

 Remarks

# UNICEF Executive Director Catherine Russell's remarks at the World Health Summit launch of the Community Health Delivery Partnership

*As prepared for delivery*

17 October 2023



**BERLIN, 17 October 2023** – "Excellencies, colleagues, distinguished guests, it is my privilege to welcome you here for the launch of the Community Health Delivery Partnership.

"Thank you, Margaret, for sharing your story. It is because of the selfless commitment, compassion, and heroic service of you, and the millions of other community health workers, that we are here today.

"Across the globe, community health workers serve as important sources of trusted knowledge in their communities, as providers of integrated primary health care and nutrition services, and as advocates for local priorities and needs.

"In many contexts, they are the only healthcare providers for vulnerable populations. Over the past year, I have met with community health workers in India, Brazil, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa, and seen their incredible work firsthand.

"In countries where these workers are fully integrated into the primary health care system, they are at the vanguard of accelerating progress on universal health care and health system strengthening. If we could increase support to these workers, helping to extend their reach in vulnerable communities, the impact would be incredible.

"We know, for example, that if community health workers could reach at least 90 per cent of children in need with critical child survival interventions, we would reduce the child mortality rate in high burden countries by a third.

"We also know that the impact of these workers can be maximized when they are supported with fair pay, training opportunities, safe working conditions and resources to get the job done.

"But this is not always the case – especially for women, even though they account for nearly 75 per cent of community health workers globally.

"In many countries, girls' and women's access to quality education and learning tools remains woefully inadequate. Fair compensation for women health care workers is also a serious problem. On average, women are paid 24 per cent less than their male counterparts. And women health workers are more likely to experience violence, sexual abuse, exploitation and harassment at work.



"This needs to change.

"We must provide all community health workers with equitable pay, quality education and training, and a safe working environment, so that they can provide the care on which millions of vulnerable children and families depend.

"And by providing this largely women-led workforce with the right support, we will also help to reduce gender inequality, strengthen community health systems, and accelerate progress on universal health care and the Sustainable Development Goals.

"To support this effort, we have established the Community Health Delivery Partnership to strengthen community-based primary health care, with a focus on community health workers. The Partnership is built on the principles of national ownership, partner alignment, and equity.

"Critically, the Partnership will leverage new investments in women community health workers – to ensure that they receive the salary, support, and supplies they need to deliver vital health and nutrition services.

"Once the Partnership is implemented across the priority countries, at least 66 million children and 100 million women will benefit annually, bringing us one step closer to our goal of universal primary health care.

"UNICEF is fully committed to this agenda, and we will be directing additional resources to support the Partnership. I hope that you will join us, as we grow our investments in resilient, and inclusive community-based primary care systems to reach all children, wherever they may be.

"Thank you."

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