



**Brighter
Communities**

Worldwide

CREATING BETTER FUTURES

COVID-19 Emergency Response



**March 2020 – September 2021
Activity Report**

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Brighter Communities Worldwide

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Kenya – OP 218/051/2005/0295/3731

Contents

About Brighter Communities Worldwide	3
Executive Summary	4
Kenya Situational Analysis – COVID-19	5
Impact of COVID-19 on communities and partners in Kericho County	6
Health Systems	6
Girls and Women	6
Poverty	6
Education	6
A deepening inequality	7
Our response to COVID-19	7
Community Sensitisation	8
Health Systems Strengthening	9
Menstrual Health	10
Education	11
Economic Empowerment	12
Alternative Rites of Passage	13
Maternal and Child Health	13
Smokeless Stoves & Water	14
Other Emergencies	14
Online Engagements	15
Acknowledgements	16

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

Since the start of the pandemic, Brighter Communities Worldwide has been delivering our biggest programme to date - an emergency response reaching over 900,000 people. Alongside this we have continued to deliver our community development programmes.

When the first cases of COVID-19 were reported in Kenya, we found ourselves in a unique situation. We have operated in Kericho County for almost 20 years. Over this time, we have delivered life changing programmes by 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, and communication materials); we have supported vulnerable children during school closures 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.

It was clear from the increase in demand for support from the communities since the onset of COVID-19 that there is a greater and more urgent need for our community development programmes.

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 closed in 2020 from March to October, we also developed community learning groups for children. Support through resources 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 44 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 2020 and September 2021 a total of **924,626** beneficiaries were reached through our response. This includes **209,528** men, **228,577** women, **235,394** boys and **250,960** girls. We would like to express our deep gratitude to our donors, staff, volunteers and supporters who made our response possible. Asante Sana!



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

Kenya9 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).
- During 2020, 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 until January 2021.
- Public gatherings were initially limited to 15 people and this was later revised depending on the nature and venue of gathering. Throughout the period we revised gathering numbers based on government guidelines with no gatherings possible from July to September 2021.
- 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 2020 and International flights re-started in August 2020.
- All people were encouraged to work from home and limit their travel. Countrywide curfews were in place from in place from 7pm to 4am until September 2021.
- There are restrictions of numbers on public transport to 60% capacity since March 2020
- Health services were impacted by a Nurses and Doctors strike in December 2020 and January 2021 brought on by lack of PPE and adequate resources to prevent cases and deaths among health professionals.
- Further lockdowns were imposed on the Lakes Region (where Kericho County is located) from June to September 2021. This included banning all in person gatherings, putting a curfew in place from 7pm, stopping all church services and closing all non-food and livestock markets.
- At the time of writing less than 7% of the Kenyan adult population are vaccinated.



Delivery of PPE to Londiani Sub County Hospital, July 2021

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

The negative impact of COVID-19 across Kericho County can be seen across a number of key areas:

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. The impact of the pandemic has resulted in the focus of health services in the region almost entirely focused on the COVID-19 response. Health services in the revision have prioritised their COVID-19 response which has limited their focus on other public health programmes and other health needs.

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 consultation 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. There an increase in teenage pregnancies and an increase in school dropouts with many school children not returning to school in January 2021.

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 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 resulting in 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**

A deepening inequality

At the time of writing, COVID-19 vaccination rates across Kenya are less than 7% and the impact of the pandemic continues to be felt. The needs of communities in which we work have exacerbated due to COVID-19. In many ways gains made over the last decade have been reversed as a result of the pandemic.

A recent Human Rights Watch Report in Kenya¹ documents the increase in Gender Based violence across Kenya. This report highlights the challenges to existing systems in Kenya in the prevention of violence and abuse which has increased due to economic pressures, restrictions on movement and other factors. The impact of COVID-19 on adolescents in Kenya was documented in a recent report entitled “Promises to keep”². The report highlights that 16% of girls and 8% of boys did not return to school in January 2021; at least 4% of adolescents aged 15-19 have had a baby or are pregnant; 50% of girls could not access sanitary towels; and 97% could not access remote learning materials during school closures. The longer the pandemic remains in the community, the deeper and more challenging all these impacts will be.

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 of our community development programmes as planned for 2020 - 2021.

We began preparing for COVID-19 in February 2020 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.



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



**Kericho County Director of Education Office
Distribution, June 2021**

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

¹ https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/09/kenya0921_web.pdf

² https://www.popcouncil.org/uploads/pdfs/2021PGY_ImpactCovidAdolKenya.pdf

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.

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 were out of school and girls and women who are particularly impacted by this pandemic. We supported the re-opening of schools through the provision of handwashing containers, soap and training of students and staff. 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 menstrual health programmes. With schools closed in March through December 2020, we also developed community learning groups for children. Support through resources 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 handwashing facilities. In partnership with the Ministry of Health Brighter Communities Worldwide trained **2,784** volunteers who in turn have sensitized households across their community while adhering to the COVID-19 guidelines. The **2,784 (1,375M, 1,409F) volunteers** have sensitised **156,193 Households** across communities with **60,767** new Households reached in 2021, among which **51,888** were given soap. **790,000 beneficiaries** were reached since the exercise began. In addition 22 Town Centres, and a number of government buildings (Kericho Prison, Administrative Offices, and Police Stations) in 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. The support is across a number of areas:

- **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 **741(365M, 376F) 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; COVID 19 vaccinations and learnings shared between Ireland and Kenya.
- **163 Health Facilities** were supplied with Communication materials, soap and handwashing facilities.
- **Essential PPE** was supplied to health facilities across the county.
- 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.
- Support of the vaccine rollout programme – Since the arrival of vaccines in March 2021, Brighter Communities Worldwide has supported the rollout in a number of ways:
 - The setting up of a **vaccination centre** in Londiani Sub County Hospital to facilitate the distribution of vaccines.
 - Training of Health Care Workers and Community Health Care Workers.
 - Sensitisation of communities on vaccination.
 - Support of outreach clinics in hard-to-reach areas where vaccines are distributed. This includes the **supply of fridges, vaccine coolers, tents and logistical support**.



Isolation Ward, Londiani Sub County Hospital



Vaccine Outreach Clinic, Londiani Market September 2021

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 since – 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.



Various Menstrual Health Ambassadors Trainings

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.
- **340 (114M, 226F) Ambassadors** were trained across the region. They have **sensitised 11,185 people (1,274M, 4,352W, 1,141 Boys and 4,418 Girls)** across **142 villages**.
- 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 added to by making additional pads and liners using locally available materials. To date **3,309 kits** have been distributed to vulnerable girls and **2,177** 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.
- The Ambassadors also sensitised and demonstrated to participants on handwashing Ministry of Health guidelines

Education

In response to school closures in March 2020, Brighter Communities Worldwide 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.



Community Learning Groups, Kutung, September 2020

Between January and March 2021 **6,240 (3,120B, 3,120G)** students in **312 schools** were sensitized on handwashing within the Ministry of Health COVID 19 guidelines. These students are to serve as role models for the rest of the school population that totals **110,917** across the 312 schools. Each school was also provided with 2* 100 litre water containers and 2 cartons of soap.

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

- **8 boys' latrine blocks** (impacting 1,486 boys) and **8 latrine /washroom structures** for girls (impacting 2,046 girls) were constructed in **16 schools**.
- **16 water tanks** (32,000 litres each) were constructed in 16 schools benefiting **5,245 students**.
- **24 smokeless stoves** were installed in **24 schools** benefiting **7,791 students and 413 members of staff**.



Distribution of COVID-19 resources to schools, January 2021

Young people have been affected adversely by COVID-19. Our focus is on sensitizing them to become COVID-19 Ambassadors in their community and on supporting their income generation projects. This includes working with “boda” drivers (motorbike taxis) and youth groups across the region. Since March 2020, we have sensitized **3,346 Boda drivers** in 6 sub counties. This involved sensitizing 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. Handwashing facilities and soap have been provided in **200 stages**. All drivers were encouraged to ensure their passengers took the necessary COVID-19 precautions before boarding the bike.



Boda Sensitisation, Maji Moto Route Fort-Ternan, July 2021

Economic Empowerment

Since March 2020 Brighter Communities Worldwide has supported **50** community groups to start income generation projects – some related to COVID-19 such as mask making, tree nurseries, equipment hire, chicken rearing, coffee planting, bee keeping, goat rearing and tomato seedlings amongst other projects. Households across Kericho have seen a large reduction in their income since March 2020. Projects like these will contribute to alleviating some of this reduction over time. Of the **50** groups, **22** participated in business workshops and this will continue over the coming months. There are **995 (419M, 576F)** members in these groups of whom **46.2%** are young people, and **12** projects are supporting **54** people with disabilities.



End of 3 day business course, Tamboiyot Women Self Help Group, 2021



Distribtuion of chairs for hire to Mission Self Help Group – August 2021

Smokeless Stoves & Water

COVID-19 impacts those with underlying respiratory conditions in a more severe way. Our smokeless stove projects have continued considering COVID-19 precautions. A total **2,280 stoves** were installed in households benefitting **12,973 residents**. Water is also key to preventing COVID-19. In 2020 and 2021, **8 spring protection projects** were installed bringing clean water to **1,667 households**.



Work in progress at the Kimaut Water project, June 2021

Other Emergencies

In May 2020, 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 (stoves) 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.

In 2020 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.



Smokeless stove built in Kutung Primary



Distribution of resources to Kericho Prison

Online Engagements

A number of online sharing opportunities arose during both in 2020 and 2021. Brighter Communities Worldwide participated in many seminars, conferences and online workshop throughout this period. Our team presented our work in several webinars including those organised by Business Ireland Kenya; Esther Alliance and WHO, WASH United and Alive& Kicking. 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 continue to apply them to strengthen our fundraising online.



Online workshop with Irish Health Care Workers, Londiani, July 2021

**GET VACCINATED
BE SAFE!**

The Covid-19 vaccine is an essential tool in stopping the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

You must also use the following tools to reduce your chance of being exposed:

- WEARING A MASK
- HAND HYGIENE
- SOCIAL DISTANCING

Brighter Communities
WORLDWIDE

Kunawa mikono yako kwa maji na sabuni kutasaidia kukinga viini.

Tumia sabuni: Kutumia maji pekee hakuusaidi kuondoa mchanga na grisli inayoweza kufunga viini na virusi vilivyoonakana. Nawaa mikono yako kwa angaloo **sekunde 15-20** ukatumia haluu zilizotazaa: Muda wote unaoitajika kufika utaribu huu ni **sekunde 40-60**

Wakati wa kuosha mikono
-Niaba, wazazi na baada ya kutayarisha chakula
-Mchizi ya kazi
-Mchizi na baada ya kutuambia nguvu
-Mchizi na baada ya kutuambia
-Mchizi ya kutimiza choko
-Mchizi ya kutimiza maji au kuosha mchizi ambaye amesha hapa
-Mchizi ya kutuambia, kukosha au kuaga chafya
-Mchizi ya kutuambia
-Mchizi na jafati, kwa mikono

Community sensitisation Materials

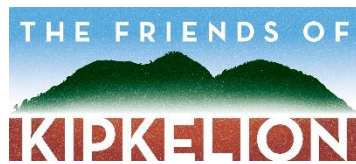
Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful for the amazing support we have received throughout this period 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.

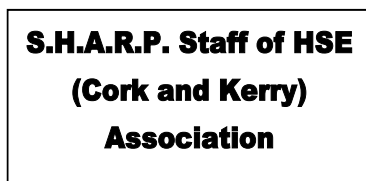
Without all of you we could not have come this far through such unprecedented times, fit and be able to continue responding to the emerging needs within our communities. We will leverage our learnings with us from the last 18 months as we look to the future, and we hope you will continue to support and journey with us through the challenging times 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



Ambasáid na hÉireann
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dóchas

The Irish Association
of Non-Governmental
Development Organisations

Asanteni sana!