

The Elders welcome Ethiopia's commitment to primary health care and digital innovation

ADDIS ABABA, 21 May 2019

The Elders met Ethiopia's State Minister of Health, Dr. Lia Tadesse, on 20 May 2019 to learn more about the country's efforts to achieve Universal Health Coverage. They also visited the Feres Meda health centre in Addis Ababa to meet patients and hold discussions with Health Extension Workers.

The delegation applauded Ethiopia's focus on primary health care as the most effective way of providing essential services to poor and vulnerable populations including women and children. They discussed with the State Minister the need for the health budget to be increased for Ethiopia to move further towards Universal Health Coverage.

They also took the occasion of the visit to welcome the launch in Ethiopia of the Community Health Academy programme pioneered by global health NGO Last Mile Health.

The new Community Health Academy programme is partnering with Ministries of Health across the world, to help frontline health workers use digital technology to improve their clinical skills and the overall capacity of health systems. The [online community health leadership course](#) of the Academy, co-created by Ethiopia and other countries, launched last week and has already enrolled over 3,700 learners in more than 150 countries.

[Graça Machel](#), Deputy Chair of The Elders and former Education Minister of Mozambique, said:

"Health is a human right, and health workers are human rights champions. I applaud the Ethiopian Government's commitment to delivering free primary care services at a community level, and urge them to commit further public funds to the health budget to reach this goal. At the same time, I welcome Last Mile Health's support as an inclusive model of innovation and partnership which I'm sure will yield impressive results in the future."

The Elders believe that community health workers can play a critical role in helping countries reach UHC and help all people access the healthcare they need without facing financial hardship. They recognised that Ethiopia's Health Extension Worker programme is a positive example for other countries to follow.

[Ricardo Lagos](#), Elder and former President of Chile, added:

“Community health workers are on the frontline of providing essential services to poor and vulnerable patients in Ethiopia. It was inspiring to see their tireless work in challenging circumstances, and to hear their hopes and plans for the future. The Community Health Academy partnership offers a great opportunity to share digital innovations for health workforce capacity building with these grassroots actors and the health systems leaders who support them.”

The Elders are holding their biannual board meeting in Addis Ababa from 19-22 May.

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The Elders are independent leaders using their collective experience and influence for peace, justice and human rights worldwide. The group was founded by Nelson Mandela in 2007.

The Elders are [Ban Ki-moon](#) (Deputy Chair), [Lakhdar Brahimi](#), [Gro Harlem Brundtland](#), [Zeid Raad Al Hussein](#), [Hina Jilani](#), [Ellen Johnson Sirleaf](#), [Ricardo Lagos](#), [Graça Machel](#) (Deputy Chair), [Juan Manuel Santos](#), [Mary Robinson](#) (Chair) and [Ernesto Zedillo](#).

[Martti Ahtisaari](#), [Ela Bhatt](#), [Fernando Henrique Cardoso](#), [Jimmy Carter](#) and [Desmond Tutu](#) are Elders Emeritus.

[Kofi Annan](#) (1938-2018) was a founding member of The Elders and served as Chair from 2013 to 2018.

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