

Champions of Care: How JSI Supports the Community Health Workforce



JSI is committed to improving lives by advancing better health and education outcomes for individuals and communities. Through multisector partnerships, we co-create lasting solutions. Our decades long partnership with community health workers (CHW)—a frontline public health worker who is a trusted member of the community served¹—is foundational to JSI’s mission to improve health and education outcomes for all.

Listening to Community Health Workers

CHWs offer critical health services to families, including counseling, screenings, timely access to essential medicines, referrals to specialized care, and psychosocial support.² For rural and harder to reach populations, CHWs are vital to care access. Their work has shown to reduce costs³ and alleviate burdens on a health system.⁴

JSI has built effective, scalable, and sustainable programs by working side-by-side with CHWs in more than 20 countries. We work with CHWs to understand their experiences; drive program design and implementation; and produce and use data to inform sustainable health program improvement. We provide capacity strengthening, equipment, and evaluation assistance. We embrace the principle of “Nothing about CHWs without CHWs”, ensuring that CHWs are respected, compensated fairly, and are in positions of leadership.

CHW Core Roles

- Care coordination and system navigation
- Health advocacy
- Provide direct essential health services
- Conduct community health outreach
- Provide culturally appropriate health education
- Provide psychosocial support
- Health program research, measurement, evaluation, and learning

CHW Core Skills²

- Communication and outreach
- Interpersonal and relationship-building
- Service coordination
- Understanding of health system navigation
- Advocacy
- Professionalism
- Evaluation and research





Strengthening Quality-of-Care Provided by CHWs

We work with CHWs to strengthen their knowledge of care per recommended guidance and to give them access to the commodities and support they need to strengthen the quality of health care systems. JSI has provided national training for health centers and healthy start programs. At the U.S. state level, we partner with organizations to highlight innovations in CHW care models for broader learning and implementation. JSI assessed CHW and potential payer perspectives on facilitators and challenges to expanding CHW services in Massachusetts, developing guidance on how CHW services can improve health and quality-of-care, and reduce disparities and costs. We provided training to tens of thousands of CHWs in Zambia to vaccinate community members against COVID-19 and worked closely with the national Lady Health Worker Program in Pakistan to provide high-quality, integrated health services at the doorsteps of households.

Empowering CHWs with Technology for Better Evidence-driven Decision Making

In Yemen and Ethiopia, JSI has equipped CHWs with an electronic community health information system, a tablet based application that enables a CHW to access counseling instructions on a range of health services. This technology enables CHWs to sync their service data to national health databases, enabling greater visibility of their work, while informing more effective resource prioritization across the health system.

Partnering with CHWs for Equitable Evaluation

JSI served as one of two national evaluation centers for a U.S.-based CHW initiative addressing COVID-19. Our multi-site community-based evaluation explored CHWs' role in expanding access to COVID-19 and community resources. We have worked with multiple states to advance the CHW workforce through planning and evaluation. We supported asthma programs in Massachusetts, including researching and evaluating models for CHW-led asthma home visiting that improve self-management and reduction of environmental trigger-factors for children and older adults.

CHWs as Advocates for Change

JSI worked with CHWs in eastern India, who were change agents in providing nutrition education services and advocating for increased availability of community-based maternal and child nutrition services.

CHW Voices Can Build Strong Health Programs

Through a local health leadership empowerment approach, we developed an initiative in Laos that unified community health voices to discuss local health access challenges and pinpoint solutions which we helped to implement through funding and technical supervision.

References:

1. <https://www.apha.org/apha-communities/member-sections/community-health-workers>
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3. ASTHO. Community Health Workers: Evidence of Their Effectiveness. Published online 2024. Accessed December 23, 2024. www.astho.org/globalassets/pdf/community-health-workers-summary-evidence.pdf
4. Kangovi, S., Mitra, N., Grande, D., Long, J. A., & Asch, D. A. (2020). Evidence-Based Community Health Worker Program Addresses Unmet Social Needs And Generates Positive Return On Investment: A return on investment analysis of a randomized controlled trial of a standardized community health worker program that addresses unmet social needs for disadvantaged individuals. *Health Affairs*, 39(2), 207-213.

