



Community health worker Jerome Gardiner demonstrates how he uses his COVID-19 job aide and knowledge gained from Last Mile Health-supported COVID-19 training when working in his community.

Quarterly Report

July - September 2020

COVID-19 Response

While [COVID-19 transmission in Africa](#) remains lower than in other global geographies, healthcare inequities are being exacerbated. Countries that already lacked adequate medical supplies, personal protective equipment, and essential health workers are seeing those challenges compounded. To reduce the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations, Last Mile Health has deployed a coordinated response effort with government and local partners so that community and frontline health workers can keep their communities safe and healthy.

Ensuring the Continuity of Primary Healthcare Services

Evidence from past outbreaks suggests [access to healthcare is significantly reduced](#) during pandemics. During COVID-19, community and frontline health workers have continued to provide healthcare to remote communities who need it most. To ensure essential health services keep going, Last Mile Health partnered with Liberia's Ministry of Health to design and deliver a comprehensive COVID-19 curriculum focused on prevention measures, case detection and response, and a protocol for 'no touch' delivery of primary healthcare services. Last Mile Health has trained nearly 1,500 community and frontline health workers in Rivercess, Grand Gedeh, and Grand Bassa counties, **while nationally all community health workers deployed have been trained in the COVID-19 curriculum.**



“Now that the [infection prevention and control] training is complete, everyone is working to ensure precautionary measures are followed at the community and facility levels. Community supervisors are responsible for ensuring the community health workers use all the necessary personal protective equipment while providing health services, and the County Health Teams are working to ensure both the health facilities and the community health teams observe and take every precaution to protect themselves and the patients. After all, the ‘safety of one, means the safety of all.’

Diana Dennis

Quality Assurance Officer

In collaboration with other partners and donors, Diana and her colleagues are supporting Liberia’s Ministry of Health to train and equip the country’s nearly 4,000 community and frontline health workers to safely respond to COVID-19.

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These community health workers are leading efforts to educate their neighbors on COVID-19 disease transmission, signs and symptoms, hand washing, and home isolation protocol, while also screening and referring household members for COVID-19 during routine household visits. In addition, COVID-19 digital clinical education tools from the Community Health Academy are being rolled out to frontline health workers to complement their training by providing timely refresher content on subjects such as case management and infection prevention and control.

Equipped with knowledge from the training, community health workers are currently adapting no-touch protocols to safely deliver essential services so that preventable diseases like malaria, pneumonia, and diarrhea can still be treated. They are also continuing to provide family planning, prenatal, and postnatal services to women. **Early data from Liberia’s Community Based Information System indicates that community health worker service provision has held steady since the onset of COVID-19, with only marginal decreases in facility-based delivery rates in areas served by the National Community Health Assistant Program.** This evidence further highlights the critical role community and frontline health workers play in ensuring rural communities have uninterrupted access to life-saving care during the pandemic.

SCALE OF LIBERIA’S NATIONAL COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSISTANT PROGRAM

Cumulative from July 1, 2016 to September 30, 2020



3,800+

Community and frontline health workers deployed



4.2 Million

Home visits conducted



329,705

Pregnancy home visits conducted



1.2 Million

Cases of malaria, pneumonia, and diarrhea treated and malnutrition screenings conducted in children under five



186,788

Women with access to family planning



5,192

Potential epidemic cases reported



3,777

Digitally-empowered community and frontline health workers



363

Community clinics staffed by frontline health workers

Limiting Health Worker Infections

With community health workers in place to screen and refer sick patients to the nearest health facility, it is vital that the first line of clinical defense—nurses and physician assistants in rural health facilities—can also continue serving safely. To maintain patient trust in the health system, **Last Mile Health has supported Liberia’s Ministry of Health to deliver infection prevention and control, case management, and testing and sample collection training to 1,500 health facility staff in 87 health facilities across Rivercess, Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh and Montserrado counties.** These trainings have prepared health facility staff to use evidence-based practice for patient care, while protecting them from infection. Last Mile Health has also been supporting the Liberia Ministry of Health to establish Precautionary Observation Centers, where COVID-19 cases and contacts can safely isolate and receive care. Infection prevention and control supplies including personal protective equipment, as well as sanitation supplies such as toiletries, hand washing buckets, hand sanitizers, and cleaning materials, have also been distributed to ensure adherence to proper hygienic protocols.

Last Mile Health has been working closely with Ministries of Health in Liberia and Malawi to procure and distribute personal protective equipment. In partnership with VillageReach, Last Mile Health supported Liberia’s Ministry of Health to quantify, procure, and distribute critical supplies for community and frontline health worker training, as well as ongoing health service delivery in remote communities. **To date, Last Mile Health supported the distribution of more than 370,000 masks, 2,000 respirators, 450,000 gloves, 12,000 gowns, and 4,000 pieces of eye protection, as well as hand washing buckets and bottles of hand sanitizer, liquid soap, and bleach to community health workers, health facilities, and hospitals in 14 of Liberia’s 15 counties. In Malawi, Last Mile Health contributed more than 900,000 pieces of personal protective equipment to the Ministry of Health.**



“By tomorrow [these facilitators] will start their training at health facilities in Montserrado and we expect that all that we’ve taught today will be shared with those in the facilities as well to make sure that we all can keep safe while we are serving.”

Comfort King-Gbaie

Quality Assurance Coordinator for the Ministry of Health’s Quality Management Unit

Comfort is overseeing infection prevention and control for the COVID-19 response. In June 2020, Comfort reflected on the upcoming facilitation of a Training of Trainers in Montserrado County, where the majority of cases had been identified.



Ministry of Health staff receive and prepare personal protective equipment commodities for distribution to remote communities across Liberia.

Supporting COVID-19 Surveillance and Emergency Communications in Liberia



Last Mile Health Liberia Country Director Marion Subah presents nearly 400 devices to Liberia's Minister of Health Dr. Wilhelmina Jallah to strengthen the country's surveillance and emergency communication systems. Two-way radios help to enable timely and coordinated response efforts among health workers operating outside the cell network.

While the majority of supplies are being distributed to two districts, Chikwawa District and Nsanje District, more than 300,000 items have been donated to the central Ministry of Health for distribution across all of Malawi's districts. In Chikwawa District, community health workers at 21 health facilities have received a tranche of 18,000 surgical masks, 2,400 N95 respirators, 184,000 pairs of gloves, 300 pairs of goggles, 8,900 surgical gowns, 1,260 reusable aprons, and 360 digital thermometers.

Consistent access to personal protective equipment still remains a challenge due to high pricing and low supplies. To supplement government-led national quantification efforts and ensure community health workers are prioritized to receive the protection they need, Last Mile Health has teamed up with the [COVID-19 Action Fund for Africa](#)—a collaborative of more than 30 organizations—to equip up to one million community health workers with 450 million pieces of personal protective equipment and essential medical items across 24 African countries, including Liberia and Malawi. As the largest single effort to mobilize private resources for Africa's essential community health workers, the initiative is committed to meeting their critical protective needs to ensure they can continue their vital role in safely providing health services to communities.

Eliminating Transmission from Known Cases

To effectively break the chain of transmission from known cases in their communities, community and frontline health workers on the frontlines of COVID-19 need training in community surveillance, contact tracing, referral protocols, and supporting patients in home isolation. To meet this need, Last Mile Health is collaborating with local partners and Ministries of Health to deploy in-person and digitized COVID-19 training to further support rapid identification and isolation of known cases.

In Malawi's Chikwawa District, Last Mile Health trained 284 community health workers and their supervisors on the country's COVID-19 Operational Guide, which includes a module on case identification so that community members suspected of having COVID-19 can be isolated as early as possible. Last Mile Health incorporated updated training modules on contact tracing and home-based care guidelines to ensure the training provided remains up-to-date.



Community health workers in Chikwawa District, Malawi attend a training on the COVID-19 Operational Guide.

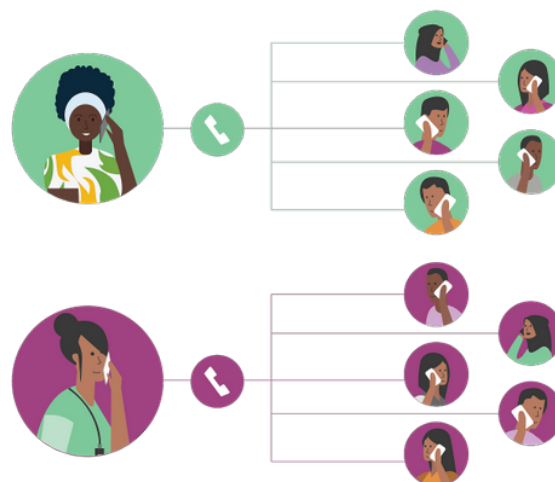
In Ethiopia, the Community Health Academy has partnered with the Federal Ministry of Health and the Ethiopian Public Health Institute to develop and launch the [COVID-19 Ethiopia app](#), the Ministry's first-ever digital learning platform, which is training community and frontline health workers with high-quality educational content on coronavirus. More than 5,000 health sector professionals registered for the app, while 3,437 downloaded one of the six courses on surveillance, laboratory procedures, infection prevention and control, case management, and risk communication and community engagement, and 1,130 learners completed at least one course. While the application has attracted learners from all parts of the country and from all levels of the health sector, Last Mile Health continues to work with Ministry colleagues to adapt the program to better reach community health workers in rural sites and women. With these resources now at their fingertips, health workers are better equipped to rapidly respond to outbreaks of COVID-19 within their communities.

“ *I believe it is a very important tool to have as a nation. Because it was prepared for health professionals, it means we can use it when treating our patients. And since it is developed according to the [national] guideline, we are assured we are getting the right information. Furthermore, it is accessible. Once you download the app, you can use it offline and refer to it whenever you want. That is why I believe it is very useful for the professional. Especially for those working in treatment centers and those working in rural areas—it is invaluable.* ”

Dr. Kidist Hailegiorgis

General Practitioner, Kolfe Health Center, Ethiopia

Dr. Hailegiorgis of Addis Ababa is one of over 10,000 users who have downloaded the COVID-19 Ethiopia App to learn how to respond to the virus.



Illustrations from the Community Health Academy's COVID-19 Digital Classroom course series instruct learners on how to perform contact tracing.

COVID-19 Digital Classroom: On Demand Training Content

Last Mile Health continues to contribute to the global COVID-19 response by sharing methods, tools, and best practices to support health workers and leaders on the frontlines of the pandemic through the Community Health Academy. Alongside a coalition of partners, the Community Health Academy launched the [COVID-19 Digital Classroom](#), which provides medically-reviewed multimedia training and education content for frontline health workers and local communities globally.

New content in the Digital Classroom includes a [course series](#) focused on building core skills in managing COVID-19 cases at the community-level, including [contact tracing](#), [home based care and isolation](#), and [community based surveillance](#). To date, learners from 78 countries have enrolled in COVID-19 courses through the Digital Classroom, with over 70% reporting they are directly involved in the COVID-19 response. Following course completion, 82% of learners report they are very likely to apply training content directly in their work—suggesting the Digital Classroom is aiding COVID-19 response efforts and increasing learner's abilities to treat and support patients and to deliver health services safely.



Community Health Academy Launches Course Series on Health Systems Financing

Health financing is a complex yet crucial component of achieving health for all. As countries develop plans to incorporate community health workers into their health systems, leveraging existing resources and identifying new financing options will be critical to ensuring programs are self-sustainable.

Launched in October, the [Financing Community Health Programs for Scale and Sustainability](#) course series from the Community Health Academy will equip leaders with the skills they need to advocate for financial resources as well as mobilize new funding for strong and effective community health systems. Developed in partnership with Financing Alliance for Health, the program draws on examples and lessons learned from a range of experts from around the world, the series presents an in-depth exploration of the financing pathway needed to ensure that community health programs are successfully launched, adequately resourced, and financially sustained.

[Register today](#) and join health systems leaders from around the globe to learn how to fund affordable and at-scale community health programs that transform health outcomes and save lives.

Africa CDC Partnership: Building Resilient Health Systems

Last Mile Health is advising the [Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (Africa CDC) a continent-wide public health agency of the African Union—to support countries to effectively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and build more resilient health systems. Working with Africa CDC and a coalition of partners, Last Mile Health will:

- Leverage private-public partnerships to address challenges in the procurement and equitable distribution of rapid diagnostic testing kits at the community level within African Union member states. Additionally, Last Mile Health is providing advice and advocacy on a comprehensive testing strategy to roll out up to 20 million COVID-19 tests and achieve a test positivity rate of less than 5% across the continent.
- Collaborate on the development of digital COVID-19 training modules on infection prevention and control and rapid antigen testing procedures for laboratory managers and frontline health workers.
- Advise Africa CDC on the design, resource mobilization, and execution of its community health worker Initiative. This initiative aims to deploy 100,000 community health workers across the continent to test, treat, and trace COVID-19 cases. Ultimately, this work is aligned with the Africa CDC and Africa Union's commitment to scale-up training for up to one million additional community health workers across Africa to provide primary healthcare and prevent future epidemics.



A clinician prepares a COVID-19 sample at a Ministry of Health enhanced surveillance site in Monrovia, Liberia.



“ We are learning every day, and we always need to be open-minded and practice humility in embracing feedback. ”

Abigail Mphatso Nyaka
Malawi Program Manager

Abigail Mphatso Nyaka works for Last Mile Health as a Program Manager in Malawi. In this capacity, Abigail oversees Last Mile Health's COVID-19 response in Chikwawa District, including coordinating with the District Health Management Team to plan community health worker training, and identifying opportunities to support digital health interventions and community engagement activities. [Read more](#) about Abigail's reflections on [Last Mile Health's values](#), and which one resonates with her the most.

The
Independent
Panel

FOR PANDEMIC
PREPAREDNESS
& RESPONSE



Raj Panjabi Named Advisor to Independent Panel on COVID-19 Response

Dr. Raj Panjabi is honored to be named Technical Advisor to former President of Liberia Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in her role as Co-Chair of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response. President Sirleaf and former Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Rt Hon Helen Clark, will lead an impartial, independent, and comprehensive evaluation of the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic coordinated by the World Health Organization. The Independent Panel—composed of members with a range of expertise from outbreak response to socioeconomics and health systems management—will make recommendations on how to improve the capacity for global pandemic preparedness and response and is expected to submit its report to the 74th World Health Assembly in May 2021. Learn more [here](#).

RECENT MEDIA

- [USA Today](#): “How we stop systemic racism from killing Black mothers” by Mary-Ann Etiebet and Raj Panjabi
- [Exemplars In Global Health](#): “Fraying Ropes - COVID-19's Impact on Gender Inequality” by Raj Panjabi
- [Thomson Reuters Foundation](#): “Fighting COVID-19 where it matters most: Rural communities” by Willy Foote and Raj Panjabi
- [Last Mile Health](#): “The Gendered Impacts of COVID-19: Reflections from Liberian Women”
- [Last Mile Health](#): “An Invisible Threat During COVID-19: The Collapse Of The Primary Health System”