



**World Health  
Organization**

Western Pacific  
Philippines



# Community Innovation to Support Surveillance and Contact Tracing

## An offline intervention from the CSO Initiative in the Philippines

10 November 2021 | News release | Itogon, Benguet

“This health tracker has been very helpful for us to monitor our family members, especially our children,” said Gladys Gapongli, a homemaker and wife of a small-scale miner in Itogon, Benguet in northern Philippines. “Now we can know and record if they are ill during this pandemic.”

Gladys’ household is one of 400 beneficiaries of the Home as Active Advocate and Network to COVID-19 Prevention and Control (“HAAN COVID”) project, implemented by Families Choice for Health and Development under WHO’s Civil Society Organization (CSO) Initiative in the Philippines.

In the Ilocano language, *haan* means no, creating a strong message of ‘No COVID’ in the gold mining communities of Benguet where the organization operates.

The HAAN COVID project is a community-level response to the surge of COVID-19 cases in the mining areas in Benguet in October 2020. Unlike those working in established mining companies, small-scale miners in the Philippines have inadequate access to healthcare. They are often from indigenous populations, living and working in crowded, poorly ventilated conditions, and rarely use the Internet, smartphones, or personal protective equipment.

In early 2021, Families Choice pioneered an innovative health reporting and community surveillance system to address contact tracing data gaps amongst vulnerable groups. Using the COVID-19 handbook developed by WHO Philippines, the organization created hard copy logbooks (“Home Health Trackers”) for miners and their families to record their daily health status and activities.

These logbooks also contain information on COVID-19 best practices to prevent and limit community transmission. The data derived from the Trackers enhance contact tracing efforts undertaken by local authorities.

In addition to improving community surveillance, FC is also conducting information, education, and communication (IEC) campaigns to improve the mining communities’ knowledge of COVID-19 prevention best practices and vaccine acceptance.

The positive results from the pilot phase of the Trackers show the potential of FC’s community surveillance tool to be scaled up in other communities living in vulnerable conditions and low-resource settings, especially in areas with poor internet penetration. This applies not only in the Philippines but also in other parts of the world where there are data gaps in close contact tracing at the community level. The concept empowers communities by introducing the concept of close contact identification and its importance for COVID-19 prevention through empowering vulnerable communities.

(Gumatdang is a barangay in Itogon, Benguet where small-scale miners work and live. It has a population of 2,163 based on 2015 census.)



*Gladys Gapongli (center), a miner's wife and home health caregiver, writes information on the Home as Active Advocate and Network to COVID Prevention and Control (HAAN COVID) handbook at her home in a mining community in Gumatdang village, Itogon municipality, Benguet province in the northern Philippines, 24 June 2021. With her are Aida Gonzales (left) of Families Choice for Health and Development and Ava Sharon Batay-an (right), WHO Consultant for Community Engagement (COVID-19 Response). © WHO/Rolax de la Pena*