



**Brighter
Communities**

Worldwide

CREATING BETTER FUTURES

COVID-19 Emergency Response



2020 Activity Report

www.brightercommunities.org

Email: info@brightercommunities.org

Telephone: Ireland +353 21 4621748 Kenya +254 723 472809

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@4abrighterworld



Brighter Communities Worldwide

Ireland - CHY 16505 • CRA 20059583

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About Brighter Communities Worldwide

Brighter Communities Worldwide (BCW) is an NGO which has been working in community development in East Africa since 2002. Brighter Communities Worldwide community development model considers the whole community, enabling individuals and communities to be authors of their own development, building brighter communities 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.



Delivery and distribution of soap and water containers, March 2020

Executive Summary

2020 was a year like no other across the globe. In Brighter Communities Worldwide we found ourselves in a unique situation. We have operated in Kericho County for almost 18 years. Over this time, we have delivered results through working in a partnership-based approach, with community members and government. As a result of our strong partnership with the Ministry of Health (MOH) we were asked to join the Emergency Response and Preparedness Team at Kericho County level. This team includes all cadres of health workers, public health representatives, disease surveillance experts, Governor's office (police, administration) and partners (BCW and the Kenyan Red Cross). Its function is to manage the COVID-19 preparedness across all services – clinical health, public health, community administration – within the County.

Our emergency response focused on supporting communities and on health systems strengthening which are highlighted in this report. We leveraged our network of volunteers (Community Health Volunteers, Facilitators, Teachers and Instructors) to rapidly scale our response. We supported the sensitisation of communities on COVID-19 across Kericho County; we have strengthened health facilities through capacity development of health care workers and the provision of essential supplies (PPE, handwashing facilities, communication materials); we have supported vulnerable children who are out of school and girls and women who are particularly impacted by this pandemic. We have supported the Ministry of Health as they continue delivery of essential services through the provision of Outreach Clinics and Ante-natal Care across the region.

Alongside the COVID-19 response there is a greater and more urgent need for community development. This is evident through the increased demand for support from communities since March when we 'pivoted' how our programmes are delivered. We have continued most of our existing programmes but have had to redesign our delivery models to observe government restrictions and keep the community and our team COVID-safe. Due to the emerging economic and social impacts of the pandemic, we have also evolved some of our programmes to meet identified needs. For example, communities requested menstrual hygiene management support and so the Ambassador programme was developed based on our existing menstrual health programmes. With schools from March to October, we also developed community learning groups for children. Support for income generation projects was also developed due to the significant economic impacts experienced across the community.

This ability to rapidly respond to changing community needs resulting from the pandemic has only been possible because of our locally based team of 34 staff and more than 2,000 volunteers across the county. The partnerships and capacity of the communities built over the past 18 years meant we had the relationships, programme infrastructure, knowledge and credibility to mobilise and effectively respond. BCW has been the key NGO partner for the Ministry of Health (MOH) who have faced critical shortages in PPE, staff, training, COVID-19 infrastructure (isolation centres) and support.

Between March and December 2020 a total of 464,244 beneficiaries were reached through our response. This includes 128,094 men, 140,868 women, 93,246 boys and 104,368 girls. We would like to express our deep gratitude to our donors, staff, volunteers and supporters who made our response possible. Asante Sana!



Our logistics team with soap deliveries - March 2020

Kenya Situational Analysis – COVID-19

- The first case of COVID was diagnosed on 13th March 2020 and restrictions put in place immediately. The Government put stringent regulations in place to limit the movement of people including night time curfew, restrictions of movements between some counties. Schools were closed immediately and shops/ traders were allowed to remain open under strict prevention measures (handwashing, mask wearing, social distance).
- All Schools and higher learning institutions remained closed from March and partially reopened in October for students in standard 4, standard 8 and form 4 (exam years) but remained closed for all other classes.
- Public gatherings were initially limited to 15 people and this was later revised depending on the nature and venue of gathering. At our community workshops and trainings the number was limited to 5 participants and 2 facilitators.
- Open air markets were closed for several months which severely impacted the livelihoods of stall holders e.g. vegetables, fish, second hand clothes. There is no back up support or online options for these workers.
- Many family members were forced to move back to rural homes due to job losses in urban areas putting extra pressure on families
- The movement into and out of Nairobi, Mombasa and Mandera was closed between April and July 2020.
- Initially all flights were cancelled. Domestic flights restarted in July and International flights re-started in August.
- All people were encouraged to work from home and limit their travel. Countrywide curfews remain in place from 10pm to 4am
- There have been restrictions of numbers on public transport to 60% capacity since March
- Health services were impacted by a Nurses and Doctors strike in December and January (2021) brought on by lack of PPE and adequate resources to prevent cases and deaths among health professionals.



Health Clinic staff receiving buckets, soap and posters for handwashing stations, March 2020

Impact of COVID-19 on communities and partners in Kericho County

There are four key areas where we see the negative impact of COVID-19 across Kericho County –

Health Systems

Health systems in this region are not sufficient in terms of service delivery, resources and personnel and many areas remain unserved and under-served. The impact of COVID-19 has exacerbated this issue with the pandemic response requiring diversion of scarce resources from other parts of the system. It will take time to understand the full impact of COVID-19 but we already see a fall in the numbers attending mother and child health clinics which will reverse progress on immunisation and maternal health programmes.

Girls and Women

The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on girls and women is well documented globally ([link](#)) and emerging data from the Ministries in Kericho shows this to be the case in the county as well. This data also shows women are losing their livelihoods faster because they are more exposed to hard-hit economic sectors like casual market trading; reports of violence against women have increased; the burden on women of unpaid caregiving and domestic work has increased; and poorer families have increased food insecurity (less income for seeds, restricted markets) which has detrimental effects particularly on girls and women. In consultations with local communities, there have been reports that some families are choosing to marry off their teenage daughters to obtain a “bride price” to supplement depleted household incomes.

Poverty

COVID-19 has had a profound negative impact on the Kenyan economy severely affecting incomes, employment, and social conditions in addition to health outcomes. According to a recent report by the World Bank the economy is projected to contract by 1% in 2020 ([link](#)) which indicates the country is in recession. This report also highlights how the pandemic has increased poverty by 4 percentage points adding 2 million people to those living below the international poverty line. Evidence of the increase in poverty can be seen across the County with families struggling to make ends meet. With no social welfare assistance of any kind when the cupboard is bare that's it – there is nowhere else to go but to go hungry.

Education

Schools were closed from March 2020 which disproportionately impacted the most vulnerable including early school dropouts, child marriages, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), and inadequate school facilities (particularly in the areas of WASH, and Menstrual Health Management (MHM)).

There has been an increase in social issues including alcohol and drug abuse and gambling. While school went online for children in many parts of the world this was not possible in Kenya where most homes do not have electricity let alone internet connectivity. There is a real fear of a ‘lost generation’ of children resulting from the pandemic who will be separated from the support and safeguarding structures that education offers as a means out of poverty.



**Community Learning Groups,
September 2020**

Our response to COVID-19

As an organisation, our response has been two-fold – responding to the pandemic by supporting the communities and strengthening health systems and finding ways to continue delivery our community development programmes as planned for 2020.

We began preparing for COVID-19 in February by including sensitisation of communities and schools as part of our regular engagement activities across all our programmes. We introduced a training module for all Remote Emergency Care Instructors and Facilitators, and all staff were trained in both COVID-19 and Incident Management in early March. Our Incident Management teams in Ireland and in Kenya were stood up by mid-March. The office in Kenya closed to the public with the majority of staff working from home.

As a result of our strong partnership with the Ministry of Health (MOH) we were invited to join the Emergency Response and Preparedness Team at Kericho County level. This team includes all cadres of health workers, public health representatives, disease surveillance experts, Governor's office (police, administration) and partners (Brighter Communities Worldwide and the Kenyan Red Cross). Its function is to manage the COVID-19 preparedness across all services – clinical health, public health, community administration – within the County. We have remained part of this team through 2020 and into 2021.

As the only NGO working in this area, the community came to us for information and support in the early stages of the pandemic when information was not readily available and mis-information was rife. We leveraged our network of volunteers (Community Health Volunteers, Facilitators, Teachers and Instructors) to rapidly scale up our response.

COVID-19 has not eliminated the need for our community development programmes. In many ways it has created a greater and more urgent need – we've had to find ways to 'pivot' or switch how we can deliver them so that they can continue while still observing restrictions that kept the community and our team safe from transmission of the virus. Our mission remains as it always has been - working in partnership to delivery programmes that enrich lives and help create better futures.



**Training of Community Health Volunteers,
Koru, May 2020**



Centre Ju - Town Centre Distribution, May 2020

In summary we supported the sensitisation of communities on COVID-19 across Kericho County; we have strengthened health facilities through capacity development of health care workers and the provision of essential supplies (PPE, handwashing facilities, and communication materials); we have supported vulnerable children who are out of school and girls and women who are particularly impacted by this pandemic. We have supported the Ministry of Health as they continue delivery of essential services through the provision of Outreach Clinics and Ante-natal tracking across the region.

Due to the emerging economic and social impacts of the pandemic, we have also evolved some of our programmes to meet identified needs. For example, communities requested menstrual hygiene management support and so the Ambassador programme was developed based on our existing MHM programmes. With schools closed since March, we have also developed community learning groups for children. Support for income generation projects was also developed due to the significant economic impacts experienced across the community.

Community Sensitisation

Brighter Communities Worldwide leveraged its 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 Brighter Communities Worldwide sensitized almost 2,000 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**. In addition 22 Town Centres, and several government buildings (Kericho Prison, Offices, and Police Stations) across Kericho received sensitisation, handwashing and soap.



Handwashing Sensitisation, May 2020

Health Systems Strengthening

Brighter Communities Worldwide worked with the Ministry of Health to strengthen the services available across the county. A number of tasks were completed:

- **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.



Isolation Ward, Londiani Sub County Hospital

- **163 Health Facilities** were supplied with Communication materials, soap and handwashing facilities.
- **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.

Menstrual Health

Sexual and Reproductive Health services have been impacted with the provision of menstrual health commodities being disrupted by the strains on supply chains and reduced household income to purchase products. There has been an increase in transactional sex as girls try to support the financial needs of their families. The need to support girls and women during their menstruation increased across the County since March.

Our “Girls for Girls” programme in schools could not continue, and restrictions on gatherings continued to be in place throughout the year – so we adjusted! We designed a Menstrual Health Ambassador Programme to meet the rising need for menstrual health support across communities. The programme has a number of objectives:

1. To create awareness about menstrual health among all community members – men, women, boys and girls.
2. To contribute towards the elimination of violence against women through ensuring that girls remain in school, understand their rights, have alternatives to early marriage and lessen the risk of early pregnancy.
3. To encourage confidence in girls and women to take part fully in education, learn the skills needed to earn a living and believe in themselves so they and their families will stay healthy and safe from hunger and poverty.
4. To break myths and taboos surrounding menstrual health in the community.
5. To eradicate the stigmatization of girls and women due to menstrual health.
6. To work with all partners involved to tackle challenges around menstrual health.

A number of activities have taken place to date:

- An Ambassador Pack was designed which contains sensitisation tools to enable Ambassadors to visit households and small groups of community members to increase their knowledge and awareness of menstrual health. The pack also contains information on the prevention of COVID-19 and how to recognise signs and symptoms.
- **139 (84F, 55M) Ambassadors** were trained across 11 communities. They have sensitised **4,899 people (1712F, 405M, 2,214 Girls and 568 Boys)** across 98 village.
- The design of a “Starter” sanitary kit for girls and women. This kit contains underwear, soap, liners, an information pamphlet and cotton reusable pads as a “starter” for a girl or woman. The kit can be



Various Menstrual Health Ambassadors Trainings

added to by making additional pads and liners using locally available materials. To date **1,026 kits** have been distributed to vulnerable girls and **704** to vulnerable women.

- As well as sensitising on menstrual health, the Ambassadors also demonstrate to participants how to make reusable sanitary pads from locally available materials.

Education

In response to school closures in March BCW together with community leaders, parents and volunteer teachers set up community-based learning groups across 6 villages which reached **1,224 (554B, 670G)** students. Each group catered for 15 children and was supervised by 2 volunteer teachers. The children were enabled to focus on their school subjects as well as life skills, time for play and social skills. The students were provided with a hot meal as many families struggled to feed themselves. Girls were especially vulnerable to violence and exploitation while schools were closed – these groups gave support and a safe place to be.

Our planned infrastructure projects continued in schools and will contribute to the safe re-opening of schools. The following projects were completed:

- **4 boys' latrine blocks** (impacting 598 boys) and **4 latrine /washroom structures** for girls (impacting 924 girls) were constructed in **8 schools**.
- **8 water tanks** (32,000 litres each) were constructed in 8 schools impacting **2,507 students**.
- **12 smokeless stoves** were installed in 12 schools impacting **4,193 students and 216 teachers**.



Community Learning Groups, Kutung, September 2020

Young people were also adversely impacted by COVID-19. Our focus is on sensitizing them to become COVID-19 Ambassadors in their community and also on supporting their income generation projects. This includes working with “boda boda” drivers (motor bike taxis) and youth groups across the region. Since March, we have sensitised **900 Boda boda drivers** across 122 stages in two sub counties. This involved sensitising the drivers on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19, how to protect themselves; providing masks and hi-vis vests with key messages to the drivers. At each stage handwashing facilities and soap were provided and all drivers were encouraged to ensure that their passengers took the necessary COVID-19 precautions before boarding the bike.



Boda Boda Sensitisation, Ndubusat, September 2020

Economic Empowerment

Since March Brighter Communities Worldwide has supported **20** community groups to start income generation projects – some related to COVID-19 such as mask making, while others included tree nurseries, equipment hire, chicken rearing, coffee planting, and bee keeping. Households across Kericho have seen a large reduction in their income since March. Projects like these will contribute to alleviating some of this reduction over time. Each group supported was also given capacity development by BCW and this will continue over the coming months. There are **423 (165M, 258F)** members in these groups of which 50% are young people, and 3 projects are supporting people with disabilities.



Distribution of materials to Income Generation Group, September 2020

Alternative Rites of Passage

Due to COVID-19 restrictions in place it was not possible to gather all facilitators together in 2020. Brighter Communities Worldwide adjusted the plans, and instead travelled to each ward to meet small groups of facilitators which enabled the planning of Alternative Rite of Passage courses to take place. **80 (39M, 49F)** facilitators attended these workshops and discussed the challenges that had emerged due to COVID-19 including the return to harmful traditional practices across the region; increase in teenage pregnancies and early marriages. Together they devised ways of enabling girls to safely attend Alternative Rite of Passage courses in November and December. All facilitators were trained in the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education guidelines on how to run workshops safely. In total **47 trainings** were implemented across the region reaching **793 girls**.



Alternative Rite of Passage Graduation, November 2020

Maternal and Child Health

COVID-19 has had an adverse impact on expectant mothers' ante natal care and safe delivery, child immunisation and other essential health services. In March, the first month of the restrictions there was a 38% reduction in attendance across health facilities; 12% reduction in the number of women attending antenatal care; 45% reduction in women attending postnatal care and 3% less deliveries in health facilities across the counties.

Brighter Communities Worldwide continued to implement its Maternal, Newborn and Child Health strategy throughout this period. Outreach clinics continued enabling **12,452 beneficiaries** to avail of services (Immunisation, maternal health, health talks etc.). In areas where we implemented a tracking system to enable women attend their antenatal check-ups there was a 15% increase in the number of



Distribution of vaccine fridge to Laliat Dispensary, September 2020

pregnant women completing their check-ups. Vaccine Fridges were delivered to **8 health facilities** to enable the immunisation of children. All interventions enabled essential services to continue throughout the pandemic.

Smokeless Stoves & Water

COVID-19 impacts those with underlying respiratory conditions in a more severe way. Our smokeless stove project continued taking COVID-19 precautions into account. A total **1,299 stoves** were installed in households benefitting **6,867 residents**. Water is also key to preventing COVID-19. In 2020 **4 spring protection projects** installed bringing clean water to **515 households**.



Other Emergencies

In May, the Community of Kutung experienced devastating landslides in which 3 lives were lost and 27 families were displaced. The 27 displaced families found temporary refuge at Kutung Primary school. Brighter Communities Worldwide supplied food stuffs, sanitary materials and jikos to these families. We also worked together to build a kitchen and an industrial smokeless stove to enable cooking to be done in a smoke free environment. The families stayed in the school for 8 weeks. They have now rebuilt their homes and replanted crops with the support of the community.

Once the families relocated back home the stove and kitchen were used to cook for the children attending the Community Learning Groups.



Distribution of resources to Kericho Prison



Smokeless stove built in Kutung Primary School

An outbreak of COVID-19 also occurred across three prisons in Kericho. Brighter Communities Worldwide supported the Ministry of Health to contain the outbreak through supplying mattresses and blankets to those affected.

Online Engagements

A number of opportunities arose during 2020 online. Brighter Communities Worldwide participated in many seminars, conferences and online workshop throughout the year. Our team presented our work in several webinars including those organised by Business Ireland Kenya; Esther Alliance and WHO. Our team shared their learnings and experiences across the globe.

Our fundraising moved online due to COVID-19 restrictions and we were successful in becoming a GlobalGiving Partner through their Accelerator Programme. This enables us to participate in crowd funding campaigns. The learnings are many and we will take these into 2021 to strengthen our fundraising online.

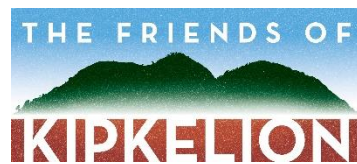
Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful for the amazing support we have received throughout 2020 from our partners, donors and supporters in Kenya, Ireland and around the world. This support takes the form of financial through grant funding and response to our fundraising appeals; peer support and advice from within the sector; motivation and encouragement from friends and our supporter group and a huge sense of solidarity across all those involved in the organisation.

Without all of you we could not have come through this unprecedented year to be fit and able to continue responding to the emerging needs within our communities. We will take our learnings with us from 2020, we hope you will continue to support and journey with us through the challenges ahead.

“We are only as strong as our weakest link .. None of us are safe until all of us are safe”

Dr. Mike Ryan, Head of World Health Organisation Emergency Programme
4th June, 2020



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**S.H.A.R.P. Staff of HSE
(Cork and Kerry)
Association**



dóchas

The Irish Association
of Non-Governmental
Development Organisations

Asanteni sana!