



**Brighter
Communities**
Worldwide

CREATING BETTER FUTURES

Maternal, Newborn and Child Health



2020 Programme Report & 2021 Programme Plans

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Brighter Communities Worldwide

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Kenya – OP 218/051/2005/0295/3731

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Front Cover: An Outreach Clinic in Mugulwet; November 2020

About Brighter Communities Worldwide

Brighter Communities Worldwide (BCW) is an NGO working in community development in East Africa since 2002. Brighter Communities Worldwide's community development model considers the whole community, enabling individuals and communities to be authors of their own development, building better futures for all. Our model creates an enabling environment for communities to realise change and uses a partnership-based approach to deliver relevant programmes to meet the needs of communities and individuals.

Creating brighter communities means ensuring:

- Access to good, affordable healthcare;
- Education to help people find a job and be able to articulate their needs;
- An income that can sustain a family; and
- Healthier lives with a supply of clean water and better facilities.

Our vision

A world where strong, healthy communities can thrive, building sustainable livelihoods and brighter futures

Our mission

To work in partnership with communities, to deliver programmes that enrich their lives and help create better futures for them and their families.

Our values

Our values underpin everything we do and every decision we make. They also help communicate the way we work and how we do things.

- Integrity - We are an organisation built on integrity and good governance with a track record for success.
- Passion - We work passionately in all that we do to realise our vision across communities.
- Togetherness - We work together with all our stakeholders; all programmes are based on community needs as identified by themselves.

Our values are based on the way we work:

- As advocates for people who don't have a voice
- In partnership with local people, officials, NGOs and governments
- Giving people the tools to build on what they already have
- Building on the traditional way of doing things to improve lives for everyone.



Community Maternal Task Force Volunteers maternal health training, Malaget

Health context in Kericho County

Brighter Communities Worldwide works in Kericho County (population 901,777) in North West Kenya.

- Communities in Kericho County lack access to basic services including water, sanitation, electricity and healthcare and many households (up to 60%) are living below the poverty line.
- Access to essential health services is difficult in this remote area due to poor infrastructure, difficult terrain and health education and awareness.
- The prevalence of maternal mortality is high (circa 500 women die in childbirth per 100,000 live births; 0 per 100,000 in Ireland ([link](#)))
- The county perinatal mortality rate is 38 per 1,000 which means that 1 in every 26 infants die in birth or within their first 7 days of life (nationally 1 in 35; Ireland 1 in 156)
- Children who survive birth do not always thrive and 1 in 20 will not reach their 5th birthday (child mortality circa 49.4 in 1,000 Demographic Health Survey 2014). This is often due to lack of immunisations, poor environmental conditions, poorly educated parents etc.
- 85% of households rely on traditional methods of cooking which involve using wood as fuel, and subsequently respiratory illness are widespread

Brighter Communities Worldwide works in partnership with local communities and with the Ministry of Health to improve on mother, new-born and child health through its maternal health programme.

COVID-19 Pandemic

Since the first cases of COVID-19 were reported in Kenya in March 2020, Brighter Communities Worldwide continued to work delivering programmes adhering to Ministry of Health Guidelines. As a team we “pivoted” our activities to enable their delivery in a safe way for all beneficiaries and staff. Our focus included community sensitisation, health systems strengthening and supporting the vulnerable.

In March we joined the Kericho County Emergency Response & Preparedness Team and worked in partnership with the Ministry of Health to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We leveraged our volunteer network to sensitise households across Kericho on COVID-19 and supported vulnerable households with soap and tippy tappys. In partnership with the Ministry of Health we sensitized volunteers who in turn sensitized households across their community while adhering to the COVID-19 guidelines. A total of **1,964 (991M, 973F) volunteers** were trained and they have sensitised **77,123 Households** across communities reaching **394,703 beneficiaries**.

We worked with the Ministry of Health to strengthen the health services available across the county. A number of tasks were completed:



Health Care workers trainings in Kericho and Londiani in June of 2020

- **Isolation Units** were built in Londiani Sub County Hospital and in Ndubusat Clinic. These were used to separate patients who showed symptoms of COVID-19 before transferring them to the County COVID-19 treatment centre in Kericho.
- Training of **422 (192M, 230F) Health Care Workers** (across all cadres) who are employed across 105 health facilities in Kericho County. The training included infection prevention & control; identifying, isolating and caring for patients; contact tracing; home based care and learnings shared between Ireland and Kenya.
- **163 Health Facilities** were supplied with Communication materials, soap and handwashing facilities.



Isolation Ward, Londiani Sub County Hospital



Training community volunteers on COVID-19 in Koru, May 2020

- **PPE** was supplied to 4 health facilities.
- Brighter Communities Worldwide facilitated an online exchange between health workers in Londiani Sub County Hospital and health workers in Ireland. Learnings and experiences were shared by all involved.
- Tents supplied to Londiani Sub County Hospital and Ndubusat Clinic to enable social distancing in waiting areas; and triage.
- Vaccine fridges were delivered to **8 health facilities**.



Mothers and babies at immunization clinic in Tea Research Institute Health Centre, July 2020

Maternal, New-born and Child Health

Brighter Communities Worldwide introduced a new **Maternal, New-born and Child Health (MNCH) Strategy** in December 2017.

The overall objective of this strategy is to strengthen the delivery of essential healthcare services for mothers and babies through ensuring access to comprehensive maternal, neonatal, and reproductive healthcare services. It has a multi-faceted approach including skills, education, awareness, strengthening services, and infrastructure that focuses on three levels

- **Community** - through increased knowledge and awareness as part of the Life Skills peer education courses which include modules on maternal & new-born health and family planning.
- **Community Health Volunteers (CHVs)** - through inclusion of training in this area provided for the volunteers as part of implementation of Community Units.
- **Health Care Professionals** - professional development through Essential Obstetric and Neonatal Care courses. Improvements of skills in obstetric and neonatal care are essential to the improvement of maternal and new-born health.



A Community Health Volunteer demonstrating handwashing with locally available resources during Laibon Field day, February 2020

The strategy has a number of objectives including:

- To increase health-seeking behavior among women and girls in areas where we work;
- To increase awareness of maternal and child health amongst community members in areas where we work.
- To adopt a health systems strengthening approach to respond to the needs and priorities of women and girls; and
- To contribute to the improvement of measurement systems to ensure that all maternal, new-born and child health data is accurately recorded.



Mothers wait at Ndubusat Clinic to immunize their babies.

Many reasons contribute to poor maternal health including lack of knowledge, culture, fear, a lack of infrastructure, communities living long distances from health facilities, and lack of access to basic services such as clean water.

Outreach Clinics

To improve access to healthcare services in remote and underserved areas, Brighter Communities Worldwide support outreach clinics where Community Health Workers and Ministry of Health Staff bring health care services to communities in underserved areas.

These services include:

- Immunisation of Children less than 5 years of age;
- Weight Monitoring;
- Ante natal Care;
- Deworming;
- Nutrition/Vitamin A supplementation;
- Family planning; and
- Identification and referral of cases to health facilities.

In 2020, **228** Outreach clinics were held in different locations across Kericho County bringing services to **11,600** people who attended.



Distribution of vaccination fridge to Laliat Dispensary, July 2020

These Outreach clinics helped provide the much needed vaccines for children, ante natal and post-natal care to women amongst other services to the community members. Many women felt more at ease attending the clinics rather than seeking services at the health facilities where they feared they would be more exposed to COVID-19.

As the COVID-19 numbers grew in the community, there were however a number of Outreach Clinics that were delivered as health care workers were unable to travel. This has contributed to an increase of 6% in the number of children under 5 fully vaccinated.

Lack of adequate PPE and insufficient financial health cover in the event of infection was of prime concern to the health care workers and one which led to the nurses' strike in December. At this point public Health facilities closed and all Outreach clinics stopped until February 2021 when the strike ended.

Health Field Days

To increase knowledge and awareness of health issues, Brighter Communities Worldwide supports a number of health field days every month in local communities across the four Sub Counties. Activities carried out during these health field days include:

- Mother and Child Health/Family Planning;
- Water and Sanitation ;
- Ideal homestead including promoting Smokeless Stove installations;
- Nutrition/Weight Monitoring;
- Blood Pressure Check up;
- Volunteer Counselling and Testing;
- Dental Hygiene;
- Malaria Control;
- HIV/TB Prevention;
- Cervical Cancer Screening; and
- Treatment of jiggers



Health Care worker weighing a child during Kapchorwa Outreach Clinic

In 2020, **3** health field days were held where **1,544** people attended. Due to COVID-19 no field days have taken place since March 2020.

Life Skills

The Life Skill Programme enables communities to learn about HIV/AIDS (awareness, treatment and prevention); communications & values; relationships; stages of development; maternal and new-born health; sexuality, nutrition; family planning; mental health; drugs and addiction. It is our entry point and first involvement with a community and has often contributed to the strengthening of trust between community members as well as the formation of community groups who focus on addressing key issues in the community. In 2020, **7** courses were delivered for **305** participants. This number was less than expected due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Maternal and New-born Health Courses (MNCH)

To improve community access to health information and MNCH health services available, Community health Volunteers, Community Health Committees and a selection of community members attend maternal, newborn and child health courses.

The trainings aim to equip participants to be able to deliver health messages to the community, identify maternal health issues early, recognise the danger signs and refer to health facilities for checkups and delivery. BCW works with the Ministry of Health in the delivery of these programs.



Tendeno CHVs undergoing Community Maternal Health Task Force training.

Community Maternal Health Task Force (CMHTF) establishment and training

The taskforce is set up at community level to raise awareness on maternal, new-born and child health.

In 2020, **6** Maternal Health Courses were completed for **211** Community Health Volunteers and **12** Community Maternal Health events and trainings completed for **318** participants

Maternal Health Shelter

The Maternal Health Shelter in Londiani Sub-County hospital provides a free and secure place for expectant mothers to come and stay when delivery is near so they have access to professional services within the hospital when delivery time arrives. In 2020, **53** pregnant women used the shelter. This number decreased from the previous year, as the shelter did not operate since the outbreak of COVID-19. Instead women were monitored closely in their homes by health care workers.

Ante Natal Care (ANC) Follow-up Tracker System.

The ANC tracker system was introduced to address the falling numbers in women completing the recommended 4 ANC visits. The tracker system involves training Community Health Volunteers in data collection tools to essentially track a woman from the time she becomes pregnant, accompanying her to her first ANC visit and supporting her up to birth of the child and beyond. It enables follow-up to be done by the volunteers if a woman is not attending the ANC clinic and allows for any issues arising with the pregnancy to be addressed. It has resulted in an increased attendance at ANC clinics, and as a result an increase in health facility deliveries. During 2020, ANC Tracker reached expectant mothers in **344 villages**. Despite COVID-19 the results are positive this year. This can be attributed to a number of factors including the commitment of the health facility staff throughout this time, but primarily because of the continuation of the ANC Tracker system and Outreach clinics throughout the pandemic. Across the other sub counties in Kericho where the ANC Tracker has not been implemented a reduction of between 2% and 19% in mothers attending 4 ANC visits can be seen since the onset of COVID-19.

Key results in Maternal New-born & Child Health in 2020:

Despite the challenges of COVID-19, the maternal, new-born and child health programme delivered a number of key results in the last 12 months:

- 27 % growth (from 4127 to 5219) in the number of births taking place in facilities in the region
- 18% increase (from 6251 to 6336) in the number of children under one who are fully immunised
- 18% increase in the number of women completing 4th ANC visit (from 2779 to 3300)
- 53 pregnant women used the Maternal Health Shelter
- 5.57% increase in Caesarean Section Rate

Planned Impacts of the Maternal New-born & Child Health Programme in 2021 (subject to COVID-19 impacts)

By the end of 2021, the Maternal New-born and Child Health Programme will have:

- Strengthened health services across the Kericho County continuing to support the Ministry of Health in addressing the COVID-19 pandemic
- Supported the sensitization across households on COVID-19 and the provision of soap and handwashing facilities.
- Improved access to health services by supporting **28 Outreach Clinics every month** across Kericho County in underserved and hard to reach areas.
- Supported **16 Maternal Health Trainings** for an additional **288 Community Health Volunteers**
- Advocated for health facility deliveries in communities for women by supporting the use of the Maternal Health Shelter in Londiani hospital;
- Increased the number of women attending Ante Natal Care through the expansion of the ANC Follow-up Tracker System.



***Thank you to all those who supported our Maternal, New-born and Child Health Programme during 2020.
Asante Sana!***