Universal health coverage

In 2013, countries of the Region endorsed universal health coverage as an overarching priority in resolution EM/RC60/R.2, and committed the Regional Director to developing a regional framework for action on advancing universal health coverage in 2014.

The framework includes a set of strategic actions for countries to achieve universal health coverage that are evidence-based, cost-effective and feasible; all of which are being supported by corresponding actions by WHO. They include actions to enhance financial risk protection to ultimately reduce the share of out-of-pocket spending, and thus of catastrophic health expenditure, and impoverishment.

The framework also aims to ensure that each country's social health insurance coverage scheme contains a package of essential services, including preventive and curative services. Finally, it guides countries to expand coverage to vulnerable groups, particularly the poor and those in the informal sector, and to collect data to allow monitoring of progress toward population coverage.

WHO is providing support to countries through health system review missions which aim to identify challenges and opportunities to create national universal health coverage strategies. National strategies and plans have now been developed in 10 countries. Almost all countries, including group 3 countries, are actively exploring options for universal health coverage, including the important topic of expanding population coverage through social health insurance, and covering informal and vulnerable groups.

The inclusion of universal health coverage as a target of Goal 3 of the Sustainable Development Goals has given further impetus to furthering progress. In 2016–2017, WHO's work will focus on exploring innovative means of mobilizing resources, expanding financial risk protection that focuses on the informal and vulnerable segments of the population, reducing wastage of resources through better tracking of expenditure and improving the monitoring of country progress towards universal health coverage.

Read more about universal health coverage

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