altogether, and adult refugees suddenly found themselves without any help. With all these problems, the children were often forgotten and not noticed in everyday life. Volunteers were not allowed or could not support the refugees or enter the shelters for a long time. This made it impossible for them to accompany the refugees, for example to doctor's appointments.

From this evaluation findings many new tasks arose to support the refugees, government employees, charities and volunteers. In a follow-up project, the focus will be on individual districts, where improvements in the areas of health and child protection will be achieved through close networking with the Violence Prevention Coordinator and Plan International, e.g. through regular low-threshold consultations for the residents of local shelters or the implementation of childcare.

In order to support all parties involved in their work, the MEDBOX team added the category "Children" to the already existing "REFUGEE TOOLBOX". All relevant information is bundled in the subcategories "COVID-19", "Child Protection", "Child Friendly Rooms" and "Unaccompanied Refugee Minors". All other categories were restructured, new documents added or old ones removed.

Educational materials such as videos, posters and brochures on SARS-Cov-2 and COVID-19 were made available in different languages. Through a variety of background documents, guidelines and best practice examples, all actors should deepen and broaden their knowledge about the establishment of child-friendly spaces, child protection issues and psychological problems of children.

All in all, the REFUGEE TOOLBOX is a great enrichment in the work with refugees, as all relevant actors and the refugees themselves can easily access information and educational materials for free. For a quick overview of available materials in the COVID-19 Refugee Toolbox, two MEDBOX Issue Briefs were published: Issue Brief No.3: Migranten und Geflüchtete & COVID-19 in Deutschland and Issue Brief N.4: Refugees, Internally Displaces Persons, Migrants & COVID-19.

For people with different cultural context and living in this special conditions, videos, songs and video clips are best suited for education and awareness-raising. Therefore, the **MEDBOX** team, in cooperation with Dr. Joost Butenop and Nazareth Bonilla-Perez, has compiled a selection of over 70 African hits from different countries in a playlist. The aim is to raise awareness of the many ways to fight COVID-19. A poster has been created and can be printed out and used in various institutions such as cultural centres, hospitals and refugee camps. Click <u>here</u> to access the COVID-19 African Hits Playlist.

Image 5: Poster to print out to draw attention to the COVID-19 videos and songs





Figure 7: In the Refugee Toolbox includes more than 1,350 documents (End of Dec.2020). These documents have been downloaded nearly 500,000 times and viewed more than one million times.



Figure 8: In the new added category "Children", the documents in the sub-category "Unaccompanied refugee minors" were the most clicked on.

#### **OUTREACH ACTIVITIES**

With the cancellation of the majority of conferences in 2020, the main MEDBOX outreach activities took place online. First and foremost, we launched in December 2020 the new MEDBOX video series with four videos on MEDBOX and how to use it.

- 1. MEDBOX The idea behind
- 2. MEDBOX How to find documents
- 3. MEDBOX My MEDBOX Features
- 4. MEDBOX Toolboxes



The videos were created to promote the MEDBOX and to give guidance to our users on the usage of the different features. These video clips can be included into online courses, workshops and seminars to support the participants to find further quality assured documents and to deepen their knowledge. The video series enables MEDBOX to reach another milestone in its goal to provide free access to high quality documents to health workers and humanitarian aid workers worldwide in an easy-to- use way.

Apart from these videos, the MEDBOX team participated in several online conferences and events to promote the MEDBOX. Major target group were students, e.g. in a lecture on Mental Health for the Public Health students at the LMU in Munich, or the outgoing professionals from the NGO German Doctors.

Partners of the Medical Mission Institute and the Difaem during the joint seminars on COVID-19 in early summer 2020 were another target group. With the support of our experts MEDBOX and its COVID-19 related features were presented in an English, French and Portuguese webinar with more than 40 partners, mainly from the African continent.



## OUTLOOK

For 2021 we are planning to improve the technical handling of our website, expand our Issue Briefs and Toolboxes for specific content, as well as restructure some of the older categories. The technical implementation will be realized by our new webmaster and we are looking forward to a fruitful cooperation. The Issue Briefs, that have proven successful in 2020, should be extended to more topics including, as well as beyond COVID-19. We would also like to publish one or two new toolboxes. Topics could be Neglected Tropical Diseases NTDs, Non-communicable Diseases NCDs, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene WASH, etc.

In addition, we are hoping to attend a number of conferences in person or virtually to spread the word about MEDBOX to everyone who is in need of access to quality health information.

We are looking forward to receiving feedback on our conducted and planned activities from users and partners.

#### PARTNERSHIPS

The MEDBOX Team would like to thank all our partners who have supported MEDBOX since the beginning. We always like to welcome new partners who would like to support us with their expertise or financially.



#### SOCIAL MEDIA



Please visit our homepage at www.medbox.org.

Additionally, you can follow latest developments of the MEDBOX project on Facebook, or Twitter.

#### CONTACT

MEDBOX is brought to you by the Medical Mission Institute, Advisory Group for International Health, based in Wuerzburg, Germany.

Feel free to contact us for further information at info@medbox.org

February 2021 Medical Mission Institute Wuerzburg

MEDBOX — The Aid Library

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