

TEMPLATE FOR SUBMISSION OF CONTRIBUTIONS



2020 Regional Development Forum for Africa (RDF-AFR)

*Digital transformation to accelerate achievement of the SDGs
– Digital development, partnerships and funding*

6-7 October 2020, 12:00 – 15:00 CAR (Virtual meeting)

with preparatory break-out sessions on 5 October 2020 (12:00 – 13:30 CAT time)

CONTRIBUTION BY UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office

TITLE: Continuous Professional Development in a digital world – a case study of frontline health workers

EXPECTED DURATION OF PRESENTATION: 5 minutes

CONTACT: UNFPA ESARO

❖ **Africa Regional Initiatives:** [Select the Regional Initiative(s) relevant for your contribution]

[Yes] AFR Regional initiative 1 – Building digital economies and fostering innovation in Africa

[No] AFR Regional initiative 2 – Promotion of emerging broadband technologies

[No] AFR Regional initiative 3 – Building trust and security in the use of telecommunications/
information and communication technology

[Yes] AFR Regional initiative 4 – Strengthening human and institutional capacity building

[No] AFR Regional initiative 5 – Management and monitoring of the radio-frequency spectrum and
transition to digital broadcasting

❖ **Related ITU development thematic:** [Select the thematic area(s) relevant for your contribution]

[No] Networks and digital infrastructure

[No] Cybersecurity

[No] Emergency telecommunications

[No] Environment

[No] Digital policy and regulation

[Yes] Capacity development

[Yes] Digital services and applications

[Yes] Digital inclusion

[No] Digital innovation ecosystems

[No] Statistics and data for evidence-based decision making



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- ❖ **Year(s) of implementation:** [Select the year(s) for which your action/project/initiative is relevant]

[No] 2018	[No] 2019	[Yes] 2020	[Yes] 2021	[No] Others 2015 – to date
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- ❖ **COVID-19 response related initiative:** [Please indicate if your action/project/initiative is relevant for COVID-19 response]

[Yes] COVID-19 response related initiative

Background [max 300 words]

Many governments are taking unprecedented measures to limit the spread of the COVID-19, ramping up health system responses and announcing lockdowns and movement restrictions affecting millions in East and Southern Africa (ESA) region – home to over 600 million people in 23 countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted access to life-saving sexual, reproductive, maternal, neo-natal and child health (SRMNCH) services. The pandemic has also placed significant amounts of additional demands on the frontline health workers, sometimes without sufficient knowledge sharing and skill development as the traditional face-to-face knowledge sharing/training approaches have been compromised.

To enhance the knowledge and skills of frontline health workers, the ESA regional joint UN team has initiated a webinar training series on ‘COVID-19 and SRMNCAH’, since April 2020. Over 13 webinars, with more than 80 participants in each webinar, have been conducted so far. However, the webinar mode of training has serious limitations to reach over 200,000 frontline health workers in the ESA region.

To address this situation, the four UN regional agencies (UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO), under the Swedish supported 2-gether-4-SRHR programme that is being managed by UNFPA ESA regional office, have come together to create a mobile and web based **virtual training platform** to provide high quality and timely continuous professional development (CPD) courses to frontline health workers.

There have been strong increases in 4G coverage and the expansion of mobile broadband coverage in Sub-Saharan Africa¹. Network quality has also improved significantly and the vast majority of countries now have average broadband speeds that allow reasonable quality internet browsing (greater than 2 Mbps)². With the increased mobile penetration per capita, many opportunities are available for this mobile and web based virtual CPD platform during and beyond the COVID-19.

Proposal [max 400 words]

UNFPA ESA regional office will share a multi-UN agency innovative approach for building capacity of the frontline health workers through a mobile and web based **virtual training platform**.

This innovation has brought together three important actors, namely the UN agencies (UNAIDS, UNICEF, UNFPA and WHO), the educators and regulators (professional associations and councils, medical colleges such as University of Pretoria and ministries of health) and a tech company (the World Continuing Education Alliance - WCEA), to create and scale up a virtual learning platform for nurses and midwives across the East and Southern Africa region. The WCEA, the delivery partner of this innovation, after piloted the platform in Ghana, is already offering trainings to around 7,000 nurses per week.

¹ <https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/GSMA-State-of-Mobile-Internet-Connectivity-Report-2019.pdf>

² *ibidem*



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This innovation builds on pre-established infrastructure, professional networks and regional governance arrangements to create and sustain a high quality eLearning and mLearning platform. This platform is being connected to the Human Resource Information Systems of the ESA countries to allow the professional association and regulators (where applicable) to monitor and track online training activities offered and used through the platform. The platform will also allow frontline health workers to print completion certificates.

The eLearning and mLearning platform is leveraging content that is already developed and updated regularly by respected educators such as the UN agencies and others such as Royal College of Midwives, the Aga Khan University School of Nursing and Midwifery East Africa, Jhpiego, Maternity Foundation. Access to the platform is open through membership and all content developed under this initiatives will be available for Free. A Technical Advisory Group (TAG) has been established at regional level with members from professional associations, partner agencies, donors, and regional communities to advise and guide the roll out of the virtual learnings on SRMNCH. At the completion of a course, the platform would provide a certificate linked with CPD points by ensuring that health workers have gone through all the content before they are given a certificate.

The main beneficiaries of this intervention are women and newborns who will receive better quality health services from the frontline health workers whose knowledge and skills have been developed through this virtual platform. This initiative is being supported by the Swedish Development Agency (SIDA) under the 2-gether-4-SRHR programme that UNFPA ESA regional office manages.

PLEASE SUBMIT THE CONTRIBUTION BY 15 SEPTEMBER TO ITU-RO-AFRICA@ITU.INT

