

## What is universal health coverage (UHC)?



Universal health coverage (UHC) aims to eliminate the many barriers to health in order to ensure that all people can access the health services they need without suffering financial hardship. UHC addresses the concepts of equity, access (availability, affordability and acceptability), and quality of services. A well-trained, well-supported and appropriately dispersed health workforce is integral to achieving UHC.

UHC looks different in different settings, and every country can take a variety of steps toward achieving its desired outputs. For example, in some developing countries progress toward UHC might begin with a nationwide rollout of a package of essential low-cost, high-impact health interventions. Making health services such as skilled birth attendance available and affordable could be transformative in settings where out-of-pocket health spending and preventable deaths are high.

## What is the role of frontline health workers in achieving UHC?

Frontline health workers (FWWs) are integral in providing available, affordable, and culturally acceptable health services, especially for communities in hard-to-reach areas. Frontline health workers not only provide necessary medical treatments, they also save lives by encouraging healthier living through preventative care and health education.

*WHO and Global Health Workforce Alliance in 2013 reported that 83 countries worldwide have below the minimum requirement of 23 doctors, nurses and midwives per 10,000 people in order to be able to provide the essential health services.*



## How must the global health workforce be strengthened to achieve UHC?

A joint framework developed by the World Bank Group and World Health Organization for monitoring progress toward UHC includes two targets, one for financial protection, and one for access to essential services. For service delivery, the World Bank and WHO propose that by 2030, delivery of essential health services should reach at least 80% coverage, irrespective of income, gender or place of residency.

Given the WHO estimate that at least 1 billion people currently have little to no access to health workers, **reaching the 80% target for essential**

**health services coverage will require a much greater focus on health workforce strengthening.** WHO and Global Health Workforce Alliance in 2013 reported that 83 countries worldwide have below the minimum requirement of 23 doctors, nurses and midwives per 10,000 people in order to be able to provide the essential health services.

## About the Frontline Health Workers Coalition

Launched in January 2012, the Frontline Health Workers Coalition (FHWC) is an alliance of United States-based organizations working

together to urge greater and more strategic investment in frontline health workers in the developing world as a cost-effective way to save lives and foster a healthier, safer, and more prosperous world.

What is being done to address health workforce barriers to achieving UHC and what more can be done?



Photo: Amref

At the Third Global Forum on Human Resources for Health held in Recife, Brazil, in November 2013, the United States joined 92 other World Health Organization member states in signing the to the *Recife Political Declaration on Human Resources for Health*, which states, **“We as leaders are committed to attaining universal health coverage and recognize that we need an improved health workforce to achieve it.”**

At the same forum, 57 countries and 26 other constituencies made concrete commitments to improve their health workforces with the aim of achieving UHC. In addition, the world’s health ministers have mandated the World Health Organization submit a global strategy on strengthening health workforce for consideration at the 2016 World Health Assembly. A health workforce target also was included in the Open Working Group’s proposed post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.



Photo: Asma Sharmin

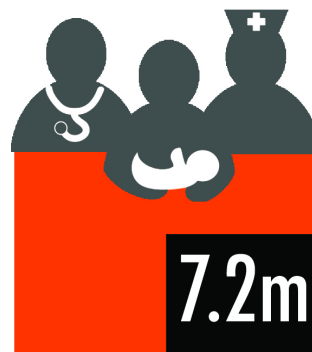
### Recommendations

Going forward, global leaders can further strengthen the global health workforce to help enable achievement of UHC by:

- Ensuring robust country-level and donor support needed to achieve and expand on the health workforce commitments made at the Third Global Forum on Human Resources for Health in Recife, Brazil
- Ensuring the post-2015 global health workforce strategy have concrete targets and financial commitments and a strategic focus on frontline health workers
- Ensuring a specific sub-goal in the SDGs be included on ensuring all people have access to trained and supported health workers, and that a sub-goal on UHC have an access target

*We as leaders are committed to attaining universal health coverage and recognize that we need an improved health workforce to achieve it.*

-Recife Political Declaration on Human Resources for Health



Current estimated global shortage of doctors, nurses and midwives needed to deliver basic services



The number of children’s lives that could be saved each year if we fully utilized community health workers on the frontlines