"All roads lead to universal health coverage."

This was the foundational assertion of incoming World Health Organization Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in a recent editorial where he called on governments to commit to ensuring equity in access to healthcare. The moral imperative of health equity sits at the heart of Last Mile Health’s mission and vision, so our team was thrilled to see universal health coverage featured as a key focus of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September.

Amongst the more than 20 events that Last Mile Health attended during UNGA week, we were honored with an invitation from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to present as one of four ‘Accelerators’ working to advance the Sustainable Development Goals. At the event, CEO Dr. Raj Panjabi announced our plans for the Community Health Academy before an audience that included former president Barack Obama, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai, and many respected peer organizations.

EXPANSION TO GRAND BASSA COUNTY

In August, we officially launched operations in Grand Bassa County. We will be partnering with the Ministry of Health’s local County Health Team (CHT) to implement the National Community Health Assistant (CHA) Program. Over the next year, we will recruit, train, and deploy 100 Community Health Assistants (CHAs) and 10 clinical supervisors to serve 100 remote communities.

Together with the Grand Bassa CHT, our Research, Monitoring, and Evaluation Team is currently in the process of mapping the county using Global Positioning System (GPS) technology. Once data collection is complete, the resulting maps will be used to inform the optimal distribution of CHAs across communities, as well as the development of efficient supervision and restock routes.

NATIONAL CHA PROGRAM PROGRESS

At the national level, we continued to support the Ministry of Health to drive forward scale of the National CHA Program and ensure a high quality of implementation across Liberia’s 15 counties. Since July, we have supported implementing partners and government stakeholders to come together for Quarterly Review Meetings at the national level and in Rivercess and Grand Gedeh Counties to discuss program outcomes and navigate challenges and opportunities, especially in the areas of supply chain management and human resource strategy. We also supported the Ministry of Health to develop and begin the

COMMUNITY HEALTH ACADEMY UPDATE

In April, CEO Dr. Raj Panjabi accepted the TED Prize and announced the Community Health Academy as his TED Prize Wish. Drawing on our work in Liberia, the Community Health Academy aims to reinvent the education of community health workers and the leaders who support them. The platform’s first initiative will be an online, open-access continuing professional education platform for policymakers and other public health professionals. In concert with numerous partners, we’re currently developing the platform’s first online course, which will be launched on the HarvardX platform in 2018. The course will be facilitated by leading public health innovators from around the world with a focus on best practices in designing robust and equitable public sector community health worker programs for nationwide scale. To learn more or get involved, visit http://communityhealthacademy.org

PHOTO CAPTIONS
(1) CHA Agnes Panman relaxes outside of her home in Zean Town, Gboe District
(2) Zeagbeh community in Gboe District
(3) Last Mile Health and CHT staff celebrate the launch of operations in Grand Bassa County
(4) A Last Mile Health driver navigates challenging road conditions in Rivercess County
(5) A mother and her baby from Gboe District
(6) The Boe Geewon Community Clinic
(7) Community members, Last Mile Health staff, and members of the CHT celebrate the clinic launch in Boe Geewon