Crisis communications and vaccine uptake in fragile African settings: What Works?

8:30AM Welcome and Prologue

Murugi Ndirangu (Columbia University, Columbia Global Center Nairobi)
Youssef Cherif (Columbia University, Columbia Global Center Tunis)

8:40 Keynote 1 Natalia Kanem. Executive Director: UN Population Fund. The role of the UN Population Fund in risk communication and community engagement - especially as it affects women and girls of reproductive age - during the COVID19 pandemic in Africa.

9:00 Panel Discussion

Agency and the Health Citizen: How do we acknowledge the agency of citizens in health decision-making? How do we build communications infrastructure from the local level up, rather than top-down?

Moderator: Wilmot James, Columbia University

Speakers:

James Oladipo Ayodele, Africa CDC, An Africa-CDC Perspective on Risk Communication and Vaccine Take-Up.
Michael T Ghebrab, Independent Consultant and former veteran of the Catholic Relief Services, Working in pre and post crisis situations in South Sudan, Uganda and Sierra Leone.

9:50 Keynote 2 Simone Carter, UNICEF, Using integrated analytics to inform vaccine-related communication and engagement strategies: case study from the DRC.

10:10 Panel Discussion

Community Partnerships: How can community partnerships drive vaccine uptake? How do we ensure that public health communications are attuned to those community values, beliefs, and norms that matter?

Moderator: Jennifer Dohrn, Columbia University (School of Nursing)
Speakers

Chinwe Lucia Ochu, Nigerian Center for Disease Control (N-CDC), A Nigerian/West African Perspective on Building Community Partnerships and COVID19 Vaccination Strategies.

Stefano Cordella, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC-Libya), Community Engagement, Risk Communication and Rolling out Vaccines in War-Torn countries – The Case of Libya.

Sheila Davis, Partners in Health, A Justice Perspective on Risk Communication and Vaccine Take-Up.

Richard Garfield, US CDC, Reflections on panelists presentations.


11:30 Panel Discussion

Journalists Reflect

Moderator: Victoria Rosner, Columbia University (English and Comparative Literature)

Speakers

Madeline Drexler, Harvard University School of Public Health – Pandemic Response and Risk Communication: Lessons from Bhutan.

Mark Heywood, Daily Maverick (South Africa) – An Activist’s Perspective on science communications ... what we learnt from the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

12:00 Close

Speaker Biographies

Keynote Speakers

Natalia Kanem, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

Dr. Natalia Kanem is United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. Appointed by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres in 2017, Dr. Kanem has more than 30 years of strategic leadership experience in the fields of preventive medicine, public and reproductive health, social justice and philanthropy. She started her research career with the Johns Hopkins and Columbia University schools of medicine and public health.

Dr. Kanem joined the United Nations in 2014 as UNFPA Country Representative in the United Republic of Tanzania. In 2016, she was named Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director in charge of programmes. Previously, she served as founding president of ELMA Philanthropies, Inc., and as senior associate of the Lloyd Best Institute of the West Indies.

At the Ford Foundation from 1992 to 2004, she funded pioneering work on women’s reproductive health and human rights, serving first in West Africa and eventually as Deputy Vice-President for peace and social justice programmes in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and North America.

She holds a medical degree from Columbia University in New York, and a Master’s degree in Public Health with specializations in epidemiology and preventive medicine from the University of Washington in Seattle. She is a magna cum laude graduate of Harvard College in history and science.
In 2019, Dr. Kanem presided over the Nairobi Summit on ICPD25, which marked the 25th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development. Dr. Kanem is recognized for her powerful advocacy for the rights and choices of women and girls and as a key influencer and thought leader in the formulation of global policy on sexual and reproductive health and rights in the Sustainable Development Goals era and has been listed on the Gender Equality Top 100.

A member of the United Nations Senior Management Group, a high-level body chaired by the Secretary-General, she is also a member of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination; the United Nations Secretariat Management Performance Board; the H6 Partnership for global health; and the UNAIDS Committee of Cosponsoring Organizations, which she has chaired. She is also a Governor of the United Nations System Staff College and a member of the Honorary Advisory Council of the Dag Hammarskjöld Fund for Journalists.

Dr. Kanem advocates for the rights of women and girls on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, an international forum for humanitarian partners, and as co-chair of the Reference Group of Family Planning 2020-2030, a global partnership for investing in rights-based family planning. She has made leadership contributions to the Secretary-General's organizational transformation initiatives towards reform of the United Nations development system, including co-chairing the Strategic Financing Group of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, and as a member of the High-Level Steering Groups on Gender, Youth, the System-wide Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the global response to COVID-19.

Dr. Kanem is the fifth Executive Director of UNFPA since the Fund became operational in 1969.


Melinda Frost, MA, MPH, is a leader in global public health communication and education with a focus on infectious disease, immunization, non-communicable disease and health security. She is currently the ‘Translate Science’ team lead – Infodemics Pillar for the World Health Organization’s response to COVID-19. In this role she represents the risk communication and community engagement response (RCCE) for the Organization.

Prior to COVID-19, Melinda led RCCE capacity building for WHO under the Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Framework. She directly supported more than 40 countries in building their emergency RCCE preparedness and response capabilities under the International Health Regulations. She co-led and designed the Emergency Communications Network and SocialNet deployment trainings which collectively prepared 300+ media and emergency risk communicators and social and behavior scientists for deployment. She also designed the WHO European Region’s Emergency Risk Communication 5 – Step capacity building package as well as numerous journalist trainings.

Prior to 2013, Melinda was the Director for Emergency Risk Communication for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (U.S. CDC) in Beijing, China for 6 years and developed and led new communications programs from the agency headquarters for more than 10 years. Melinda has also consulted for UNICEF, FAO and IFRC to assess national existing communication capacity, coordinate multi-sector partnerships, develop communication strategy and facilitate programs to strengthen national and sub-national level communication response.

Melinda’s experience spans more than 25 years as a manager, director of programs, project officer, health communicator, writer, producer, instructional designer and educator. She holds a Master’s degree in Global Public Health, a Master’s degree in Educational Psychology – Cognitive Studies and a Bachelor’s degree in Communications.

Simone Carter is UNICEF’s lead on Integrated Multidisciplinary Outbreak Analytics for the Public Health Emergencies, where she provides support to countries to better integrate and operationalise evidence in outbreak response. Simone joined the Eastern DRC Ebola outbreak response in September 2018, where she, under the strategic coordination for the Ministry of Health (MOH), developed, set up, and managed the Social Sciences Analytics Cell (CASS), which is now operational in the DRC for Ebola, COVID and cholera. The DRC was the first time that such a structure has existed in outbreaks: providing real time social and behavioral analysis data in an integrated and coherent way to systematically influence the response and Simone is currently in Guinea Conakry working with WHO, CDC, MSF and the MoH to replicate this integrated analytics approach.

Simone has a Master of Science in Epidemiology from the University of British Columbia's Faculty of Medicine where she focused her research on understanding HIV treatment attrition among sex workers. She has spent the last 10 years working across Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East in humanitarian response, six of which working for Oxfam’s rapid response team leading the humanitarian and public health emergency response. Since the 2014-16 West Africa Ebola outbreak, Simone has focused on operational research to inform programming, aiming to improve accountability to communities through the use of evidence.

Simone leads the GOARN Analytics for Operations working group which aims to support different organizations and country teams in collaboration with academic, government and operational actors to ensure that integrated analytics are set up, coordinated and used to influence outbreak response. She is dedicated to ensuring that research and data are gender inclusive, using evidence for advocacy and raising the voices of women and children in public health emergencies.

**Moderators and Panelists**

Wilmot James, Senior Research Scholar, ISERP, Columbia University

Wilmot James, PhD is Senior Research Scholar at the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy (ISERP). He received his PhD (Sociology and African History) from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Dr. James was a post-doctoral fellow of the Southern African Research Program at Yale University, the American Bar Foundation in Chicago and the Hannah Arendt Center at Bard College. Dr. James pursued his interest in science and society (James, Nature’s Gifts: Why we are the way we are, WITS University Press, 2010) as a visiting fellow at the Economic and Social Research Council at the University of Edinburgh and as the Gordon Moore Visiting Professor in the Humanities at the California Institute of Technology.

Dr. James is a policy specialist. He joined the University of Cape Town in 1986 as a member of the academic faculty in sociology, and became department chair in 1992. His research on labor migration (James, Our Precious Metal: African Labour in South Africa’s Gold Industry, Indiana University Press, 1992) led to his appointment as chairman of the task team that designed the first post-apartheid refugee protection and immigration policies under President Nelson Mandela. As a Member of Parliament and opposition spokesman on health and, given Africa’s disease burden and infectious disease outbreak patterns, Dr. James developed an enduring interest in global health security policy formulation and practice. He authored and edited twenty books and policy monographs, forty plus journal articles and book chapters and over 200 opinion/education articles. He is a contributing author to and editor of Vital Signs: Health Security in South Africa (Brenthurst Foundation, 2020). His greatest honor was to serve as a co-editor of the late President Nelson Mandela’s presidential speeches published as Nelson Mandela In His Own Words (Little Brown and Co, 2003).

As Trustee of the Ford Foundation and Chairman of its Education, Media, Arts and Culture (EMAC) committee, Dr. James oversaw the introduction of a $320 million International Fellowship Program, the largest single program investment the Foundation ever made. Over 4,300 students graduated with masters level degrees worldwide with support from the Foundation.
Dr. James current research interests are in global health security with a particular interest in the welfare of children. He also serves as a senior consultant to the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) and is an honorary professor of public health at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa.

James Oladipo Ayodele, Principal Communication Officer, Africa Centres for Disease Control

James has over 20 years of international work experience in programme and corporate communications at FHI 360, the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, Management Sciences for Health, Hivos and some United Nations organizations including FAO, UNODC, UNOPS, UNMAS and UNDP. His experience spans a wide range of development issues, including health, HIV/AIDS and TB, key populations, agriculture, justice, drugs and crime, migration, terrorism, evaluation, sustainable development, and mine action.

In the earlier days of his career, he was Managing Editor of the African Journal of Reproductive Health at the Women’s Health and Action Research Centre in Nigeria, where he transitioned the publishing and distribution of the journal from Germany to Nigeria to make it a full-fledged African publication. Subsequently, submissions to the journal and subscriptions increased substantially and the publication’s frequency was increased from two to four editions per year. As Senior Writer/Editor at FHI 360, he provided communications support to Nigeria’s first nationwide large-scale PEPFAR-funded programme on HIV/AIDS.

James has managed several communications start-ups for different organizations. At FAO he set up the communications function for the Office of Evaluation, including the development of a communication strategy for evaluations and standardization of reports and other evaluation related documents. He set up the communications function for two large-scale EU-funded projects at UNODC and the UNDP-GEF Global Access and Benefit-Sharing project. Before joining Africa CDC, he was strategic communications advisor at the United Nations Mine Action Service Libya programme where he developed a communication and stakeholder engagement strategy for the programme.

James holds a bachelor’s degree in agronomy, he however switched career from agriculture to communications when he worked as science editor at Spectrum Books Limited in Nigeria. He later obtained a master’s degree in professional communication from Sheffield Hallam University and a postgraduate diploma in journalism from the London School of Journalism.

Donda Hansen, Associate Director for Communication office, Center for Global Health, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Donda Hansen has more than 25 years communication experience working in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. Ms. Hansen has been with CDC’s Center for Global Health for eight years where she has touched on all functions of the Associate Director of Communication office, including managing media, overseeing the Center’s web pages, supporting every global emergency response, developing and facilitating risk communication training, and leading a team that provides communication technical assistance to CDC staff in more than 60 countries around the globe.

Ms. Hansen deployed for the West Africa Ebola response – first to the WHO Africa Regional headquarters in Brazzaville in the early days of the outbreak as part of the WHO Emergency Communicator’s Network, then to Liberia for CDC where she worked closely with partners, the Ministry of Information and the Incident Management System Lead on risk communication. She also deployed to Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo for the 2018 - 2019 Eastern DRC Ebola outbreak.

Prior to coming to CDC, Ms. Hansen served as public affairs officer for the U.S. Army for more than 20 years. Five of those years were also spent as a foreign area officer for the Horn of Africa. Most recently Donda managed crisis and risk communication activities for U.S. Africa Command. During the Balkan conflict she worked with the Organization for Security Cooperation in Europe to monitor media for compliance with the Dayton Peace Accords in Bosnia-Herzegovina and developed journalist professional education programs to bring the ethnic groups together.
Michael T Ghebrab, Chief of Party/Project Manager, Catholic Relief Services

Michael T Ghebrab is an international development professional with more than 16 years of experience working for multilateral development organization in East, Southern and Western parts of Africa.

Most recently, he led the USAID funded, Development Food Security Activity (DFSA) in Malawi with Project Concern International, “Njira project” where he built dynamic partnerships with government counterparts and communities, at all levels, establishing close working relationships that aided in promoting sustainability and a strong sense of community ownership of all project interventions. One of the three main pillars for the Njira project focused on Maternal/Child Health and Nutrition targeting over 64,000 households and the project used the Care Groups approach to increase coverage and promote sustainable behaviour change by training a large network of volunteer health/nutrition educators. As part of the Disaster Risk Reduction strategy the project enhanced capacity of communities and individuals to prepare, respond and cope with natural disasters.

Michael served with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) as Head of Program for over five years (2005-2011) and had extensive exposure and experience in design, implementation and evaluation of diverse project portfolios that aimed to address the most pressing problems of the targeted communities; from emergency interventions and infectious disease to food and economic security as well as climate change adaptation projects—using sound technical assistance and evidence-based implementation strategies. I had the opportunity to work in diverse cultures, geographies and sectors, enabling local stakeholders to drive their own solutions and find pathways to change through a focused approach on capacity building.

Prior to his recent experience as a volunteer crisis management advisor on COVID-19 with the Blatyre District Health Office in 2020, he served as a Chief of Party with Project Concern International in Malawi and Country Director with CRS in Sierra Leone. Besides his leadership role, Michael had dependable programming experience and he has overseen Cholera emergency response projects in Southern Sudan as well as Sierra Leone, implemented the early phase (2005-2007) of the well-resourced HIV AIDS response known as PEPFAR (President’s Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief) program in Uganda and served as a member of the National Ebola Task Force in Sierra Leone (2014-2016).

Given his experience in Southern Sudan, Northern Uganda and Sierra Leone, he regarded an expert in adaptive management and has operated in the nexus between emergency and development programs with experience pivoting within development programming designed to respond to immediate shocks and address acute needs while protecting development gains.

As our world wrestles with the COVID-19 pandemic and the frequency as well as coverage of health emergencies seems to be on the increase, Michael would like to reflect and share his thoughts and join platforms that may influence policy and program approaches to strengthen the preventive capacity and mitigate the negative impacts of health emergencies.

Jennifer Dohrn, Associate Professor and Assistant Dean, Columbia University School of Nursing

Jennifer Dohrn, DNP, CNM, FAAN, is an Associate Professor and Assistant Dean of the Office of Global Initiatives and its PAHO/WHO Collaborating Center for Advanced Practice Nursing at Columbia University School of Nursing. She has worked in Sub-Saharan African countries since 2003, helping to expand the role of nurses and midwives in HIV pandemic response, and nursing response in Sierra Leone and Liberia to Ebola. She is currently conducting oral histories of nurses in New York City who are on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. She has integrated her global experiences in pandemic response and complex humanitarian emergencies into two decades of teaching in midwifery and global health equity.
Chinwe Lucia Ochu, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)

Dr. Chinwe Lucia Ochu is a medical doctor with over 24 years’ experience as a clinician. She has MBBS from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria (1996) and MPH from University of Liverpool, UK (2016).

She currently works with Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) as the Acting Director Prevention, Programmes & Knowledge Management and as the Head of Research. NCDC is Nigeria’s National Public Health Institute with the mandate to protect the health of Nigerians through prevention, early detection and control of infectious diseases of public health importance. She represents NCDC at the National Lassa Fever Research Consortium and National Health Research Technical Working Group. She is a member of the Body of Experts of Central Bank of Nigeria’s Health Sector Research & Development Intervention Scheme, and a member of the Research Functional Working Group and Sustainable Production Group of the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19.

She represents NCDC in the Ebola Steering Committee of the Infectious Disease Data Observatory (IDDO) whose aim is to improve the research capacity of countries affected by Ebola. She has represented Nigeria in international discussions that border on the advancement of accelerator 5 of SDG3 (R&D, Innovation and Access). She was part of the health product development, implementation and funding partners deliberation on tackling bottlenecks that impede access to health innovation and was a speaker at the 2019 World Health Summit. She represents Nigeria at the Uniting Efforts for Innovation Access & Delivery (UEIAD), a UNDP-Japanese Government-GFID convened partnership. She is a collaborator of Global Burden of Disease (GBD) and a reviewer for scientific journals and research funders including the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR), UK. She is the Principal Investigator of the US CDC-funded ‘Advancing Infectious Disease Research across Nigeria (AIDRAN)’ project. She is the convener and National Coordinator of the Nigeria COVID-19 Research Consortium.

Stefano Cordella, Head of Delegation for Libya, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent

Stefano Cordella is the Head of Delegation for Libya for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the world's largest humanitarian organization, comprising 192 member Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies. He joined the IFRC in 2015 as Head of Delegation for Sudan.

He spent 20 years in international and humanitarian affairs, working in politically sensitive environments, in complex and volatile situations, both in conflict and post-conflict scenarios - from Afghanistan and Iraq, to Lebanon and Libya, from Pakistan and Palestine (and Gaza), to Syria and Sudan. He worked with the United Nations system, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, and the NGO sector.

He holds a post-graduate international diploma in humanitarian assistance from the Centre for International Humanitarian Cooperation, Fordham University, a master of philosophy in development studies from the University of Bologna, and a master of arts in international affairs from the University of Trieste.

He was born in Adria, Italy, in 1976. He is an enthusiastic runner and tennis addict.
**Sheila Davis**, Chief Executive Officer, Partners in Health

Dr. Sheila Davis, DNP, ANP-BC, FAAN, is the Chief Executive Officer at Partners In Health (PIH). Previously, she served as Chief of Clinical Operations and as Chief Nursing Officer, where she oversaw nursing efforts as well as supply chain, medical informatics, laboratory, infrastructure, and quality improvement activities. Starting in 2014, she served as the Chief of Ebola Response as she led PIH’s response efforts during the West Africa epidemic. She has been a nursing leader in the field of HIV/AIDS and served on the National Board of the Association of Nurses AIDS Care (ANAC). She entered the global health arena in 1999 responding to the global HIV pandemic working in a number of countries. She was the co-founder of a small NGO that worked in South Africa and Boston from 2004-2010 on health projects, including a rural village nurse clinic. Dr. Davis is a frequent national speaker on global health and clinical topics including HIV/AIDS, the Ebola epidemic, leadership in public health, and the role of nursing in human rights.

Dr. Davis received her BSN degree from Northeastern University in 1988, her Masters in Nursing degree as an Adult Nurse Practitioner in 1997 and her Doctorate in Nursing Practice with a concentration in global health in 2008. Both of her graduate degrees are from the MGH Institute of Health Professions. Dr. Davis was a faculty member at the School of Nursing at the MGH Institute of Health Professions for 4 years and an Adult Nurse Practitioner at the MGH Infectious Diseases outpatient practice for over 15 years. Currently she is Adjunct faculty at the UCSF School of Nursing. She was inducted as Fellow in the American Academy of Nursing in 2008 and in 2009 was inducted as a member of the inaugural class of 12 Carl Wilken’s Fellows working on anti-genocide global efforts as part of the Genocide Intervention Network. She recently completed a Robert Wood Johnson Executive Nurse Fellowship as part of the 2012-2015 cohort.

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Richard Garfield RN, DrPH, is Team Lead for Assessment, Surveillance, and Information Management in the Emergency Response and Recovery Branch of the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. He is also the Henrik H. Bendixen Professor Emeritus of International Nursing and Professor Emeritus of Population and Family Health, Columbia University and Adjunct Professor of Public Health at Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University.[1] Garfield has been He has been visiting professor at the London School of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene in the U.K. and Karolinska Institutet in Sweden.

Garfield worked with health authorities in Central America in malaria control, where wars during the 1980s stymied disease control efforts. He helped reorganize health services to protect civilians from the impact of conflict. In the 1980s and 1990s he quantified the impact of conflict on noncombatants using epidemiologic methods and studied the effects of economic sanctions on health in Iraq, Cuba, Nicaragua, Liberia, Haiti, and the former Yugoslavia. He is known for estimates of mortality changes related to conflict. Garfield was the founding director of the Health and Nutrition Tracking Service at the World Health Organization (WHO), continues to consult with WHO on non-communicable diseases and information systems, assisted in developing the Global Health Center at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and coordinated the Collective Violence risk group of the third round of Global Burden of Disease estimates. He has taken part in large scale needs assessment surveys for the UN related organizations following disasters in Myanmar, Pakistan, Haiti, South Sudan, the Philippines, and in New Orleans. He has assisted in developing applied methods of epidemiologic assessment to the area of emergencies and disasters, and currently does this in advising The Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) in Geneva and ALNAP in London.
Victoria Rosner, Columbia University, English and Comparative Literature


Madeline Drexler, Visiting Scientist, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health


Mark Heywood, Daily Maverick (South Africa)

Mark Heywood is the Editor of Maverick Citizen, a section of the Daily Maverick. He is the former Executive Director of SECTION27 and has been a human rights activist most of his life.