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

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Innovation in Global Health

Collaborating in the Catalyzing Covid-19 Action (CCA) Project for Success

Since July 2021, Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation (EGPAF) Kenya has worked closely with the Kiambu county health department to create buy-in and ownership of the COVID-19 integration model in 30 facilities in Kiambu County. The success is attributed to several best practices that can be applied in other programmatic settings. These include

> 1. A project design that drives the county priorities;
> 2. Strong county health leadership;
> 3. Inclusive and active stakeholder engagement in the project cycle;
> 4. Joint project management and oversight;
> 5. Buy-in to the project goals resulting in sustainability plans;
> 6. Monitoring and accountability framework implemented at the facility and sub-national levels.

1. ADDRESSING COUNTY PRIORITIES

Kiambu County was selected for the project implementation as it had the second highest COVID-19 caseload in the country, and successful implementation would significantly contribute to the national COVID-19 response in Kenya. The COVID-19 pandemic destabilized a fragile health care system grappling with various challenges. Government health officials recognized a need for collaboration to mount a solid response to the pandemic. This aligned well with the urgency of the start of the CCA project to ensure implementation started within the first three months. The project goals aligned with the MOH priorities towards urgently mounting and improving the COVID-19 response, rapidly bringing technical capacity, introducing new technologies, and mounting a well-coordinated COVID-19 response.

''You have come in at the right time to help us manage this pandemic. To speed up the implementation of the project, I will appoint a project committee to spearhead the process,''

— Dr. Joseph Murega, CEC Member Health, Kiambu County.

Anthony Mburia a laboratory staff at Ndeiya health center handles COVID-19 positive samples due for genomic sequencing. *Photo: EGPAF, 2022*

2. STRONG COUNTY HEALTH LEADERSHIP

Recognizing the urgency and importance of implementing the work, the health County Executive Committee (CEC) guided the county health team and championed integrating COVID-19 testing and treatment into existing health services. This leadership was critical in the successful rollout and implementation of the project. The CEC organized a forum to bring Members of the County Assembly on board to ensure sustainability beyond the project. The Chief Officer of Health affirmed that the project model would help ensure the continuity of other health services and continued promoting the model in all meetings discussing the COVID-19 pandemic.

> "The integration model must be the standard way to manage COVID-19 as we can't keep stopping services in selected facilities to prioritize them for management of COVID-19,"
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> **—Dr. Patrick Nyaga, Chief Officer of Health**

A community laboratory staff tests for COVID-19 at a CCA dialogue event in Limuru sub-county, Kiambu County.
Photo: EGPAF, 2022

3. INCLUSIVE AND ACTIVE STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT IN THE PROJECT CYCLE

The project engaged with various stakeholders at the national, county, and health facilities level before program implementation to build understanding and support for the CCA project. EGPAF engaged with the National government through the MOH Director General and the County Health Management Team to ensure a strong relationship was established before implementation, and the key stakeholders were familiar with the project. This engagement continues through the life of the project. EGPAF's long program experience and reputation built through implementing high-quality work enabled the CCA project to work seamlessly with the MOH and key stakeholders. EGPAF's ongoing engagement ensured that county officials were active and informed participants, giving substantive input throughout the process. The sense of ownership translated into a commitment to executing the plan. EGPAF collaborated with other partners, for instance, on the electronic medical record (EMR) customizations with the health information system (HIS) partner Palladium to ensure that data was captured correctly and disseminated to ensure effective project implementation.

> "Government health officials felt we were listening to their concerns when we co-created project activities and continued to consult them during implementation."
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> **— CCA Project Manager, Calvine Lwaka**

4. JOINT PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT

A project committee was convened to shepherd the implementation of the project and was critical in promoting CCA project initiatives at health facilities and community awareness campaigns. The nine-member committee comprised of county health staff, namely, the director of health, health partnership lead, director of nursing, acting medical director for services, anesthesiologist, medical laboratory coordinator, director of public health, AIDS control coordinator, and epidemiologist. The committee clarified the project scope and engaged in effective project implementation through co-creating the work plan. The budget and timeline of the project were jointly discussed, resulting in the bulk of funds being utilized on COVID testing in response to where the gaps were. The project team set realistic goals feasible to the county's context.

The agreed-on plan was in line with what would work in the county and was complementary to what was implemented to avoid duplication and ensure that the correct issues were addressed promptly. The committee prioritized the development and signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to clearly define roles and responsibilities, terms of the partnership, and project deliverables. The continuous consultation of the project team through regular meetings and in-depth input from stakeholders kept everyone in the loop of the project implementation.

CCA staff and Kiambu County health officials in a meeting to develop IEC materials.
Photo: EGPAF, 2022

5. BUY-IN TO THE PROJECT GOALS RESULTING IN SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

The CCA project was designed to be catalytic and draw lessons from EGPAF's rich implementation experience. EGPAF brought in the utilization of existing systems, performance management dashboard, and integration of diagnostics and management into health clinics. The project also worked with the existing ministry of health (MOH) community health workers (CHWs) while leveraging the existing structures developed by MOH to ensure the sustainability of the intervention. The CCA team provided on-the-job training to health workers through continuing education courses to ensure that health care workers were not away from their workstations, especially when there was already an existing staff shortage at sites. The tablets procured for the project were issued to the health facilities with ownership to be transferred to the MOH when the project ends.

> "Integration is working because COVID testing is available at the clinics, and I am able to see data on patients tested right in my office through the EMR that will exist even after the project ends; We are now able to report our testing data to the national level at the required timelines."
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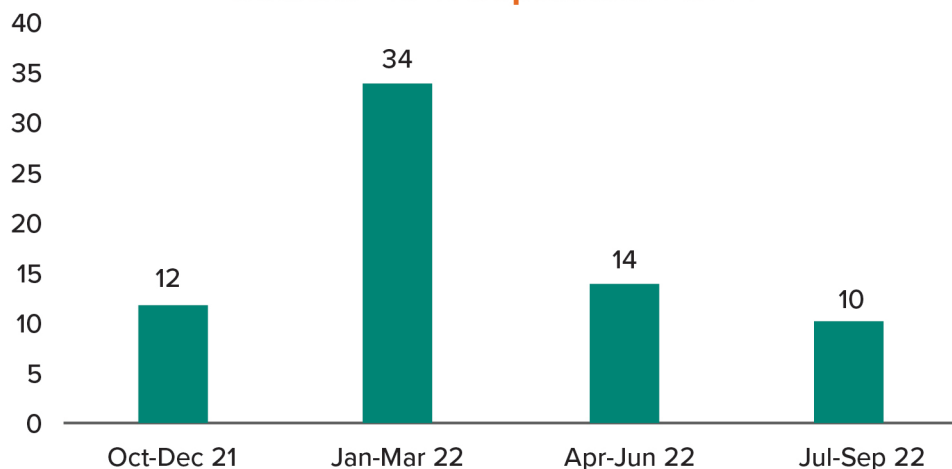> **— David Nduati, County laboratory coordinator**

6) MONITORING AND ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORK IMPLEMENTED AT THE FACILITY AND SUB-NATIONAL LEVELS

The project committee reviewed the project implementation activities through regular meetings and held an Inter-Action Review progress meeting. The team examined the CCA project goals and outcomes from the execution of the CCA project. The annual project review included a gap analysis to identify gaps and develop an action plan based on the current situation. The project utilized the existing MOH-owned Kenya EMR system to document COVID-19 screening, testing, and management data that was captured in the performance management dashboard. The data that is transmitted in real-time enabled facility staff, county managers, and the program to track COVID-19 testing and management cascade and Provide prompt support. Utilization of the EMR system has enabled real-time availability of data, reduced data redundancies and demands on health care workers, and enabled immediate technical support by the MOH and CCA project technical teams, leading to high-quality services for the clients.

Number of Engagements October 2021-September 2022

Period	Value
Oct-Dec 21	12
Jan-Mar 22	34
Apr-Jun 22	14
Jul-Sep 22	10

Lastly, EGPAF developed a stakeholder engagement tracker to monitor stakeholder engagement at the facility and sub-national level, including the number of stakeholders, type of stakeholder, and stakeholder forum. This tool is used to continually monitor stakeholder engagement to ensure strong engagement with all the partners in the project. The graph below highlights the CCA staff engagement with Kiambu county government officials to ensure the CCA project was effective over the past year. The project began COVID-19 services in all the facilities in January, which is why there was an intentional increase in the number of meetings with key stakeholders.

CCA staff deliver project tablets to Ruiru Level 4 hospital in Kiambu County.
Photo: EGPAF, 2022