

International Women's Day Spotlight: Financing Alliance for Health

Financing Alliance for Health (FAH) is a founding member of the Communities at the Heart of UHC Campaign. The organization works to help governments design and fund ambitious, highly effective, affordable, and at-scale health systems. FAH strongly believes that community health systems are an integral part of the larger primary healthcare system and that community health workers and are a key component of the continuum of care within the larger human resources for health strategy. For #IWD2020, we asked Nelly Wakaba, FAH's Country Engagement and Support Director, why financing and equality are important to achieving health for all.

Q: What inspires your work at Financing Alliance for Health?

A: What inspires us is the \$2bn gap in funding annually in Sub-Saharan Africa, yet we know a key solution towards attaining health for all is investing in frontline health workers. This is the reason we rise up each day – to push the needle towards closing this gap!

Q: Why is it important to help governments design and fund ambitious, affordable, and at-scale community health programs?

A: It is extremely important to support governments as they are the key implementers and drivers of these programs at scale. Additionally, well-designed community health programs have been shown to yield a \$10:1 return on investment. In the wake of limited resources and complex public health challenges, investing in community health is the best bet on the dollar as it targets to reach communities where 'health is made'. This is why the FAH employs the 'accompaniment model' to work with governments on all steps of financing from designing, costing, developing the case for investment and mobilizing resources – domestic, donor or private sector.

Q: Why do you focus efforts on health systems at the community level?

A: We focus on health systems at the community while leveraging primary healthcare to attain health for all – no communities should be left behind. At this level of the healthcare system, the efforts are geared more towards prevention and aversion of health crisis such as the Ebola outbreak where CHWs played a key role. This keeps healthcare affordable and accessible as well as providing short term savings to other parts of the healthcare system.

Q: The majority of community health workers are women. How can we work together to ensure that an investment in health workforce is an investment in women's empowerment?

A: Majority of community health workers (70%) are women. Sadly, most of them are unpaid yet they serve their communities creating societal benefits that significantly contribute to the return on investment. Investing in paid community health workers, creating a career path for growth and an enabling environment for them to work would be a great way to empower women. In turn, as these highly motivated 'foot-soldiers' work in the community, they shall empower other women – "If you educate a woman, you educate a nation."

Q: An equal world is an enabled world. How does your work benefit women around the world?

A: Firstly, our team is led by a phenomenal woman and the team largely comprises of women! This in itself fuels our conviction to do what we do. If we have trained, equipped and paid CHWs, majority of whom are women, we shall have empowered women in the community. As they work to educate young girls about their health or women on family planning, the ripple effect shall be felt and we shall have an equal, enabled world.