



**Elizabeth Glaser
Pediatric AIDS Foundation**
Fighting for an AIDS-free generation



PHOTO: EGPAF, 2020

Fighting for an AIDS-Free Generation in the Time of the Coronavirus

Leading the fight against HIV for more than three decades

The Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF) is a global organization focused on ending AIDS in children, youth and families.



EGPAF has supported **over 15,000 sites** to offer HIV counseling, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment services alongside high-quality family health care.



We have provided **more than 31 million women** with access to testing, treatment and other lifesaving services.



EGPAF currently supports **1.7 million people on HIV treatment, including 90,000 children.**



In the past year, EGPAF has tested **nearly 9 million people for HIV.**



Our organizational reputation, staff experience, and platform of programs in Africa have put us on the front-line of response to the new threat of COVID-19.

COVID-19 has changed the world

Now more than ever, the devastating effects of infectious diseases are impossible to avoid. The novel coronavirus known as COVID-19 has spread to all continents except Antarctica. In contrast, the HIV/AIDS epidemic enters its fifth decade, and its effects are far from novel. We are working to turn the page on what we hope will be the final chapter.

HIV is an epidemic that has impacted every corner of the earth, infected 75 million people, and claimed over 32 million lives. Even in the year 2020, the number of people living with HIV is on the rise. Sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the world's epicenter of HIV and AIDS with 68% of the world's cases occurring in the region. Even after a global decline in pediatric infections of over 50% since 2000, HIV continues to severely impact infants, children, and their mothers.

EGPAF is a global leader in the fight to end HIV and AIDS, providing high quality and innovative technical assistance (TA) and direct support for service delivery across 14 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and India. Today, EGPAF and the international HIV programs we serve are facing unprecedented challenges in providing essential HIV services while addressing the urgent threat of COVID-19. The global COVID-19 pandemic has drastically interrupted access to critical HIV services across sub-Saharan Africa and recent UNAIDS modeling suggests potential for dramatic increases in AIDS-related mortality due to treatment interruptions.¹ As of July 14th, over 475,000 COVID-19² cases have been reported across Africa. COVID-19 mitigation strategies, including social distancing and lockdowns as well as fear of visiting health facilities have resulted in significant declines in children and their families accessing HIV services.

EGPAF has responded with unprecedented speed in the face of the crisis, taking measures to protect staff while working to maintain essential services for our clients.

For example, EGPAF is supporting health facilities to dramatically shift operations at site and community levels. This includes addressing patient flow to allow for distancing, enhanced infection prevention and control (IPC) measures, integration of COVID-19 screening into HIV testing service (HTS) entry points, multi-month dispensing (MMD) for both stable and unstable patients, decentralized drug delivery, integration of COVID messaging into HIV and TB health education, and remote data collection, virtual support, and trainings.

We must push even harder

Despite these efforts to maintain essential services, we are seeing early warning signs around backslide of progress driven by dramatic decreases in clients accessing critical services. As lockdowns begin to lift across sub-Saharan Africa, EGPAF is now preparing for the surge in demand alongside a continued threat of COVID-19 and unreliable supply of personal protective

equipment (PPE). For example, in EGPAF-supported sites, saw a recent decrease in service uptake including³:

- 35% decrease in pediatric testing for HIV in Côte d'Ivoire (February-April 2020).
- 39% decrease in monthly viral load tests in Lesotho (March 30-June 30)
- 53% decrease in monthly ANC attendance in Côte d'Ivoire (March 30-June 30)

To address backslide in programming and to maintain essential services for the communities we serve, our work is evolving from emergency response to longer-term recovery.

A multi-faceted response

EGPAF has developed core strategies that are supported by EGPAF's global, regional, and national level efforts to adapt technical guidance, tools, and frameworks to support the evolving response. For example, leveraging our experience in rapidly shifting programming during the emergency response, EGPAF is prioritizing development, packaging, and dissemination of organization wide approaches, tools, training materials, and SOPs for emerging programming modalities including MMD, decentralized drug delivery, and multiple virtual support modalities. Finally, at the global, regional, and national levels, EGPAF is playing a critical role in both contributing to the evidence-base around COVID-19 and its impact on HIV programming and the populations we serve, and in analyzing and disseminating early findings. For example, EGPAF has hosted multiple internal and external webinars to rapidly share emerging evidence around the impact of COVID-19 on children and pregnant women through EGPAF's global network.



3 EGPAF COVID dashboard

¹ https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/2020_global-aids-report_en.pdf

² <https://COVID19.who.int/>

How we are fighting dual pandemics

Ensure continuity of critical comprehensive HIV services and address backslide in progress.

The cornerstone of EGPAF's COVID-19 response is targeted efforts to ensure continued access to critical HIV services for the populations we serve. Alongside the dramatic disruption in services, COVID-19 has created opportunities to rapidly implement and test new solutions and programming modalities. As described above, EGPAF has made shifts in programming from simple public health solutions focused on patient flow and physical distancing, to major shifts in antiretroviral therapy (ART) delivery and retention support. It is critically important to understand which solutions work and scale those solutions. EGPAF's expansive implementation platform allows for rapid testing of the impact of these solutions and the ability to scale the most successful methods as part of the long-term response.

Adapt HIV services for children and families to ensure life-saving HIV services remain accessible through community, facility and virtual-based approaches. Highlights of on-going and priority activities in this area include:

- **Health education and behavior change:** Responding to misinformation in communities around COVID-19; introducing options for assistance and access to real-time information via WhatsApp groups, social media platforms, radio spots, and messaging.
- **Testing:** Expansion of HIV self-testing, with telephonic follow up for those who receive self-tests; increasing distribution of self-testing kits.
- **Treatment:** Expansion of MMD for children (2 years+) and adults with 3-6 months of ART, including those clients newly initiating and transition to TLD; Expand decentralized drug delivery including the expansion of mobile pharmacies, door-to-door community delivery and community-based ART pick up.
- **Retention:** Expansion of virtual case management utilizing comprehensive care management teams through WhatsApp and telephonically, particularly for children, pregnant adolescent girls and young women (AGYW), HVL clients, and those newly initiating ART; Home-based sample collection for decentralized VL monitoring.
- **TB:** MMD of TB preventative therapy and treatment to patients on continuation phase; Virtual/telephonic contact tracing for TB.

Provide high-quality TA at the national, decentralized, and site levels through innovative mechanisms to ensure strong systems are in place to support the evolving HIV response. Highlights of on-going and priority activities in this area include:

- **Virtual Site Support:** Virtual TA to sites through phone and mobile applications including virtual supervision and monitoring.
- **Ensuring adequate supply of ART and other commodities:** Extensive monitoring of ART supply, forecasting and redistribution to support 3-6 month MMD; Supporting emergency procurement as needed, layering of digital health solutions to extend and ensure real-time monitoring.
- **Targeted support for frontline health workers:** Focused on physical and mental well-being; Deployment of a tailored suite of services for health care workers (HCW) including training on COVID-19, access to accurate information, and virtual PSS; Systematic screening and testing of HCW with follow-up/case management.
- **Introduction of new modalities for data collection, analysis, and data visualization:** Launch of EGPAF's COVID-19 dashboard to monitor the progression of COVID-19 at the national level and its effects on essential HIV and health services; Expanded mobile data collection to leverage existing electronic systems; Enhanced data analytics to assess the outcomes and impact of changes made to HIV/AIDS programming due to COVID-19.

Advance research around COVID-19's impact on HIV programming and the populations we serve.

Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on HIV infected clients will be critical as it continues to spread across sub-Saharan Africa and as therapeutics and vaccines are developed. EGPAF is able to leverage our platform and existing structure and research expertise to rapidly prepare systems for data collection, and generate and disseminate new evidence as part of the global body of evidence. The following highlights EGPAF's current COVID-19-related research activities as well as areas where additional evidence is urgently needed. Examples of current COVID-19-related studies include the following:

- **Syndromic Surveillance Survey of COVID-19 in Malawi:** Phone survey of ~ 56,000 individuals from the general population and ~28,000 people living with HIV (PLHIV) across Malawi to collect information on individuals experiencing COVID-19 like symptoms, mortality, and access to health services during the pandemic, with geo-mapping of symptom clusters.
- **Prevalence and Outcomes of Patients with SARS-CoV2 and HIV Infections in Kenya:** Prospective follow-up of patients with COVID-19 and examining the outcomes of the patients with and without HIV co-infection.

- **Infection Prevention and Control and SARS-CoV2 Related Changes in Health Services Delivery in Kenya and Cameroon:** Survey of facilities in regions that are hardest hit with COVID-19 cases in Kenya and Cameroon to document changes in the delivery of health services and those that may be related to IPC activity/disruptions.
- **Evaluating Health Behaviors and Care Utilization Experiences during the HIV/COVID-19 Double Pandemic (Tanzania):** Longitudinal cohort study of HIV positive patients' knowledge, practices, and experiences accessing their health care services during the SARS-CoV2 pandemic in five regions in Tanzania.
- **Priority areas where additional research is urgently needed include the following:**
 - Epidemiology, clinical disease and outcomes of SARS-CoV2 infection in children in Africa, including HIV/SARS-CoV2 co-infected children.
 - Impact of SARS-CoV2 pandemic and health system responses on the delivery of HIV services and outcomes among HIV positive patients (adult, adolescents, children, pregnant women).

Effectiveness of rapid changes to long (six month) multi-month ART prescribing on stable vs. unstable HIV positive patients due to the service delivery changes associated with the SARS-CoV2 response.

- Impact of COVID-19 on TB services in Africa.

Leverage lessons from the HIV response to prepare health systems to respond to COVID-19.

As described above, COVID-19 has dramatically impacted HIV services across sub-Saharan Africa. Given the interruptions to service delivery and COVID-19's impact on the health systems and communities we serve, EGPAF will support COVID-19 programming with an emphasis on the areas

described below. This work will leverage EGPAF's decades of experience supporting the HIV response including important lessons around testing, contact tracing, and treatment as well as proven strategies for reaching the most vulnerable populations and the critical role engagement with civil society plays in any coordinated response. EGPAF's work will focus on the countries where we have established programs, a deep understanding of the health systems, and established relationships with ministries of health. Highlights of on-going and priority activities in this area include:

- **National level TA** to support policy and guideline development for COVID-19.
- **COVID-19 testing and contact tracing** including a broad range of testing efforts (mobile hotspot, drive thru, facility, and decentralized testing including point-of-care testing, offered at multiple entry points including HIV testing.)
- **Supporting hotlines** for testing questions and strengthening processes to improve turn-around-time for results
- **Contact tracing**
- **Community engagement** including mobilization of community leaders to support community education and monitoring of self-isolation.
- **Training** of HCWs on COVID-19 and capacity building, and training for community health workers in public health surveillance and outbreak investigation.
- **Procurement, distribution, and tracking of PPE.**
- **Surveillance and M&E** through TA at the national and sub-national levels and development of M&E tracking tools including dashboards for data analytics and visualization.



Invest in EGPAF today to create an AIDS-free generation tomorrow

Now more than ever, as we face the devastating effects of infectious diseases, EGPAF is uniquely poised to offer the above package of services during this challenging time. We have an extensive range of infectious disease experts versed in disease prevention and community approaches, while offering practical solutions for medical care in low resource settings. We bring more than 31 years of experience managing high quality public health service delivery support, expert technical assistance, and local capacity building efforts. Additionally, EGPAF is a trusted partner to Ministries of Health, local organizations, and communities, while serving as a leading voice to advance global technical policy and guidelines.

The time is now, to make a targeted investment that will bolster HIV prevention efforts, support retention on HIV treatment, address the special needs of women and children, and counter the emerging effects of COVID-19 – all while strengthening the next generation of health systems and experts to defend our fragile world. New resources will be required to make this shift.

We need funding now, as we battle two pandemics at once. Your support will be flexible and used where we need it most, while we focus on activating our core strategies to ensure that we do not backslide in the face of the COVID pandemic.

You can make a dramatic difference wielding the above interventions in the name of science, at a time when the global economy is uncertain and when hard-gained progress in African nations is at risk.

To discuss your investment, please contact Trish Karlin at trish@pedaids.org.



PHOTO: ERIC BONDI/EGPAF 2017