



## ASRIC Working Group on Africa's Indigenous Knowledge to Preventing and Controlling Emerging Infectious Diseases on the Continent like Covid-19: Utilizing an Afro-Centric Response

Inaugural Steering Group Meeting held on the 23rd April, 2020 at 2:00 pm (Abuja time)

Meeting link: [https://bluejeans.com/220141813/9143?src=join\\_info](https://bluejeans.com/220141813/9143?src=join_info)

### **Minutes of the meeting**

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## Minutes of the meeting

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**African Union Scientific, Technical and Research Commission – (AU-STRC) and African Scientific Research and Innovation Council Secretariat:** Engr. Dr. Hamdy Ahmed (Executive Director); Dr. Mohamed Kyari and Mis. Marie Bassie (secretariat).

**Members of working Group: Prof. Kenneth Yongabi Anchang; Project Coordinator** (Nigeria/Cameroon), Prof. Percy Chimwamurombe (Namibia), Associate Prof. Esther Innocent (Tanzania), Dr. Amira Adel Taha Al-Hosary (Egypt), Dr. Joseph Nicolao Otieno (Tanzania), Mr. Gideon Adotey (Ghana), Mr. Enock Mac'Ouma (Kenya).

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## Summary of discussions and deliberations

### 1. Opening session

The coordinator opened the meeting with brief remarks then called upon the Executive Director ASRIC to make his opening remarks. The Executive Director hailed the rich diversity of the Working Group in terms of gender, regional representation and multidisciplinary. This session was concluded by a self-introduction of meeting participants.

### 2. Presentation and adoption of Agenda

The agenda was introduced by the project initiator and coordinator and adopted by members without any alterations.

### 3. Brief presentation on Covid-19

The representative of the African Union Scientific Technical and Research Commission (AU-STRC) (Dr Kyari) made a brief presentation on Covid-19. Participants noted the anticipated negative impact of the virus on key areas of development such as trade, food and nutritional security, transport and travels, education and training, employment and poverty alleviation among others. Participants resolved that collective, systematic, and proactive approaches would be helpful in tackling the Covid-19 pandemic, and other emerging infectious diseases.

### 4. Presentation by coordinator

The coordinator took participants through a presentation which elucidated the proposed Afro-centric approach towards tackling emerging infections in Africa. It was resolved that an Afrocentric strategy is the most appropriate approach to interventions against Covid-19 in Africa and other emerging diseases in Africa. This is in view of high levels of poverty

and low levels of literacy which characterizes most parts of Africa. The Afrocentric approach was unanimously adopted by participants as the backbone to the proposed research initiative. Further, participants adopted the main objective of the Working Group as below:

To develop and implement **Afro-centric response to Covid-19 and other infectious diseases** building on the Africa's abundant indigenous knowledge rooted in **Africa's ethnographical and cultural characteristics without compromising global standards is a critical approach to follow.**

## 5. Discussion and sharing workload

### **General observations by participants:**

Participants noted the following as the key rallying points for the initiative:

The mandate of the Working Group sits well with Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA – 2024) and the overarching continental framework AU Agenda 2063. One of the priorities is Prevention and Control of Diseases;

Africa is rich in local knowledge about prevention and control of emerging diseases which could be tapped into. However, a repeat of what happened with investigations on the Ebola pandemic could happen again, where the continent was never involved in studies on the virus after it emerged from the Congo basin.;

Covid-19 and other infectious diseases pose a big threat to the development and prosperity of Africa;

Local African knowledge and experience amidst pandemics are rich enough to spearhead a scientific process to investigate emerging infectious diseases such as Covid-19 and Ebola;

The Working Group has the potential to spearhead research on preventing and controlling emerging diseases in Africa as per its mandate;

Many Covid-19 patients have confessed to recovering from the infection upon using traditional medicines which are plentiful in Africa;

The Chinese story of successful management of Covid-19 pandemic was largely as a result of use of complementary traditional Chinese medicine, a scenario which Africa could borrow a leaf from;

The Working Group will ensure that international standards and best practices are strictly adhered to.

### **Workload sharing:**

**Dr Esther Innocent and Dr. Joseph Nicolao Otieno:** (i) Compile a compendium of plants through a systematic review of literature on published works on antiviral medicinal plants with view to selecting potent plants for large scale biopharmaceutical production (Short term goal); (ii) Identify quinolines alkaloid analogues from local medicinal plants in Africa used in treating fever and flu indigenous to Africa, and test their efficacies against Covid-19, Ebola and Lassa fever (short term goal); (iii) Identify already licensed African based herbal products for boosting the immune system and engage in clinical trials against Covid-19, Lassa fever and Ebola (by determining, establish and codify an Afro-standard for herbal extracts, products and derived supplements which meets or exceeds international standards) (Short term Goals).

**Professor Kenneth Anchang YONGABI:** will be saddled with the overall coordination of the project and in liaison with the AU -ASRIC

(i) Identify selected antiseptic plants and locally source materials to produce disinfectants for hand sanitizers; standardization for manufacturers of hand sanitizers taking in to consideration production from locally available materials in Africa (from Africa's unique bio-cultural diversity) efficacy, safety, and availability (short term goals). (ii) Produce standard operating procedures (SoPs) for the production, efficacy, safety and quality control for the use of hand sanitizers in Africa. Hand sanitizers production that have broad spectrum for DNA and RNA viruses (SOPs and usage and safety) (Long term Goals) (iii) Focus on licensed products and select what could be subjected to trials. (iv) Call meetings.

**Mr. Gideon Adotey:** (i) Screen the selected antiviral plants visa –a- vis- standard controls against Covid-19 using proxy models and run randomized control clinical trials on extracts and products found to be effective in vitro (Long Term Goals). (ii) Work out the production of simple face masks with the precise filter size with appropriate filter size for filtration of Covid-19 (Long term goals).

**Prof. Percy Mwamurombe and Dr. Amira Adel Taha Abdel Aleem Al-Hosary:** (i) prepare a draft work plan and budget for the working group (ii) coordinate with other members of the Working Group on the already listed activities for work plan and budget preparations.

**Mr. Enock Mac'Ouma:** (i) Propose a community strategic guideline for prevention of Covid-19 as well as Lassa and Ebola in rural and semi urban Africa (Short term goals). (ii) Develop a unique afro centric policy brief and policy guideline for the integration model for integrated hospitals in Africa that combine Orthodox and Complementary medicine (Long term goals). (iii) Prepare and share meeting minutes.

### **Way forward**

Noting the significance of authentication of members nomination to the working Group, it was resolved that official letters of appointment be drafted on headed letter, signed and issued to the nominees. Action: Dr. Hamdy.

Noting the significant contribution towards research on Covid-19 treatment by Madagascar, the meeting resolved that the scientists from Madagascar responsible for the Covid-19 “therapy” should be incorporated into the Working Group. Action: **Dr. Hamdy.**

### **Vote of thanks**

The project lead and participants thanked the African Union and its affiliates – The African Union Scientific, Technical and Research Commission (AU-STRC) and the African Scientific and Innovation Council (ASRIC) for their immense contribution and role in establishing the Working Group.

### **Closing remarks**

The Executive Director – ASRIC assured participants of total support, and availability of sufficient funds as they undertake the important assignment aimed at improving the health and wellbeing of the people of Africa.

The Project initiator and Coordinator assured ASRIC of total commitment by the team to deliver on its important mandate.

Noting the significance of synergy among key actors in research on covid-19 and other emerging Infectious Diseases, it was resolved that members should, as much as possible, work very closely and build synergy with state actors and other researchers within their regions.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 pm (Abuja time), by the host.

Scribe :

Mr. Enock Mac’Ouma (Kenya) and Prof Kenneth Yongabi

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