



**People's Vaccine Alliance Africa**

Civil Society Meeting

October 25, 2023

Hosted by the [African Alliance](#)

Name of the Rapporteur:	Takudzwa Kampira
Organisation responsible for the meeting:	The African Alliance
Meeting name:	PVA Africa Monthly CSOs meeting

This document contains a report of the proceedings, deliberations, and resolutions made during the 2023 PVA-Africa remote CSOs meeting hosted by the African Alliance on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October

## Meeting Objective

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As Coordinators of the People’s Vaccine Alliance in Africa, the African Alliance sought to create a space where civil society representatives from around the continent could receive a briefing on the work of the PVA Africa thus far while also developing improved mechanisms for amplifying African voices within the PVA and better coordinating African vaccine access and equity efforts.

## Participants

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<b>Participant</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Tampose Mothopeng	The Peoples MATRIX Association
Barrack Owino	African Alliance
Kristine Yakhama	Good Health Community Program
Martie Mtange	African Alliance
Takudzwa Kampira	African Alliance
Daraus Bahikire	Purpose Healthcare
Thulisile Maziya	Sinatsisa Lubombo
Youba Darif	Roots Lab for Gender and Development
Elliot Orizaarwa	Women and Girl Child Development
Tom Muyunga-Mukasa	AdNetA
Goerge Jobe	MHEN
Prince Thompson	
Rodrick Vuxika Mhlongo	
May Ger	SHAPE
Peter Owiti	Wote Youth Development Projects

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## Meeting Agenda & Key Points

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### **Agenda Item 1: Opening Remarks and Introductions?**

The PVA Africa CSOs meeting, held on October 25th, provided a platform for stakeholders to discuss the challenges and impact of mental health during pandemics, with a particular focus on the African context. Mental health has emerged as a critical issue in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, revealing the need for increased awareness, destigmatization, and support. This report aims to summarize the key discussions and findings from the meeting, highlighting the barriers and challenges faced in addressing mental health in African cultures, exploring the impact of the pandemic on individuals' mental and emotional well-being, and providing recommendations for policy and practice to improve mental health support and services during future pandemics.

#### **What is The African Alliance**

The African Alliance is a 100% African-led and staffed global health non-profit that works across diverse portfolios, including work to ensure that communities - in all their diversity

This report will further explore the challenges faced in destigmatizing mental health in African cultures, examine the impact of the pandemic on individuals' mental and emotional well-being, and provide specific recommendations for policymakers, healthcare providers, and civil society organizations. By addressing these issues, we can foster a more supportive and resilient society that prioritizes mental health even during crisis situations.

The PVA Africa coordinator together with the African Alliance team also gave presentations on the People's Vaccine Alliance, providing details on:

- What the Alliance stands for,
- The sub-granting process,
- PVA Africa strategy development
- Membership Landscape

- are meaningfully engaged in all aspects of COVID-19 vaccine research development and eventually equitable access. The African Alliance was formally founded as a queer-led

non-profit organization in 2013 to provide a space where some of the continent's best minds in the development and transformation space could come together to collaborate, strategize, and collectively advance rights-based work with a shared understanding of our past, our

### **The Peoples Vaccine Alliance**

The People's Vaccine Alliance is a coalition of over 90 organizations and networks supported by Nobel Laureates, health experts, economists, Heads of State, faith leaders, and

### **PVA Africa**

The People's Vaccine Alliance (PVA) - Africa's role is to ensure that the voices, priorities, and work of African activists and communities, in all of our diversity, are meaningfully reflected in the global position of the PVA. PVA Africa also ensures that interventions, strategies, and approaches to address the lack of access to COVID-19 vaccines are addressed on our (African) terms. We do this by ensuring that the work of indigenous organizations in all five regions of the continent is spotlighted and supported and shapes our collective advocacy. Housed in the African Alliance, PVA Africa, under the guidance of the Steering Committee, comprises leaders of five regional networks and never loses sight of our collective desire for the decolonization of public health and rights-

present and our hopes for the future. Over the years, the work of Alliance has grown from being a consultancy agency to a full-service non-profit with partnerships and networks globally with an equally diverse portfolio of work.

activists, working together for a People's Vaccine, available free of charge to everyone, everywhere.

based access to products and science that saves lives, keeps us healthy and accelerates our right to dignity as Africans.

Martie also emphasized the following points:

- The intended target audience of the People's Vaccine Alliance Africa,
- Forthcoming opportunities.

In conclusion, Martie provided a succinct overview of the coordination of work within the People's Vaccine Alliance Africa. He also communicated the organization's enthusiasm for more African members, particularly from underrepresented North African

countries. Participants were urged to register through the provided link.

[link](#) here

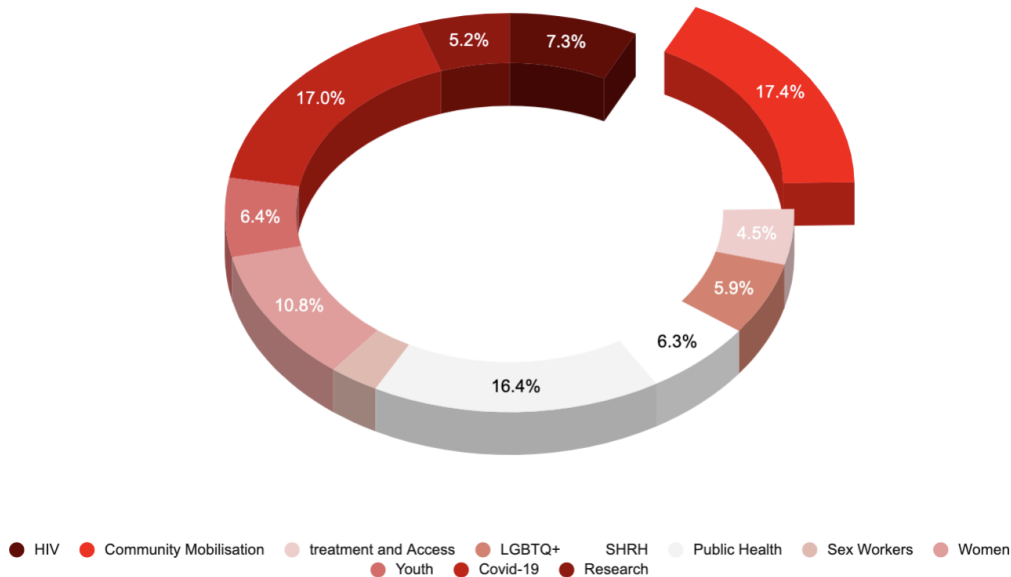
## **Agenda Item 2: Membership Landscape**

Takudzwa Kampira, the Membership Coordinator of PVA Africa, presented an overview of the organization's membership landscape. PVA Africa is committed to ensuring that African voices are adequately represented in global affairs. To achieve this, PVA Africa collaborates closely with a network of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) across the continent, referred to as PVA Africa Members. Presently, PVA Africa boasts 97 validated and active members

spanning across the five regions of Africa.



## **Sectoral Representation within PVA Africa**



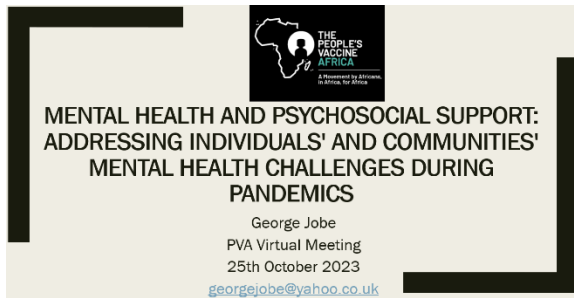
Members of PVA Africa represent a diverse range of sectors, including community mobilization, public health, women's advocacy, and research among others. This diversity is a deliberate strategy to ensure that the Alliance represents all demographic groups within African communities, particularly those often marginalized. The sector with the most considerable representation is community mobilization, accounting for approximately 17.4% of all members.

The sector with the least representation within PVA Africa is sex work, which constitutes about 3% of all members. PVA Africa extends an open [invitation](#) to organizations working with sex workers to [join](#) the Alliance. The organization aims to network with more organizations representing the health rights of sex workers, ensuring their adequate representation in all health-related interventions.

**Agenda Item 3: Mental Health and Psychosocial Support During Pandemics**

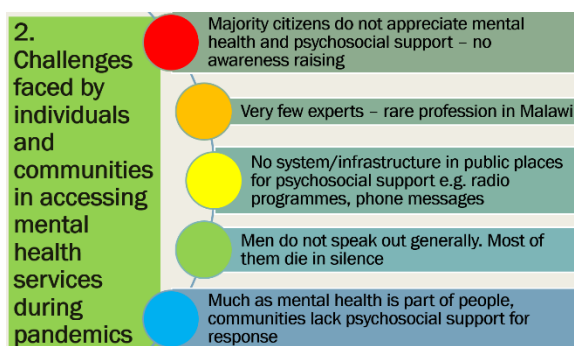


## Overview of the Meeting



George Jobe, from the Mental Health Networks, delivered a presentation on mental health and psychosocial support in pandemics. He emphasized the significant impact of pandemics, including COVID-19, on mental health and the need for addressing mental health challenges at both individual and community levels. George discussed the importance of raising awareness and destigmatizing mental health, particularly in African cultures where it is still considered

### Challenges in Addressing Mental Health:



The participants from the presentation accepted that addressing mental health in African cultures where it is considered taboo poses unique challenges. The stigma

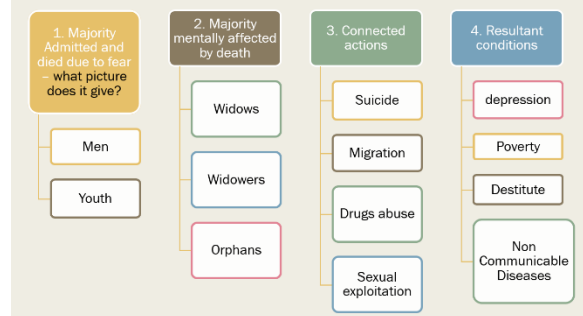
taboo. He highlighted the barriers and challenges faced in addressing mental health, such as limited resources and infrastructure, lack of budget allocation, and cultural beliefs and practices. George also shared insights from his experiences in Malawi, including the role of healthcare workers in providing support and the need for greater access to mental health services. Overall, his presentation emphasized the urgency of integrating mental health and psychosocial support into pandemic response strategies, as well as the importance of policy and practice changes to improve mental health support and services in African communities.

surrounding mental health issues often prevents open discussions and discourages individuals from seeking help. Raising awareness and destigmatizing mental health requires targeted efforts. Cultural beliefs and practices need to be taken into account, and community engagement becomes crucial in effectively addressing these challenges. Education and awareness campaigns should be culturally sensitive and tailored to the specific needs and beliefs of the

communities. Collaboration with community leaders, traditional healers, and religious organizations can help bridge the gap and promote a more inclusive approach to mental health support.

## Impact of the Pandemic on Mental Health and Lessons Learned

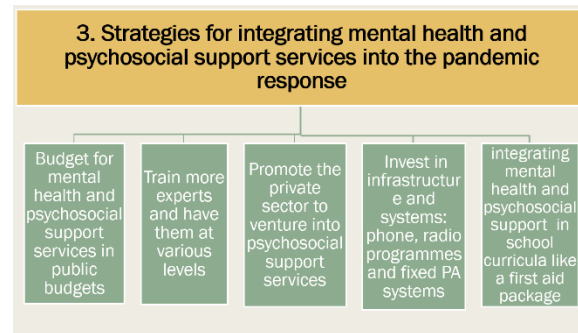
### 1. The importance of mental health and psychosocial support during pandemics



From the presentation the participants appreciated that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the mental and emotional well-being of individuals, including healthcare workers and the wider community. The uncertainty, fear, and isolation brought about by the pandemic have contributed to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Lessons learned from previous pandemics, such as Ebola, can be applied to improve mental health responses. These lessons include the importance of integrating mental health support into the overall pandemic response, increasing access to mental health services, and addressing the social determinants of mental health. The members emphasized that it is crucial to prioritize mental health support

for healthcare workers who are at the frontlines of the response, providing them with the necessary resources, training, and psychological support. It is also essential to involve local communities in the response, engaging them in the design and delivery of mental health services, and ensuring culturally appropriate support is available. The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need for comprehensive mental health policies and practices that consider the unique challenges faced during pandemics and ensure equitable access to mental health services for all individuals.

### Recommendations for Policy and Practice



During the meeting, several recommendations were discussed to improve mental health support and services during pandemics. These recommendations are essential for policymakers, healthcare providers, and civil society organizations to address the barriers and challenges faced in raising awareness and destigmatizing mental health in African cultures.

1. Increase budget allocation for mental health: It is crucial for governments to allocate sufficient funding to mental health services and programs. This includes establishing budget lines specifically dedicated to addressing mental health during pandemics, as well as ensuring sustainable funding for long-term mental health initiatives.

2. Training and capacity building: Prioritize the training and continuous professional development of healthcare personnel, including frontline workers and mental health professionals, to enhance their knowledge and skills in providing mental health support during pandemics. This training should focus on addressing cultural sensitivity, recognizing and responding to mental health needs, and developing effective communication strategies.

3. Community engagement and awareness campaigns: Engage communities through culturally appropriate and participatory approaches to promote mental health awareness, destigmatization, and help-seeking behaviors. This can be done through educational campaigns, community dialogues, and partnerships with local leaders and organizations.

4. Integration of mental health into primary healthcare services: Strengthen the integration of mental health services into primary healthcare systems to ensure holistic and comprehensive care for individuals during pandemics. This can include the development of task-shifting strategies, the establishment of mental health support teams at primary healthcare facilities, and the provision of training and resources to primary healthcare providers.

### **Agenda Item 4 Conclusion**

The PVA Africa CSOs meeting on mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic provided valuable insights into the challenges and lessons learned in addressing mental health in African communities. The discussions highlighted the significant barriers in raising awareness and destigmatizing mental health, particularly in cultures where it is still considered taboo. These barriers include cultural beliefs, lack of

education, and limited access to mental health services. However, it is evident that there is a growing recognition of the importance of mental health and the need for action.

The impact of the pandemic on mental health has been profound, affecting not only individuals but also healthcare workers and

the wider community. The experiences shared during the meeting shed light on the emotional and psychological toll that the pandemic has taken on people's well-being. Lessons learned from previous pandemics, such as Ebola, emphasize the importance of integrating mental health support into pandemic response strategies. The need for comprehensive mental health services, training of personnel, and community engagement emerged as key recommendations to address these challenges.

In conclusion, addressing mental health during pandemics requires a multi-sectoral approach involving policymakers, healthcare providers, and civil society organizations. It is crucial to allocate adequate budgetary resources to mental health services, promote training and capacity-building initiatives, and actively engage communities in destigmatization efforts. The PVA Africa CSOs meeting has contributed significantly to the growing dialogue on the importance of mental health support and services during challenging times, and it is hoped that the recommendations put forth will pave the way for meaningful change in policy and practice.