ICRH KENYA RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The first case of coronavirus infection (COVID-19) in Kenya was confirmed on 6 March 2020. As of 7th of July 2020, there are 8087 confirmed cases, 164 deaths attributed to the virus and 2414 people who have recovered. All projects in the organization are ongoing. Where possible, staff have been asked to work from home to increase social isolation and reduce the risk of infection or transfer to others if they are infected.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

**HIV and STI services to sex workers, men having sex with men and transgender persons are ongoing.**

ICRHK is funded to provide HIV and SRH services to populations vulnerable to HIV (key populations, [KP]) in the coast (Mombasa and Kilifi counties). In these COVID-19 times, ICRHK drop-in centers are still open and accessible to members of key and vulnerable populations. To comply with the government directives of limited movement after curfew hours, the centers open at 9 am and close at 4.30 pm. Peer educators funded by our programs continue to provide peer education, distribute condoms and lubricants and respond to sexual violence. There are measures in place to optimize infection control. From the beginning of the period of restricted movement in Kenya (March 2020), 3,000 female sex workers, 2,000 men having sex with men and 250 transgender have received services.

Where clients are unable to reach the drop-in centers due to travel limitations, we have made arrangement to provide HIV-positive KP with prescription refills for ART and oral PrEP at home. Interestingly, we have also noted an increase in the need and uptake of contraceptives among FSW during this period.

**Sexual and gender-based violence services are available at the GBVRC at Coast General Teaching and Referral Hospital**

Since 2007, we have partnered with the Coast General Teaching and Referral Hospital in Mombasa, and the Mombasa County Government to provide clinical, psychological and legal services to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. The center receives about 50 survivors of sexual violence every month. During the COVID-19 period, we are open for 24 hours and continue to provide services. Surprisingly, the number of survivors received at the center has gone down from March 2020 although reports from the community indicate that sexual violence cases have risen. It is possible that some of these SV cases are not reported.

Secondly, due to travel restrictions as a measure to enhance social isolation, a number of survivors of sexual violence, especially minors, have missed follow-up visits to psychosocial counseling. To counter this, we started providing individual tele-counselling (by phone) to survivors who were unable to travel to the center.

Seven drop in centres run by ICRHK provide services to sex workers, MSM and transgender persons five days every week from 9am-4:30 pm

The Gender-based violence and Recovery Center is currently supported by the UNFPA and through the Amplify Change project.
COVID-19 testing support at the ICRHK molecular laboratory

Since March of this year, we have partnered with the Coast General Hospital to scale up the COVID-19 testing. Coast General Hospital and Mombasa County Government mounted a Roche COBAS 6800 PCR system in the ICRHK molecular research laboratory in Mombasa. This machine is one of two in the county that has the capacity to test samples for COVID-19. Over the last month, more than 1,000 tests have been carried out in the laboratory.

COVID-19 and SRH related research

We are currently engaged in a variety of studies evaluating the impact of COVID-19 and interventions to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on sexual and reproductive health.

Through the Performance Monitoring and Accountability (PMA) Kenya study, we will collect COVID-19 relevant data from 11 counties in Kenya through a cell phone-based household survey. ICRHK is also a member of the Academic Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Policy Rights (ANSER) and whereby researchers have launched a multi-country research project to gather data from social media on the intersection between SRH and COVID-19. We are also collecting data through exit interviews at the gender violence and recovery center on ways to improve GBV care during the COVID-19 period.

Mombasa County support towards mass testing

Mombasa is one of Kenya’s most affected counties. Mombasa has the second-highest number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 and deaths after Nairobi. By 25 May 2020, 388 confirmed cases and 28 deaths were reported in the county. We hired two clinical officers on a contract and seconded them to the county to support the rapid scaleup of mass testing. We have also donated food to people isolated in quarantine centers in the county.

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