THE EPIC PROJECT COVID-19 FACTSHEET

Meeting Targets and Maintaining Epidemic Control (EpiC), a global project funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), provides strategic technical assistance and direct service delivery to achieve HIV epidemic control among at-risk and vulnerable populations and strengthen global health security, including COVID-19 response. EpiC is led by FHI 360 with core partners Right to Care (RTC), Palladium, and Population Services International (PSI). Starting in early 2020, EpiC responded to the global COVID-19 pandemic by supporting partner governments to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19 and bolster health systems.

A summary of EpiC's key achievements from the COVID-19 portfolio can be found here.

CORE APPROACHES

Increasing capacity to provide high-quality clinical management of COVID-19 cases

Supporting countries to deliver COVID-19 vaccines

Strengthening oxygen ecosystems

Strengthening laboratory diagnostics and surveillance

Procuring essential medicines, supplies, and equipment

Social and Behavior Change to Promote Vaccine Uptake

EpiC has supported COVID-19 activities in 55 countries:

Latin America/Caribbean (11): Bolivia • Colombia • Dominican Republic • El Salvador • Guatemala • Haiti • Honduras • Jamaica • Panama • Paraguay • Peru

Africa (23): Benin • Botswana • Cameroon • Chad • Cote d'Ivoire • DRC • Djibouti • Egypt • Eswatini • Lesotho • Liberia • Malawi • Mali • Mozambique • Namibia • Nigeria • Senegal • Sierra Leone • South Africa • Tanzania • Uganda • Zambia • Zimbabwe

Asia (20): Bhutan • Cambodia • India • Indonesia • Kazakhstan • Maldives • Mongolia • Nepal • Pacific Islands (Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Solomon Islands, Tonga) • Papua New Guinea • The Philippines • Sri Lanka • Tajikistan • Thailand • Vietnam

Europe (1): Moldova

Increasing capacity to provide high-quality clinical management of COVID-19 cases

Starting in June 2020, EpiC provided technical assistance on the clinical management of COVID-19 patients across the continuum of care—from the hospital to primary care levels, and in community settings.

The development and availability of effective oral antivirals for non-hospitalized COVID patients was a major advance with far-reaching potential. EpiC supported governments to explore strategies for identification and treatment of cases, particularly among those with risk factors for disease progression (which often overlap with vulnerable populations). In four countries (El Salvador, Botswana, Malawi, and Senegal), EpiC supported implementation of a pilot program to explore the feasibility and acceptability of a Test and Treat strategy for COVID-19.

EpiC conducted in-person and remote training on triage, infection control, critical care (including oxygen therapy), and COVID-19 therapeutics for physicians, nurses, and other members of the health workforce. EpiC led the development of the COVID-19 Adult Case Management Series Training Curriculum with input from the University of California at San Francisco's Anesthesia Division of Global Health Equity, the Institute for Global Health Sciences, and the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. This curriculum was adapted and rolled out to 19 countries supported by EpiC. EpiC also collaborated with USAID's RISE and STAR projects to facilitate a series of Global Practice Update webinars, including a session on the importance of COVID-19 across the continuum of care that highlights the need for strong pathways between the community, the primary health care system, and emergency/triage systems to connect patients with COVID-19 to the right care at the right time and avoid overloading already taxed health systems.

EpiC also lead technical assistance on the implementation of community-based care models, as the majority of COVID-19 patients could be safely cared for at home without straining limited hospital resources. EpiC's developed a community care package, including job aids and other technical resources for health care workers, patients, and caregivers who are managing COVID-19 in community settings. EpiC's support allowed patients and caregivers to both understand and implement home quarantine and isolation measures, supportive care, infection prevention and control, identification of warning signs (including the proper use of home pulse oximetry), and locating the nearest health facility. EpiC also supported health care workers at those facilities with tools to navigate the appropriate pathways for COVID-19 care through effectively triage, management, and referrals.

*Examples: In **Nigeria**, EpiC partnered with the Federal Ministry of Health to build the capacity of 1,070 health care workers in COVID-19 case management and critical care through training, clinical mentoring, and establishment of a community of practice for COVID-19 care. EpiC **El Salvador** opened three hands-on*

Health care workers receive training in critical care in Bhutan. Photo by EpiC Bhutan
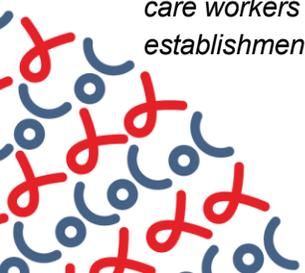
learning laboratories across the country to provide in-person mentorship for physicians, nurses, and other providers; build their skills for ventilation, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and patient care in critical care settings; and enable them to practice clinical skills with appropriate medical training equipment.

Supporting countries to deliver COVID-19 vaccines

EpiC supported COVID-19 vaccine readiness and rollout in 28 countries: Botswana, Cameroon, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Eswatini, Guatemala, Haiti, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Maldives, Mali, five Pacific Island nations (Fiji, Tonga, Kiribati, the Solomon Islands, and the Marshall Islands), Nepal, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Thailand, and Uganda. In 16 of those countries, EpiC supported direct service delivery, resulting in the administration of 18,749,840 total doses globally. The project partnered with national stakeholders to jointly develop and roll out COVID-19 vaccination policies and plans, prepare frontline health workers to deliver COVID-19 vaccines, track adverse effects, and develop monitoring systems to improve vaccine delivery. To create demand, counter misinformation, and address vaccine hesitancy, EpiC lead vaccine

EpiC mobilized over 3,200 private sector doctors, nurses, and midwives as vaccinators to administer over 1.74 million doses between August 2021 and April 2022. Photo by EpiC Indonesia

communication campaigns and engages trusted local leaders and peers in sharing accurate information about the safety and benefits of COVID-19 vaccinations.

*Examples: In **Botswana**, EpiC supported district health management teams to vaccinate 2,244 people over 12 days at drive-in vaccination sites and an additional 5,672 people through mobile and community outreach efforts. EpiC **Indonesia** supported the government's vaccination efforts by recruiting, training, scheduling, and coordinating payment to 3,244 private sector vaccinators; establishing 1,706 vaccination sites across three provinces, which resulted in 1,198,580 people receiving COVID-19 vaccines from August 7 to November 30, 2021; and mobilizing 2,193 clerks to enter electronic vaccination data directly into the government's database.*

Strengthening oxygen ecosystems

Medical oxygen is a life-saving commodity in the fight against COVID-19, yet dozens of countries have reported severe shortages of oxygen during COVID-19 surges, which threaten to collapse entire health systems. To address this need and ensure medical oxygen is available in facilities for patient care, EpiC provides technical and procurement support for a range of activities to strengthen oxygen ecosystems from the national to the facility level. These activities include conducting rapid assessments of oxygen capacity and technical assistance needs; market shaping; procuring oxygen; preparing for and installing medical oxygen system infrastructure; repairing existing infrastructure; and training staff at facilities to maintain oxygen systems and provide oxygen therapy to patients.

In ten countries (Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Eswatini, Jamaica, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tanzania, PNG, and Vietnam), EpiC is working to ensure that health facilities have infrastructure required to use liquid medical oxygen (LOX). EpiC procures LOX system infrastructure and tanks full of LOX, extends or replace piping systems to priority wards, and strengthens the nonclinical skills of technicians to

maintain systems and the clinical skills of health care workers to provide oxygen therapy. In Southern Africa (DRC, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia), a market shaping initiative is engaging with suppliers and other local stakeholders (including MOHs) to improve availability and affordability of LOX throughout the region. This initiative is being implemented in partnership with the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI).

The first USAID-funded liquid oxygen system is inaugurated at the Tan Bien District Health Center in Vietnam. Photo by EpiC Vietnam

*Examples: In **Vietnam**, EpiC is procuring and installing LOX systems at 13 high-demand facilities, including a cryogenic LOX storage tank, a vaporizer, safety regulators, and a piping system linked to up to 80 beds per facility. EpiC is also training staff at each facility to calculate oxygen needs, safely use and maintain the equipment, and accurately prescribe the use of medical oxygen for patients. In **Tajikistan**, EpiC is working with partners to support the installation of PSA oxygen-producing plants by building basic infrastructure for the oxygen systems. And during a severe medical oxygen shortage in **Haiti**, EpiC worked with local suppliers and global producers to rapidly procure and distribute liquid oxygen to facilities in urgent need*.

Strengthening laboratory diagnostics and surveillance

EpiC supported countries to detect COVID-19 infection by strengthening capacities at the national and subnational levels to improve diagnostic networks; ensure functional equipment; develop strong specimen collection, referral, and supply chain systems; procure diagnostic commodities; ensure adherence to biosafety and biosecurity standards; conduct genome sequencing; improve laboratory quality management systems; and enhance linkages to surveillance systems to achieve integration and interoperability. EpiC also supported the procurement of equipment and other laboratory commodities to bolster COVID-19 diagnostic capacity.

*Examples: In **Nepal**, EpiC strengthened the capacity of the National Public Health Laboratory to conduct COVID-19 genomic sequencing, resulting in improved surveillance and detection of the Delta and Omicron variants in the country. EpiC expedited COVID-19 diagnostic (polymerase chain reaction [PCR]) testing by enhancing laboratory resources and strengthening capacity in **Thailand, El Salvador, Panama, and Nigeria***.

Procuring essential medicines, supplies, and equipment

EpiC contributed to national COVID-19 responses by procuring and delivering essential items to governments in urgent need. Procurements range from personal protective equipment, data

management software, COVID-19 diagnostics, and other laboratory equipment and supplies, to essential medical consumables and durables, to medical oxygen.

*Examples: In **Panama**, EpiC collaborated with the MOH to identify priority needs for procurement to support clinical management of COVID-19 cases. As a result, EpiC procured and handed over oxygen delivery devices and consumables, such as nasal oxygen cannulas, pulse oximeters. In **Vietnam**, the project responded to urgent needs in five provinces by procuring equipment and supplies, including liquid oxygen systems, patient monitors, mobile PSA units that generate oxygen, and nasal cannulas, as well as financing facility-level modifications.*

Social and behavior change to promote vaccine uptake

EpiC partnered with goverments and local organizatons to develop, implement, and monitor social and behavior change (SBC) and risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) activities to introduce, create demand, counter misinformation, address vaccine hesitancy, and create an enabling environment for sustained use of COVID-19 vaccines.

*Examples: In **Tanzania**, EpiC partnered with USAID's Tulonge Afya project to increase demand for COVID-19 vaccination through mass media outreach and community mobilization, reaching over 37 million Tanzanians with vaccine promoting messages. In **Papua New Guinea**, EpiC partnered with Sogeri Health Centre to conduct extensive community engagement and COVID-19 vaccine awareness activities, including holding an event to publicly vaccinate players on the Central Dabaris, a popular premier rugby league club, who became vaccine champions.*

Central Dabaris rugby players and coaching staff after receiving their COVID-19 vaccinations. Photo by EpiC PNG.