



## **A Message of Solidarity from Lwala's Leadership Team**

Dear Lwala Team,

Lwala communities have long, historic ties with communities in the United States. Current events in the US, and the systemic racism still affecting African Americans, are stark echoes of the injustices that our part of Kenya has suffered over generations. We, too, know the dehumanizing impact of police violence. From a long history of colonialism, we, too, know inequities of power, wealth, and health access.

Racism is, and always has been, inextricably linked to health inequity. This same injustice is replicated across countries in Africa often taking various forms, but with a predictable result – systematic marginalization that keeps people in poverty with poor life outcomes.

Our Founders, Milton and Fred Ochieng', arrived on the beckoning shores of the United States to pursue not only their own American Dream, but the dream of connecting our communities to health services. That dream became Lwala Community Alliance. As medical doctors, Milton and Fred have experienced first-hand how the marginalization of the black community, and other racial minorities in the US leads to disproportionate health outcomes. Even, or perhaps especially, in the wealthiest nations, racist and colonialist ideals are at work to limit human freedoms.

At Lwala we believe we must be anti-racist and anti-colonialist to truly solve the injustices at the core of our mission. The white supremacy on display in America, and at work across the globe, is an affront to our organization's mission and values. Here at home, COVID-19 has exposed the disparities in access to healthcare services and been used to justify police brutality, especially against the poor. In this time of mourning and reflection, we reaffirm our vision of promoting wholeness of life in Lwala and beyond. We have a resolute commitment to our values, including **neighborliness** and **dignity**.

We stand with communities in Kenya and in the US to denounce the systemic racism and marginalization that denies people health as a basic human right. Yet, we have seen how investment in such marginalized communities, like ours was, can bring hope and transform lives. **We choose to be our neighbors' keeper**, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or socio-economic standing.

Stay safe.

In Solidarity,

Julius Mbeya, Milton Ochieng', Fred Ochieng', Ash Rogers, Daniele Ressler, Doreen Awino, Elizabeth Owino, Robert Kasambala, Rose Adem, Vincent Okoth, Winnie Oyugi

*The Lwala Leadership Team*