

# COUNTDOWN TO 2023: AMPLIFYING COMMUNITY HEALTH AT THE 2023 UN HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON UHC

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**W**hen governments and the global health community committed to Universal Health Coverage (UHC), they made a promise to health for all, including the hardest-to-reach populations. Community health is critical to achieving this goal. Research shows that 90% of all health needs can be met at the primary care level. Additionally, community health workers (CHWs) can improve maternal, child, reproductive, and adult health outcomes in a financially sustainable method when properly integrated into national health systems and supported by evidence-based best practices.<sup>1</sup>

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends service delivery models that integrate CHWs into primary health care to provide adequate system support and to drive more effective and efficient coordination.<sup>2</sup> Because community health programs provide a high-impact, low-cost solution to the health systems challenges faced in low- and middle-income communities, they alleviate pressure on resource-constricted health facilities. Recognition, investment, and commitment to community health will maximize impact to achieve UHC. CHWs are central in achieving health for all.

## Looking back: 2019 Political Declaration on UHC

The [Political Declaration on UHC](#) was adopted by United Nations Member States on September 23, 2019, and incorporated UHC in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This pivotal moment presented global health advocates like the Communities at the Heart of UHC Campaign a major political platform for comprehensive health

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<sup>1</sup> Primary Healthcare Report Assessment of Supply and Demand Drivers; [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00TG9G.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00TG9G.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> WHO guideline on health policy and system support to optimize community health worker programmes;

<https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/9789241550369>

commitments. More than [30 country officials](#) acknowledged the necessity of community health in their commitments to UHC and when setting national targets for in-country implementation of UHC programming.<sup>3</sup> However, the latest global monitoring report on UHC by WHO and the World Bank indicates that the COVID-19 pandemic is reversing progress made in service coverage.<sup>4</sup>

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*"Without CHWs, there would be many cases of death, home deliveries, and limited immunization. We bridge the gap between health facilities and our communities."*

**Pamela Otieno**  
CHW, Kenya MoH/Lwala Community Alliance

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## Moving forward: 2023 High-Level Meeting on UHC

In September 2023, the United Nations will organize the one-day high-level meeting on UHC (HLM-UHC) in New York to discuss progress made toward UHC commitments to date. The Secretary-General will issue a progress report in early 2023 and the interactive multi-stakeholder hearing will be scheduled before the end of June 2023. The HLM-UHC offers an opportunity to advocate for actions to get back on track in accelerating progress towards UHC by 2030 and ensure continued prioritization of investment in strengthening community health systems that leave no one behind.

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<sup>3</sup> Recap on the UN High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage; [https://www.uhc4communities.com/\\_files/ugd/0d93f1\\_78483aea27a94f-3bae6a7f5e076cedf6.pdf](https://www.uhc4communities.com/_files/ugd/0d93f1_78483aea27a94f-3bae6a7f5e076cedf6.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Tracking Universal Health Coverage: 2021 Global monitoring report <https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/9789240040618>

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In preparation of this meeting, the Communities at the Heart of UHC Campaign will continue to track progress on the commitments to community health through our [Community Health and UHC Scorecards](#) and advocate for well-developed implementation strategies. Momentum to achieve UHC at national and global levels must be accelerated and the time to act is now.

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*"CHWs play a significant role in the health sector. In remote areas where people travel long distances to access health facilities, we step in to help with treating malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia, and other diseases. In my community, my neighbors recognize me as their first doctor."*

**John Obongo**  
**CHW, Kenya Ministry of Health/Lwala Community Alliance**

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### How to engage in HLM-UHC:

It is important for advocates and community health champions to be active in making the 2023 HLM-UHC and outcome document a meaningful tool to ensure progress towards UHC. The following actions can help you leverage this opportunity:

- Participate in the Multi-Stakeholder Hearing: CSOs, iNGOs, advocates and more will have the opportunity to participate in and give feedback during the interactive multi-stakeholder hearing which will be organized before the end of June 2023.
- Use other global health moments to encourage increased attention and investments for community health and UHC by hosting side events and submitting abstracts for consideration that highlight the value of community health for UHC. Moments include:
  - WHO Executive Board (January 2023)
  - 5th Global Human Resources for Health Forum (April, 2023)

- World Health Assembly (May 2023)
- Regional multi-stakeholder consultations on the margins of regional forums for sustainable development (March-April 2023)
- Amplify CHW voices for UHC, including helping CHWs to write and publish blog posts, facilitate CHW participation in events and consultations, and support CHWs to raise awareness in their communities and countries.
- Educate decision-makers: Meet with government leaders to share materials and evidence on community health and UHC and encourage their active participation in the 2023 HLM-UHC. Urge governments to prioritize community voices and utilize budget tracking tools to hold decision makers accountable to their commitments.
- Evidence and materials to support advocacy efforts can be found at <https://www.uhc4communities.com/>
- Add your voice! Use messaging from groups like [Communities at the Heart of UHC campaign](#), [UHC2030 CSEM](#), and [Allies Improving PHC](#) to make the call for community health and UHC loud.

### About the Communities at the Heart of UHC Campaign:

Communities at the Heart of UHC is a multi-year global campaign working to leverage political commitments for UHC by elevating community health and its champions from the global to sub-national level. Amref Health Africa, Financing Alliance for Health, Health and Rights Education Programme, Lwala Community Alliance, Living Goods, Muso Health, Pathfinder International, and the People's Health Movement of Tanzania work together as the campaign steering committee to elevate the visibility of community health within the UHC space.