



FRANCE AND UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

FACT SHEET



Today the international community agrees that universal health coverage is an essential goal to strengthen health systems and facilitate access to quality health services for all, without risk of impoverishment. France supports universal health coverage (UHC) as an encompassing health goal in the post-2015 development agenda.

“ Universal health coverage is the single most powerful concept that public health has to offer. Universal coverage is relevant to every person on this planet. It is a powerful equalizer that abolishes distinctions between the rich and the poor, the privileged and the marginalized, the young and the old, ethnic groups, and women and men. Universal health coverage is the best way to cement the gains made during the previous decade. ”

Dr Margaret Chan,
WHO Director-General,
at the 65th World Health Assembly
in Geneva on 21 May 2012.

What is universal health coverage?

According to the WHO definition, UHC aims at ensuring that all people have access to the quality health services they need, without suffering financial hardship due to healthcare out-of-pocket payments. Since December 2012, UHC has been the subject of a political definition universally approved through resolution A.67/81 of the United Nations General Assembly.

It has three complementary dimensions: the population (who is covered?), the health services (what services are covered?) and financing (what is the level of financing?). It contributes to strengthening health systems by ensuring the quality of health services and medicines provided, while making their financing more sustainable.

The international community's commitments

Several high-level conferences in 2012 highlighted how important it was to tend towards UHC. They led notably to the declarations of Bangkok (28 January 2012), Mexico (2 April 2012), Tunis (5 July 2012) and Kigali (13 September 2012).

The major role of UHC was underlined during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20: resolution 66/288, “The Future We Want” of 27 July 2012) as a key instrument for “enhancing health, social cohesion and sustainable human and economic development”.

More than 90 countries from different regions and of differing levels of development co-authored resolution A.67/81: “Global health and foreign policy”. The resolution was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 12 December 2012, highlighting the cross-cutting support for extending UHC as a sustainable and inclusive development goal.

France in international negotiations

On the international stage, France promotes UHC as a strategic response to the evolving global health challenges. Given the stakes of universal access to affordable quality healthcare services, France is very active in favour of promoting UHC via various initiatives. Promoting “social protection floors” was a priority of the French Presidency of the G20 (Cannes Summit in November 2011). One example of significant progress was the strengthening of the social dimension of globalization through the recognition of the need to deploy social protection floors adapted to the needs of each country. In 2006, the French and Norwegian Foreign Ministers launched the Foreign Policy and Global Health initiative aimed at increasing the attention accorded to health in diplomacy. That informal group is made up of seven countries: Brazil, France, Indonesia, Norway, Senegal, South Africa and Thailand. Through this initiative, France has promoted UHC in the post-2015 development agenda, including by presenting resolution A.67/81, which was adopted during the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

1
BILLION

The number of people who do not have access to the health services they need.

France also supports the promotion of social protection for health in developing countries, notably through Providing for Health (P4H). It accorded a subsidy of €2 million to this network over the 2010-2013 period, through a priority solidarity fund. P4H was founded in 2007 as a Franco-German partnership, joined by multilateral agencies and bilateral partners. It supports the countries in designing and implementing health coverage mechanisms.

French intervention thrusts

The Agence française de développement (AFD, the French agency for development) has, since 2005, been the keystone operator of France's bilateral development aid. Over the 2012-2014 period, the priority intervention focuses of the AFD for health and social protection have included strengthening healthcare systems and social protection. They also include the financing of strengthening sectoral public policies and health systems, with the aim of improving handling of non-communicable diseases. Among the AFD projects aimed at improving access to healthcare in Africa is a regional project for Member States of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). This project, worth €5.4 million, helps countries formulate and implement effective long-term national strategies to increase the number of beneficiaries of health coverage. In 2005, the public interest group for health and social protection in the international arena, GIP SPSI, was set up, helping developing countries upon request with French expertise tailored to social health protection issues. GIP SPSI's role is to unite, support and facilitate a French international cooperation offer in the health and social field.

Results gained

For the last decade, many low and middle income countries have shown that UHC is not the preserve of high income countries. Thus Brazil, Chile, China, Mexico, Rwanda and Thailand have recently made major progress in the establishment of social protection systems in the health field.

Thailand sets itself apart for example with a system based on a prepayment mechanism, including a mixture of taxation and insurance premiums.

Gabon has introduced innovative means to collect health funding, including a tax on the use of mobile telephones. Cambodia has created a health equity fund, which covers the health costs of the poor.

Next challenges

One of the main global health challenges is that of the sustainability of healthcare system financing. Greater priority accorded to healthcare in government budgeting appears vital to maintain long-term universal coverage. If the African Union countries dedicated 15% of their public spending to health, in accordance with the commitments signed up to in the 2001 Abuja Declaration, they could raise an additional \$29 billion per year for healthcare.

UHC contributes to poverty reduction, equity and social cohesion, which are central to the international reflection which needs to lead to the design of a new post-2015 global development framework to replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which expire on that date.

100

MILLIONS

The number of people who fall into poverty each year because they have to pay their healthcare costs directly, according to WHO figures.

THE SOLIDARITY AND HEALTH INITIATIVE FOR THE SAHEL

The Solidarity and Health Initiative for the Sahel was initiated by France in 2013 and aims to promote children's access to healthcare in the Sahel. In the six countries covered (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger and Senegal), strategies to fund healthcare for young children are generally based on a policy of free treatment.

This initiative supports or finances the launch of mutually supportive mechanisms for exemption from payment of primary healthcare for children under 5 promoted by States and/or non-governmental organizations.

€30

MILLIONS

The portion of the 2013 receipts of the French Financial Transaction Tax (FTT) dedicated to the child health in the Sahel (see inset above) in the framework of the Solidarity and Health Initiative for the Sahel (Initiative solidarité santé Sahel, I3S).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

French Ministry of Foreign Affairs website

www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/french-foreign-policy-1/development-assistance/health

Resolution A.67/81 "Global health and foreign policy"

www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/67/81

The P4H network

www.who.int/providingforhealth/en/index.html

The GIP SPSI

<http://en.gipspsi.org/>

Projects for improvement of access to healthcare on the AFD website

http://www.afd.fr/home/projets_afd/sante-health

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