



Universal Health Coverage: Health for all

PRESS RELEASE, 12 DECEMBER 2018 | ADDIS ABABA – On 12.12.2018, the Federal Ministry of Health of Ethiopia renews its commitment to actions towards universal health coverage (UHC). December 12 is an international UHC day.

Every person—no matter who they are, where they live, or how much money they have—should be able to access quality health services without suffering financial hardship. To achieve this vision of universal health coverage by 2030, we need collective action now to build strong, equitable health systems in Ethiopia.

What is universal health coverage?

Universal health coverage (UHC) means that every person, everywhere, has access to quality health care without having financial hardship. It includes the full spectrum of essential, quality health services, from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care. UHC enables everyone to access the services that address the most significant causes of disease and death, and ensures that the quality of those services is good enough to improve the health of the people who receive them.

Unexpected illness requires them to use up their life savings, sell assets, or borrow – destroying their future and often those of their children. Protecting people from the financial hardship of out of pocket payment at time of need for health services reduces the risk that affected individuals will be pushed into poverty.

Achieving UHC is one of the targets the nations of the world set when adopting the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015. Achieving UHC will also contribute to achieving the SDGs focused on economic development, cutting poverty and inequality.

Ethiopia making progress towards UHC

Ethiopia is making promising progress towards UHC. Established on the gains already made, Ethiopia is taking practical actions that enable the state to move towards UHC rapidly. For example, the values and the core-principles in the Ethiopian health policy explicitly states that granting universal health coverage is the ultimate target. In addition, the four transformation agenda (i.e. Ensuring quality and equity in health service, *Woreda* Transformation; creating a

compassionate, respectful & caring, professionals; Information Revolution) of the Health Sector Transformation plan are all targeted to ensuring universal health coverage. In particular, the implementation of the *Woreda* Transformation plan is an innovative approach which can facilitate the progressive realization of UHC focusing on best performing primary health care units, insuring financial protection to the households, creating better performing ‘model’ *Kebele*.

Furthermore, the recent activities in redefining the essential health service packages (EHSP) will serve to focus along the priority health problem in the faces of limited resources.

Major challenges to UHC in Ethiopia

Despite very promising progress towards UHC in Ethiopia, there are some challenges that requires careful attention. Slow progress in the execution of social health insurance has been an impediment in ensuring financial risk protection at the level of serving. In general, the fiscal space for health in Ethiopia is very limited with highly dependent on external funding sources. Furthermore, high socioeconomic, urban-rural, and regional inequity in health services coverage are also major challenges to UHC.

Next steps

1. Establish strong pre-payment mechanism, improve domestic resource mobilization, increase the allocation of resource from government sources, and increase effective utilization of resources
2. Ensure the execution of the transformation agenda
3. Re-define essential health service packages:
4. Engage civil society and the media participation in advocacy and awareness creation towards UHC

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