UPDATES FROM THE FIELD: AFRICAN FETPS’ INVOLVEMENT IN THE COVID-19 RESPONSE

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread around the globe overwhelming health systems in both developed and developing countries. As of 02 April 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic 206 countries across the globe had been affected with 896,450 confirmed cases and 45,526 deaths. In Africa, only four countries are yet to report confirmed COVID-19 case.

FETPs in Africa are closely working with respective national ministries of health to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.

110 residents of the Ethiopia FETP supporting various fronts of the COVID-19 response

As of 23 March 2020, a total of 110 residents of the EFETP were supporting various fronts of the COVID-19 response: 47 residents were supporting contact tracing; 25 were assigned to the rapid response team (RRT); 19 residents were screening travelers participating at the Bole International Airport; 16 were operating the toll free lines; while three residents were each supporting training for screening, follow up and quarantine.

EFETP resident assignment in COVID-19 response as of 23 March 2020

Residents have also been involved in preparedness assessments; point of entry screening and surveillance of suspected cases; developing protocols and guidelines for surveillance, infection prevention and control, risk communication and community engagement activities.
An Ethiopia FETP resident working at the toll free center in response to the COVID-19 outbreak

Ghana FELTP trains residents on Enhanced Surveillance for COVID-19

The GFELTP with support from AFENET organized a 3-day workshop on the COVID-19 outbreak from 27 – 29 February 2020 at the University of Ghana School of Public Health. The workshop was organized for residents of Cohort XII and XIII of the GFELTP, and was also attended by other health workers from the University of Ghana. A total of 36 residents participated in the workshop which as facilitated by GFELTP faculty and other external resource persons.

The objectives of this training were to train residents and alumni on enhanced surveillance for COVID-19 as well as to equip and prepare them adequately to respond to the COVID – 19 outbreak. Topics covered include: overview of COVID-19, surveillance, infection control and prevention, and case investigation. A simulation on contact tracing was also carried out.
Kenya KFELTP response to COVID-19 outbreak

Following the outbreak of COVID-19 in China, residents of the Kenya FELTP conducted a rapid assessment to evaluate the preparedness of the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport Points of Entry (POE) to an impending COVID-19 outbreak. Cohort XV residents participated in the evaluation and shared a report with the Kenya Ministry of Health (MOH) and other key stakeholders. The findings of the evaluation prompted provision of sanitation facilities in public areas, and personal protective equipment (PPE) for Point of Entry (POEs) staff. Cohort XV residents were also deployed to support screening and tracking of suspected travelers at the airport.

Kenya confirmed its first case of COVID-19 on 13 March 2020. The cases escalated to 28 by 26 March 2020 resulting in many contacts, prompting the Ministry of Health (MOH) through COVID-19 National Taskforce to direct that KFELTP supports response efforts at the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Cohorts XIV – XVI residents were deployed to the EOC to support different key technical areas including coordination, surveillance, contact tracing and screening at the POEs and data management.

The KFELTP Deputy Director - Warqo Boru was as deployed at the EOC as Operations Chief to support coordination of the RRT, contact tracing, laboratory and screening at POE.
A total of 40 residents are currently involved in contact tracing, rapid response and data management activities.

KFELTP residents attend a COVID-19 training in Nairobi, conducted by the Washington State University, 18 March 2020

Shem Otwade - Cohort XVI resident taking a nasal pharyngeal swab from a suspected COVID-19 case

Dr Boru Ogutu - Cohort XVI resident in full PPE in preparation for sample collection from a suspected COVID-19 case
Sora Dida - Cohort XVI resident (center) with law enforcers during community contact tracing

FETP residents build contact tracing capacity in Liberia

Together with National Public Health Institute of Liberia, the LFETP team worked built contact tracing surge capacity for the COVID-19 response by training 133 medical and Master of Public Health (MPH) students.

Surge capacity training for medical and MPH students
LFETP Intermediate trainees and graduates will be rolling out a rapid survey on community risk perception of COVID-19, during which they plan to interview about 1,000 people.

IPC Rapid Assessment at Port of Buchanan, Grand Bassa by LFETP intermediate trainees

IPC Rapid Assessment at Sinje Health Center, Grand Cape Mount, by LFETP intermediate trainees
FETP residents support case management, contact tracing and data management in Uganda

In partnership with the Uganda Ministry of Health (MoH), AFENET and CDC, Makerere University School of Public Health (MakSPH) has deployed 32 alumni and residents to support the COVID-19 response.

The alumni and residents are involved in case management of COVID-19 patients at the Mulago National Referral Hospital, contact tracing, following up quarantined individuals, conducting epidemiological investigations, and data management among other activities as part of the efforts to control the pandemic.

On 15 March 2020, alumni and residents were deployed to support preparedness efforts which included screening of travelers at the Entebbe International Airport, and follow up of high risk travelers. The residents have since been integrated into the National Rapid Response Team (NRRT) and are working directly under the MoH.

Friday 20 March 2020: MPH Alumni at Entebbe Airport screening travelers on arrival at Entebbe International Airport.

MPH Alumnus - Nakamya Petranilla (standing) conducting contact tracing while maintaining social distance and avoiding sitting or touching any objects around
MakSPH FETP Alumnus - Brenda Nakazibwe sensitizing police officers guarding one of the institutional quarantine sites

FETP alumnus - Rita Tamale (standing in an apron) educating staff at Grand Global Hotel (a quarantine site) about infection prevention and control measures

FETP resident - Ian Amanya taking a sample from a contact at one of the institutional quarantine sites
Zimbabwe FETP leading Community Education Efforts in the fight against COVID-19

As of 30 March 2020, Zimbabwe had seven confirmed cases of COVID-19 and a single death. Four of the cases were imported, while three were contact cases. Therefore, the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MOHCC) remains on high alert in terms of surveillance and provision of health education to communities.

Zimbabwe FETP has been a critical player in assisting the MOHCC on risk communication and community engagement through health education awareness and surveillance. Residents of the Zimbabwe FETP were deployed from 23 – 27 March 2020 to participate in community awareness and health education. The awareness was conducted in four high density suburbs in Harare through door to door health education activities. Zimbabwe FETP also developed and distributed IEC materials which included 20,000 flyers, 500 posters, 5 banners, 450 branded t-shirts, 1,500 pens and 1,500 rulers. During the door-to-door awareness campaign 1,600 households were reached. A moving truck was used in a roadshow to pass on key information on COVID-19 in residential areas that were not reached by the door-to-door approach.

The Zimbabwe FETP also conducted a knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) survey to determine the level of COVID-19 awareness amongst residents of Harare. This will assist policy makers in implementing tailor-made COVID-19 prevention and control measures.

A Zimbabwe FETP resident giving education on COVID-19 in the community
South Africa FETP residents respond to COVID-19

South Africa recorded its first COVID-19 case on 5 March 2020 and since then confirmed cases have risen to 1,280 with two (2) recorded deaths as of 30 March 2020. In an effort to curb the spread of infection, the South African government has instituted a number of preventative measures including a national lockdown; 26 March - 16 April 2020. The South African Field Epidemiology Training Program (SAFETP) alumni and residents are working closely with the Emergency Operating Centre (EOC) of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), National and provincial departments of health to intensify the surveillance, preparedness and response activities for COVID-19. Two of the trainees are also involved in surveillance activities at their own placement sites at the provincial level. The graduates of the frontline (basic) epidemiology courses are participating in surveillance and contact tracing in their respective provinces and districts.

SA FELTP residents participated in the following activities:

- Participation in the development of the COVID-19 technical resources such as guidelines for case finding, diagnosis, management, and public health response
- Extensive work in contact tracing
- Daily symptoms monitoring of close contacts of the confirmed cases
- Epidemiologic data management activities
- Conducting in-service training of healthcare professionals and
- Community awareness about mode of transmission and prevention measures using mass media
- Data capturing
- Staff deployed to Field for swabbing and contact tracing

**Graduates of the FETP frontline accompanied by SAFETP epidemiologist ready to collect swabs, eThekwini District, KwaZulu-Natal Province - March 2020**
Graduates of FETP frontline visiting a contact of COVID-19 confirmed case for throat and nasal swabbing, eThekwini District, KwaZulu Natal - March 2020

Graduates and current 2nd year resident of SAFETP deployed to the emergency operation center (EOC) to assist with daily
AFENET Secretariat support to the COVID-19 response in Uganda

As soon as the COVID-19 outbreak was declared in China on 7 January 2020, the Ministry of Health (MoH) started to prepare for possible spread of the outbreak to Uganda. During the preparedness phase, the technical team at the AFENET Secretariat worked closely with the MoH to develop a preparedness and response plan, and to build national response capacities. Uganda reported the first confirmed case of COVID-19 on 22 March 2020. A total of 44 confirmed cases have been reported as of 02 April 2020.

On the 23 March 2020, the AFENET Secretariat deployed a team of 6 epidemiologists: Dr. Ben Masiira, Dr. Hasifa Bukirwa, Dr. Kevin Mugenyi, Dr. Joseph Magoola, Dr. Christine Kihembo, and Dr. Godfrey Kayita to support the MoH to response to the COVID-19 epidemic in Uganda. On the day of deployment, the AFENET epidemiologists attended a national COVID-19 stakeholders' technical meeting to review the national policies, guidelines and response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 24 March 2020, the AFENET epidemiologists met with the Incident Commander for the COVID-19 response (Atek Kagirita), the Assistant Commissioner Epidemiology and Surveillance and the Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) Senior Epidemiologist to discuss the terms of reference and deployment.

The AFENET epidemiologists are currently participating in risk communication and public education on radio. Messages delivered on radio talk-shows focused on transmission, signs and symptoms and prevention of COVID-19. The AFENET teams were deployed to contact tracing, follow-up of contacts to identify suspected cases and COVID-19 alert management. Other activities supported included: supervision of patient screening at Mulago National Referral Hospital, and assessment of selected workplaces in Kampala City to provide technical support on infection prevention and control.
The current status of Covid19 cases in Uganda.

Dr Kevin Mugyenyi – Epidemiologist – AFENET Following up contacts to case-patients, to monitor signs and symptoms of COVID-19, working with Public Health Fellow- Esther Kisaakye
Dr. Ben Masiira explains the role of social distancing in the fight against COVID-19 in Uganda. This interview was aired on 27 and 28 March 2020.

Epidemiologists pictured in advance of collecting contact information from COVID-19 confirmed cases in isolation at Entebbe Hospital.
Kevin Muyenyi – Epidemiologist, AFENET following up of contacts at a quarantine site in Kampala

Daily morning contact tracing debrief and review meetings at MoH. Bernard Lubwama – Epidemiologist, MOH, addressing team members. Seated left is Dr. Julie Harris (CDC), from the Uganda Public Health Fellowship Program
Emergency response team members arrive to evacuate a confirmed COVID-19 case from designated quarantine hotel in Kampala.

Taking temperature of a COVID-19 contact.
Zambia FETP Response Efforts to COVID-19

In Zambia, 39 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed as at 2 April 2020. These cases involve both imported and local transmissions. In view of the potential spread of coronavirus to other regions of the country, there has been urgent to increase the workforce of frontline staff to contain this pandemic through: active surveillance, monitoring, contact tracing of persons epidemiologically linked to confirmed cases and ensuring persons with exposure to confirmed cases or with history of travel to high risk areas adhere to self-quarantine.

Zambia FETP has involved FETP alumni and Frontline trainees in COVID-19 response activities:

1. **COVID-19 active surveillance**
   The program has identified and attached one advanced alumnus and one resident to be incorporated in surveillance, case detection, outbreak investigation, data analysis and reporting. Surveillance strengthening activities planned by Zambia National Public Health institute (ZNPHI), with support from Center for Disease Prevention and Control (CDC-Zambia), include: integration of COVID testing into the existing ILI/SARI surveillance system, active case finding at hospitals and TB clinics, COVID-19 mortality surveillance, syndromic surveillance using SmartCare (an electronic medical record in Zambia), active surveillance for ILI at pharmacies, and the WHO ‘First Few Infections’ protocol. FETP are involved (or will be involved) in all aspects of these activities.

2. **Monitoring and contact tracing**
   Since January 2020, the ZNPHI with support from CDC-Zambia, has facilitated the involvement of 10 Frontline FETP trainees in monitoring of travelers from high-risk countries to ensure adherence to self-quarantine and, to enhance early detection, and contact tracing of persons epidemiologically linked to confirmed cases. It was this team that detected the first two COVID-19 cases (among returning travelers) in Zambia.
Frontline FETP trainees conducting monitoring through phone calls to all travelers

3. **Outbreak Investigations**

All alumni and residents residing in the epicenter (Lusaka) have been actively involved in various roles in COVID-19 Incident Management System (IMS) including case and outbreak investigations.
4. **Capacity Building**

Zambia FETP alumni and current residents have supported provincial, district and sub-district levels clinical orientations, rapid response teams (RRTs), IMS, and data analytics trainings.

![IMS Orientation at Provincial Health Office – Lusaka, Zambia](image)

5. **Risk communication**

FETP alumni and current residents have been involved in efforts to reach the public with accurate and timely information about COVID-19 in Zambia.
FETP Program Director sensitizing the public on COVID-19 on a local radio

Current FETP resident participating in radio show about COVID-19