

Building blocks of community positive health: the contribution of Kenyan communities



Claudia Robbiati, Chloe Wood, Winnie Chelagat, Lilian Koskey, Geoffrey Mwai, Iregi Mwenja, Aloyce Odhiambo, Hinjal Bhatia, Emma Ogden, Martha Gutteridge, Laura E R Peters, Des Tan, Geordan Shannon

Abstract

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Stema, London, UK (C Robbiati MSc, C Wood MSc, H Bhatia MSc, E Ogden BA, M Gutteridge MRes, L E R Peters PhD, D Tan MSc, G Shannon PhD); Mama Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya (W Chelagat BSc); Sauti Dada Africa, Kenya (L Koskey BSc); Kenya Red Cross Society, Nairobi, Kenya (G Mwai BSc); PDO Kenya, Nakuru, Kenya (I Mwenja BSc); SWAP Kenya, Kisumu, Kenya (A Odhiambo BSc); Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction (L E R Peters) and Institute for Global Health (L E R Peters, G Shannon), University College London, London, UK; American University School of International Service, Washington, DC, USA (L E R Peters)

Correspondence to:
Ms Claudia Robbiati, Stema,
London WC1V 6RD, UK
cl.robbiati@gmail.com

Background Beyond the health system, people draw on a complex system of everyday community resources to strengthen human and environmental health. These resources, and the community members who use them, are often overlooked by traditional approaches to planetary health. We aimed to apply a resourcefulness approach to define community positive health and the systems of resources that support this, and to define ways in which communities can pursue and sustain health agendas driven by local priorities.

Methods Through a multi-site, mixed-methods research project, we worked with different groups of community members across three diverse field sites in Kenya, in the Baringo, Siaya, and Nakuru counties. We used a mixture of qualitative (78 focus discussion groups), participatory (67 activities, such as cognitive mapping, community timelines and mapping, tree diagrams, patient journeys, and walking interviews), and data-driven approaches to understand community concepts of positive health and collaboratively define the building blocks that shape community positive health.

Findings Preliminary research findings indicated that community positive health was defined by building blocks that included nutrition, clean water, education, and adequate local infrastructure. Crucially, these building blocks were underpinned by intangible community resources, such as culture, knowledge, and social cohesion. With cognitive mapping, we understood how communities leveraged these building blocks into a functioning community-level system. However, one of the greatest challenges felt by each community was the detrimental effects of climate change, contributing alongside human action and inaction to droughts, floods, and natural resource degradation.

Interpretation This initial stage of research defined community positive health and uncovered systems of local resources. Findings will be refined in a further stage of research to co-produce a pilot-tested, validated toolkit to enable resourcefulness-based approaches to community positive health. This output will be supported by an inclusive knowledge-building process that will set the stage to support communities to make more effective decisions about the use of local resources.

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Contributors

CR, CW, and GS conceived the study, designed the research methodology, verified and analysed the data, and wrote and revised the abstract. EO, LERP, and DT verified and analysed the data and wrote and revised the abstract. HB, WC, MG, LK, GM, IM, and AO collected and analysed the data and revised the abstract. CR, CW, GS, EO, LERP, and DT accessed and verified the data.

Declaration of interests

We declare no competing interests.

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