

# COVID-19 RESPONSE

The World Health Organization indicated that the novel coronavirus was being spread by human-to-human transmission on January 21, 2020 and declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020. In response, Integrate Health has taken aggressive and proactive action in an effort to minimize the spread of the virus, ensure continuity of primary healthcare and in turn, lessen the impact of the virus in our communities.

All of the activities Integrate Health has and will undertake as part of our COVID-19 response are directly in line with our mission to ensure access to quality primary healthcare for all. COVID-19 poses a direct threat to this mission and only by rapidly responding to the pandemic, while ensuring continuity of primary healthcare delivery, can we continue to uphold our mission and save the greatest possible number of lives.

As a leading healthcare organization in Togo, it is essential that Integrate Health protect its employees while also working to continue to provide high-quality healthcare to our patients. COVID-19 presents serious risks to the program as well as opportunities to demonstrate its strengths, such as how Community Health Workers are an essential part of the health system, especially when it is stressed. Through a strong response to this pandemic, Integrate Health has the opportunity to deepen our relationship with the government by operating as a responsible partner in support of Ministry of Health efforts, coordinating closely with other technical partners, demonstrating how Community Health Workers can contribute to fighting a pandemic, and modeling how we can strengthen the resiliency of clinics to take on COVID-19 while continuing to fight the major killers in Togo.

***An effective implementation of our pandemic response is a strategic imperative as well as an opportunity to accelerate and amplifying our goal to strengthen the national primary health system across Togo.***

## INTEGRATE HEALTH'S COVID-19 RESPONSE HAS THREE OBJECTIVES:

- 1 Maintain the health and safety of our healthcare workers and staff
- 2 Continue to provide essential quality healthcare to our communities
- 3 Demonstrate our commitment as partners to the Ministry of Health in Togo

# MAINTAIN THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF OUR HEALTHCARE WORKERS AND STAFF

To maintain the health and safety of Integrate Health staff, we have implemented strict procedures following [World Health Organization guidelines](#), read the [Togo Preparedness Plan](#) and [US Preparedness Plan](#).

## ACTIONS TAKEN TO DATE:

- We have formed a COVID-19 task force of senior leaders and clinicians in US and Togo who are coordinating preparation, mitigation and communication activities in both contexts. Updates are being shared regularly and IH COO and CEO are convening daily to discuss updates and preparation activities.
- Led by Integrate Health Medical Director, the Integrate Health staff have developed a preparedness plan including equipping CHWs with PPE and with key education messaging which they have already begun disseminating in their communities.
- Integrate Health is maintaining a detailed risk registry of multiple scenarios possibly resulting from this pandemic and are developing a contingency plan for each.
- Togo-based staff are now working remotely. Those who must go into office take daily temperature; wash hands upon entry; and limit two staff per office or car at a time.
- Additional equipment and 3G cellphone credit procured to facilitate remote work.
- Staff were advanced one month of salary to help with preparations in advance of limited movement.
- Integrate Health has offered all Community Health Workers an opt out policy with full paid leave if any feel worried or unsafe about continuing their work in the field. Currently, all 95 Community Health Workers have committed to continue working and are conducting proactive home visits with the assistance of additional PPE.
- All Community Health Workers and staff at Integrate Health's supported health centers have been equipped with masks and face shields, and are continuing to use hand sanitizing gel as per existing protocols.
- Most expat staff based in Togo have been evacuated.
- All US staff are working remotely, and we are monitoring personal travel.
- Integrate Health hosted a partner call to discuss COVID-19 related plans and needs for the coming months and to create an opportunity to respond to questions and suggestions. If you're interested in viewing the slides, [please click here](#).
- In April, the Integrate Health Program team organized a series of stress management trainings led by mental health professionals for Community Health Workers.
- In May, Integrate Health turned to a local Togolese start-up, EcoTecLab, to facilitate PPE procurement. In June, all Integrate Health Community Health Workers were trained on the use of Thermoflash (infrared thermometers).

# CONTINUE TO PROVIDE ESSENTIAL QUALITY HEALTHCARE TO OUR COMMUNITIES

Integrate Health is deeply committed to providing quality healthcare to our communities. As history has shown, when health system resources are redirected to fight an epidemic, essential primary health services may become harder to access. Without access to these vital services, unnecessary morbidity and mortality may result. That is why we are equipping our Community Health Workers and clinic staff to continue their lifesaving work while on the frontlines of this epidemic.

## ACTIONS TAKEN TO DATE:

- Community Health Worker activity will continue as normal. Community Health Workers will continue to adhere to their pre-existing protocols with mandated use of hand sanitizer, hand washing and personal protective equipment. Large group education gatherings have been cancelled.
- Tents for isolation have been set up at busier clinics. All clinics are in the process of setting up isolation areas.
- All CHWs have been equipped with laminated education materials and are providing COVID-19 prevention messaging at every home visit.
- Detailed protocols are being developed to guide all Community Health Worker and clinic activities including on proper use of PPE, infection prevention and control measures, and distance maintenance strategies during care provision.



# DEMONSTRATE OUR COMMITMENT AS PARTNERS TO THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH IN TOGO

As partners of over 15 years, we believe all of our work must support the work of the Ministry of Health. This is even more crucial during a pandemic response. By working closely with the Ministry of Health in the coordination of activities and by providing critical technical expertise and financial support, we will support the national pandemic response to benefit not only Integrate Health-supported communities, but the entire country.

## ACTIONS TAKEN TO DATE:

- Integrate Health began supporting the Ministry of Health to develop a national preparedness plan as early as mid-January. Integrate Health developed our own internal preparedness plans prior to the first case detection in Togo.
- Integrate Health sits on the Ministry of Health's rapid response task force and meets twice weekly with key Ministry officials and other partners (UNICEF, GIZ, WHO).
- Integrate Health is closely supporting the response coordination at the regional level, including sitting on the regional response task force.
- In response to our own estimation of needs and detailed requests received from the national and regional Ministry of Health, Integrate Health has procured and is actively working to continue to procure critical equipment and supplies including personal protective equipment.
- Integrate Health is coordinating technical assistance with our partner Construction for Change to inform the rapid construction of the only isolation ward to treat COVID-19 patients in the Kara region.
- Integrate Health has sponsored and will continue radio emissions throughout the region of Kara to ensure the spread of accurate information regarding COVID-19.
- To complement the risk communications strategy, Integrate Health deployed a telephone survey using WHO standard protocols for monitoring knowledge, attitudes and practices. The survey revealed that all of the respondents were aware of the COVID-19 pandemic and were somewhat or very worried. To read more about the results of the survey, [please click here](#).
- Integrate Health is proud to partner with the [COVID-19 Action Fund for Africa](#), a collaboration of 30+ organizations providing PPE to over 20 countries to ensure Community Health Workers are appropriately equipped. IH helped to facilitate a donation from the COVID-19 Action Fund for Africa to the Togo Ministry of Health, which included over 900,000 masks, 300,000 gloves, and 18,000 face shields for 11,768 Community Health Workers across Togo.

IH continues to manage close collaboration with global partners and co-authored a position paper with the Community Health Impact Coalition that is [available here](#).

We will continue to push forward on all of these goals while ensuring the safety and security of our staff, patients and broader communities. Thank you for standing by us.

To stay up to date with our work, follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).