



**PREVENT  
GLOBAL  
HPV CANCERS**

# Increasing Uptake of HPV Vaccine in Communities

An Action Guide for Civil Society Organisations in Kenya

# A Letter from KENCO

## THE KENYA NETWORK OF CANCER ORGANISATIONS

Dear Colleagues,

We are at a critical moment in time because we can now create the first generation of Kenyan women free of cervical cancer.

**Cervical cancer is a preventable cancer caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV).** We have a vaccine that can prevent HPV infection and the precancerous lesions and cancers it can cause. While the HPV vaccine is a powerful tool to prevent cervical cancer, only three (3) in ten (10) girls in Kenya today are fully vaccinated against cervical cancer – significantly lower than World Health Organization's cervical cancer elimination target of 90% coverage.

**The HPV vaccine is safe, effective, and provides long-lasting protection.** Millions of girls have safely received the vaccine globally since it became available in 2006. Countries that were early adopters of the HPV vaccine are seeing dramatic reductions in cervical precancers and cancers.

**Health care workers, including community health volunteers, are one of the most trusted sources of health-related information** across communities and strongly influence parents' decision to get their girls the HPV vaccine. We, civil society organisations, can partner with county health leaders and health facilities to prioritise HPV vaccination and strengthen the capacity of community health assistants and volunteers to help every girl get vaccinated before her 15th birthday.

**Cervical cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in Kenya—and it does not have to be!** Collective action by civil society organisations, county health leaders, and health facilities can ensure that every daughter in Kenya gets the cervical cancer prevention vaccine.

This Action Guide offers evidence-based actions and resources to help civil society organisations take the next steps.

**Let us stop cervical cancer before it starts and create a future Kenya, where girls grow-up protected against cervical cancer.**



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## Abbreviations used in this guide:

<b>CHA</b>	Community health assistant
<b>CHV</b>	Community health volunteer
<b>CSO</b>	Civil society organisation
<b>CHMT</b>	Country health management team
<b>HPV</b>	Human papillomavirus
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization



## How to Use This Guide

### Who

This guide is designed for civil society organisations (CSOs) to support counties and health facilities in their efforts to mobilise parents and communities to get their daughters the free HPV vaccine offered in the routine immunisation programme, ensuring that every girl is protected from cervical cancer.

### HOW

This guide provides actions and resources for CSOs to consider when working with county health management teams (CHMTs). With guidance and approval from CHMTs, CSOs may use this guide to finalise their action plans and leverage existing standardised resources for implementation in the assigned community.

Standardised resources help with sharing facts about HPV vaccination and cervical cancer elimination in communities. They also help in encouraging parents to take their eligible daughters for the free HPV vaccination.

# Acknowledgements

The development of this guide and its resources were informed by research with parents and community health volunteers conducted by the Busara Center for Behavioral Economics in collaboration with Women 4 Cancer Early Detection and Treatment and the American Cancer Society.

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The project was supported by a grant from the American Cancer Society's Global HPV Cancer Free program that envisions a world free of HPV cancers, starting with cervical cancer. For questions about this guide or Prevent Global HPV Cancers, contact [globalcancerprevention@cancer.org](mailto:globalcancerprevention@cancer.org).



**Cervical cancer, which is caused by the human papillomavirus, is the leading cause of cancer deaths in Kenya.<sup>1</sup>**

In Kenya, on average,

**5,236**

women are diagnosed with cervical cancer every year.<sup>1</sup>

**2x**

Cervical cancer cases and deaths in Kenya are projected to more than double by 2040.<sup>2</sup>

**6 in 10**

eligible girls in Kenya have received their first dose of the HPV vaccine.<sup>3</sup>

Less Than

**3-in-10**

Kenyan girls have received their second dose of the HPV vaccine.<sup>3</sup>

\*September 2022 data

## Elimination is Possible

Cervical cancer, caused by HPV, is an urgent public health problem that can be solved. In 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched a global initiative to eliminate cervical cancer which set targets for three important strategies: HPV vaccination, cervical cancer screening, and treatment. Currently, 193 countries, including Kenya, are committed to eliminating cervical cancer. To achieve elimination, by 2030, 90% of girls need to be vaccinated before their 15th birthday.<sup>4</sup>

### WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION **Achieving Elimination**

**Vision:** A world free of cervical cancer

**90%**

of girls fully vaccinated with HPV vaccine by 15 years of age

**70%**

of women screened with an HPV test at 35 and 45 years of age

**90%**

of women identified with cervical disease receive treatment for precancerous lesions and invasive cancer

Elimination threshold: < 4 cases of cervical cancer per 100,000 women per year

## Key Facts About HPV Vaccination



### HPV VACCINATION HELPS PREVENT CERVICAL CANCER.

HPV vaccination is important because it protects girls from HPV infections and can prevent over 70% of cervical cancers.<sup>5</sup>



### THE HPV VACCINE IS GIVEN TO GIRLS AGES 10 TO 14 IN ALL PUBLIC HEALTH FACILITIES FOR FREE IN KENYA.

- When girls turn 10 years old, they become eligible for HPV vaccination in Kenya.
- The vaccine is available free of charge at all public health facilities and during community outreaches where immunisation services are offered.
- All girls aged 10-14 years need two doses of the vaccine, six months apart, for maximum protection.
- The vaccine is most effective when given to girls before they are exposed to HPV.<sup>5</sup>
- By receiving the HPV vaccine, girls are protected from developing most cervical cancers later in life.<sup>6</sup>



### THE HPV VACCINE IS SAFE AND EFFECTIVE AND OFFERS LONG-LASTING PROTECTION.

- The HPV vaccine provides long-lasting protection. When a girl gets the HPV vaccine, she will make antibodies that fight the virus. Antibodies from this vaccine give strong and long-lasting protection.
- All vaccines can have potential side effects, but reactions caused by the HPV vaccine have been mostly mild and similar to other vaccines.
- Common side effects are redness, pain, and swelling at the injection site.<sup>7</sup>
- If a girl shows any unusual symptoms after vaccination, take her to the nearest health facility.

### WHAT IS CERVICAL CANCER?

- Cervical cancer is a serious disease that affects the opening of the womb in women.
- Cervical cancer is caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV).
- Only women develop cervical cancer, despite HPV infection being common in both males and females.
- Cervical cancer can develop after many years of being infected with HPV and often does not show any symptoms until the cancer is in an advanced state.<sup>5,6</sup>

### WHAT IS HPV?

- HPV is an extremely common infection and nearly everyone will get an HPV infection during their lifetime.
- HPV has no signs or symptoms until disease develops and most people will never know they are infected.
- There is no treatment for HPV infection.<sup>5,6</sup>

## Role of Civil Society Organisations in Increasing HPV Vaccination Rates

Civil society organisations (CSOs), have proven to be important partners to the Ministry of Health in increasing the uptake of routine immunisations. CSOs work hand-in-hand with families and community decision makers using their local connections and knowledge. CSOs are trusted advocates for the most underserved.

### **TO INCREASE HPV VACCINATION, CSOS MAY ASSIST WITH:**

- Delivering services in hard to reach areas.
  - Helping with public education across communities about cervical cancer, its risk factors, and available prevention interventions.
  - Distributing communication materials and raising awareness of the benefits of HPV vaccination as cervical cancer prevention.
  - Strengthening the capacity of health workers including community health volunteers (CHVs) and community health assistants (CHAs) to share facts about HPV vaccine in communities and recommending it to parents and guardians.
  - Equipping health workers with job aids and resources for outreach to parents, such as [HPV vaccination posters](#), [fact sheets](#), and more (see [Resources](#)).
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# **Actions for CSOs**

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to Support Health Facilities  
with Increasing HPV Vaccination  
in Communities

## Actions At a Glance

Civil society is influential in the formulation of national health policy and in shaping policy debates on issues such as children's and women's health and effectiveness and access to health services in the county assemblies.

### **TO MOBILISE PARENTS AND COMMUNITIES FOR HIGH UPTAKE OF HPV VACCINATION, CSOS MAY DISCUSS AND SEEK GUIDANCE FROM LEADERSHIP AT HEALTH FACILITIES ON HOW TO:**



**strengthen** capacity of CHVs and CHAs.



**Leverage** all opportunities to recommend and remind parents/guardians to get their daughters vaccinated before their 15th birthday.



**Track** progress and share lessons learned.



## ACTION 1

# Strengthen Capacity of Community Health volunteers and Community Health Assistants

CHVs and CHAs play a key role in outreach to parents of adolescents in communities through home visits. CSOs can assist health facility leadership with providing continuing education and training to CHVs and CHAs on HPV vaccination to help them become HPV vaccine champions. Further training and education can strengthen CHV/CHA capacity and motivation to mobilise parents/guardians of eligible girls for HPV vaccination.

## PARTNER WITH HEALTH FACILITIES ON THEIR CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING NEEDS AND PRIORITIES:



**Engage** with the facility-in-charge to assess education and training needs for CHVs and CHAs.



**collaborate** on holding 1-2 day continuing education and training sessions for CHVs/CHAs, as needed, and include the following:

- Highlight the burden of cervical cancer in Kenya, the safety and effectiveness of HPV vaccination, and its cancer prevention benefits. ([contact us](#) for a sample training presentation)
- Give tips on how best to make effective recommendations to parents/guardians and how to respond to their questions. (see [Resources](#))
- Help CHVs/CHAs practice making a recommendation to parents/guardians and using effective responses to parent FAQs.
- Consider providing a [training completion badge](#), button, or [apron](#) that says “Trained in cervical cancer prevention” and can be worn during home visits.\*

## PROVIDE JOB AID AND PARENT-FOCUSED RESOURCES:



**Distribute** resources to CHVs/CHAs for future reference including the [HPV Fact Sheet: Frequently Asked Questions](#), and more. (see [Resources](#))



**provide** HPV vaccination education materials to give to parents/guardians. (see [Don't Wait to Vaccinate](#))



**share** other relevant community resources, if available, for CHVs/CHAs to encourage parents to get their eligible daughters to the clinic for vaccination (Example: transportation or financial support).\*



**Provide assistance** for printing and distributing the information, education, and communication (IEC) materials.\*

\*As and when financial resources are available



## ACTION 2

# Leverage all opportunities to recommend and remind parents/guardians to get their daughters vaccinated before their 15th birthday

**A recommendation from a health worker is a key reason why parents/guardians choose to vaccinate their daughters and do so on-time.<sup>8,9</sup>**

Most adolescents do not regularly come into a health facility unless sick, so identifying and leveraging all opportunities to recommend the HPV vaccine to parents/guardians of eligible girls is an important strategy for increasing HPV vaccination coverage. Equally important is to follow-up with parents/guardians to ensure completion of the two-dose HPV vaccination series.

## PARTNER WITH HEALTH FACILITIES TO PROMPT PARENTS AND GUARDIANS TO ASK ABOUT HPV VACCINATION AT THE FACILITY:



**Engage** health facility staff to determine high-visibility, high-traffic areas.



**Support** the display of [posters](#) and [flyers](#) in high-visibility areas to serve as a reminder to parents/guardians and staff about the HPV vaccine and its benefits as cervical cancer prevention.



**Seek** opportunities to share HPV vaccination education materials with parents/guardians. Potential moments include when parents/guardians enter the facility, while parents/guardians are in waiting areas, and at the vaccination nurse's station.

## SUPPORT CHVs AND CHAs TO RECOMMEND AND REMIND PARENTS AND GUARDIANS DURING HOME VISITS ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF HPV VACCINATION:



**Support** CHVs and CHAs to recommend HPV vaccination at every meeting with parents/guardians of age eligible girls by providing IEC materials to:

- Emphasise that the HPV vaccine is free and is a part of the routine immunisation schedule.
- Answer parents'/guardians' questions about the HPV vaccine with facts. ([Factsheet for Health Workers: Frequently Asked Questions](#))
- Leave parents/guardians with resources. ([Don't Wait to Vaccinate](#))



**Encourage** CHVs and CHAs to work with parents/guardians to determine the best opportunity for HPV vaccination (clinic hours, days, location).



**Remind** CHVs and CHAs to conduct follow-up visits with, or call, families to make sure vaccination is complete.



## ACTION 3

### Track Progress & Share Lessons Learned

Improving HPV vaccination rates takes time and effort, but ultimately leads to less women facing a cervical cancer diagnosis and saving families the high costs of cancer treatment. Tracking progress can highlight gaps in vaccination in the community and facilitate a better understanding of how to address parent/guardian concerns and other barriers to vaccination. Sharing progress can also bring inspiration and a sense of accomplishment to communities and community health workers.<sup>10</sup>



**Support** CHVs and CHAs in tracking and reporting back to county health facilities on the efforts within communities. ([Action Checklist](#))



**Support** the recognition of champions at the facility level and in the community.

- Consider providing [certificates of recognition](#) through the county health facility leadership.



**Help** identify CHV/CHA peer leaders who have prioritised HPV vaccination in their work and can provide on-going support and motivation to other CHVs/CHAs who need assistance.



**Explore** providing opportunities for high-performing county health facilities to share best practices and lessons learned with other county health facilities.



# Resources

## FOR HEALTH WORKERS

- [Factsheet for Health Workers: Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [HPV Vaccination Job Aid for CHVs](#)
- [HPV Vaccination Educator Badges](#)
- [Wearable Vest Designs](#)

## FOR PARENTS

- [Don't Wait to Vaccinate handout](#)

## FOR HEALTHCARE FACILITY

- [HPV Vaccination Poster](#)

## FOR HPV VACCINATION AND CERVICAL CANCER EDUCATION TRAINING

- [Contact us for a presentation to help train health workers on HPV vaccination and cervical cancer](#)

## MONITORING PROGRESS AND RECOGNITION

- [Action Checklist](#)
- [Sample Certificate of Recognition](#)

## LINK TO GUIDELINES FOR HPV VACCINATION

- [Cervical Cancer Prevention Screening and Early Detection Participant Manual](#)
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