In pursuit of equitable access to public health knowledge, OpenWHO has translated COVID-19 online courses into as many languages as possible, in particular into languages spoken by vulnerable or underserved populations in low- and middle-income countries. Accessing learning in preferred languages enhances uptake and comprehension.

OpenWHO currently delivers critical learning content in 56 languages, including the official languages of every WHO region, the 15 most commonly spoken languages worldwide and the official languages of 42 out of 46 of the least-developed countries.

The top 10 languages by enrolment are English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Portuguese, Indian sign, Hindi, Indonesian, Russian and Italian.
Since the Learning and Capacity Development Unit of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme was formed in October 2018, following what constituted the WHO Ebola Training Team of 2014–2015, multilingualism has been brought to the core of emergency learning. This was recognized in the 2020 United Nations "Multilingualism in the United Nations system" Joint Inspection Unit report.

According to the report, “WHO is well prepared and operational in producing materials for emergencies based on lessons learned and findings made during the Ebola West Africa outbreak, which have been progressively turned into practices. The new solutions and services put into practice, which relate mainly to capacity-building among staff and knowledge transfer, include: (a) local language translation capacity; (b) unlimited online dissemination to the frontline through a dedicated low-bandwidth platform; and (c) a process to turn evidence-based and emergency guidelines into knowledge resources for responders.

“As also recently experienced with the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, disease transmission chains cannot be stopped unless people understand how to keep themselves and their families safe. This means communicating in the right languages and formats for the widest possible audience at each location.”
OpenWHO on Twitter: WHO has posted a series of tweets highlighting OpenWHO’s commitment to equitable access to public health knowledge. View the full series on Twitter here.

Fighting AGEISM

We ensure equity by providing easily accessible learning for older learners.

5% of OpenWHO learners are 70 years of age or older – a previously unrepresented demographic – as those vulnerable to COVID-19 actively seek life-saving information.

Training HEALTH RESPONDERS

Health workers need new knowledge during the pandemic to work safely and effectively.

28% of OpenWHO learners are health professionals, who can access real-time learning based on WHO guidance for 38 COVID-19 topics.