SPARK HEALTH AFRICA
Ignite. Innovate. Impact.

newsletter

AUGUST 2026

Dear Partners & Friends,

It has been a while since we last wrote, and we are excited to share the remarkable momentum building across our transformative programs. From the Dodoma region in Tanzania to multi-country convenings in Nairobi, we are seeing transformative leadership take root and collective impact deliver real results. Here is a snapshot of the exciting work we have been doing.


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1 TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP & CULTURE CHANGE PROGRAM

Our flagship program continues to drive deep systemic change by equipping Ministry of Health management teams with the skills to build resilient workforces and create enabling environments for healthcare workers.

Tanzania ECD Program in Dodoma Region

Between March 2024 and March 2026, in partnership with the Government of Tanzania and the Tanzania ECD Network, we supported operationalisation of the National Multi-sectoral Early Childhood Development Programme (NMECDP) in four councils: Bahi DC, Chamwino DC, Kongwa DC, and Dodoma City. Funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, this 25-month initiative focused on fostering transformative leadership at the sub-national level to integrate ECD sectors and enhance holistic child development. By strengthening governance mechanisms and promoting data-driven decision-making, we helped local multisectoral teams improve resource mobilization and accountability in ECD service delivery. Read more below.

2026 Hilton Foundation Grant: Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zanzibar

We are thrilled to be expanding our work across East and Southern Africa with a new grant from the Hilton Foundation to ensure commitments made in support of young children and their families are followed up and actioned in Kenya, Mozambique, and Tanzania.

A major milestone was the Early Childhood Development East and Southern Africa Partners Convening in Nairobi, where government representatives, partners, and leaders from the three countries came together for five days of forward-looking dialogue. Hosted by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, the convening was anchored by an inspirational address from Mrs. Graça Machel, who reminded us that investing in early childhood is a non-negotiable priority for Africa's future.

Key outcomes from the convening include:

- Country Commitments: Each country presented coordinated, time-bound plans for accountability and implementation.
- A Collective Roadmap: All three countries agreed that the path forward hinges on functional coordination, targeted domestic financing, and robust data systems.
- Reframing ECD: Country teams developed elevator pitches to reframe ECD beyond a social sector issue, aligning it directly with core national economic and human capital goals.

Following the convening, we are now, over the next 9 months, supporting governments in translating these commitments into action—working with them to strengthen coordination mechanisms and ensure that the promises made in Nairobi become reality on the ground.

PATA TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (PTLDP): STRENGTHENING LEADERSHIP FOR ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT

Over the past year, Spark Health Africa has been partnering with Paediatric-Adolescent Treatment Africa (PATA) to deliver the PATA Team Leadership Development Programme (PTLDP), a leadership journey designed to strengthen individual leadership, team effectiveness, and organizational performance.

The programme- covering the entire staff compliment- has taken participants through a progressive learning journey from self-awareness, psychological safety, trust, and belonging, to accountability, systems thinking, and execution discipline. Rather than focusing solely on leadership theory, the workshops have increasingly centred on PATA's real organisational challenges, encouraging participants to reflect on how leadership behaviours shape culture, collaboration, and organizational effectiveness.

A notable outcome has been the growth in participant engagement. As the programme has progressed, staff have become increasingly open in sharing their experiences, challenging assumptions, and collaborating across teams. Through facilitated discussions and practical exercises, participants have explored issues such as accountability, communication, inclusion, role clarity, and systems improvement, creating a shared language for leadership across the organization.

With the programme now entering its final phase, the focus is shifting from reflection to action supporting PATA's Senior Management Team to strengthen collective leadership, embed practical leadership tools, and build the systems and behaviours needed to sustain organizational growth and impact. The PTLDP is laying the foundation for an ongoing culture of continuous learning, collaboration, and adaptive leadership across PATA.

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2 COLLECTIVE IMPACT PROGRAM

Our Collective Impact program cultivates radical collaboration among multi-sectoral stakeholders working towards a common government-led vision.

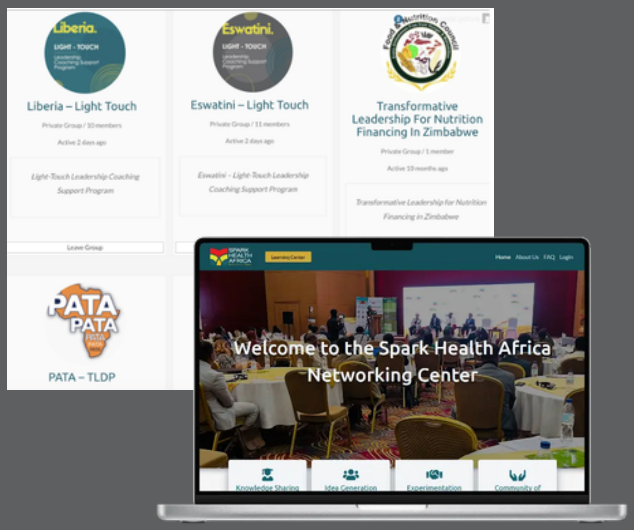
SCALING UP NUTRITION (SUN) COUNTRIES: ESWATINI, LIBERIA, AND NAMIBIA

In September 2025, as part of the Scaling Up Nutrition Finance Capacity Development Platform and in partnership with the Nutrition Council of Zimbabwe, we facilitated a Transformative Leadership for Nutrition Financing Workshop. The workshop successfully brought together national-level stakeholders to address the critical challenge of sustainable nutrition financing, moving beyond technical solutions to address the underlying belief systems, cultural norms, and structural barriers that impede progress.

Subsequent to this, with support from FIAP (a public-sector foundation attached to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation of Spain) and the endorsement of the Anglophone Africa Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement Secretariat, we facilitated a workshop for 14 Anglophone Africa countries to strengthening the functionality of national Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs) and advancing sustainable nutrition financing amidst a challenging global aid landscape. Emerging from the plenary discussions, the key output from this workshop is an advocacy brief to support SUN Focal Points and senior government officials in influencing policy, decision-making, and resource allocation for stronger multi-sectoral coordination of nutrition.

We are proud to have, subsequently, on request, supported Eswatini (June 2026) and Liberia (July 2026) with light-touch leadership coaching as part of our Collective Impact work. We are in the preparatory stages of supporting civil society in Namibia (August 2026), through collaboration with the Nutrition and Food Security Alliance of Namibia (NAFSAN) and its member organisations. The coaching program is designed to strengthen the leadership and strategic capacity of the Nutrition Multi-Sectoral Platform country teams, enabling participants to address structural and capacity challenges, navigate government transitions, and build a cohesive team culture that drives effective multi-sectoral nutrition coordination.

E-CAMPUS



A significant development is the onboarding of both the PATA TLDP and SUN Country cohorts onto our e-Campus platform. This online Learning and Networking Platform provides participants with access to resources and the chance to engage with like-minded change agents. By creating a digital space for networking and sharing of best practices, we are fostering a community of practice that transcends geographic borders and enables continuous learning.

Digital Assets for the WHO Scaling innovations in public health systems: guidance and toolkit

In December 2025, we had the privilege of partnering with the World Health Organization to develop digital assets for the 'WHO Scaling innovations in public health systems: guidance and toolkit.' The first of three digital assets we developed, this digital asset complements the 'WHO Scaling innovations in public health systems: guidance and toolkit' by providing a concise introduction to the innovation scaling framework. It presents the rationale for innovation scaling, the three strategic approaches to scaling, the seven government roles and the core Explore–Adapt–Learn processes that support governments in moving from promising pilots to sustainable, system-wide adoption of health innovations. The presentation also shares real-world case studies and key lessons from country experiences to support discussions on applying the framework in different contexts.

Intended as a companion resource to the full guidance, it supports presentations, workshops and stakeholder engagement, helping governments and partners communicate the framework and its practical application in strengthening public health systems.

Spark Health Africa at the 11th SCoP Annual Forum: Advancing Scaling Goals in Kenya's LREB

In February 2026, as Co-Chairs of the International Scaling Community of Practice Health Technical Working Group, we were pleased to co-facilitate and present at a session at the 11th SCoP Annual Forum titled "Using ExpandNet's Framework, Tools, and Online Learning Platform to Advance Country and Global Scaling Goals." The session brought together 95+ global health and development practitioners, policymakers, and implementing partners to explore how the ExpandNet/WHO systematic approach to scaling has been used to strengthen country-level outcomes across diverse settings.

A central premise of the discussion was the recognition that promising health innovations often show strong pilot results but fail to translate into wider implementation. Scaling, participants reflected, involves more than geographic expansion—it requires embedding key components within relevant systems to enable continued expansion and sustainability over time. Speakers highlighted the importance of developing robust scale-up strategies, aligning stakeholders, and ensuring that innovations are designed for the systems where they will be scaled.

SCALING COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

INSIGHTS FROM KENYA'S LAKE REGION ECONOMIC BLOC

As part of the session, we presented insights from our work supporting the Lake Region Economic Bloc (LREB) in Kenya to develop a scaling strategy for Early Childhood Development interventions. This work, embedded in the ECD program funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, and co-funded by ExpandNet, was grounded in the ExpandNet/WHO scaling framework—a structured and evidence-based approach to navigating scaling complexities.

In October 2024, Spark Health Africa facilitated a Science of Scaling Workshop for the LREB, bringing together multisectoral team chairpersons, sectoral representatives, and political leaders from seven counties in Phase 1 of scaling efforts. The workshop revealed several critical insights, namely:

Strong Political and Institutional Backing:
High-level participation demonstrated genuine buy-in, with one politician remaining engaged throughout the entire 2.5-day workshop—a powerful testament to the priority placed on ECD scaling in the region.

Critical Gaps Identified:
The workshop surfaced several gaps that informed our strategic priorities, including the absence of a formal regional scaling blueprint; unclear definition of the innovation package; inconsistent documentation of both structural and behavioral components of coordination mechanisms; and limited resource team capacity.

Appetite for Structured Scaling Frameworks:
Teams demonstrated genuine enthusiasm for applying the Nine steps for developing a scaling-up strategy beyond ECD, reflecting a mindset shift toward adopting systematic scaling approaches. This enthusiasm extended to exploring synergies between the demand-driven Mountain Model for Public Sector Scaling and the WHO/ExpandNet framework.

Need for Cross-County Learning:
Teams engaged enthusiastically during best practice sessions, sharing experiences and asking critical questions. This highlighted the lack of previous opportunities for inter-county collaboration, pointing to the need for sustained platforms for information sharing.

LOOKING AHEAD

Looking ahead, the Science of Scaling Workshop provided a clear picture of both progress and challenges in scaling ECD interventions across Kenya's LREB. By addressing identified gaps and leveraging the enthusiasm and capacity developed through the workshop, we are exploring ways to continue supporting counties to scale their multisectoral ECD approaches effectively—ultimately improving outcomes for children and families across the region.

SIGN-OFF

It has been an absolute pleasure sharing with you what has been keeping us busy the last couple of years, and we sincerely look forward to reconnecting with as many of you as possible. Please feel free to share your feedback with us or drop us a line so we can catch up!

Warmest regards,
Tendai Gotora, on behalf of the Spark Health Africa team

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Turning policy into practice

Tanzania's National Multisectoral ECD Programme

For 18 months, Spark Health Africa partnered with Tanzania's government and four districts to demonstrate how to do this in practice.

The opportunity:

The policy framework was strong. The challenge was execution. Across districts, common constraints emerged:

- Siloed planning and resource allocation
- Limited cross-sector collaboration
- Data collected but not consistently used for decision-making

The intervention:

We combined Transformative Leadership workshops with sustained, on-the-job coaching embedded within existing government platforms.

This was deliberate:

- Training shifted mindsets
- Coaching translated those shifts into changes in behaviours, team practices, and system processes

What changed?

Stronger coordination and resource optimisation

Bahi District: Before the Transformative Leadership training, departments worked in parallel but rarely together. Nutrition had fuel budgets but no vehicles; Education had vehicles but no fuel budgets. Today, they coordinate resources naturally—sharing vehicles, fuel, and messaging—so that joint field visits happen seamlessly.

Turning policy into practice

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What changed?

Improved service coverage through coordinated action

Chamwino District: Chamwino achieved 100% coverage of SALIKI (Village Health and Nutrition Day) in all 107 villages, reaching 39,539 children with nutrition screening. Theirs is a story of how systems, relationships, and relentless follow-up made universal coverage possible in a rural district.

Context-specific problem solving in urban settings

Dodoma City: While the Dodoma region reported near-universal school feeding coverage (99%) by late 2024, a specific assessment of the 265 schools within Dodoma City revealed a different reality. Our baseline (January–June 2025) found that coverage within the capital was significantly lower, at 86.6% (104,234 of 120,391 students) , reflecting the unique logistical and social challenges of the urban environment This is the story of logistics, partnerships, and the daily miracle of feeding hundreds of thousands of children in a growing capital city.

Kongwa District: Kongwa District developed the strongest target-based accountability culture among all four districts, consistently reporting numerators and denominators across health, nutrition, and social welfare indicators. The team can now answer "Did we succeed?" with precision: skilled delivery at 99.6% (4,665 of 4,684), exclusive breastfeeding at 98.7% (14,791 of 14,981), nutrition counseling at 100% (7,279 of 7,279).

What did we learn?

1. Training alone is not enough. Coaching sustains change.
2. Measurement without action is just documentation. Data must trigger response (are we happy with the status quo?).
3. Working through existing government platforms (SALIKI, school feeding) drives sustainability
4. The next frontier is outcome measurement: not just "how many reached" but "what changed for children?"

What's next?

The pilot reached 4 of Tanzania's 184 districts. The opportunity now is to scale what works, strengthening the link between leadership, coordination, and measurable outcomes for children. The lessons from this pilot offer a blueprint for phase 2 of operationalization of Tanzania's National Multisectoral Early Childhood Development Programme.