



# AfricaCDC

Centres for Disease Control  
and Prevention



## Building Stronger Communities Across Africa: The REACH Initiative

### Resilient and Empowered African Community Health

The REACH Initiative, led by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the Africa Centres for Disease Control (Africa CDC), is committed to improving community health across Africa. By providing essential training, safety equipment and technical support, we are empowering community health workers and volunteers to more effectively combat preventable diseases and improve health services.

Our goal is to significantly increase the number of community health workers throughout the continent. To achieve this, we are working closely with ministries of health and other key stakeholders to support African Union member states at all levels, from continental to community. This effort aligns with the commitments made at the 29th AU Summit in July 2017, which include building sustainable primary health care and

empowering individuals and communities.

The REACH Initiative targets 12 initial priority countries which are: Nigeria, Kenya, Burkina Faso, South Sudan, Somalia/Somaliland, Egypt, Morocco, Central Africa Republic, Angola, The Gambia, Togo and Malawi.

Currently, the initiative is underway in Nigeria, Kenya, Burkina Faso, and South Sudan, with plans to expand to the other countries soon.

This initiative is transforming health care at the grassroots level, ensuring that every community is better prepared to tackle preventable diseases and achieve lasting health improvements. Together, we are building a more resilient and healthier Africa.



## REACH Initiative Countries of Operation



**Together, we are building a more resilient and healthier Africa.**

### SOUTH SUDAN

## Empowering Communities: REACH in South Sudan

Over the past months, the South Sudan Red Cross through its REACH program has trained more than 70 dedicated individuals as community health workers in Wau State, nestled within the rugged landscapes of Western Bahr el Ghazal region. These local heroes have become the lifeline for their communities, offering essential health services right at their doorsteps. Equipped not only with medical knowledge but also with empathy and dedication, they are bridging the gap in healthcare access that has long plagued the region.

In villages where healthcare once seemed distant, these community health workers have become trusted figures. They administer vaccinations, provide maternal care, and educate families on hygiene practices that safeguard against disease. Beyond these vital services, they play a crucial role in identifying complex cases that require specialized attention, promptly referring them to nearby health centres for further treatment.

"When I heard about the REACH programme through the South Sudan Red Cross, I felt a spark of hope. This was my chance to make a real difference.

The training was challenging, but I embraced every moment. I learned how to administer vaccinations, provide maternal care, and educate my community about hygiene and disease prevention," says Ajak

Across the region, similar stories unfold daily. David Deng, once a farmer struggling to make ends meet, now stands tall as a pillar of health knowledge in his community. With the support of the REACH program through IFRC and Africa

CDC these community health workers are not just providing medical aid—they are nurturing resilience and empowering their communities to thrive against all odds. Families that once faced despair now find comfort in knowing that help is nearby.

As the sun sets over the rolling hills of Western Bahr el Ghazal, the impact of the REACH program shines brightly. With each training session, each life-saving intervention, and each smile of gratitude, the future grows brighter for Wau State, a future where health is a right, not a privilege.

**Link to the full story:**

- [Ajak's Story: From Village Girl to Community Hero](#)
- [REACH: Adut Brings Health and Hope to Her Community](#)



Ajak, a community health worker, examines medical supplies provided by the REACH initiative to treat her community members.

### BURKINA FASO

## Burkina Faso Red Cross Curbs Dengue Fever

Amidst the bustling streets of Ouagadougou and the vibrant markets of Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso faced a daunting challenge: a sudden outbreak of dengue fever. In response, the Burkina Faso Red Cross, fuelled by the REACH program and the ministry of health in Burkina, mobilized a swift and coordinated effort to protect its communities.

As the fever spread, Burkina Faso RC swiftly mobilized teams to mitigate the outbreak. They targeted mosquito larvae breeding sites, ensuring no corner was left unchecked. At the same time, critical sites across the cities were rigorously disinfected, to help in halting the fever's spread.

This rigorous approach was complemented by a robust advocacy campaign, led passionately by 90 trained volunteers and supported by 84 community leaders.

Street by street, door to door, they reached out to over 123,497 people, spreading crucial awareness about dengue prevention and control.

Through their tireless efforts, Burkina Faso RC not only mitigated the immediate threat of the epidemic but also strengthened Burkina Faso's ability to confront future health challenges. The REACH program, by IFRC and Africa CDC, transformed a crisis into a catalyst for community unity and preparedness, leaving a lasting impact on the health landscape of the nation.



Volunteer team geared up for indoor residual spraying as part of dengue response effort.

### NIGERIA

## Transforming Health in Benue Through Collaborative Efforts to Strengthen Community Health Workforce Amid Crisis

A two-day technical consultative workshop held on June 5-6, 2024, marked a significant milestone in Benue State, Nigeria. The event brought together over 48 participants from various sectors, including the Ministry of Health, State Primary Healthcare Board (SPHCB), and local NGOs. The workshop aimed to enhance community health workforce capabilities and establish a collaborative roadmap for future initiatives.

Benue State, known for its rich agricultural heritage, faces escalating humanitarian crises. Armed conflict, farmer-herder clashes, and natural disasters have devastated communities, displaced thousands, creating a dire need for humanitarian aid. Overcrowded IDP camps lack adequate water, sanitation, and healthcare facilities, with women and children particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence and exploitation.

Recognizing the critical need for improved health outcomes, particularly for women and children, the Nigerian Red Cross Society (NRCS), in collaboration with the IFRC's REACH project,



Nigerian Redcross interaction with mother's club. The group holds weekly trainings to discuss topical issues both on health as well as disease outbreaks before going into the communities for sensitization and awareness creation.



Participants at the State Technical Consultative Workshop for Community Health Workforce, held on June 5th - 6th in Benue State, Nigeria.

is on a mission to strengthen the community health workforce in Benue State. This initiative aims to reduce maternal and child mortality and enhance health services in conflict-affected areas.

During the workshop, participants engaged in group work, brainstorming sessions, and SWOT analyses to assess the current state of community health. They mapped out locations, political wards, and communities for the initiative and identified functional primary healthcare centres (PHCs) to support.

A highlight of the workshop was a visit to the Family Support Programme Primary Healthcare Center (FSP-PHC) in Daudu. This visit allowed the REACH team to interact with health workers and understand the existing infrastructure strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, the team visited the Uikpam

IDP camp to assess healthcare accessibility for the displaced population.

To further engage the community, the team met with the Mother's Club during their weekly training session. These gatherings are crucial for disseminating health information and raising awareness about disease prevention and health promotion.

The workshop concluded with a unified commitment to enhance community health systems and a call for more inclusive planning with government authorities, ensuring every step aligns with the broader health goals of the state.

By building the capacity of the community health workforce and fostering strong partnerships, the project is paving the way towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goal of ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all.

## KENYA

# Kenya Celebrates the Launch of the REACH Initiative

On March 14, Kenya proudly inaugurated the Resilient and Empowered African Community Health (REACH) initiative, marking a significant advancement in community healthcare. This program aims to substantially increase the number of Community Health Workers by 2029, bringing essential health services closer to underserved populations.

The launch was a key milestone in our collective efforts to enhance healthcare across Kenya. The Kenya Red Cross played a crucial role alongside the Ministry of Health, Africa CDC, IFRC, and Prudential Kenya. Together, these organizations have set the stage for a transformative approach to community health, working towards the broader goal of universal health coverage.

Honorable Nakhumicha S. Wafula, Cabinet Secretary for Health, Ministry of Health Kenya, emphasized the alignment of the initiative with national goals: "The REACH Initiative aligns seamlessly with our commitment to achieving Universal Health Coverage."

Dr. Ahmed Idris, Secretary General of the Kenya Red Cross Society, echoed the initiative's importance: "The REACH Initiative

mirrors the Kenya Red Cross Society's dedication to community health service programming."

Mohamed Babiker, IFRC Head of Delegation, noted the broader impact: "The REACH Initiative aims to enhance Kenya's healthcare system by empowering communities, expanding the Community Health Workforce, and achieving Universal Health Coverage."

Dr. Jean Kasea, Director General of Africa CDC, highlighted the crucial role of community health workers: "Community health workers are instrumental in realizing health coverage and health security on our continent."

Gwen Kinisu, CEO and Managing Director of Prudential Kenya, shared the vision for the future: "We are all working towards a future where empowered CHWs play a central role in fostering healthy communities and building resilience across Africa."

This launch highlights a strong commitment to empowering communities and improving health services. As the initiative progresses, it promises to make a significant impact on the health and well-being of individuals across Kenya.



Mohamed Babiker, Head of Delegation for IFRC's Nairobi Country Cluster (Kenya and Somalia), signs the REACH Initiative Launch commitment.