

**Concept Note**

**Role of CHWs in Pandemic Preparedness and  
Response: discussion on the Integration of  
Community Health Workforce into the broader  
Health systems.**

**March 23rd, 2022**

**16-18h EAT**

**Zoom Virtual meeting |**

**[https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_Gsz2WvbRTBCZ3qgzP1C2rw](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Gsz2WvbRTBCZ3qgzP1C2rw)**

## Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the inequalities in health systems within and between nations. With nearly 200 million COVID-19 cases detected to date and over 4 million deaths globally, the pandemic has added additional pressure to underfunded health systems and disrupted the provision of essential health services threatening years of progress on global health challenges. In Africa, the impact of the pandemic on health systems is more pronounced, exacerbating the already constrained health system delivery characterized by an inadequate number of healthcare workers. As Part of the Covid-19 response, The African Union Commission through Africa-CDC have launched the Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing (PACT): Trace, Test & Track (CDC-T3) to facilitate implementation of the Africa Joint Continental Strategy for COVID-19, endorsed by African Ministers of Health on February 22, 2020, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Through the initiative and working with partners, Africa CDC has been able to deploy more than 20574 community health workers (CHWs) in 29 African countries for the COVID-19 response to conduct active case findings, contact tracing, risk communication and community engagement for vaccine uptake.

Following the mobilization of the PACT CHWs, Africa CDC conducted regional surveys and oversight to understand Member States implementation of the initiatives. Although the cadre contributed significantly to pandemic response efforts, two main challenges were noted: the integration of CHWs into primary health care system and the financing of community health systems, including compensation.

The African Union Commission - Africa CDC, cognizant of the critical role community health systems play to achieving better health outcome, is organizing a webinar series. The discussion will focus on the immediate role CHWs have in the health, economic and social recovery of Africa from the COVID-19 pandemic, including the need for investments in robust community health systems that include pandemic preparedness and response, and the continuation of essential health services beyond the pandemic.

### Goal:

1. Recognize and value the role of community health workers in pandemic preparedness and response
2. Advocate for mainstream of the Covid-19 CH Workforce response into existing health system structures on the continent.
3. Discuss the community health challenges faced at various levels of the health system
4. Bring together various implementers and policy makers for cross system learning
5. Gather recommendations, strategies and best practices in integrating CH workforce into the larger Health systems.

### Session Objectives:

1. Share the impact of community health programs
2. Showcase the triumphs and challenges of compensating and integrating the community health workforce into existing health systems
3. Share the key opportunities and challenges in scaling high performing and integrated community health systems

### Principal discussion themes:

1. Role of CHWs in Pandemic Preparedness and Response
2. Successful integration into nationalized primary health care systems
3. Use and leverage of digital tools and systems to streamline integration efforts
4. Challenges CHWs face on the ground and day to day

### Key benefits and expected outcomes:

Cross-site learning across geographies in support of the 2 million community health workers in Africa initiative by the African Union Commission (Assembly/AU/Dec.649 (XXIX)):

- **Cross-learnings** from the different countries on integrations of national community health systems for sustainability, pandemic preparedness and continuation of essential health services
- **Increase investment into community health systems** as pillars for strong and resilient health systems in the region. This includes domestic, donor and innovative financing mechanisms.
- **Establish data driven programs:** Enhance data system performance to strengthen surveillance and data-driven decision-making via tech-enabled transparency. In addition, ensure integration of program data into existing national health information systems (HMIS) and its use to span across the different levels of the health system.
- **Build momentum** for countries to navigate ways they can continue strengthening and building high-quality community health systems with key tenets in place.
- **Integrate CHW pandemic response plans with essential health service provision:** Position existing CHWs as key part of the pandemic response through training, equipping, deploying and supervising surge cadre focused on the pandemic including risk communication, community engagement for COVID-19 vaccine uptake and work on how to institutionalize them for long lasting impact towards resilient health systems.
- **Secure the continuity and expansion of essential health services:** Scale efficient and equitable models of community service delivery to maximize the impact of existing malaria eradication programs, help reduce the pressure on health services and bring primary health care (e.g. malaria / HIV / Tuberculosis testing and treatment, maternal

and reproductive health services) within reach of every individual on the African continent.

- **Advance global health security and bolster future pandemic preparedness:** Bolster CHWs cadres offering an agile and dispersed workforce who can monitor for, quickly detect, and respond to future infectious disease threats. Support technical assistance and infrastructure improvement to develop health security response plans/SOPs and to harness gains of emergency funding allowing countries to rebuild effective community health systems.
- **Create jobs:** Support the scale up of professionalized community health workers, towards the 2 million CHW target. Creation of remunerated jobs at the community level will advance women, youth and marginalized groups and help stimulate the countries' economies.

#### **Audience:**

National governments from African Union Member States, bilateral and multilateral organizations, implementing partners

#### **Date & Format:**

**Date:** March 23 2022, 16-18h EAT

**Venue:** Zoom Virtual Meeting

#### **Registration:**

TBD

#### **Speakers:**

**Hosts:** Africa CDC

#### **Speakers:**

- Kenya (MOF)
- Sierra Leone (MOH)
- Guinea (CHW)
- Gabon (CHW)
- Namibia (MOH)
- Algeria (local implementing NGO)
- Malawi (CHW)
- Rwanda (CHWs)

**Moderators: TBD**

**Draft Proposed Program:**

5m	Welcome and Introduction	Moderator
5m	Opening Remarks	Africa CDC
35m	Panel 1: CHWs	CHWs from Guinee, Gabon, and Malawi, Rwanda
35m	Panel 2: Technical and Implementing Partners	representatives from Kenya, Sierra Leone, Namibia, and Algeria
30m	Q&A	Moderator
10m	Closing remarks, recommendations, next steps	Moderator

**Next steps:**

**For further information please contact:**

**Mr. Thaddee Niyoyitungira,**

Technical Officer- Disease Control and Prevention, Africa CDC

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Tel: +251966833402

Email: [NiyoyitungiraT@africa-union.org](mailto:NiyoyitungiraT@africa-union.org)

**Dr Herilinda Temba**

Medical Epidemiologist, Africa CDC

PACT CHW Initiative Coordinator

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Tel: +251966924187

Email: [HerilindaT@africa-union.org](mailto:HerilindaT@africa-union.org)