

REPORT

ThinkWell short-term technical assistance to the Council of Governors' COVID-19 Secretariat

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BREAKING NEW GROUND

THINKWELL



Submitted to the Council of Governors

Chief Executive

cc

Health of the COVID-19 Secretariat

Head of Human Resources Department

Authors

This report was prepared by Felix Murira (Public Health Specialist) and Boniface Mbutia (Health Economist).

I INTRODUCTION

As the COVID-19 pandemic started to spread across different parts of the globe, Kenya's Ministry of Health (MoH) drafted a COVID-19 strategy in January 2020 to guide the country's response. Kenya reported its first case of COVID-19 in March 2020. Since then the National and County Governments continued to strengthen the pandemic preparedness and response through measures addressing financing, governance, human resources, clinical management, and information systems as well as the economic impacts on households. The Council of Governors' (CoG) COVID-19 Secretariat was established to strengthen the response at the county level and to effectively engage the National Government and other stakeholders in mitigating the effects of the pandemic. ThinkWell, through the **Strategic Purchasing for Primary Health Care (SP4PHC) project** supported by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) seconded a Health Economist, Boniface Mbuthia, and a Public Health Specialist, Felix Murira, to offer short-term technical assistance to the COVID-19 Secretariat for three months, between May and July 2020. This handing over report summarizes the achievements and makes recommendations for the ongoing COVID-19 response.

II OBJECTIVES OF THE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE COG COVID-19 SECRETARIAT

The objectives of ThinkWell's technical assistance were to:

1. Provide analytics to identify gaps for county actions
2. Advise the COVID-19 Secretariat on matters arising during the response
3. Support CoG coordinate county and stakeholder activities.

III REPORTING

The two seconded staff reported to the Head of the COVID-19 Secretariat, and worked in consultation with the CoG Health Secretariat staff.

IV KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Key tasks undertaken, achievements, challenges, and recommendations from the technical assistance are highlighted below.

Task	Accomplishments and comments
Supported intergovernmental and stakeholder engagements Parliament: The Senate and National Assembly Health Committees MoH Partners: WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, Aga-khan University	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contributed to a position paper on reopening of economic activities, cross country movements and places of worship presented at National and County Government Summit meeting.• Assisted CoG and county governments prepare for and contribute to national discussions.

Task	Accomplishments and comments
<p>Provided technical support for analytics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data on weekly county progress on County COVID 19 preparedness and response • Dashboards to improve data visualization for county decision making • Analytics of service statistics from Kenya Health Information System (KHIS) for advisory on maintenance essential services delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic • Survey on Social Economic Effects of COVID-19 to the County Governments” by Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research & Analysis (KIPPRA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aailed data to CoG Communications team for weekly press briefings on counties’ COVID-19 preparedness and response • The Chair of CoG issued a call to all County Governors to ensure that essential services are offered. CECs and County Directors are monitoring essential services delivery. • CoG’s M&E team should take up monitoring of essential services delivery and engage with the maintenance of Essential Health Services Committee at MoH. • Supported development of two dashboards to track financial resources and county health system capacities in COVID-19 response. The dashboards will be further improved with input from an MoH led multi-agency team and WHO focal person, Sanjay (rane@un.org). • Kenya Health Facility Beds Occupancy dashboard can be accessed here • Kenya COVID-19 County Financial Tracking can be accessed here. Assisted CoG and KIPPRA to develop survey tools for a study on the Social Economic Effects of COVID-19
<p>Represented CoG at the National COVID-19 Taskforce and other national committees meetings to strengthen policy and strategic support to counties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported the COVID-19 Secretariat establish a repository of information on counties which feeds into the National COVID-19 Taskforce discussions. The COVID-19 Secretariat had a central role enabling County Governments participation to national issues
<p>Reviewed and provided inputs to national health policy documents, including the UHC 2020-2030 policy</p> <p>Developed a simplified version of MoH guidelines on COVID-19 home-based care for counties</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assisted CoG to consolidate feedback to MoH on the UHC 2020-2030 policy. The lead of the Health Committee will follow up adoption of the recommendations. • The Health team will continue evaluating progress on implementation of the COVID-19 home-based care guidelines in counties.
<p>Led development of a community of practice themed 'From policy and evidence to action: a case for teenage pregnancy in Kenya scheduled for 27th July to 5th August.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will involve multiple stakeholders who can help address the problem of teenage pregnancy. Felix and Boniface will continue to offer technical support to the community of practice.

V CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Coordination of efforts between MoH and the CoG Health Committee to support counties

There is need for CoG Health Committee to create platforms where issues related to data collection, analysis and reporting can be discussed to improve inter-governmental consensus between CoG and MoH.

To strengthen the advisory role of CoG Health Committee, there is need to consider the following:

- Strengthen use of evidence through analytics and visualization to identify county needs and performance. The committee may guide counties on use of research and technology to improve the efficiency of the health systems.
- Synchronize reporting tools for similar data sets/needs between MoH and CoG to reduce the burden of reporting to Counties.
- The CoG maintains a central repository of all data sets as a recommendation to improve data management.

County health systems strengthening recommendations

- Provide continuous guidance and advisory to counties for effective county health systems management across the eight (8) pillars identified in the Kenya Health Investment Framework,
- Champion for Counties to embrace effective healthcare financing models that include strategic purchasing towards realization of the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) agenda
- Promote coherence of the County and National Health systems in the implementation of vertical programs e.g. HIV/AIDs, TB, Leprosy and Malaria, COVID-19 response to ensure Counties are able to use data to negotiate for effective allocation and utilization of resources.

VI OPPORTUNITIES FOR FUTURE ENGAGEMENTS

ThinkWell appreciates the partnership with CoG through SP4PHC project and the short-term technical assistance to the COVID-19 Secretariat, and will pursue opportunities to support health financing policy and practice via:

- Promoting greater investment in primary health care towards achievement of Kenya's UHC goals
- Technical support to Counties in reviewing policies to enable public health facilities have autonomy to retain and use revenue to improve quality of care
- Support to County Health Departments to incorporate strategic purchasing in planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation,
- Support CoG in engaging the health stakeholders on policy dialogue.