

The comparative agility of the community health worker cadre in fragile & conflict-affected contexts

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The gendered experience of CHWs in fragile and shock-prone settings: implications for policy and practice during and post COVID-19

Aim: to explore the roles of CHWs and their gendered experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic in fragile and shock-prone (FASP) settings



CTC providers

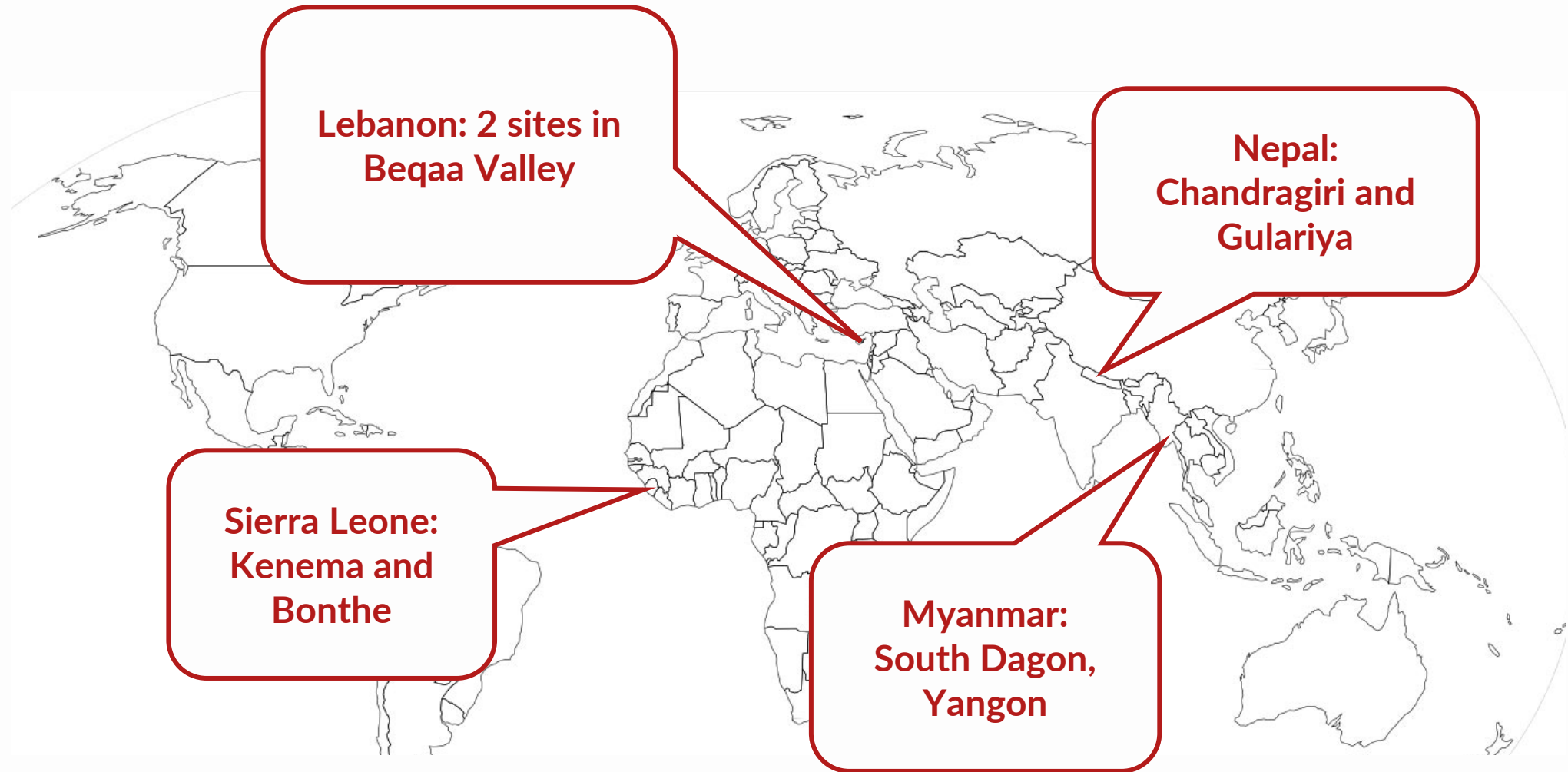
FASP settings

Gender

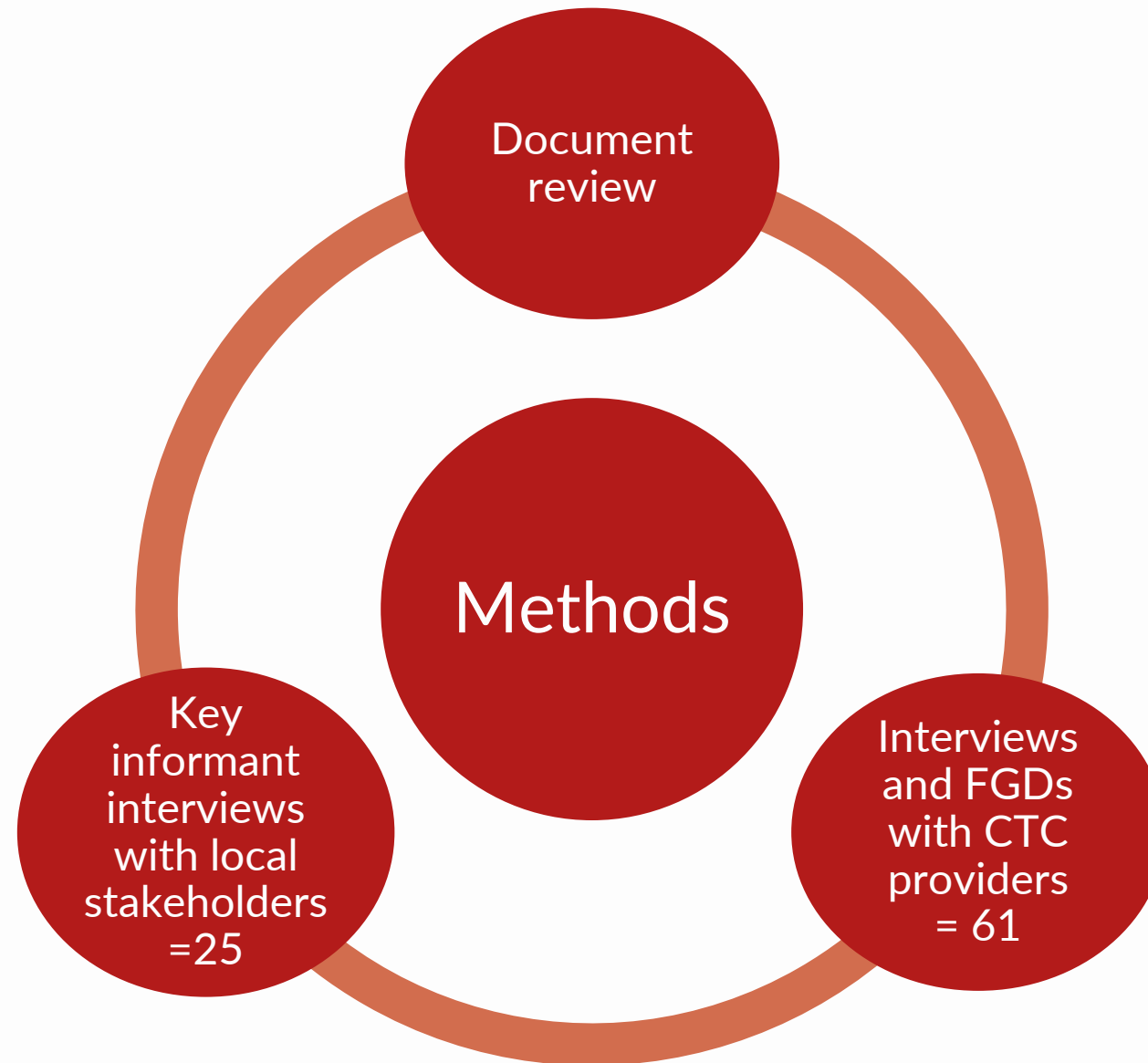
COVID 19



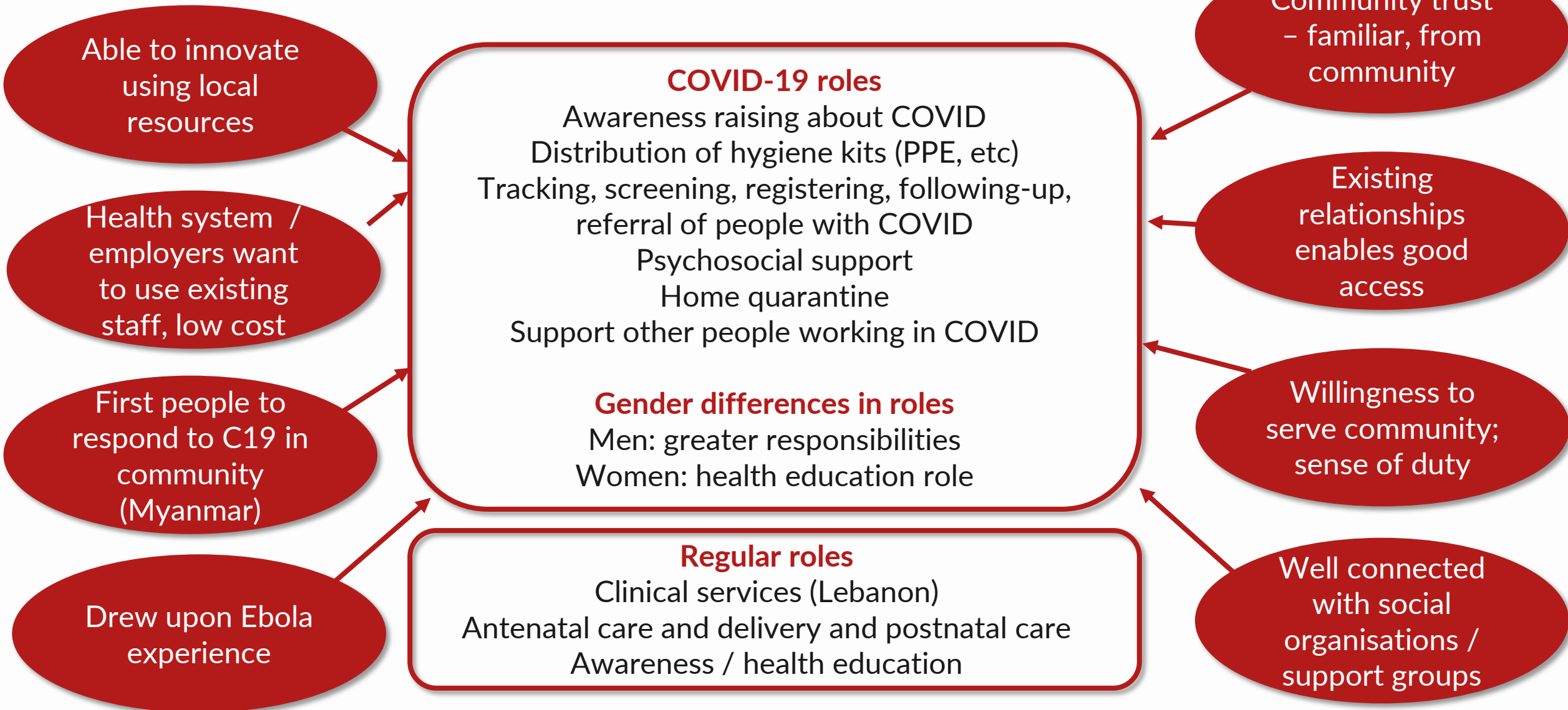
Methods



Methods



Adapting role of CHWs during Covid-19



Challenges that CHWs face in adapting their role during COVID: individual perspective

“Need to adjust to have equilibrium between work and family. More sacrifice for women than men as men do not have much responsibility like women.
CHW, woman, Myanmar”

Juggling multiple tasks

“Family comes first: When the children are not going to schools, it exerts pressure on me. I am working outside, and when my children study online, I had to stay with them for hours. My husband is at home due to corona. This also exerts pressure.” *CHW, woman, Lebanon*

Increased workload, particularly challenging when unplanned work

“The workload was much... we have to visit quarantine homes twice a day and talk to them and check their temperature... And in some households, there are many people.”
CHW, woman, Sierra Leone

Travel and safety

“There is a challenge for girls, and it sometimes needs for the family to accompany the girls (volunteers) on their way home from work. Sometimes, we have meetings at night. For me, my husband come and pick me up. For girls, we may need to arrange for their return trip. For example, township committee arrange a car for girls. For Boys, there is no problem as they can manage their own.”
Supervisor, woman, Myanmar

Fear of COVID

Halted or limited income generating activities



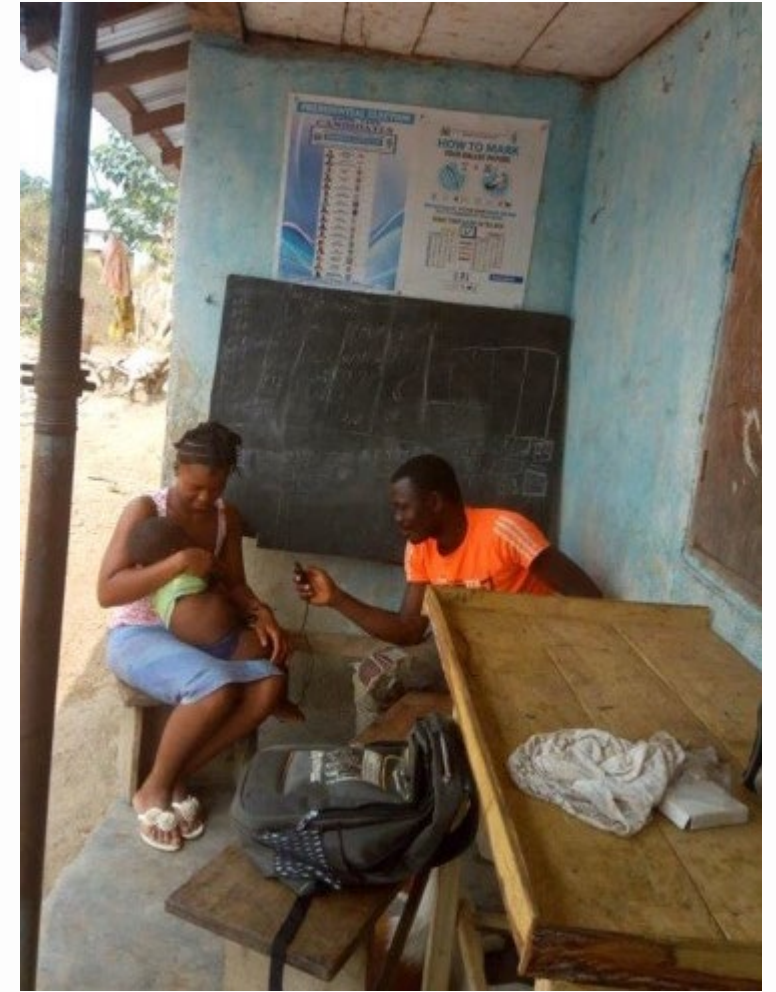
Challenges that CHWs face in adapting their role during COVID: family

Some have limited support for their role

Some have limited support for household work

Adopt coping mechanisms
e.g wake up early to do household chores, ignore

“The family member scold asking, “Why do you need to do that work?” My own husband scolds me asking, “How much do they pay you? Why do you go there?” I have been used to this type of scolding. I let him continue scolding. I’ll carry on with my work.” CHW, woman, Nepal



Challenges that CHWs face in adapting their role during COVID: community

“Initially during the first wave some people in the community are frightened to talk to me which eventually reduced in the second wave.”

CHW, woman, Myanmar

**Stigma and
discrimination from
community members**

“Neighbours and people around me used to tell me: Stay away from us. Don’t come closer. You work with Corona. Maybe you could infect us.”
CHW, woman, Lebanon

**Reluctance to listen
to women CHWs**

“Communities do not tend to often listen to women in certain situations due to cultural beliefs...they are not given the audience they need...so in some cases we provide them with a male back up if there should be pressing issues to be addressed.”
Key Informant, man, Sierra Leone

“Some of them lock their door. They have dog. The dog attacked us. When we ringed bell, they used to look at us and go inside fearing whether we might have brought corona. When we told them, “We need to discuss something with you,” only then they came out to their balcony.”
CHW, woman, Nepal



Challenges that CHWs face in adapting their role during COVID: health system

“There was no proper training - our main source of information was Facebook”
CHW, woman, Myanmar

Limited training and supervision

“We can hardly secure the PPE for the employees.”
Key informant, man, Lebanon

Limited equipment and supplies including PPE

Not prioritised for vaccine

“I feel very sad when they send us for work but don't provide us necessary equipment. We tell them [health workers] that we are in need of safety items while visiting community. But HWs say even they don't receive adequate supply at health post.” CHW, woman, Nepal

“The money that they gave us was too small... during a lockdown, we have to buy things in the house to eat. The family burden is too much on us we have our children to look after and other family members.”
CHW, woman, Sierra Leone

Limited financial support for additional roles despite policy

Recognition:

“It would be really good if the health department recognizes the community health volunteers and tries to connect and collaborate with them more”
CHW, woman, Myanmar

Families:

help in doing their work,
arrange transport,
accompany to and from work

Innovation:

digital technology for
supervision and training

Community:

strengthen links with
community leaders and
organisations

**CHWs need
support**

Health system:

training, incentives,
protection from infection

**Mental health support
and development of
coping mechanisms:**

“Providing us with the
support we need will
makes our work
easy...Without support,
the work cannot be
done as required.”
CHW, man, Sierra
Leone

Thank you

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