



# TOGETHER

*for health*



# 2023

## YEAR IN REVIEW

Dear Supporters,

There's sound logic behind the cervical cancer elimination strategy launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2020 in that a singular focus on any one of its three underlying pillars – vaccination against the human papillomavirus (HPV), preventive screening, and treatment – at the expense of the others will ultimately leave too many women behind. The goals were constructed to ensure a comprehensive approach preserving adult lives in the near-term through screening and treatment, with widespread vaccination of children and adolescents preventing cancer-causing strains of HPV in future generations.

It's a reminder to those of us working to ensure the achievement of the WHO's goals is a collective effort and that no single organization will achieve these ambitious goals alone. In 2023, this spirit of collaboration resulted in exciting developments and the formation of new partnerships and initiatives dedicated to ending this preventable cancer. Forging new partnerships is a core part of our mission.

At TogetHER for Health, we are especially proud of our role as a founding partner in Operation Wipe Out – alongside our partners at Alabama's Department of Public Health, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the Rotary Clubs of Birmingham and of LaFayette County, and others – which launched the country's first statewide plan to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem in the United States. None of these dedicated organizations could have solely taken on the task of engaging providers and experts from across the State to bring together the knowledge and commitments culminated in the ten-year action plan.

This emphasis on partnership was mirrored globally. The burden of both cervical and breast cancer in the Asia Pacific region is slated to increase substantially in the years to come without concerted policy action. That's why we were proud to join the APAC Women's Cancer Coalition in 2023, alongside advocacy partners, program implementers, and industry experts alike. TogetHER also joined the Global HPV Consortium, organized by the Sabin Vaccine Institute to build an action plan across a diverse set of partners to accelerate progress in cervical cancer elimination. And, our role as a funding partner through our Cervical Cancer Grants Program enabled two organizations to bring innovative prevention approaches directly to women and girls in Kenya and Malawi.

Six years ago, TogetHER was launched to convene implementing partners to share best practices, evidence and intelligence. To that end, we were thrilled to expand our member network in 2023, as we welcomed the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) and Grounds for Health as part of our global network.

It's inspiring to see new partners and initiatives bring to bear a new urgency in the global fight for cervical cancer elimination. Certainly there is a role for each organization to play. Far too many women – over 662,000 in the most recent estimates for 2022 - continue to be diagnosed with cervical cancer globally. Almost 349,000 women lost their lives to this preventable disease in 2022. This status quo is utterly unacceptable.

In January of 2024, I was honored to moderate a panel on global cervical cancer prevention at the White House organized by the Biden Cancer Moonshot team. My comments emphasized the need to challenge this unacceptable status quo in which too many women, families, and communities are devastated by cervical cancer. That word "Moonshot" denotes the ambition of this endeavor.

It took teamwork, guts, dedication, and significant resources to achieve the goals of the Apollo Program in the 1960s and 1970s. To make cervical cancer elimination a reality, these same qualities must be exemplified by our partnerships and programs, working not in myopic silos, but driven to collaborate and reinforce each other in service of our collective goal.

TogetHER for Health is proud to stand with you all. Thank you for your partnership this year and every year.

Heather White, Executive Director

**Dedicated to Ending Cervical Cancer Around the World**

Cervical cancer is highly preventable and treatable when detected early. Vaccines against human papillomavirus (HPV) are safe and protect against a total of six HPV-related cancers, including cervical cancer. Cervical screening can identify precancerous cervical lesions for safe removal, reducing the risk of invasive disease. Expanding access to vaccination and screening can improve treatment and cure rates by reducing the overall prevalence of late-stage diagnoses.

Despite the existence of effective prevention measures, cervical cancer needlessly ends the lives of almost 349,000 women every year. The vast majority of these deaths – roughly 90% – occur in low- and middle-income countries and are attributable to tragic inequities in access to effective prevention and timely treatment.

TogetHER for Health is a global partnership focused on ending cervical cancer by generating political will to improve policies and increase investment, enhancing technology and practice, and expanding awareness to address these inequities. We draw on the strength of our member network of organizations with decades of experience working on the frontlines of sexual and reproductive health and rights in over 31 countries worldwide, building support and knowledge among advocates, health workers, government officials, and others who are needed to make cervical cancer elimination a reality.

**Progress in Achieving an End to Cervical Cancer**

In November of 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched its Global Strategy to Accelerate the Elimination of Cervical Cancer in November – the first-ever global plan to eliminate a cancer. The Strategy hinges on three critical access targets:

- Vaccinating 90% of girls against HPV by 15 years of age;
- Screening 70% of women at ages 35 and 45 for precancerous cervical lesions; and
- Ensuring that 90% of those women in need receive treatment for cervical disease.

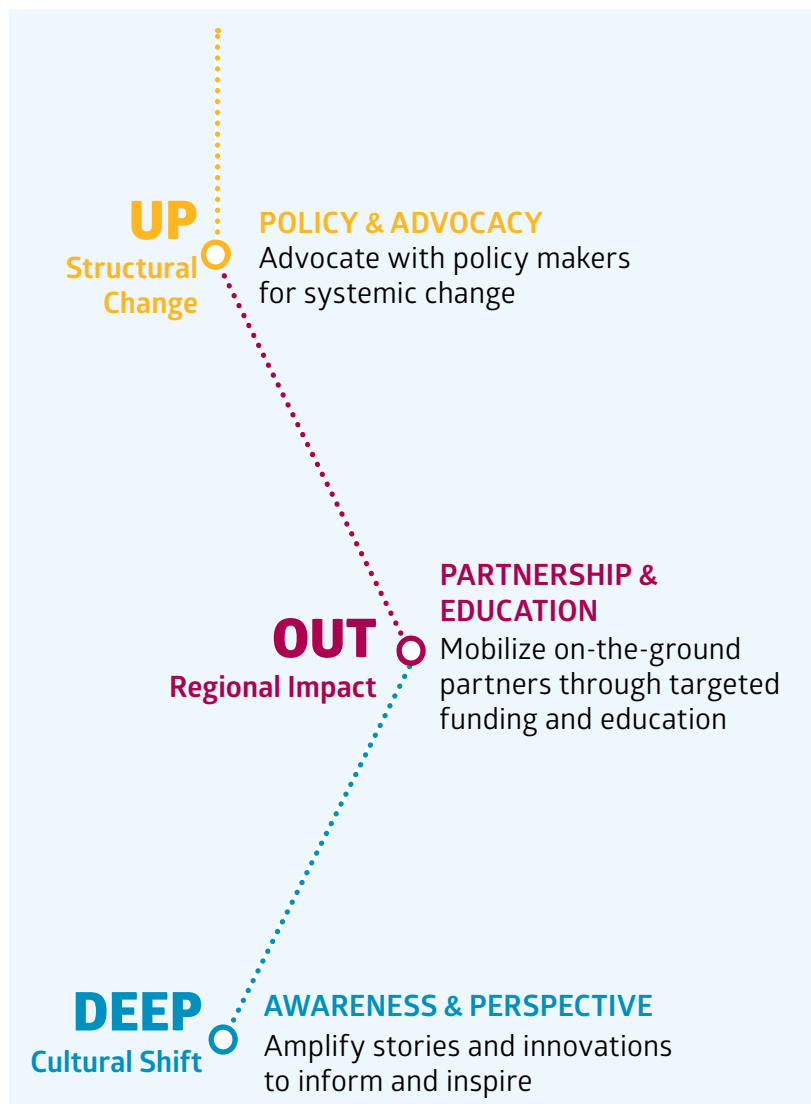
Progress against these goals since the Strategy’s launch has been uneven at best, and practically non-existent in

many parts of the world, leaving millions of women at risk and threatening the fabric of families and communities. TogetHER for Health is dedicated to doing what it takes to accelerate access to the evidence-based prevention and treatment tools and strategies that can make cervical cancer a disease of the past.

**TogetHER’s Approach**

TogetHER works to catalyze cervical cancer elimination by:

- **Scaling up** to create structural change through policy and advocacy;
- **Scaling out** to drive regional impact through partnership and education; and
- **Scaling deep** to address cultural barriers by increasing awareness and amplifying critical perspectives.



*TogetHER’s Approach*

TogetHER's team worked across these three areas in 2023 to address the wide spectrum of challenges standing between us and a world without cervical cancer.

**Scaling Up Through Policy and Advocacy**

Political will, financial resources, and an enabling policy environment are necessary elements for the full realization of the WHO Cervical Cancer Elimination Strategy.

TogetHER and our partners engage policymakers and funders to generate critical support for cervical cancer prevention programs and demand accountability for prior commitments. Advocating for necessary policy change and new investment is best done in tandem with others, and TogetHER leveraged our partnerships for key advocacy at the national, regional, and global levels in 2023.

The United States government is the single largest funder of cervical cancer screening and treatment in low- and middle-income countries, primarily through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)'s Go Further collaboration, which also includes partners at the George W. Bush Institute, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Merck, and Roche. United States support has also been provided through the Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research (PEER) program, jointly funded through the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering & Medicine.

Sustaining – and expanding – these crucial investments means mobilizing legislative support in the United States

Congress. In April 2023, TogetHER and our member organization Pathfinder International coordinated an educational day on Capitol Hill, [bringing evidence and advocacy to the U.S. Congress](#) through a series of meetings with staff from two Senate offices and six House offices members focused on the lifesaving impact of U.S. investments in cervical cancer. We supplemented these in-person meetings with virtual engagements, totaling 22 Congressional offices in total. In an especially challenging Congressional environment, experiencing bipartisan enthusiasm for cervical cancer prevention was especially encouraging.

The respective burdens of cervical and breast cancer are projected to rise in the Asia Pacific Region without investment in prevention and a more enabling policy environment. TogetHER for Health is proud to be a founding member of the APAC Women's Cancer Coalition, formally launched in September 2023, to not only play a role in accelerating access to lifesaving cervical cancer prevention in the Asia Pacific region but to ultimately drive regional progress toward the achievement of the WHO's global targets for breast and cervical cancer. The Coalition commissioned a report from Economist Impact – [Impact and opportunity: the case for investing in women's cancers in Asia Pacific](#) – that lays out the public health, equity, and financial case for enhanced regional investment in women's health and provides national policy summaries of the state of cervical cancer prevention across the Coalition's six target countries: India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

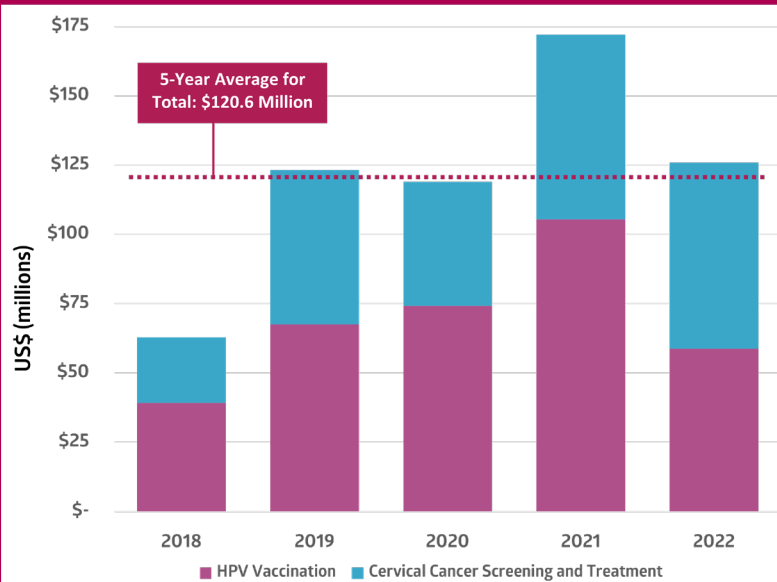


*Representatives from KILELE Health Association, Pathfinder International, and TogetHER for Health's Heather White with staff from Congressman Michael McCaul in April 2023*

*Dr. Yin Ling Woo of ROSE Foundation with TogetHER's Tom Harmon at the launch of the Global HPV Consortium in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, September 2023*



*TogetherHER for Health's Kathy Vizas at the Stronger Together patient advocacy event in Geneva, July 2023*



*Figure 1. Cervical Cancer Prevention Funding in Low- and Lower Middle-Income Countries, 2018-2022*

2023 also saw TogetherHER join as a founding member of the Global HPV Consortium, organized by the Sabin Vaccine Institute to bring together global actors to accelerate efforts to prevent HPV infection and eliminate cervical cancer as a public health concern. The launch meeting in Kuala Lumpur in September of 2023 featured leading lights in the global cervical cancer prevention space, as well as a number of groups new to the effort bringing fresh ideas and energy.

Heather White and TogetherHER for Health's Co-Founder/ Chief Strategy Officer Kathy Vizas joined global cervical cancer advocates in Geneva for a meeting of the Stronger Together patient advocacy group in July, organized by Hologic. Discussions centered on the need to ensure that patients' voices and perspectives are incorporated into global strategies.

TogetherHER knows that arguments to sustain and increase funding rely on evidence and data. In November, TogetherHER released [its fifth annual estimates of funding for cervical cancer prevention](#) in low-income countries (LICs) and lower middle-income countries (LMICs), covering 2018-2022. 2022 witnessed a year-to-year decrease in financial support for cervical cancer prevention programs in LICs and LMICs. In 2022, a total of US\$58.9 million was invested in HPV vaccine programming in low- and lower middle-income countries, a year-to-year reduction of 44.2% largely attributed to use of vaccine stocks not dispensed during the COVID-19 pandemic. US\$67.1 million was invested in cervical cancer screen-and-treat programs in 2022, a slight year-to-year increase of 0.7%.

These data do not exist in a vacuum; context is critical. The sizable decrease in funding between 2021 and 2022 was in large part a result of good stewardship of vaccine resources and is also likely to be reversed as Gavi's revitalization program greatly ramps up HPV vaccination programs in its partner countries in the next several years. It remains to be seen whether future investments will close the existing gap for global funding needed to reach global elimination targets. At the current pace only around \$1.6 billion will be mobilized for cervical cancer prevention in LICs and LMICs by 2030, a mere 15% of the \$10.5 billion WHO estimates will be necessary to achieve targets for cervical cancer elimination in these countries. The goal of elimination hinges on the entry of new political and financial champions to mobilize the necessary resources. In March of 2024, the World Bank, the Gates Foundation, and UNICEF made a joint commitment totaling \$590 million to support cervical cancer elimination, but it remains unclear how this funding might be distributed among each of the three elimination pillars of vaccination, screening, and treatment.

Aligning global HIV/AIDS and cervical cancer scale-up goals presents an opportunity to take on these interlinked global health crises in tandem. Expanding access to HPV vaccines for people living with HIV represents a critical step toward achieving those goals – and safeguarding millions of lives. On World AIDS Day 2023, TogetherHER for Health and AVAC [called for evidence-based action to protect this especially vulnerable population](#), which bears a sixfold risk of being diagnosed with cervical cancer.

TogetHER continued its push for broader uptake of WHO guidelines emphasizing HPV testing and single-dose HPV vaccine regimens for eligible youth, and the integration of cervical cancer prevention activities within family planning and sexual and reproductive health programs.

We also initiated research seeking to better understand barriers to increasing European engagement in global cervical cancer prevention efforts, as well as where opportunities to more effectively utilize pooled procurement to reduce the costs of HPV diagnostics might expand access and support the WHO's 70% screening goal.



*Operation Wipe Out Partners at the launch of the Strategic Action Plan for Cervical Cancer Elimination as a Public Health Problem in the State of Alabama, May 8, 2023.*

### Scaling Out Through Partnership, Education, and Funding

By leveraging its networks and resources, TogetHER seeks to support programs in low-resource settings through targeted engagement and catalytic funding, generating community health impact and expanding the evidence base to inform programs both globally and in the United States.

Alabama has among the highest death rates from cervical cancer in the U.S., nearly 50% higher than in the rest of the country. Promoting education and ensuring access to affordable HPV vaccination, screening, and treatment services for adolescents and women in Alabama are critical for reversing this fatal trend.

In November 2021, TogetHER joined with Alabama-based partners - including the Alabama's Department of Public Health, the Auburn University School of Nursing, the Chambers County School District, the Circle of Care Center for Families, Quality of Life Health Services, Inc., the Rotary Clubs of Birmingham and of LaFayette County, and the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center - to form [Operation Wipe Out](#). Since its launch, Operation Wipe Out partners have worked to raise awareness about HPV and cervical cancer prevention and facilitating access to HPV vaccination, screening, follow-up, and treatment if needed. Operation Wipe Out also organized engagements to gather the perspectives and input of health providers from across the state on opportunities to enhance access through the Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (ABCCEDP) which provides free breast and cervical cancer screenings for women in the state who are otherwise unable to pay.

That feedback was integral to the creation of a groundbreaking new plan. In May of 2023, Operation Wipe Out leaders were joined by Alabama's State Health Officer Dr. Scott Harris as [Alabama announced the United States's first statewide action plan to eliminate cervical cancer](#) as a public health problem.

Operation Wipe Out continues to grow. Dr. Isabel Scarinci of the University of Alabama at Birmingham received a supplemental grant from the National Cancer Institute to develop a leadership program with high school students enrolled in the Chambers County Health Science Career Technical Education Program, who developed a multi-channel communication campaign promoting awareness



*Ms. Linda Hayes is a health advocate and outreach coordinator for Alabama's Department of Public Health, an Operation Wipe Out partner. [Click here for her story](#). Photo: Moonshine Agency.*



about cervical cancer and information about HPV vaccination in Chambers County, alongside a series of school-based vaccination campaigns.

TogetHER's Cervical Cancer Grants Program provides targeted grants designed to generate evidence supporting increased access to innovative cervical cancer prevention technologies. On March 8th, 2023 – International Women's Day - [we announced two new grantees:](#)

As **Grounds for Health** scales up the implementation of HPV self-sampling in its Kenya program, it is applying lessons learned and informing program adaptations to reach up to 2,000 women with HPV self-testing. The significant shift in approach self-sampling represents to cervical cancer to screening has affected everything from importation to service delivery. Our support for Grounds for Health's program seeks to identify best practices in the implementation of HPV testing and treatment programs and promote local and global dissemination of effective models of service provision, specifically in very rural settings where so many women in low- and middle-income countries reside.

**Women Together Global's** Cervical Cancer Screening and Prevention project focuses on mobilizing and training a total of 25 women and girls from its target communities in the districts of Mangochi and Mulanje to become Cervical Cancer Navigators, educating women and girls in their communities about the risk of cervical cancer and methods of prevention. Working hand-in-hand with local community health workers and district hospital staff, Cervical Cancer Navigators aim to boost adoption of new self-swabbing methods for cervical cancer screening - reaching at least 1,000 women with the technology - and establish

a new role for women as an effective grassroots workforce for improving health in their communities.

Unfortunately, Women Together Global's programs were halted by a tragic natural disaster, as Cyclone Fred devastated their partner communities in Malawi, with more than half of residents surveyed losing part or all of their homes and nearly all losing crops. TogetHER worked with Women Together Global [to pivot Cervical Cancer Grants Program support](#) toward the process of rebuilding as a step toward relaunching their cervical cancer prevention activities in the future.

### **Scaling Deep Through Sharing Knowledge and Perspectives**

Opportunities to engage the wider cervical cancer prevention field and other organizations working in global women's health abounded in 2023. Throughout this past year, TogetHER staff were onsite for a number of global events relevant to our mission, networking with new potential partners and champions.

TogetHER for Health was active at the April 2023 International Papillomavirus Conference (IPVC) organized by the International Papillomavirus Society (IPVS) in Washington, DC. In addition to presenting research stemming from our recent Kizazi Chetu program with Scope Impact to drive awareness and uptake of cervical cancer screening in Kenya, we were invited to participate in a reception organized by the Business Coalition for International Understanding that also featured speakers from the Biden Cancer Moonshot team, IPVS, and leaders from Roche Diagnostics and Merck.

It was also an honor to be invited to attend the Skoll World Forum in the

*Top: Courtesy of Grounds for Health  
Middle: Courtesy of Women Together Global  
Bottom: Dorothy Nyong'o of the Africa Cancer Foundation with Heather White at the World Cancer Leaders Summit*

United Kingdom in April, where Executive Director Heather White spread our message in a new venue to a dizzying variety of experts in global health and development. Dr. White was also in attendance at the World Cancer Leaders' Summit taking place in October 2023, organized by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC).

Cervical cancer impacts lives in every region of the world, which means that effective prevention programs must reflect the local context and build on a widely available base of knowledge on what works in other settings. TogetHER provides opportunities for practitioners and advocates to share their expertise and inspiration with their global peers, constructing a truly global network of practice standing in solidarity against cervical cancer.

In 2023, TogetHER added four webinars to our ongoing series focused on key topics in cervical cancer prevention:

- A conversation centered on the impact on investments made by Unitaid to expand access to effective tools improving cervical cancer screening and pre-cancer treatment through the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) and the Scale-up Cervical Cancer Elimination with Secondary prevention Strategy (SUCCESS) project.
- A discussion highlighting opportunities and challenges to rolling out and scaling HPV testing (including self-sampling approaches) and pre-cancer treatment for women in rural Kenya, featuring experts from CureCervicalCancer and Grounds for Health.

- A webinar featuring staff from the MD Anderson Cancer Center and Population Services International (PSI) presenting results from the USAID/NAS-funded MULHER study, integrating cervical cancer prevention services into existing voluntary family planning programs in multiple sites across Mozambique.
- A conversation going into detail on the massively successful cervical cancer screening and treatment pilot project bringing together the Elekta Foundation, the Rwanda Biomedical Centre, Society For Family Health and the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI).

These webinars and supplementary materials [are archived on TogetHER's website](#).

### Bringing Organizations Driving Cervical Cancer Prevention Efforts TogetHER

TogetHER exists to serve the wider effort of global cervical cancer elimination, creating spaces for dialogue and collaboration and acting as a networking hub connecting organizations from around the world.

In 2023, TogetHER continued to convene and support our network of member organizations: the American Cancer Society, Basic Health International (BHI), Global Health Labs, Jhpiego, Pathfinder, and Population Services International (PSI). We also welcomed two new members: the Clinton Health Access Initiative and Grounds for Health. The cervical cancer prevention programs of several of our members [were spotlighted in a brief](#) published in November.

In addition to the members of TogetHER, we would like to thank our collaborating partners and supporters, including Panorama Global, Rotary International, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the Alabama Department of Public Health, AL Dept of Public Health, Rotary Clubs of Birmingham and of LaFayette County, Hologic, Roche, the Women to Watch Foundation, Maverick Collective, Cervical Cancer Action for Elimination, Cervivor, Colectivo, Scope Impact, the Tiba Foundation, the Matibabu Foundation, Conquering Cancer, and all of the organizations who share TogetHER's commitment to the global elimination of cervical cancer.



*Leadership of Operation Wipe Out (TogetHER for Health, Alabama Department of Public Health, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham) in the TogetHER for Health promotional video.*



**Ready for Our Close Up?**

One of TogetHER’s goals going into 2023 was to let some of the personalities behind our mission get more visibility. Our participation in Moonshine Agency’s new version of their powerful Conquering Cancer documentary (coming to screens in 2024) also generated footage Moonshine used [to create a promotional video](#) we released in November of 2023. It’s a great introduction to what inspired our creation and to the passion behind our efforts to accelerate an end to cervical cancer.

We also released a series of Staff Spotlights on our website over the course of the year, allowing our team members to talk a bit about who we are when we step away from our laptops.

**TogetHER We Can End Cervical Cancer**

2023 saw TogetHER’s activities evolve to be both more global AND more local, from the rural areas of Alabama to conference centers in Vietnam. It’s a great reminder that there is work to be done around the world to address women’s challenges in accessing effective cervical cancer prevention – and that there are lessons to be learned in each of these contexts that can inform and improve successful programs in surprisingly different places.



*Team retreat in Del Mar, California, November 2023.  
L-R: Tom Harmon, External Affairs Director; Kathy Vizas, Co-Founder/Chief Strategy Officer; Heather White, Executive Director*

Regardless of setting, the goal remains the same: to identify and implement the best solutions in every context to safeguard women’s health from this preventable cancer along the way to ending it for all time.

Your support remains a source of inspiration and motivation. We’re grateful for the contributions of our partners – past, present, and future - as we work for a world where cervical cancer no longer threatens any woman, anywhere.

**TogetHER Members**



**A WORLD WITHOUT  
CERVICAL CANCER  
DEATHS IS POSSIBLE.**



**[www.togetherforhealth.org](http://www.togetherforhealth.org)**

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