



Institutionalizing Community Health Conference



27-30 March 2017 | Johannesburg, South Africa



FACT SHEET

The time is now for community health. This March, nearly 400 of the world's leading health experts from 45 countries will convene one of the largest gatherings held around community health in years. The Institutionalizing Community Health Conference (ICHC), to be held on March 27 – 30, 2017 in Johannesburg, South Africa, will support countries to strengthen partnerships with communities as resources to transform the future and ensure that every mother, newborn, and child not only survives, but thrives.

ICHC will focus on:

- Sharing state-of-the-art lessons and experience;
- Enabling country stakeholders to share progress and identify solutions to persistent challenges;
- Informing national policies and plans through evidence, success, and adaptive learning; and
- Engaging communities as dynamic resources and agents within national and local systems.

Anticipated outcomes of the conference include:

- Advancing the understanding of the opportunities and challenges – financial and human resources, programmatic, socio-political – for institutionalizing viable and resilient platforms for community health investments,
- Learning from community health programs in diverse systems contexts, with documented processes and impact on comprehensive RMNCAH issues,
- Forging new and strengthening existing partnerships between governments, civil society (i.e. international and local NGOs, professional associations, academia), private sector, and other relevant development partners, to leverage new resources and achieve results with equity, shared accountability, and national ownership,
- Developing country-specific action plans for addressing priority issues/challenges to guide country action and harmonize donor support around those actions
- Prioritizing learning themes within and across countries towards a comprehensive learning agenda to inform community health policies and programs

WHO IS INVOLVED?

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and USAID's flagship Maternal and Child Survival Program (MCSP) will host this four-day conference.

ICHC will mobilize government officials, civil society leaders, policymakers, sub-national program managers and practitioners, private sector, bilateral and multilateral organizations, and researchers. ICHC will feature 23 Country Delegations from: Bangladesh, Benin, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, DRC, Ethiopia, Guinea, Haiti, India, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Uganda.

WHY COMMUNITY HEALTH?

Advancing community health is central to achieving sustainable development and universal primary healthcare. The foundations of community health within the context of primary health care are increasingly recognized as crucial components of national policies and strategies to accelerate progress in health. We need to further integrate community health approaches into national and local health policy and systems in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the implementation of the new UN Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health.

Community health is not a new concept, and programs have existed for decades, from the “Feldsher” program in Russia in the late 1800s to the “Barefoot Doctors” in China in the 1920s. The Alma-Ata Declaration of 1978 identified primary health care as the key to the attainment of the goal of Health for All, and it ushered in the modern era of community health worker (CHW) programming.¹

Today, CHW programs vary around the world, but they all have one thing in common – they play an essential role in closing the health worker gap, and in fostering universal health coverage.

The risk of death is almost twice as high for rural children than urban children. CHWs typically live within the villages they serve so they can respond rapidly, and they are capable of providing many life-saving interventions. For millions of people, CHWs are their first and often only link to health care of any kind.²

Many families rely on CHWs as their main source of information and curative and preventive services for everything from deadly diseases like Ebola, HIV, and malaria, to routine prenatal and postnatal care. The UN recognizes community health work as an essential component of health system resilience needed to combat these emerging diseases and pandemics.³

According to WHO projections, by 2030 we will face a shortage of 18 million health workers, particularly in low-income countries. This scarcity threatens the potential for achieving the SDGs.⁴ Prioritizing community health is a very efficient means to achieving many health outcomes, so it will be critical to reaching the SDGs and ensuring Health for All. WHO estimates that expanded access to key interventions provided by CHWs could prevent up to 3 million deaths per year.⁵

Community health also accelerates other community-based development objectives, from education to employment to women's empowerment.⁶ In addition, an often underappreciated aspect of health service delivery is the community members themselves and their role in the ownership and generation of health. Community health approaches can empower communities so that they can be involved in processes to help ensure that health services are people-centered.

To learn more, visit www.ichc2017.org, and follow the conference hashtag [#HealthForAll](https://twitter.com/HealthForAll).

¹ [Community Health Framework](#), USAID

² [Frontline Health Workers Coalition](#)

³ [Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescent's Health](#), WHO

⁴ [Working for Health and Growth: Investing in the Workforce](#), WHO

⁵ [Strengthening Primary Health Care through Community Health Workers](#), WHO

⁶ [Community Health Framework](#), USAID