

Community Working Group on Health



Press Statement

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CWGH urges government to turn commitments into Action for the attainment of UHC

Today, the Community Working Group on Health (CWGH) joins the rest of the world to commemorate the International Universal Health Coverage Day 2023, urging the government to urgently set in motion a process to revitalize the Public Health Care (PHC) as a vehicle for the country's achievement of UHC and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This year's UHC Day theme: "Health for All: Time for Action" is a reminder to our government to transform all its national, regional, and international commitments into real action for the attainment of UHC for all citizens. It should not just be a slogan but a reality.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a wakeup call to roll out and make Universal Health Coverage (UHC) a reality. The National health insurance is critical for the for achievement of universal Health Coverage (UHC). This is important in a country where currently only about 7% of Zimbabweans have medical insurance. Sustainable progress toward UHC requires that a country's health financing system consistently generate sufficient, largely domestic resources. Empirical evidence has shown that government financing is the most efficient and equitable way to fund health coverage.

Primary health care is the frontline of Zimbabwe's health system. Primary health care is usually the first point of contact people have with their health care system, and ideally should provide comprehensive, affordable, community-based care throughout life. A strong, well-funded and accessible primary health system keeps people healthier and out of hospital by supporting them to manage their health issues, including chronic conditions, in the community. This reduces Zimbabweans' reliance on costly acute care, such as specialists, emergency department or other hospital services. Its therefore vital to specifically budget for primary health care. There is need for the government to especially increase investment in the PHC sector since it is an essential component in improving UHC and overall health outcomes. The district and community health systems are the foundation of the national primary health care system.

Combating the scourge of NCDs. Focusing on lowering the risk factors linked to NCDs is an effective method to control these diseases. Reducing significant modifiable risk factors include cigarette use, hazardous alcohol consumption, poor diets, and lack of physical activity.

In view of the resurgent Cholera outbreak, the country must improve public investments in water, sanitation and hygiene. The Global Task Force on Cholera Control considers water, sanitation and

hygiene investments as the foundation to meeting the goal of reducing cholera deaths by 90% by 2030. Furthermore, several water sanitation and hygiene interventions can be implemented rapidly and cost-effectively; these include: point-of-use water treatment and safe storage, community action to end open defecation, provision of soap, and promotion of handwashing.

A strong health workforce is the cornerstone of every health system, and is essential to ensuring Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and to achieve the SDGs. It is important to review the health staff establishment to reflect the current demographic and macroeconomic trends. Appropriate incentives must be designed to ensure equitable distribution across urban and rural areas ensuring access to under-served populations.

The National Budget is an important instrument of resource allocation in order to ensure not just a rapid pace of GDP growth, but also the achievement of important development imperatives such as price stability, employment creation, Universal Health Coverage (UHC), and sustainable development. The National Budget should fully implement a rights-based approach, that ring-fences and prioritizes resource allocation to socio-economic rights, including health and other social determinants of health such as education, employment, and water and sanitation. Zimbabwe is a signatory to various regional and international agreements that provide benchmarks on budgetary allocation to fundamental socio-economic rights. Prioritizing the attainment of these benchmarks is critical to ensure UHC as well as the attainment of sustainable development in general in the country. Key sectoral spending targets/benchmarks that a National Budget must attain to demonstrate commitment and ensure the realisation of pro-poor, inclusive and sustainable growth and development.

The Community Working Group on Health (CWGH) is a network of national membership based civil society and community based organisations who aim to collectively enhance community participation in health in Zimbabwe.

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