

Mayo University Hospital in Ireland and Londiani Sub County Hospital in Kericho, Kenya Partnership

Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic 2021 - 2022

The health partnership between Mayo University Hospital in Ireland and Londiani Sub County Hospital in Kericho, Kenya was awarded a grant of €10,000 in June 2021 by ESTHER Ireland and the HSE Global Health programme. This grant was primarily used to improve access to COVID-19 vaccines in Kericho. However, due to the nature of health partnerships both institutions benefitted from ongoing communication and knowledge sharing throughout this project.

Increasing the awareness of COVID-19; the transmission pathway; the risks associated with infection; the importance of infection control; and the benefits of vaccination was an important first objective of this project. Education and training of not only healthcare workers, but Community Health Volunteers (CHVs) and the wider community was made possible using these funds. 94 healthcare workers were trained on infection control. This aimed to reduce the rate of COVID-19 infection among healthcare staff.

An impressive 559 CHVs were provided with a workshop on COVID-19. They were advised on infection control procedures and provided with information on the efficacy, administration process and the benefits of COVID-19 vaccines[AC1] [BCW2] . The CHVs then promoted COVID-19 vaccines and good hygiene practices within the wider community of around 32,000 people. Promotional materials were employed such as banners and posters. This aimed to reduce vaccine hesitancy. Reported cases of waterborne diseases reduced by 31% during the grant period, possibly as a result of improved hand hygiene practices within the community.

187 healthcare workers were trained on administering COVID-19 vaccines and a COVID-19 Vaccinator Centre was constructed and equipped within the Londiani Sub County Hospital using this grant. A Ministry of Health-approved vaccine fridge was secured to ensure safe storage of vaccines. 20 vaccine

cooler boxes were provided to transport COVID-19 vaccines to remote and hard to reach places via outreach clinics. This ensured equity in vaccine access, particularly for those from rural areas where financial or logistical barriers may have impeded uptake. Electronic tablets were purchased to allow online registration for COVID-19 vaccines, facilitating accurate data collection.

This clinic allowed COVID-19 vaccinations to be separated from the antenatal clinic which provides vaccinations and other services to mothers and children[AC3] [BCW4] . This important separation of services meant that numbers attending the antenatal clinic did not decline.

The efficacy of the health partnership was apparent throughout the year as online knowledge-sharing and support was provided by the two partners. Health care workers were able to disseminate experiences, and learn from each other across the two hospitals. Challenges were shared, and joint solutions sought together. Both groups encouraged each other throughout this very difficult period.

The overall aim of this project was to improve access to life-saving COVID-19 vaccines which was facilitated through the provision of resources and services; informational workshops and training; and knowledge-sharing. A total of 37, 828 doses of COVID-19 vaccine were delivered to the community, of which 19,200 were provided by this COVID-19 vaccination facility. While this project has not provided a silver bullet for all issues related to access to vaccines and vaccine uptake, it has provided important community-led services which have enacted real change. The inspiring results of this project highlight the possibilities which can be realised thanks to small grants[BCW5] , such as those provided by ESTHER Ireland.



Photos courtesy of Brighter Communities