

In disease surveillance activities, community informants are indigenous members of communities who volunteer to report suspected notifiable diseases and public health events to public health departments and relevant authorities.

Over the years, their importance has become glaring, especially since the adoption of the integrated disease surveillance and response (IDSR). They have been identified as important part of community-based surveillance (CBS), and regularly work (pro-bono most times) with community health workers. They help in event alert, and in identifying and investigating rumours.

A community-based surveillance system relies on the community members' capacity to identify and report public health problems to the nearest health facility or to the LGA health department. In this system, community informants/agents and other community based agents identify and report events in the community that have public health significance. The community informants and agents report to the health facility, or in the case of a serious event, directly to the LGA authorities.



According to the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC), a community informant should be selected by the communities they live in so as to increase empowerment and ownership of CBS. Any person acceptable by the community can be an informant. Representation could be from basic community-level services such as:

- traditional birth attendants
- community health influencers and promoters
- similar care providers,
- village leaders (religious, traditional or political)
- school teachers
- agricultural extension workers

health extension workers
patent medicine vendors
barbers
local guards
traditional healers.

Any suspected event occurring in the community, including maternal and neonatal events, should be reported immediately. The trigger mechanisms of reporting must be clearly defined and the information must be immediately notified to community informants, if already identified, or to a nearby health facility or LGA DSNO.

Any community member acceptable by the community can be a community informant or agent. Once selected, the community informants/ agents should receive training and carry out supportive supervision on how to recognise certain diseases or health conditions for the purpose of reporting suspected cases.

Example: Community informants or agents hear of several cases of acute watery diarrhoea with vomiting in the community. The informant suspects cholera and reports the alert to the local health facility and to the LGA level health officer by text messaging.

Members of the public health emergency rapid response team (RRT) travel to the community to verify and investigate the possible outbreak, and, based on the investigation results, implement control and prevention measures.

The outbreak is quickly contained. Thanks to the early warning from the community-based surveillance system. LGA staff may identify sources in the community with opportunity to know about the community's health status.

To be a community informant and be part of networks of community informants across Nigeria, you can start immediately by filling this [community informant registration/alert reporting form](#). These are also some of the [notifiable diseases in Nigeria](#) we focus on in our communities

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