

## How African migrants in China cope with barriers to health care

Despite public health being a top priority of the China-Africa cooperation,<sup>1</sup> approximately half a million African migrants in China continue to have restricted access to local health services because of a combination of considerable social and structural barriers to health care.<sup>2</sup> Their quality of life and wellbeing were also affected by racial discrimination and visa policy restrictions.<sup>2,3</sup> In view of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) epidemic, African migrants residing in Wuhan, Hubei province—the epicenter of the outbreak—might be more worried than ever.<sup>4</sup> According to AllAfrica, almost 5000 African students in Wuhan are lacking cash and food products during the current quarantine-lockdown period.<sup>5</sup>

However, the power of community might prove to be crucial during this epidemic. In particular, through strategic community-led initiatives aimed at safeguarding the health of their own community.<sup>6</sup> Community unity is the primary strategy in coping with barriers to health care—eg, the Ghanaian community in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, made monetary donations and arranged health care for their community.

African community organisations also compile and manage information about visits of health-care providers from Africa for their members and encourage these visiting specialists to informally consult on a voluntary basis.<sup>7</sup> Visiting Africans are often asked to bring medicines and test kits for self-diagnosis when they travel to China. Family elders and religious leaders have a major role as health-care providers for both adult and adolescent members of the African community. This community unity is crucial in the current climate marked with an atmosphere of racial discrimination, police intimidation,

and other aspects of social exclusion and harassment that Africans might face in China.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the powerful community coping strategy of African migrants in China, their social and structural barriers to health care should be taken into consideration in implementing Africa-China health cooperation plans,<sup>1</sup> particularly during the current outbreak of COVID-19.

We declare no competing interests.

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