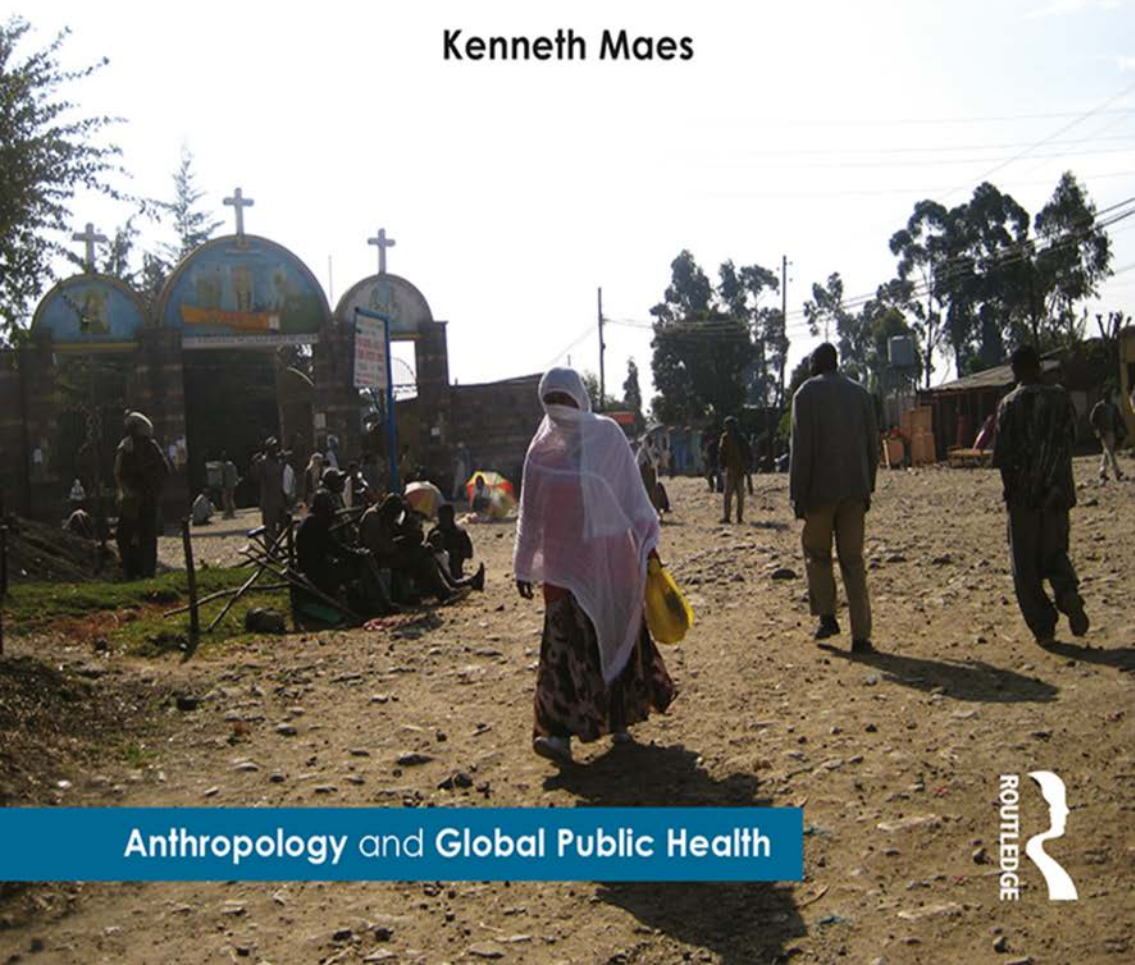


THE LIVES OF COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

Local Labor and Global
Health in Urban Ethiopia

Kenneth Maes



Anthropology and Global Public Health

ROUTLEDGE

THE LIVES OF COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

The importance of community health workers is increasingly recognized within many of today's most high-profile global health programs, including campaigns focused on specific diseases and broader efforts to strengthen health systems and achieve universal health care. Based on ethnographic work with Ethiopian women and men who provided home-based care in Addis Ababa during the early rollout of antiretroviral therapies, this book explores what it actually means to become a community health worker in today's global health industry.

Drawing on the author's interviews with community health workers, as well as observations of their daily interactions with patients and supervisors, this volume considers what motivates them to improve the quality of life and death of marginalized people. *The Lives of Community Health Workers* also illuminates how their contributions at a micro level are intricately linked to policymaking and practice at higher levels in the field of global health. It shows us that many of the challenges that community health workers face in their daily lives are embedded in larger social, economic, and political problems, and raises a resounding call for further research into their labor and the health systems they inhabit.

Kenneth Maes is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Oregon State University, USA.

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For Doris, Mark, Karen, and Dick



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CONTENTS

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>List of Abbreviations Used in the Text</i>	<i>xiv</i>
Introduction	1
<i>The Labor and Lives of Community Health Workers</i>	6
<i>Morality, Power, and Policy-Relevant Research</i>	8
<i>Studying a CHW Program: A Methodological Overview</i>	13
1 Community Health Worker Payment and Participation in Addis Ababa's Alichia Millennium	21
<i>The Global Sustainability Doctrine Meets Ethiopia</i>	23
<i>Pushing for Change or Following Directions?</i>	30
<i>Conclusion</i>	36
2 Becoming a Community Health Worker: A Biosocial and Historical Perspective	40
<i>Transformations</i>	42
At That Time, There Was a Revolution	44
<i>Another Life-Altering Infection</i>	45
<i>From Leprosarium to Antiretroviral Center of Excellence</i>	50
<i>Conclusion</i>	54

3	Some Assembly Required: Community Health Worker Recruitment and Basic Training	61
	<i>Recruiting CHWs</i> 63	
	What If She Is Planning to Fly Abroad? 65	
	Don't Think That You Will Get Something 67	
	. . . Except Mental Satisfaction 68	
	<i>The Moral Economy of CHWs</i> 70	
	<i>Training Rituals</i> 73	
	<i>CHW Orientation and Training in Three Dimensions</i> 76	
	<i>Conclusion</i> 88	
4	To Care and to Suffer: Community Health Work Amid Unemployment and Food Insecurity	93
	<i>Getting Close</i> 95	
	<i>Reconciliation</i> 97	
	<i>Confronting Death</i> 99	
	<i>Providing Good Care and Seeking Socioeconomic Progress</i> 100	
	There Is No Happiness with Me 103	
	I Brought Them into a Life They Don't Want 106	
	My Sadness Comes When I Have a Fight with My Husband 109	
	I Didn't Do Anything for Myself 111	
	<i>The Social, Economic, and Emotional Impacts of Unpaid Community Health Work</i> 111	
5	Where There Is No Labor Movement	116
	How Can I Tell Sister Meheret? 118	
	Everybody Complained 119	
	<i>Articulating a "We"</i> 120	
	<i>Legitimizing Self-Interest</i> 122	
	<i>CHW Labor Relations and Policy-Relevant Research</i> 126	
	<i>Conclusion</i> 130	
	Conclusion: Listening to Community Health Workers: Recommendations for Action and Research	134
	<i>Recruit Strong CHWs and Provide Supportive Supervision</i> 135	
	<i>Emphasize the Humanity of Patients, Quality of Life, and Empathic Care</i> 136	
	<i>Build Solid Relationships across Social Dividing Lines</i> 138	
	<i>Finance the Creation of Secure CHW Jobs</i> 140	
	<i>Strengthen CHW Participation in Processes of Social Change</i> 142	

<i>Conduct Better Research and More of It</i>	144
<i>United, Spider Webs Can Tie Up a Lion</i>	147

<i>References</i>	150
<i>Index</i>	165

FIGURES

0.1	Ethiopian Volunteers Day, 2008	2
0.2	Visor and T-shirt given to community health workers at Ethiopian Volunteers Day, 2008	4
0.3	An NGO official makes a prepared speech at Ethiopian Volunteers Day, 2008	5
0.4	Community Health Workers applauding at Ethiopian Volunteers Day, 2008	6
2.1	A sign at ALERT Hospital's main gate, 2007	41
2.2	Murals above the main gates at the St. Gebre Kristos church, located adjacent to ALERT Hospital, 2007	42
2.3	Bill Clinton visits ALERT Hospital in 2007 to inaugurate the pediatric ART clinic and ward	49
3.1	CHW trainees listening to a lecture, February 2008	80
3.2	A group of CHW trainees study their data collection forms, 2008	83
3.3	CHW trainees visit ALERT Hospital's ART pharmacy, 2008	85
3.4	A group of CHW trainees perform a social drama about stigmatization and reconciliation, 2008	86

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All the remaining shortcomings of this book, of course, are solely my responsibility.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE TEXT

ALERT	All Africa Leprosy and Tuberculosis Rehabilitation and Training Centre
ART	Antiretroviral therapy
ARVs	Antiretrovirals
BINGO	Big International NGO
CHBC	Community Home-Based Care
CHWs	Community Health Workers
CMD	Common Mental Disorder
DFID	Department for International Development
EMA	Ethiopian Medical Association
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
EPHA	Ethiopian Public Health Association
EPRP	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party
FCHV	Female Community Health Volunteer
FHI	Family Health International
FMOH	Federal Ministry of Health of Ethiopia
GFATM	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, or Global Fund
GPEI	Global Polio Eradication Initiative
GWOT	Global war on terror
HAART	Highly active antiretroviral therapy
HAPCO	HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office
HEP	Health Extension Program
HEWs	Health Extension Workers
HBC	Home-based care
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation

L10K	Last 10 Kilometers Program
LHW	Lady Health Worker
MACHW	Massachusetts Association of Community Health Workers
MAP	World Bank's Multisector AIDS Program
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MDPH	Massachusetts Department of Public Health
MEISON	All-Ethiopia Socialist Movement
MPHA	Massachusetts Public Health Association
NCHWAS	National Community Health Workers Advocacy Study (US)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries
ORCHWA	Oregon Community Health Workers Association
PEPFAR	US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PIH	Partners in Health
PLWHA	Person/People living with HIV/AIDS
PMTCT	Prevention of mother-to-child transmission
RCT	Randomized controlled trial
SIM	Sudan Interior Mission
UNAIDS	Joint United National Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNV	UN Volunteers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Program
WHO	World Health Organization
WPE	Workers Party of Ethiopia



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INTRODUCTION

In 2007, the Ethiopian government placed a bronze rectangular plaque in the center of an unimpressive traffic circle on the southwest leg of Addis Ababa's ring road, thereby creating the capital city's first "Volunteers Circle." The circle is miles away from the monumental and historical squares located in Addis Ababa's city center. There are no big buildings around, and much of the immediate surroundings consist of dirt lots littered with trash. Yet on a sunny Saturday morning in May 2008, the second annual Ethiopian Volunteers Day, Volunteers Circle became a ceremonial space packed with people and temporary canopies colored red, green, and yellow—the colors of Ethiopia's flag. Police were positioned to keep the unusual quantity of pedestrians safe from the minibuses, dump trucks, and SUVs that made their way through the roundabout. A few state and private news reporters were also on the scene, cameras in hand. Though Addis Ababa's landfill was nearby, it was downwind that morning, and the pleasant highland air competed only with truck fumes to fill the noses and lungs of the people who assembled.

In 2008, the Ethiopian Volunteers Day event was planned by the staff of a local non-governmental organization (NGO) named Hiwot, who wanted to celebrate their large workforce of volunteer community health workers.¹ The Hiwot NGO had emerged in Addis Ababa in the 1990s to prevent and provide care for people with HIV/AIDS and had since grown to become one of the largest NGOs in the country, with over six hundred community health workers or CHWs on its rosters.² Their CHWs were trained and supervised primarily to support the provision of free antiretroviral therapies (ART) to a rapidly expanding number of new patients—a national program initiated in 2005. Thus the NGO expected its volunteer CHWs to spend anywhere from 15 to 40 hours a week visiting the homes of a dozen or so people living with HIV/AIDS, providing them with



FIGURE 0.1 Ethiopian Volunteers Day, 2008.

Photo courtesy of the author.

counseling, treatment support, and routine care, as well as accompanying them as they sought resources from clinics, NGOs, and government welfare offices.

Though Hiwot trained and supervised CHWs working throughout the capital, it focused much of its attention on the ART program housed at ALERT Hospital, one of the country's biggest and best-resourced ART programs, located near the southwest city limits. At the beginning of ALERT's ART program, which was intended to cover two of Addis Ababa's ten districts, 8,000 out of a total population of 760,000 people were estimated to be in need of ART (FMOH/HAPCO 2006b). At the helm of the program was a respected Ethiopian medical doctor, who managed a staff of ART-specialist physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and data clerks. During a presentation he gave in 2006 to visiting Canadian donors, he impressed upon his audience that his relatively small staff was seeing between 180 and 200 patients a day. Nurses were doing some of the doctors' work, data entry and patient intake clerks were doing some of the nurses' work, and cleaners and records filers were doing some of the patient intake clerks' work. It seemed everyone in the clinic was working well beyond his or her official job description, as the number of people accessing ART at ALERT went from zero at the end of 2004 to nearly three thousand by mid-2006 and then kept on growing.³