COVID-19: Ensuring Essential Health Service Continuity While Supporting Government Response

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have strengthened our commitment and support to the Ministry of Health and county governments to build stronger, more resilient community health systems. We have adapted our programming and launched integrated efforts to ensure sustenance of effective community-based care in this critical period while supporting pandemic response.

Supporting MOH & Local Government Efforts

- Seconded 11 staff to provide technical support to MOH and county governments around COVID-response strategy, planning, M&E and coordination.
- Supporting MOH to develop policy documents for CHVs, households and practitioners that enable concerted action in national and local responses.
- Providing MOH with technical assistance to create an electronic community health information system and to integrate disease surveillance (starting with Covid-19) in digital CHV platforms.
- Providing operational support including supply of hand washing stations, triaging tents and full-package support to enable remote meetings.
- Supported MOH to repurpose the country’s Global Fund budget, unlocking critical resources for CHV PPE and stipends, and worked with coalition partners to support national PPE quantification and sourcing.

Protecting & Supporting CHWs

- Provided CHVs in 7 counties with PPE, and with soap, cotton wool, and surgical spirit to safely continue their core work and support COVID-19 response at community level.
- Trained Living Goods-supported CHVs in remote and in-person (low and no touch) protocols, and supervisors in remote performance management techniques.
- Adjusted compensation structures for the CHVs we support to reflect their increased workload and risk.
- Ramping up our ongoing advocacy efforts by engaging governments on recognition of CHVs, and on inclusion of community health in COVID-19 legislative frameworks, budgets, PPE quantification and reporting.
- Piloting an e-learning platform for Living Goods-supported CHVs to test viability of remote training that can potentially inform future government interventions.

Maintaining Essential Health Service Delivery

- Providing the government CHVs we support with free essential medicines including ACTs, paracetamol and zinc/ORS to ensure timely treatment of sick U5 children.
- Increasing cell phone data and airtime stipends to the CHVs to facilitate remote communication with clients.

Interrupting COVID-19 Transmission

- Training all Living Goods staff and CHVs in 7 counties in COVID prevention, early case detection, reporting procedures, and personal safety measures.
- Adjusting existing and integrating new COVID workflows on our Smart Health app to support COVID response at the community level.
- Implemented a two-way SMS service (short code 21213) for community-level disease surveillance and for sending COVID-related information to CVS and the public.
- Supporting public education through radio programs, road shows, and IEC materials for CHVs and the communities they serve.

COVID Response in Kenya

- 13,478 CHVs supported with PPE
- 5 MOH documents supported
- 406,575 IEC materials distributed in 7 counties
- 1,430,000+ SMS messages sent on COVID
- 11 Living Goods staff seconded to MOH
CHV Lydia Gavinta, Busia County

My community was affected by flooding just as the COVID pandemic emerged in Kenya. Tracing my clients was a challenge because families were scattered in different displacement camps. To make matters worse, many health facilities in the area had to close, and with impassable roads, families seeking health services were forced to pay high costs of boat fares to access far-flung health facilities.

As most of us lost our property and livelihoods, life in the camps has not been easy. There are food shortages and limited access to clean water, which poses increased risk of diseases like diarrhoea, malnutrition and malaria among young children.

Thankfully, armed with free essential medicines from Living Goods, we CHVs are ensuring that children receive timely treatment and that no young life is needlessly lost. We are also supporting pregnant mothers and educating families in and around the camp on COVID-19 to manage spread of the disease.

CHV Alice Wangui, Kiambu County

As a community health volunteer (CHV) my work revolves around promoting the health of mothers and children below five years. But with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, my work now also includes a lot of public sensitization on prevention and management of the disease. That’s because, although information about COVID-19 is broadcast on TV and radio, there are many people in my area with limited access to either and with no one to educate them.

After receiving training and information posters, I have become a source of accurate information in my community. At first, my clients were sceptical about the new measures I was proposing to them, but as I persisted in educating them, they are now letting go of myths and appreciating the importance of wearing masks, regular hand washing and observing social distance to protect themselves and their families.