



DIALOGUE

BUILDING THE FUTURE

Standing side by side with the marginalized, those living on the fringes of society not only in economic and geographical terms, but also in terms of age: this is where CUAMM wants to be. On 28 October 2022 in Florence, alongside many of our partners, we look forward to telling you more about how we do our work.

TEXT BY / DON DANTE CARRARO / DOCTORS WITH AFRICA CUAMM

This is a special issue of *Health and Development* that was conceived as a support for “*Towards Global Health: Building the Future in the Name of Social Justice*”, a day of discussion and reflection to be held in Florence on 28 October. The event will see the participation of individuals of all ages, professional backgrounds and fields: those with long-time experience in Africa or as coordination professionals within large health institutions, those who advocate for the dignity and well-being of the elderly, and others who seek ways to develop a general medicine able to serve everyone.

Notwithstanding this rich diversity, everyone in attendance will be united by a single focus: prioritizing those living on the fringes of society, marginalized in terms of where they live, their age, or their lack of economic opportunities. Each of us at the event is guided by a quest for social justice and equity, knowing that being healthy requires having access to care and services.

Thus we will learn about the unexpected commonalities between a forward-thinking Tuscan town that decided to invest in services for the elderly, a young doctor eager to bring health to those most in need in far-flung parts of Africa, and a university professor and researcher who, despite coming from different generations, share the same determination to help bring about a more equitable future. All of this gives me confidence that despite the times we live in and the epochal changes that our world is undergoing, the commitment to help others in tangible ways continues to thrive.

From the beginning, CUAMM has always stood with the populations of the countries where we work, engaging with communities on an ongoing basis in order to best understand and interpret the specific conditions on the ground, and then build there. The only approach to international development that we believe in, in fact, is long-term, with a priority focus on primary health care. Rather than intervening based on preconceived notions – an especially impracticable method in Africa, with its vast inequalities and particularly complex emergencies – our work entails constant learning, experimentation, evaluation and research. The cornerstones of this approach are continual partnership with communities and teams of local health professionals to identify needs, service integration, continuity of care, and intersectoral collaboration.

This approach to care is evident in many of the articles in this issue of our magazine, and will be discussed further, with additional insights, at our Florence event, which CUAMM organized in partnership with the Tuscany Region’s Global Health Center and the University of Florence. And just as this issue does, I too would like to underscore the multidimensional nature of care; indeed, “building” global health entails not only undertaking clinical practice and interventions, but also providing access to training and information. From the very beginning, CUAMM has been firmly convinced of the necessity of doing both. Conducting research is also crucial, as it produces further insights that help guide our work, as is envisioning care in health policy terms.

Both essential and complementary, all of these elements have guided CUAMM from the start. And we are fortunate to have shared them in the course of long years of partnership with Gavino Maciocco, professor of Hygiene and Public Health at the University of Florence, editor of this magazine, and formerly also a CUAMM development worker. Today, after a year of particular significance for him, I would like to thank him, in the hope that together we will continue to generate a culture of health for all, and do the work to achieve that vision.