![Unitaid — SAVE LIVES FASTER]

Universal Health Coverage

Half of the world's population doesn't have access to essential health services. Health systems with limited funding, mainly in low- and middle-income countries, often lack the facilities, health workers and lifesaving tests, medicines and products needed to provide quality care.

Even when stronger health facilities exist, not everyone can afford it; every year, 70 million people are pushed into extreme poverty by out-of-pocket health costs. The COVID-19 pandemic further strained overburdened health systems, making the inequalities worse.

Without access to proper health care, millions of people suffer and die from preventable, treatable diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria and complications from routine medical procedures including childbirth. Without strong health systems, countries are not prepared to respond to new crises like COVID-19.

Achieving universal health coverage is a target in Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good health and well-being. Universal health coverage aims to ensure that everyone, everywhere, has access to the health services they need without risking falling into poverty. To realize this target, governments must strengthen resilient and equitable health systems, with primary health care as a foundation.

How we contribute to universal health coverage

Universal health coverage is at the heart of our vision: to provide equitable access to health innovations to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all. Our work contributes to universal health coverage in several key ways that optimize tools, services and delivery of health products and care. This frees up human resources, money and time that countries can use to further strengthen their health systems and provide quality health care to their populations.

Providing access to new health products:
Our main contribution is by delivering the tests, treatments, and tools needed to deliver quality health care. In less than two decades, we have unlocked access to more than 100 groundbreaking health technologies, from the latest HIV treatments to the first-ever medicines for children with TB and HIV to next-generation mosquito nets to protect families from malaria.

Photo: Universal health coverage is at the heart of our vision: to provide equitable access to health innovations to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all. © Matthieu Zellweger/Unitaid.

Every year, more than 300 million people in low- and middle-income countries benefit from the treatments, tests and tools we've helped roll out. This helps build stronger health systems, improving our collective capacity to respond to whatever emergency comes next while advancing efforts towards universal health coverage.

Lowering prices: Lower prices for new health products drive crucial cost savings that allow low- and middle-income countries to make their limited health budgets go farther. We negotiate price reductions, create generic markets for products that drive down prices, and facilitate licensing agreements to promote competition and reduce costs. For example, we secured a 75% reduction in the price of HIV medicines specifically designed for children. Reduced prices and greater efficiencies that come with the products we deliver are projected to generate more than US$8 billion in savings by 2030 – much-needed funding that can be reinvested elsewhere.

Freeing up resources: Helping to tackle today's biggest health challenges, including HIV, TB and malaria, also helps free up resources in overstretched health systems to address other primary health issues. For example, HIV self-tests mean fewer people need to visit clinics or hospitals to learn their status. Advanced diagnostics machines for TB deliver results faster, freeing up staff time to focus on other patients. Thanks to seasonal malaria chemoprevention, a preventative antimalarial treatment giving to children at the community level at the start of the rainy season, fewer children are infected with the disease – meaning fewer visits to clinics for tests and treatment.

Working with partners: We deliver greater impact by collaborating with other health partners like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the World Health Organization, leveraging each other's expertise to increase our collective impact. We are one of 13 leading health and development organizations that signed the Global Action Plan (GAP) for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All, a partnership to strengthen collaboration and help countries move faster toward achieving universal health coverage.

Looking ahead

At the 2023 UN High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage in New York in September 2023, world leaders stressed that every human being has the right to good health and they recommitted to achieving universal health coverage by 2030. While national governments have the ultimate responsibility to deliver health care, governments alone cannot achieve universal health coverage. By making new health products available and affordable for people in low- and middle-income countries, we are playing our role in helping to make the global target of universal health coverage a reality.

About Unitaid:

We save lives by making new health products available and affordable for people in low- and middle-income countries. We work with partners to identify innovative treatments, tests and tools, help tackle the market barriers that are holding them back, and get them to the people who need them most – fast. Since we were created in 2006, we have unlocked access to more than 100 groundbreaking health products to help address the world's biggest health challenges, including HIV, TB, and malaria; women's and children's health; and pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. Every year, more than 300 million people benefit from the products we've helped roll out.

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