

2018 YEAR IN REVIEW

December 2018

Dear supporters,

In 2018, global health leaders drew increased attention not only to the burden of cervical cancer—which has often fallen into the shadows of other pressing development challenges—but also to the breathtaking potential of the solutions. The global health community took important steps to scale up the effective solutions already available, and to move forward with new tools against the disease.

We launched TogetHER for Health with a goal to promote greater awareness and funding, and to encourage innovation. There are exciting signs of progress, and we look forward to working with our colleagues to do much more in 2019.



Political Will

"We have the tools and, crucially, the political commitment to...beat cervical cancer," declared the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, on May 22, 2018. His call to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health threat energized the global health community and reflected the growing focus on cervical cancer

this year by political leaders, service providers, researchers, and advocates.

Following the Director General's statement, WHO brought stakeholders together to develop a cervical cancer elimination plan outlining the strategy and the funding needed to end cervical cancer. The goal to eliminate cervical cancer helps focus the global health community and world leaders on finding concrete ways to prevent and treat the disease.

The excitement around cervical cancer as a solvable problem has been felt in a variety of settings. In July, during the International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam, experts discussed the linkages between HIV and cervical cancer. Cervical cancer was also a focus at the World Cancer Congress in Kuala Lumpur; the World Congress of Gynecology and Obstetrics in Rio de Janeiro, sponsored by the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO); and the Global Symposium on Health Systems Research in Liverpool. At the FIGO conference, participants signed a call to action to end cervical cancer.

The fight against cervical cancer shone especially brightly during events surrounding the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases (UN HLM on NCDs), in September in New York. Heads of state and government committed to new measures to address NCDs, including promoting "access to affordable diagnostics, screening, treatment and care, as well as vaccines that lower the risk of cancer, as part of the comprehensive approach to its prevention and control, including cervical and breast cancers." Several side events focused specifically on cervical cancer, including an event for First Ladies, and a panel discussion co-hosted by TogetHER and the American Cancer Society that featured influential leaders such as the heads of UNAIDS and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.



Gawa Medical Clinic in Thika, Kenya.

Meanwhile, as the dialogue about cervical cancer amplified throughout the year, many countries took action to address their own cervical cancer burdens. For example:

- Namibia and Bangladesh introduced, respectively, new guidelines and a strategy on national cervical cancer prevention.
- Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe joined seven other low-income countries that now include the human papillomavirus (HPV, which causes most cases of cervical cancer) vaccine in their routine immunization programs with the support of Gavi.
- First Ladies championed cervical cancer screening and treatment. For example, Her Excellency Mrs. Auxillia Mnangagwa of Zimbabwe underwent cervical cancer screening to encourage others to do so; and H.E. Mrs. Sika Bella Kaboré of Burkina Faso was a high-profile participant at cervical cancer events surrounding the UN General Assembly.
- Australian researchers announced in October that their country will be the first to effectively eliminate cervical cancer if current vaccination and screening rates are maintained.



Funding Landscape

Women's access to cervical cancer services will improve in many countries with new sources of funding announced in 2018.

UNITAID issued a call for proposals in May for projects to increase access to HPV screening and cervical cancer treatment tools. This will bring an additional \$30m in funding for cervical cancer prevention.

Also in May, the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) announced it would invest \$30 million in cervical cancer screening and treatment for women living with HIV, working with UNAIDS and the George W. Bush Institute. PEPFAR's initial focus for this funding was eight sub-Saharan African countries where the burden of HIV and cervical cancer

is high: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

In November, the U.S. Agency for International Development requested applications for innovative approaches to increasing cervical cancer screening and preventive therapy through introduction of new technologies, and integration with voluntary family planning programs. The funding will support work in Malawi and Mozambique.

Overall, this represents an increase in funding opportunities, but continues to be far short of the need. As new technologies become available, TogetHER will continue to advocate for funding increases.



Promising Technologies

As the global health community works to scale up existing tools against cervical cancer, new diagnostic and treatment tools will allow us to reach more girls and women with even greater impact, and at even lower cost.

For example, thermal coagulation is gaining acceptance as a safe and practical means to treat pre-cancerous lesions that are revealed during cervical screening – a process known as “screen-and-treat.” Cryotherapy, an older tool for treatment, is often impractical in low-resource settings because infrastructure, trained personnel, and supplies are lacking. WHO began developing guidelines for thermal coagulation this year, and Malawi has already ordered 300 thermal coagulators, using money from The Global Fund. The



forthcoming WHO guidelines will open the door for more countries to incorporate the practice into their cervical cancer prevention recommendations, and more cases of cervical cancer can be averted.

Another technological breakthrough for cervical cancer prevention is the use of artificial intelligence (AI) for visually recognizing cervical pre-cancerous lesions. The National Cancer Institute and TogetHER member Global Good announced that AI can visually recognize cervical pre-cancer lesions better than a human expert. When this technology is available to the field, it will enable not only better diagnoses, but also greater women's access to screen-and-treat services in places where a lack of trained medical professionals is a barrier.

Self-testing for HPV is yet another innovation in cervical cancer prevention, offering women an alternative to sample collection by health care professionals. TogetHER member PSI conducted a pilot study in Uganda in 2016 that offered 5,000 women the option for self- or provider-collected sampling, and 93% of women chose to self-sample. HPV sample self-collection and testing is now expanding cervical cancer screening coverage in places like Botswana, where the Ministry of Health & Wellness has worked with TogetHER member Jhpiego to introduce it. Malaysia is another example; its Project ROSE complements a successful HPV vaccination program with self-sampling and also a digital e-Health platform for high connectivity to participants and real-time reporting.



TogetHER's Role

We formed TogetHER for Health in 2018 to turn all the positive momentum around cervical cancer into coordinated, funded action to fight the disease in the low-resource countries where the burden is greatest.

Our progress has been swift. We gained a seat at the tables where decisions are made, from the World Health Organization to The Global Fund to international public



From left to right: Dr. Alain Damiba (Jhpiego), Celina Schocken (TogetHER), H.E. Sika Bella Kabore (First Lady, Burkina Faso), Linda Lane (Women to Watch Foundation), and Leslie Mancuso (Jhpiego).

health conferences. Seven organizations joined our initiative as members. We spread awareness of the challenges and opportunities associated with fighting cervical cancer.

One of our early achievements was publishing videos, photos, and stories that convey the human stories beyond the cervical cancer statistics. Our "Faces of Hope" project introduced women affected by cervical cancer in Kenya, as well as the doctors, policy makers, and advocates working to alleviate their suffering and end cervical cancer deaths. The "Faces of Hope" materials are freely available to anyone, to help supporters highlight the urgency of addressing cervical cancer and other NCDs.

In support of our goal of increasing access to cervical cancer services by offering them in the same settings as related health services, TogetHER collaborated with leading organizations in the fields of HIV and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) to produce and distribute fact sheets on the linkages between these health issues and cervical cancer.

TogetHER attended the UN General Assembly, and co-hosted a well-attended side event. Our Advisory Board member Linda Lane made the case for cervical cancer elimination at the event, alongside other powerful voices in global health including Dr. Seth Berkley, CEO of Gavi, and UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé. Ms. Lane presented the perspective of

the private sector, explaining that businesses invest in cervical cancer programs knowing that their contributions can truly “move the needle in a significant way.” On top of our success in raising awareness about cervical cancer and inspiring action, TogetHER also developed a new innovation scale-up fund, which will launch in 2019. The fund will promote the adoption of new technologies and programs where they will make the biggest difference.



An Impressive Year

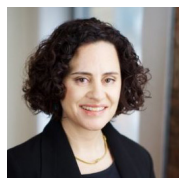
We witnessed many positive steps in 2018 toward ending deaths from cervical cancer, and TogetHER was proud to facilitate those steps.

While we celebrate the progress, we are mindful that challenges remain. The latest burden-of-disease estimates show a trend of increasing cervical cancer incidence and deaths. Over 311,000 women were estimated to die from cervical cancer this year. Shortages of the HPV vaccine have left girls waiting for protection. Middle-income countries, ineligible for Gavi assistance, struggle to afford the vaccine. The slow pace of policy change – such as the issuance of thermal coagulation guidelines – hinders health impact. And despite several new sources of implementation money announced this year, scale-up of cervical cancer services and the development of new tools is chronically under-funded.

TogetHER will continue to draw attention to these obstacles and seek solutions to them, as we head into our second year. Join us in raising awareness of the unacceptable global burden of cervical cancer, and demanding access to lifesaving prevention services for all girls and women.

If you would like to support TogetHER, please be in touch with us directly, or [visit us at https://secure.givelively.org/donate/panorama-global/together](https://secure.givelively.org/donate/panorama-global/together).

With gratitude,



Celina Schocken
Co-founder



Kathy Vizas
Co-founder

TogetHER is fiscally sponsored by Panorama Global, a 501(c)(3), non-profit organization.

TogetHER Members



TogetHER Donors

TogetHER is grateful for support from the following organizations:

- American Cancer Society
- Basic Health International
- Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation
- Global Good
- Pathfinder International
- Population Services International (PSI)
- Project Concern International
- Vizas Family Philanthropy Fund
- Women to Watch Foundation