



Policy Brief - March 2021

Community Systems Strengthening policy research

Context to Research

- ◆ Community Systems Strengthening (CSS) is an approach that promotes the development of informed, capable and coordinated communities, and community-based organizations, groups and structures in the fight against HIV, tuberculosis, malaria and other major health challenges. COVID-19 may reverse some of earlier gains made in the fight against the three diseases.
- ◆ CSS aims to achieve improved health outcomes by developing the role of key affected populations and communities and of community-based organizations in the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of services and activities related to prevention, treatment, care and support of people affected by the three diseases and other major health challenges. CSS has a strong focus on capacity building and on human and financial resources.

Findings

The core components of CSS are as essential for building strong community systems.

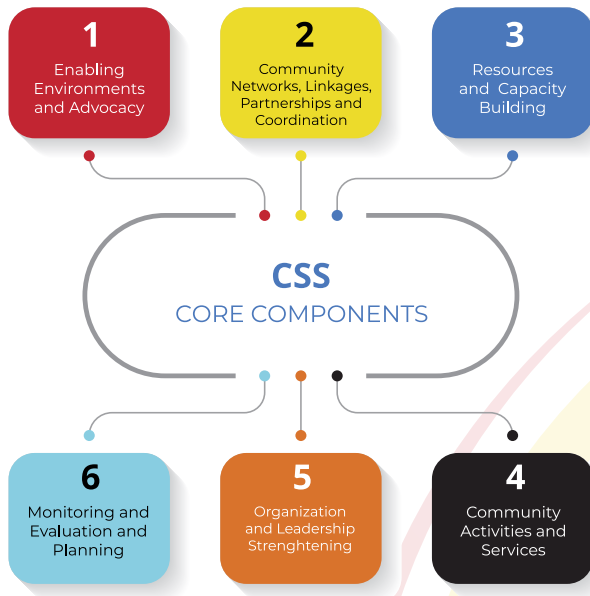


Figure 1: CSS Core Components

Gaps facing Community Systems

- ◆ Lower levels of investment in testing for HIV, TB case detection and malaria prevention.
- ◆ Stock outs of anti-retroviral (ARVs) medications in some countries or areas.
- ◆ Legal regimes and environment that criminalizes the existence of some at risk groups.
- ◆ Stigmatization and social exclusion of at risk and vulnerable populations.
- ◆ Low access to HIV prevention services for key populations
- ◆ Lack of Livelihood/Employable Skills for some KPs and Vulnerable Populations.
- ◆ Funding and resources gaps for community organizations and actors.
- ◆ Gender inequality impede progress in the fight against HIV, TB and malaria.

Main interventions by Community Systems Strengthening

- ◆ Community health workers approach hard to reach areas and key populations with disease specific intervention to reduce burdens in at risk populations.

- ◆ Community health education that focus on Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) and use of Information, Education & Communication (IEC) material to inform KPs and vulnerable groups about the 3 diseases.
- ◆ Key populations participate in Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM) meetings and grant making decision teams
- ◆ Community rights and gender initiative helped enhance the participation community actors and organizations in the development of projects and decision making at the country level.
- ◆ Formation of health alliances at regional levels for advocacy and technical support to community-led initiative and responses.

Recommendations for the next cycle planning 2022-2030

- 1 **Ensure that adequate attention is given to Community System Strengthening as part of Resilient and Sustainable Systems for Health.**
- 2 Invest in community health workers to provide primary health care services to address TB missing cases, malaria resurgence and advance HIV prevention particularly among AGYW and KPs.
- 3 Effective implementation and Supervision of Community Health Workers. The activities of CHWs important to highlight as the various reports from the OIG ascertain their importance in the delivery of health in communities.
- 4 Increase testing coverage of malaria, HIV and TB cases detection with Community systems to fight the 3 diseases.
- 5 Support community-level services towards UHC including Community-based Health Planning and Services (CHPS) as a great innovation that has proven effective.
- 6 Help resolve persistent and significant gaps in sustainable financing for local and key population-led NGOs and CBOs.
- 7 Create platforms to embrace technology, apply active surveillance on case findings and set up structures at community level to support transfer of cases.
- 8 Bolster community-based interventions especially in the case of Malaria intervention. For instance, increase community engagement in the distribution of long lasting impregnated nets (LLINs) program is key to strengthening sensitization reach and useful in improving utilisation.
- 9 Support countries to ensure development partners' efforts are aligned with respective government policies and strategic imperatives.

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