



Community health worker Mary Namboya with three secret mothers, who help connect pregnant women in Malawi with the health system for proper care.

Dear partners,

Since 2007, when Last Mile Health began advocating for investment in professionalized community health workers, we've witnessed encouraging markers of progress. More stakeholders have joined the conversation, and more governments continue to develop policies that rely on a trained community health workforce to bring primary care to poor, rural, and remote areas. We've seen the WHO adopt the first-ever guidelines for paid community health workers, donors like the President's Malaria Initiative and the Global Fund shift policy to paid community health workers, and 35+ countries commit to a professionalized community health workforce.

But at the community level, challenges remain. In many countries, community health workers are still unpaid volunteers in fragmented groups, disconnected from the health system. Even where community health policies exist, they're often not implemented effectively. Why is this?

One key barrier is financing. **To build and sustain strong community health systems, we need more funding, and we need to use that funding more effectively.** This is the driving force behind Africa Frontline First, an initiative launched in 2022 in a



Last Mile Health's Nan Chen with Dr. Jean Kaseya and H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf at Reaching the Last Mile Forum.

partnership between Last Mile Health, Financing Alliance for Health, and the Community Health Impact Coalition under the championship of H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of Liberia.

Africa faces an annual community health funding gap of \$4.4b. Beyond this gap, there are challenges relating to how money flows. It can become fragmented, with programs focusing on specific topics like HIV or malaria, rather than an integrated approach to delivering primary care via one community health workforce. And often, challenges that funders prioritize aren't the challenges national leadership identifies as most urgent. Even when



Community health worker Aaron Namakhuma conducts a patient visit in Chiwawa District, Malawi

countries secure funding, they need tailored technical assistance to ensure it translates into impact.

Africa Frontline First wants to move from a world where governments are the deal takers to the deal makers for their countries, setting the agenda for the community health workforce, its priorities, and how to allocate funding. We operationalize this by mobilizing financing, partnering with governments to ensure financing is effectively used, and building political will to advocate for professionalized community health workers. We aim to close the community

health funding gap, which will allow countries to hire an additional 200,000 community health workers and reach 100 million people with essential care by 2030. **Simply put, Africa Frontline First unlocks more money for community health—and accompanies governments to leverage it effectively.**

In partnership with the Global Fund, Skoll Foundation, and Johnson & Johnson, Africa Frontline First has unlocked \$100m through the Africa Frontline First Catalytic Fund toward improving systems that support community health workers. Last Mile Health is also the lead service provider of BIRCH, a \$7m targeted funding stream supporting 11 countries in Africa. In these countries, we are working alongside technical partners to unlock new funding and leverage complementary investments for national community health plans. We aim for these initiatives to lead to clear policy and sustainable financing.

With champions like Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Dr. Jean Kaseya, Africa Frontline First and Africa CDC are cultivating collaboration and transparency among major donors. In December 2023 at Reaching the Last Mile Forum, 11 partners committed to strengthening community health programs through coordinated and collective investments, led by a \$900m commitment from the Global Fund. Community health is becoming core to key organizations' agendas—and we're building partnerships that will let effective, honest collaboration drive impact.



Community health worker Mary Wiah.

These big-picture shifts are incredibly encouraging. But even more compelling is their impact for real people. This year, I've walked alongside community health workers and heard about their needs. One community health worker, Mary Wiah from Liberia, shared how she provides patient visits and preventive care. She said, "If we get the drugs in stock, we can deliver them and save lives." I asked, "Can you talk to me about why there's an 'if'?" She shared the reality too many community health workers face: there's no guarantee the medicine she needs will be in stock. There's no guarantee she'll be paid on time. She doesn't know if there will be internet so she can report patient data. Financing is at the heart of all these issues. When we invest in community health systems, we change the reality for community health workers.

Together, we can break down the financing barrier to stronger community health systems.

In partnership,

Nan Chen, Co-Executive Director, Africa Frontline First

GLOBAL NEWS

Last Mile Health joined **Reaching the Last Mile Forum and COP28**, elevating community health workers' role in combating the health impacts of climate change.

We published our **2023 Impact Narrative**, reviewing the year's work and impact.

Last Mile Health leaders joined a **virtual dialogue** hosted by the Network of Engaged International Donors on the need for urgent action on climate and health.

COUNTRY NEWS

Community health worker **Serkalem Getachew** shares how digital tools and strong training equip her to provide quality care for patients in Amhara, Ethiopia.

After participating in new **immunization training** from the Ministry of Health, Last Mile Health, and GAVI, community health workers in Ethiopia have increased immunization rates dramatically among a targeted cohort of high-risk children.

In Malawi, community health workers team up with trusted women—known as **"secret mothers"**—to connect with pregnant women and provide appropriate care.

A digital tool designed and pretested by



Community health worker supervision in Kambia District, Sierra Leone.



Last Mile Health and key Africa Frontline First partners onstage at Reaching the Last Mile Forum.

Last Mile Health and Sierra Leone's Ministry of Health equips supervisors to support community health workers effectively.

Our Liberia team published a new study in **BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth**, demonstrating that community health workers can help increase uptake of formal care during and after pregnancy.

In **a short documentary** made possible by the Skoll Foundation, Ethiopian community health worker Workinesh Getachew shares her work and the passion that drives her.

LAST MILE HEALTH NEWS

Meggan Ireland has been promoted to Chief Financial & Operating Officer, building on her eight-year tenure at Last Mile Health.

LOOKING AHEAD

In Liberia, following a run-off vote, President George Weah peacefully conceded to Joseph Boakai of the Unity Party, confirmed as winner by the National Elections Commission. Last Mile Health will continue to work closely with the Liberia Ministry of Health to strengthen the National Community Health Program and ensure sustainability.

This April, we look forward to attending Skoll World Forum and TED 2024.

OUR IMPACT

AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2023

Together, Last Mile Health and our government partners supported:

13,858

community and frontline health workers to provide primary health services

14.7 million

people with improved access to primary healthcare

Guided by our three-part Theory of Change, we work to realize our strategy by strengthening health systems, training health workers, and delivering primary healthcare.



STRENGTHEN

Total number of treatments delivered for malaria, diarrhea, and acute respiratory infections by community health workers to children under five years of age in Liberia

1,158,827

Number of routine home visits provided by community health workers nationally in Liberia

12,505,963



DELIVER

Percentage of children aged 12-23 months who have received all three doses of pentavalent immunizations over the past year

58% in Rivercess County, Liberia

11% in Grand Bassa County, Liberia

Percentage of children under five years of age who received treatment from a formal provider

69% in Rivercess County, Liberia

54% in Grand Bassa County, Liberia



TRAIN

Number of community and frontline health workers trained in health delivery content and/or digital systems during the current fiscal year

921 in Ethiopia

489 in Malawi

1,283 in Liberia

FOOTNOTES:

- Strengthen figures are cumulative since 2016, when Liberia's national program was launched.
- Deliver figures are from 2021 in Rivercess County and from 2022 in Grand Bassa County.

To learn more about our impact, visit our [website](#).