

UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE (UHC) MESSAGE SHEET FOR 2023

What is universal health coverage (UHC)?

- UHC means that everyone, everywhere, should have access to the health services they need without risking falling into poverty.
- UHC is part of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDG target 3.8](#)) and includes all essential health services, spanning health promotion, prevention, and treatment.
- UHC has 3 dimensions: 1) population coverage (who receives services, linked to equity), 2) service coverage (what health services are available), and 3) financial protection (ensuring health services do not lead to poverty).
- UHC is based on the principles of equity, non-discrimination, social justice and the right to health, ensuring that everyone, including the most marginalized people, are reached and covered, and no-one is left behind.
- UHC is a social contract. It implies redistribution between people who have the resources to pay and those who do not, people who are healthy and those who are not, and young people and those who are old.

Who is responsible for delivering UHC?

- Governments have the primary responsibility to ensure people's health, but governments alone cannot achieve UHC. Whole-of-society engagement in government processes and through social participation mechanisms ensures accountability and legitimacy.
- Governments need to involve civil society and communities in decision-making about their health. Inclusive involvement ensures that policies respond to all people's needs and it creates the basis for trust in policies.

- The private sector plays a key role in producing many commodities used in health service delivery, such as medicines and medical equipment. Governments need to provide the regulatory framework and legal system that ensure products and services through the private sector are accessible and affordable for all people.
- For some countries, development assistance plays an important role in supplementing and catalyzing government and private financing.

What is the relationship between UHC and health security?

- UHC and health security are two intertwined goals to protect everyone, everywhere, that we achieve through the same health system - in crisis and calm.
- Health security means minimizing the danger and impact of acute public health events that endanger people's health, especially those that cross geographical regions and international boundaries.
- Countries with strong and resilient health systems are better prepared to prevent and respond to health threats, including outbreaks with pandemic potential. For example, countries with enough trained health workers, lab and data capacity, and well-functioning basic services (such as immunization) can more rapidly detect and respond to outbreaks.
- Countries with strong and resilient health systems are also more responsive to people's needs during and after pandemics, and can continue to deliver essential services.

What is the relationship between UHC, health systems, and primary healthcare?

- UHC is an aspirational goal (everyone, everywhere should have access to the health services they need without risking falling into poverty). The means to UHC is strengthening health systems; the approach is primary health care (PHC).
- Strengthening health systems ensures everyone in a population has preventive and curative health services available to them by ample, well-trained and well-supported health workers.
- Prioritizing primary health care in health system strengthening, with community engagement and integrated health and multisectoral services, is the most efficient and sustainable approach to achieve UHC. Nearly 90% of essential health services can be delivered through primary health care systems. PHC maximizes equity and can reduce socioeconomic barriers to health individuals face due to gender, disability, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, and citizenship, among other.

Why is UHC important in 2023?

- The COVID-19 pandemic has further widened inequities in access to health services that people need. It has also shown how underinvestment in primary health care-focused health systems exposes all people and countries to health threats. This underinvestment has resulted in catastrophic costs for people, governments and for the global economy.
- Concrete action is needed to strengthen equitable health systems – including public health functions that are critical for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. UHC strengthens the resilience of people and countries - in both crisis and calm.

- The [2023 High-Level Meeting on UHC](#) provides countries and all stakeholders an opportunity to reinvigorate progress towards UHC. Action-oriented outcomes to strengthen health systems provide the basis for implementation and accountability, building on the 2019 Political Declaration.

What is UHC2030?

- [UHC2030](#) is a global movement to build stronger health systems for universal health coverage (UHC). It brings together health stakeholders and advocates to work together to advance progress towards delivering health for all by mobilizing political commitment, promoting collective action for health systems strengthening, and demanding and tracking accountability.
- UHC2030 is governed by a Steering Committee, composed of countries, international organizations, global health funds, private foundations, [civil society organizations](#), and private sector. It is also guided by the UHC Movement Political Advisory Panel, which advises the Steering Committee and Secretariat while simultaneously conveying UHC2030's messages to high-level political leaders. Secretariat support is provided by the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- UHC2030 tracks progress on UHC commitments made by national governments and publishes an annual [State of UHC Commitment Report](#) with country profiles available on the [UHC data portal](#).