Community health workers (CHWs) can dramatically expand access to health care for all in a cost-effective manner. CHWs have demonstrated effectiveness in delivering a range of preventative and curative services, resulting in reduced maternal mortality and child mortality for vulnerable communities. However, even when CHWs are in place, their success is dependent upon integration into the health systems they support. This means they must be trained, supervised, paid and equipped with the supplies they need to meet the needs of their communities. When the right products are not available, this impacts patient health and hinders CHW productivity and motivation.

VillageReach and Last Mile Health are partnering to strengthen the supply chains that provide medicines to CHWs who bring critical health care services to the hardest-to-reach communities. Initially, VillageReach will complement the existing work of the Liberia Ministry of Health and Last Mile Health in improving supply chains for hardest to reach areas in three counties—Rivercess, Brand Bassa and Grand Gedeh— as part of the Government of Liberia’s National Community Health Assistant (NCHA) Program. The demonstrated success of the two organizations will combine Last Mile Health’s deep knowledge of community health systems with VillageReach’s experience to improve product availability and quality at the point of service.

“Paying and investing in CHWs isn’t just the right thing to do; it’s the smart thing to do to accelerate universal health coverage.”

From the British Medical Journal
Dr. Wilhelmina Jallah, Minister of Health of the Republic of Liberia; Dr. Francis Kateh, Chief Medical Officer and Deputy Minister of Health of the Republic of Liberia; and Dr. Raj Panjabi, CEO of Last Mile Health
Last Mile Health has identified supplies as one of the four critical components of a CHW’s success, along with skills, salary and supervision. Supplies include everything that’s needed to support CHWs including drugs such as artemisinin-based combination treatment (ACTs), rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs) and oral rehydration salts (ORS), as well as oral contraceptions and condoms, medical products such as disposable gloves, dispensing envelopes, safety boxes and general support items (scales and calculators) and job aids. Optimizing supply chain functions will increase availability of medicines for CHWs at the point of care. The impact of the partnership will be measured by indicators including an increase in the percentage of CHWs with all essential medicines they needed, with a goal of 90% of all CHWs with all essential commodities in stock by FY2023.

VillageReach will support Last Mile Health and The Liberia Ministry of Health in strengthening key areas of the system to ensure supplies get to where they are needed at the last mile.

**COMPLEMENTING A COLLABORATION FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH**

**Supporting government for long-term sustainability**

Last Mile Health has long established that improving community health starts in the community. Behind every CHW is a team to ensure their work is possible, and VillageReach’s supply chain experts will strengthen this team by working closely with CHWs and their clinical supervisors. Both organizations are also committed to ensuring that governments—as the doer and ideally payer at scale for health care for the very poor—are at the center of any partnership. VillageReach is working closely with the government Supply Chain Management Unit, Pharmacy Division and Supply Chain Central Medical Store to increase alignment with government policies, structures, and information systems. This will improve the government’s capacity to support the supply chain for CHWs now and in the future.

The evidence generated will advance the organizations’ collective expertise to model a solution for dedicated supply chain support within Liberia’s NCHA Program. It will also inform programs in other geographies and add to operational guidance for catalyzing high-impact CHW programs in collaboration with the Community Health Impact Coalition.