



AFRICA FRONTLINE FIRST

Organizations urge African Union Summit to put the community health workforce on the agenda

Nairobi, Feb. 14, 2023 - The Africa Frontline First initiative and partners urgently call on the leaders attending the 36th Ordinary Session of the African Union Assembly to prioritize discussions on financing a strong community health workforce on the official agenda. The African Union has a critical role to play in achieving universal health coverage and supporting pandemic preparedness - and this starts with investment in a strong community health workforce.

For more than 40 years, we have seen increased investment and action by the global community to create a healthy future for all. This includes the historic commitment made by the African Union in 2017 to train, deploy and support [2 million community health workers](#) across the continent. However, our collective efforts have fallen short as commitments do not get transformed into policy, health financing remains fragmented, and siloed short-term interventions get prioritized. As a result, Africa bears 24% of the global burden of disease, yet it has only 3% of the global health workforce.

The COVID-19 pandemic is threatening decades of progress in global health and halting progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including universal health coverage. Tuberculosis deaths raised for the first time since 2005, almost four million additional children missed vaccines in 2020, and [the pandemic](#) claimed the lives of no fewer than 115,500 frontline health workers.

Investment in community health workers – who are often recruited directly from their own communities and are paid, trained, and supervised to provide essential primary care – is a critical part of the solution. Evidence indicates that community health workers can provide life-saving primary care, expand critical surveillance for emerging disease threats like Ebola and COVID-19, and accelerate economic recovery in hard-to-reach communities across Africa. In addition, community health workers have a [10:1](#) return on investment.

70% of the health workforce is comprised of women, so investment in community health workers will also advance gender equity by providing paid jobs, particularly in rural and remote areas – which is also critical to address the [6 million](#) health worker gap Africa will face by 2030. In addition, Member States will be in fulfillment of the recommendations made by the [Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response](#), and have the opportunity to accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals and follow the Africa CDC [New Public Health Order](#).

Health for all - including global health security - can be achieved with a whole-of-government and whole-of-society effort. Leaders attending the Assembly can give their citizens the health and the workforce they deserve but it requires accountability and action from the highest levels of political leadership. We encourage decision-makers gathering this week to prioritize the health workforce and make Universal Health Coverage in Africa their legacy.

About Africa Frontline First

Africa Frontline First is a collaborative initiative led by Financing Alliance for Health, Last Mile Health, and Community Health Impact Coalition to fund, scale, and strengthen community health programs across Africa. Under the championship of Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Africa Frontline First aims to reach 100 million people with essential health services by 2030. Learn more at <https://www.africafrontlinefirst.org> and on Twitter [@Frontline1st](#)

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