



14 May 2020

Hon Mutahi Kagwe
Cabinet Secretary, Health
Afya House, Nairobi
Kenya

Dear Hon Kagwe,

COVID-19 Has Complicated Healthcare; Governments Must Sustain Focus on All Life Threatening Diseases

The Commonwealth Ministers Meeting is taking place amid COVID-19. The theme of the meeting is **delivering a coordinated Commonwealth COVID-19 response**. Though a physical gathering of Ministers will not be possible, the meeting is necessary and timely as Governments the world over were caught out when COVID-19 struck.

As you plan to join in the Ministerial Meeting, as civil society organizations and the communities we represent note with concern the economic, social and health disruptions caused by COVID-19. We acknowledge and appreciate the efforts that the Government of Kenya, private sector, donors and individuals are putting in place to protect citizens from COVID-19 to save lives, mitigate its impact and sustain livelihoods. In a distinct way, we recognize the huge sacrifices of all the frontline healthcare workers for their selfless efforts.

Sadly, COVID-19 threatens to erode gains made in health to defeat diseases such as HIV, TB and malaria. For example, recent estimates by the Imperial College released on 1 May 2020 show that in high-burden settings, additional deaths related to HIV, TB and malaria over five years may increase by up to 10%, 20% and 36%, respectively, as an in-direct result of the COVID-19 epidemic [link](#). This is compounded by fragile health systems which weaken countries' ability to fight disease. Should the cases of COVID-19 steadily increase, the poorest and most vulnerable will bear the brunt as the systems would be weakened further.

To address the challenges presented by COVID-19, we ask that the Government of Kenya:

1. Continues to provide comprehensive healthcare services and remains focused on defeating other life threatening diseases as it battles COVID-19.
2. Escalates engagement of community health systems so that communities are at the heart of the COVID-19 response especially in prevention, contact tracing and surveillance.
3. Enhances multi-disciplinary partnerships for robust coordination at national, regional and global level. Researchers, social scientists, civil society organizations, academia, private sector, individuals, governments and financial institutions must be seamlessly coordinated to tackle COVID-19 and the disruption it has caused.

We join in your efforts to end COVID-19 and save lives.

Yours Faithfully,

For Rosemary Mburu
Global Fund Advocates Network (GFAN Africa)

CC

1. Hon Sabina Chege, Chairperson, Parliamentary Committee for Health
2. Hon Stephen Mule, Chair of Africa Parliamentary TB caucus

