

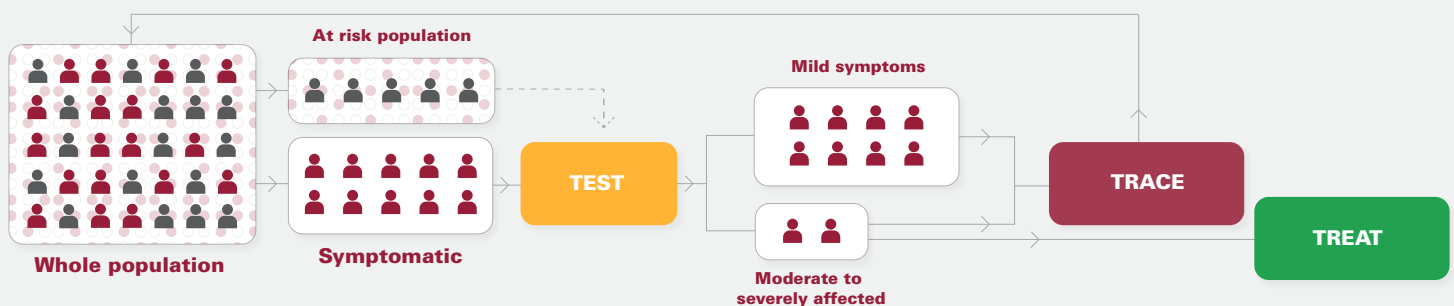


# Test, Trace and Treat:

## Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing (PACT) in Africa

To help increase continental testing efforts and reduce COVID-19 transmission in Africa, Africa CDC has launched the Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing (PACT): Test, Trace, Treat. PACT will mobilize experts, community workers, supplies and other resources to TEST, TRACE and TREAT COVID-19 cases in a timely manner to minimize the impact of the pandemic on the Africa continent. Anchored on the African Union Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak<sup>1</sup>, PACT will ultimately help prevent transmission and deaths, and minimize the social and economic harm associated with COVID-19.

All stakeholders are being called on to coordinate, communicate, collaborate, and cooperate to support the PACT Initiative to control COVID-19 in Africa.





# TRACE

to identify cases and their contacts

Targeted tactics are essential to efficiently find cases, prevent onward transmission, and facilitate rapid isolation and care without overwhelming testing capacity. These tactics should focus on:

## 1 SMART SCREENING

This strategy targets sub-populations where COVID-19 is more likely to be circulating. **To implement it:**

**IDENTIFY** locations and population groups where exposure risk is higher e.g. informal or densely packed communities, institutions or workplaces where cases have been reported, and public areas close to formal and informal health services.

**SCREEN** widely in these sub-populations for people with COVID-19-like symptoms using the expanded COVID-19 suspect case definition below.\*

**TEST** any symptomatic persons, regardless of disease severity based on expanded

symptom list, and all healthcare workers (formal and informal) regardless of symptoms<sup>2</sup>.

**INFORM** cases and contacts currently without symptoms to stay at home, monitor their health, maintain hand hygiene, cover coughs and sneezes, and observe physical distancing<sup>3</sup>. Cases and contacts are to **seek medical care for serious symptoms** such as high-grade fever, shortness of breath or other serious symptoms<sup>4</sup>.

\* **Expanded COVID-19 suspect case definition**<sup>5</sup>: When screening in communities known to have confirmed cases, it is recommended to probe for an expanded list of symptoms in addition to fever and respiratory symptoms. These include chills, shivering, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and loss of taste or smell<sup>6</sup>, cough with or without sputum, and diarrhoea<sup>7,8,9</sup>. **Individuals experiencing two or more of these symptoms should be referred for COVID-19 testing.**

## 2 ACTIVE CASE SEARCH<sup>10</sup>

This is an essential activity in the early and advancing stages of the epidemic. It provides an additional channel for detection of possible cases and should be undertaken in addition to the intensified community-based surveillance. By scanning the community around a case and locations frequented by them when they are investigating a case, field investigators can engage the community to probe deeply using the enhanced symptom list and knowledge of possible exposures.

### 3 TRACE ALL CONTACTS<sup>11</sup>

Diligent contact tracing with daily follow up speeds up case identification, testing, and isolation. Contact tracers should probe regarding symptoms on the enhanced list at each follow up and immediately refer anyone with symptoms for testing. It is also important to ensure that contacts who initially test negative understand that they may still develop COVID-19 and must remain quarantined for 14 days.

### 4 ACTIVATE LOCAL DETECTION POINTS

Patent medicine vendors, traditional healers, laboratories, and private clinics all see potential cases. Sensitizing these groups to the enhanced symptom list, enlisting their support in reporting suspect cases, and ensuring an effective referral system is established will reduce exposures in the community, shorten the time from symptom onset to isolation, and potentially improve health outcomes.

### 5 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Effective advocacy to encourage self-reporting and care-seeking requires clear information, actionable advice, and willingness to listen as well as speak. Empowering and mobilising communities to act on their own behalf and gaining active community involvement are essential to drive all PACT strategies forward.

### 6 EXPAND COMMUNITY HEALTHWORKER CADRES

Effective response to COVID-19 has to be strongly grounded in the community. PACT will support Member States to boost COVID-19 response by extending community health workers (CHWs) capacity, knowledge, and numbers and recommends that CHWs be employed to:

#### DETECT CASES

CHWs have an important role in continuous 'smart screening', identifying and referring people with suspect symptoms, and advising on testing and the need to isolate. In doing so, they will also identify new clusters of cases within the community to trigger field investigation.

#### TRACE CONTACTS

CHW are essential for daily follow up of contacts. They also have a key role in helping

contacts understand what is expected of them in quarantine and how to access available support.

#### CREATE AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Trained CHWs are essential to translating COVID-19 information for the community. When continuously updated, CHW retain community confidence and can help counter misinformation, negative perceptions, rumours, and stigma.

## HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT

CHWs can help households understand and manage home-based isolation.

## COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

CHWs have a role in helping communities

implement public health and social measures and adopt behaviours to reduce transmission. They can also encourage communities to find solutions that work for them, for example, to shield the vulnerable or provide local support for quarantined households.

### Infection prevention and control (IPC) considerations

- Infection prevention and control practices<sup>12</sup>, physical distancing measures<sup>13</sup>, and good hand and respiratory hygiene for COVID-19 should be implemented throughout all response efforts.
- Where telephone consultations cannot be performed to trace contacts, CHWs and surveillance staff should wear medical masks and maintain appropriate physical distance during the interview of identified or potential cases and their contacts, regardless of symptoms<sup>14</sup>.
- Patent medicine vendors, traditional healers, laboratories, and private clinics must adhere to both standard and transmission-based precautions. Hand washing stations or alcohol-based hand rubs should be placed at the entrance. Patients entering the facilities should maintain at least 1 metre in the waiting area and while consulting.

**In support of the PACT TRACE component**, Africa aims to **deploy 1 million community health workers by October 2020**. Considerations for expanding CHW cadres include:

### HIRE FOR COVID-19

Whenever possible, extend CHW cadres with additional staff to cover both COVID-19 specific duties and essential health services such as vaccination, mother and child care, and endemic disease programmes. Research suggests disruption to malaria, TB and HIV services could cause as many deaths as COVID-19.<sup>15,16,17</sup>

### TRAIN FOR COVID-19

PACT is supporting rapid, intensive COVID-19 training for existing and new CHWs. COVID-19-specific modules developed by Africa CDC and PACT partners, will be available to Member States for CHWs and master trainers.

### SUPPLY FOR COVID-19

Both COVID-19-focussed and routine CHWs are at increased risk of infection. PACT supplies will help Member States ensure an adequate supply of appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep CHWs safe and operational.

### SUPPORT AND RECOGNITION

Like all frontline health workers, CHWs may experience stigma, social isolation, and increased stress during the pandemic, and they may need to distance themselves from their families to reduce risk of infection. Good supervision, psychosocial support, additional allowances, and finding ways to recognise contribution can help sustain individuals and the response for the long haul.

## SOURCES

- 1 [AfricaCDC: Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19 Outbreak](#)
- 2 [Africa CDC: Know Your Epidemic through COVID-19 Testing](#)
- 3 [Africa CDC: Guidance on Community Physical Distancing During COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- 4 [WHO: Home care for patients with COVID-19 presenting with mild symptoms and management of their contacts](#)
- 5 [WHO: Global surveillance for COVID-19 caused by human infection with COVID-19 virus](#)
- 6 [CDC: Symptoms of Coronavirus](#)
- 7 [Digestive Symptoms in COVID-19 Patients With Mild Disease Severity: Clinical Presentation, Stool Viral RNA Testing, and Outcomes; PMID: PMC7172493](#)
- 8 [Clinical Characteristics of COVID-19 Patients With Digestive Symptoms in Hubei, China: A Descriptive, Cross-Sectional, Multicenter Study; doi: 10.14309/ajg.0000000000000620](#)
- 9 [Symptom Screening at Illness Onset of Health Care Personnel With SARS-CoV-2 Infection in King County, Washington; doi: 10.1001/jama.2020.6637](#)
- 10 [Africa CDC: Africa CDC Event-based Surveillance Framework](#)
- 11 [Africa CDC: Guidance on Contact Tracing for COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- 12 [Africa CDC: 2019 Novel Coronavirus Disease Outbreak: What Health Care Workers Should Know](#)
- 13 [Africa CDC: Guidance on Community Physical Distancing During COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- 14 [Africa CDC: COVID-19 Guidance on Use of Personal Protective Equipment for Different Clinical Settings and Activities](#)
- 15 [Evidence Aid: Community Health workers for COVID-19 Prevention & Control.](#)
- 16 [Africa CDC: Guidance for the Continuation of Essential Health Services during COVID-19 Pandemic](#)
- 17 [Imperial College COVID-19 Response Team: The Potential Impact of the COVID-19 Epidemic on HIV, TB and Malaria in Low- and Middle-Income Countries](#)



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