

Sauti! Rhode Island

meaning “voices” in Swahili

Presenter:

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Program Director, Multicultural AIDS Coalition

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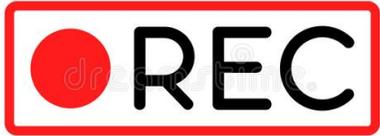
Program Coordinator, Multicultural AIDS Coalition

Inza Ouattara, EdD, MPPM, LSW

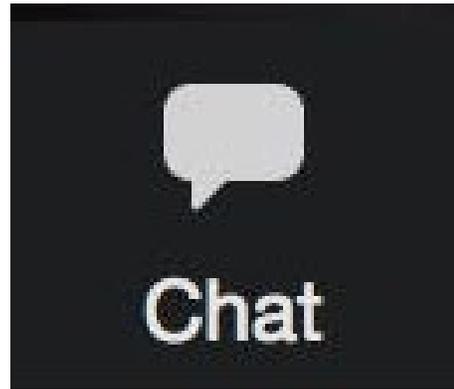
State Refugee Health Coordinator, Office of Maine Refugee Services,
Catholic Charities Maine



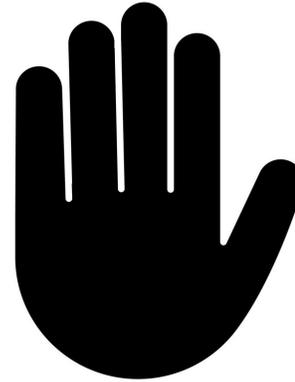
Virtual Agreements



We are recording



Use the chat box for dialogue and questions



Raise your hand, if needed



Don't forget to mute and unmute

Acknowledgement and Disclaimer

- This program was funded through a Patient- Centered Outcomes Research Institute® (PCORI®) Eugene Washington PCORI Engagement Award (17466-MAC).
- The opinions presented in this work are solely the responsibility of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views of the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute® (PCORI®), its Board of Governors or Methodology Committee.

New England African Immigrant Health Research Collaborative: The Partnership

- Africans For Improved Access (AFIA) program at the Multicultural AIDS Coalition (MAC)
- Office of Maine Refugee Services (OMRS)
- African Alliance of Rhode Island (AARI)
- New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services - Office of Health Equity (OHE)
- The University of Vermont – Larner College of Medicine (UVM)
- Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services (IRIS)



The Impact of COVID-19 on African Immigrants Living in New England Project

Project Rationale

Greater risk of both acquiring coronavirus and experiencing severe symptoms or death related to COVID-19

Work in high-contact jobs, which carry higher risk of exposure.

Information on COVID-19 is not culturally and linguistically appropriate

Fears related to immigration status

Mental health challenges due to an inability to adjust or restrictions that prevent them from cultural and religious practices.

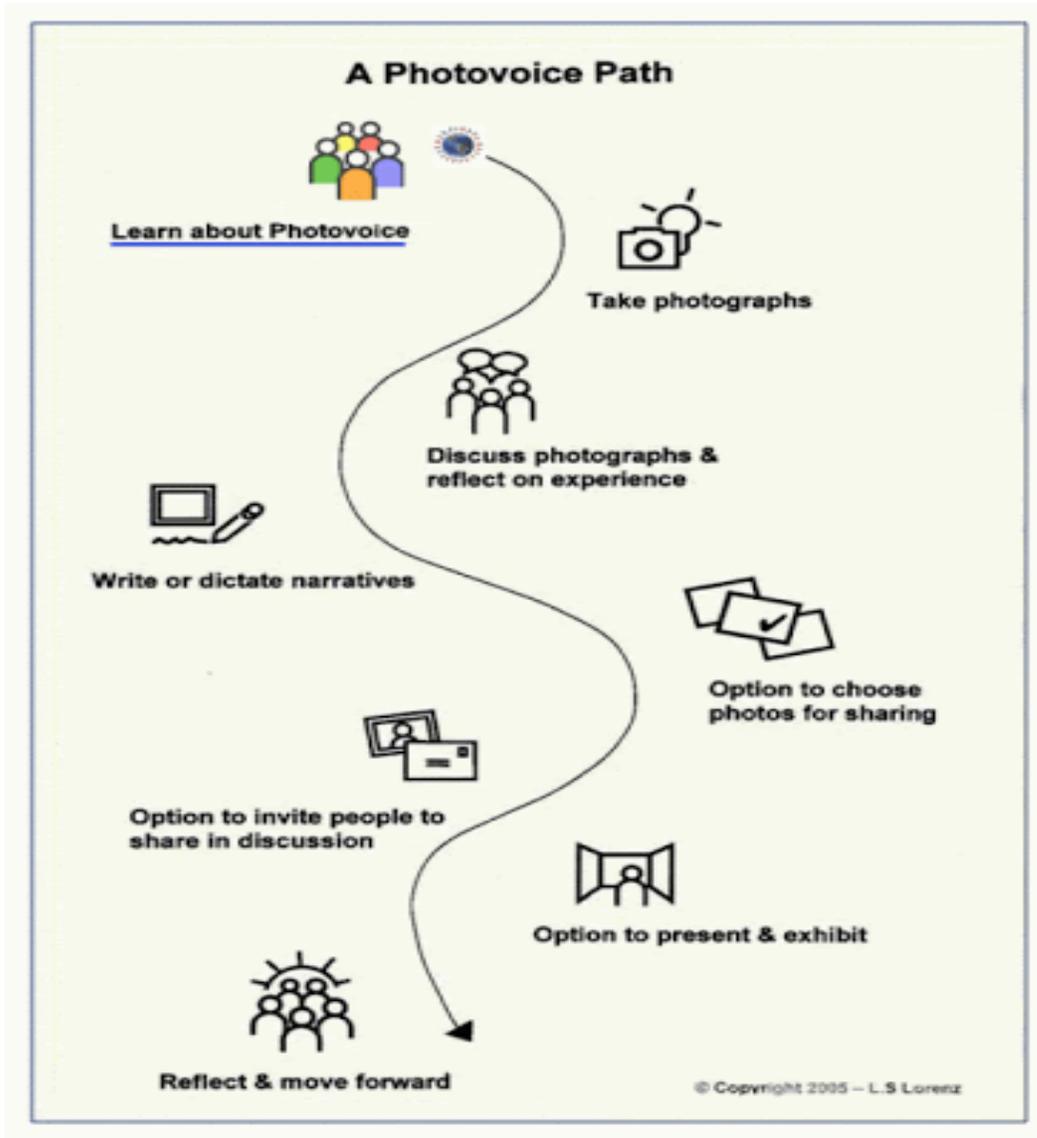
Project Activities

Partnership
Development

Team Design

Training and
Support

Session
Structure



What is Photovoice?

Photovoice is a participatory research method that asks individuals to represent their lives, points of view, and experiences using photos and narratives.

Photovoice Project Goal:

- Provide recommendations to researchers, providers and health care systems for engaging African immigrants in COVID-19 interventions.

Photovoice Project Objectives:

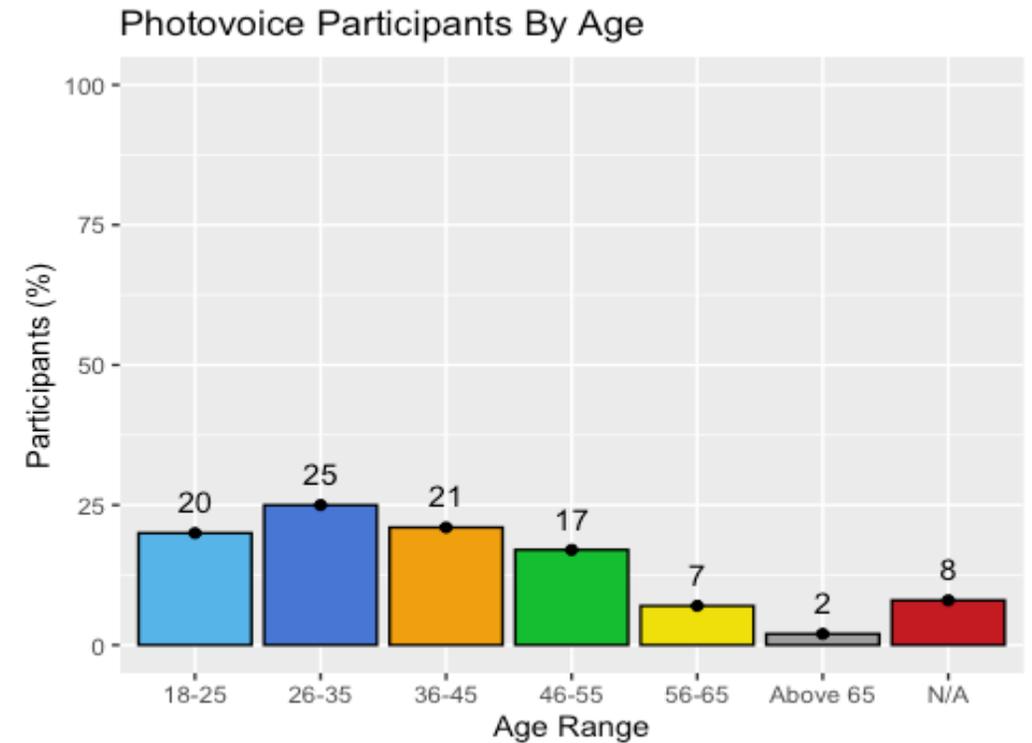
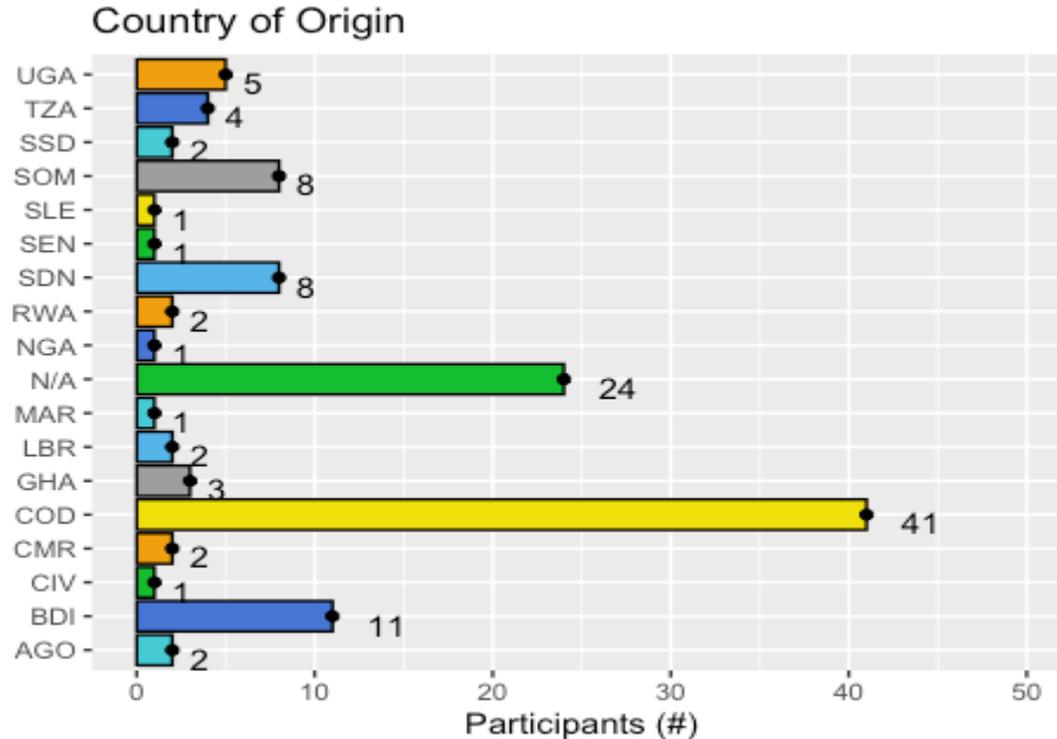
- Document challenges related to COVID-19 that African immigrants in New England experience.
- Document successful strategies for addressing COVID-19 related challenges experienced by African immigrants in New England.



Framing Questions for Photo-taking

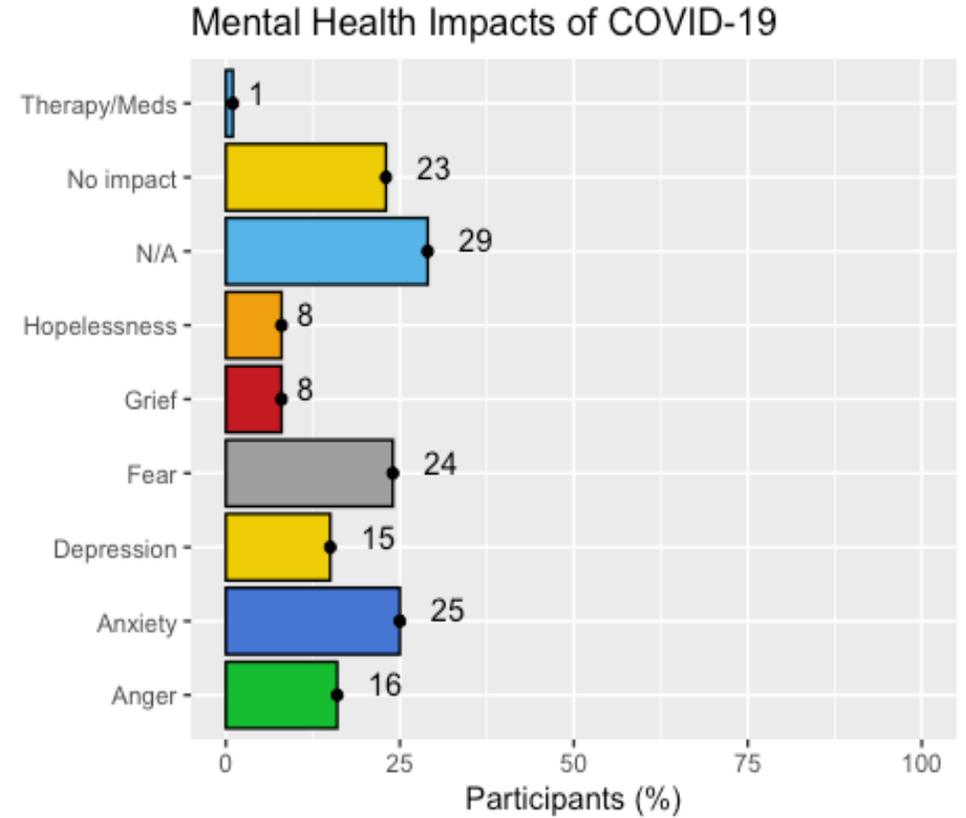
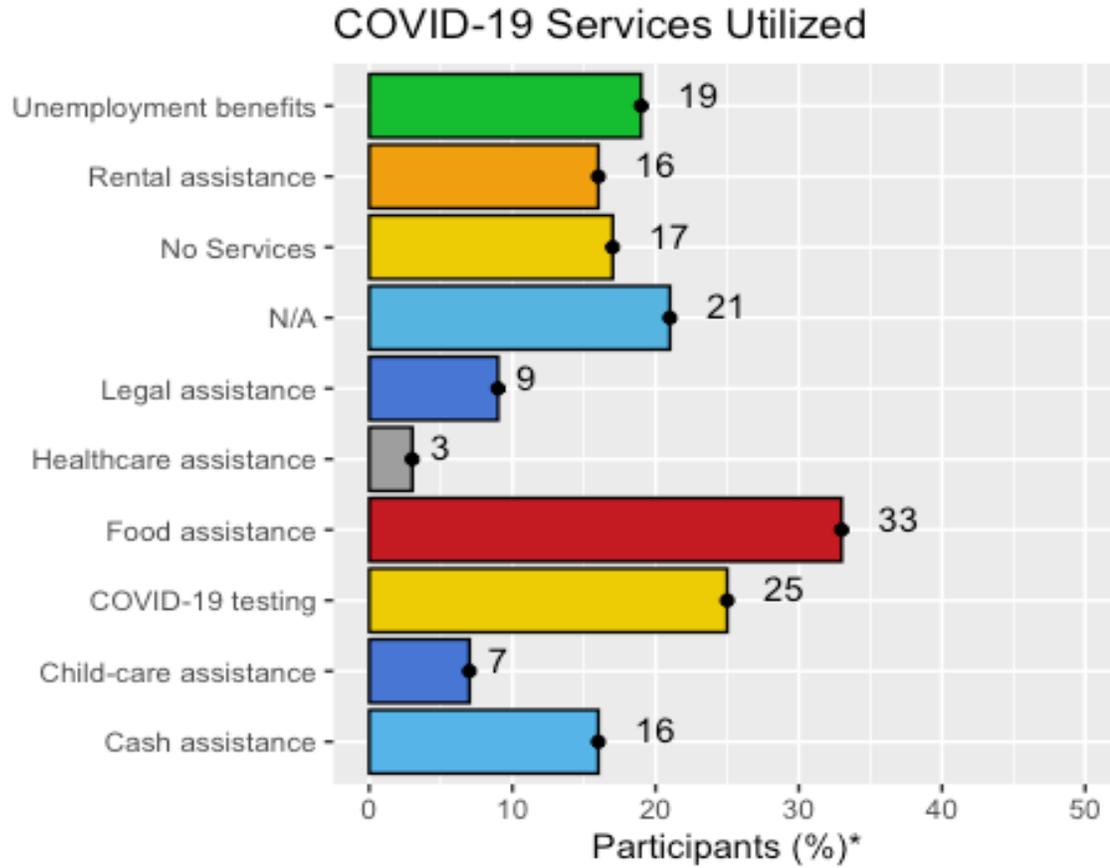
1. What was hard for you and/ or your family during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What is your experience accessing COVID-19 testing and seeking care?
3. What is your experience accessing other health services during the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. Where do you get information about COVID-19?
5. How are you addressing and being supported through your challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Participants Demographics (n=118)



- Over 75% are female
- 35% are refugees, 22% are permanent residents and 25% US Citizen
- 60% are parents with an average of 4 children
- 25% have no formal education and aren't currently enrolled in school

Experiences with COVID-19



- 14% tested positive for COVID-19
- 7% experienced symptoms but did not access care
- 30% lost their jobs

Please note that the percentages do not add up to 100 as the participants could select all answers that apply.

Project Results

- ✓ Convened 9 photovoice groups across the NE region
- ✓ All 6 states completed all 3 photovoice sessions
- ✓ Trained 9 community health workers (CHWs) for research activities
- ✓ 103 participants across the NE region completed the project
- ✓ Each state had 6 - 8 themes per category
- ✓ Participants offered 44 recommendations
- ✓ 57 photo stories, and 16 themes were identified
- ✓ 17 Recommendations developed

Themes for Challenges

Feelings of
Loneliness &
Isolation

Restrictive
Movement

Life Changes
in the “New”
Normal

Experiencing
Loss

System
Challenges

Fear of the
Unknown

Difficulties for
Our Children

Stress

Themes for Strategies

Have Hope & Stay
Positive

Government
Guidelines and
Assistance

Exercising

Traditional &
Home Remedies

Communications &
Information
Gathering

Faith

Maitaining
Connections to
Family, Friends and
Information

Photostories Video

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Recommendation: Examine the Use and Importance of Traditional African Remedies

Description and Strategies: African cultures have relied on the healing properties of nature for centuries to prevent and treat illnesses. During the pandemic, many African immigrants used traditional remedies sent or prescribed to them from family and friends in their home countries. Remedies include black seeds and a mixture composed of ginger, lime, lemon and garlic. There is a need to identify the types of traditional practices being used, the frequency of use, factors affecting use, patterns of utilization, and most importantly their contribution to health.

1. Research the relationship between traditional remedies and the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 and other illnesses.
2. Standardized practices in health services and research to elicit from African immigrants the use of traditional remedies.
3. Involve African immigrants as patient partners in health research examining cultural beliefs and practices.

Recommendation: Leverage Relationships with Trusted African Faith-Based Organizations

Description and Strategies: Faith plays a critical role in the lives of African immigrants. Churches, mosques and other faith organizations serve as a community within the greater African immigrant community. It is challenging for individuals not a part of the community to gain access to these faith networks because they are close knit. People will be open to information if it comes from the Pastor, Inman or religious leaders. Although CDC and other health agencies provide faith-based information, it often is not utilized because African immigrant communities find it difficult to trust sources that are not connected to their community. National, state and local administrations should build trust and partnerships with faith-based organizations. They can play a major role in the community for sharing accurate information.

1. Maintain a state or regional African faith-based collaborative to support networking and dissemination of culturally appropriate information.
2. Partner and fund African faith-based organizations to tailor messages in consideration of faith teachings.
3. Maintain an easily accessible clearinghouse for faith-based health and research information in African dialects. Information is provided in video, text and brochure formats.

Recommendation: Establish a Community-Driven Support System for Youth

Description and Strategies: There is no structured support system in place for African immigrant youths. They are often neglected yet they are one of the most vulnerable groups impacted by the pandemic. School closures and distance learning measures put in place created disadvantages for first- and second-generation African youth. Their parents tend to have fewer resources than native-born parents to help them with their homework, a significant number speak English as a second language, and families are less likely to have access to a computer and an internet connection at home or to a quiet place for study. Not having enough support for youths in African immigrant communities leads to negative education outcomes and high drop out rates. Effective support systems require reconnecting with African immigrant youths and working closely with parents/guardians. Community-based organizations, faith-based agencies and healthcare providers establish and maintain youth programs that meet the specific needs of African youth. Programs include intentional outreach strategies to engage African youth and supporting parents in engaging.

1. Fund local organizations to conduct assessments with African youth, and respond comprehensively to the findings.
2. School administrators work with parents/guardians, and African led organizations establish pathways to resources, such as resources related to homeschooling, staying active, safe play spaces, and mental health.
3. Partner with and fund organizations specifically serving African youth to curate and maintain a clearinghouse of resources, especially support for COVID-19 secondary issues.
4. Establish networking mechanisms and inclusion practices for youth organizations specifically serving African youth to be engaged in decision making.
5. Partner with and fund African-led organizations to support and build the capacity of parents/guardians to engage in school processes and systems to support their African youth educational experience.

17 Recommendations

1. Non-traditional outreach & communication strategies
2. Implement local and national immigrant-friendly policies
3. Promote self-sufficiency/empowerment, community cohesion and connectedness
4. Diversify U.S. healthcare system to include participatory African immigrants' specific programs and research
5. Enable African immigrants by providing thriving environment to discuss mental and emotional health issues
6. Integrate cultural practices into the health care system
7. Build partnerships with African immigrant communities to lead health and advocacy initiatives
8. Provide interpreters, translators and other technical support in African dialect to ensure comprehensive language access

Recommendations cont'd

9. Make African immigrant popular information sources reliable information sources
10. Making telehealth African immigrant friendly
11. Creating a safe and healthy workplace for employees
12. Identify and reduce areas of financial stress to African immigrant families
13. Validate and competently address concerns around COVID-19
14. Listen
15. Examine the Use and Importance of Traditional African Remedies
16. Leverage Relationships with Trusted African Faith-Based Organizations
17. Establish a Community-Driven Support System for Youth

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African Immigrant Health Research Collaborative

ABOUT US

AIHRC's mission is to increase patient engagement and equitable partnerships in research for African immigrant patients, caregivers, and organizations in New England, and foster a sustainable

PROJECTS

African immigrants have been uniquely affected by the coronavirus crisis. There is a need for researchers, health care providers and the health care system to understand their experiences and develop

RESOURCES

African immigrants are among the fastest growing immigrant groups and are a rapidly growing segment of the black community. Studies have shown disparities in health outcomes for mental





Thank You
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