

Civil Society Declaration for the High Level Meeting (HLM) on Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

Preamble

Achieving universal health coverage (UHC) is a global health priority embedded in the Sustainable Development Goals. While there is no one-size fits all model for universal health coverage at a country level, the ideal health system would be one that is comprehensive, integrated, rights-based, non-discriminatory and people-centered. 2019 is a year filled with opportunities to drive progress towards UHC. One key moment will be first-ever United Nations High-Level Meeting HLM to discuss UHC during the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2019.

The Civil Society Engagement Mechanism (CSEM) is the civil society constituency of the International Health Partnership for UHC2030 (UHC2030). The CSEM raises civil society voices in UHC2030 to ensure that UHC policies are inclusive and equitable, and that systematic attention is given to the most marginalized and vulnerable populations so that no one is left behind. CSEM members, through a global online survey and face-to-face civil society consultations¹, call for the UN HLM on UHC in 2019 to be the moment where Member States make concrete, measurable commitments to achieving UHC. Thus, the CSEM advocates that at the HLM on UHC, countries and their governments take the following priority actions to achieve UHC by 2030:

Key Priority Actions

1) Increase in public health financing

- Countries should reach the targets set in the Abuja Declaration, which calls for 15% government expenditure on health.
- Countries should increase political actions and public/domestic financing (Example: 5% GDP to be allocated to health sector, Abuja Declaration target of 15% or as appropriate for each country context)
- Civil society and communities demand transparency and accountability in health planning, budgeting and expenditure tracking to ensure public financing is efficient and effective
- Countries should work towards eliminating out-of-pocket payments for essential health services
- Countries should provide access to affordable quality health commodities to their people using international agreements in favour of meeting their peoples' health service needs
- Donors should align their funding with the UHC commitments in countries

¹ The Civil Society Survey to inform Global Health Initiatives for 2019 to date has completed by 100 civil society members from over 40 countries. In addition to the survey, the CSEM, IFRC and UNAIDS hosted two face-to-face civil society consultations in Bangladesh and at the Africa Health Agenda International Conference in Kigali, Rwanda. A total of 150 civil society participated in the Rwanda (120) and Bangladesh (30) sessions combined. This declaration is based on the inputs from both the survey and consultation sessions.

- Countries should eliminate taxation avoidance for securing resource for health
- Countries should prioritize primary health care services when allocating health resources
- Countries should engage and regulate the private sector as provision of health services are often offered by private providers

2) Reach first those left behind as committed to in the SDGs/Leave no one behind

- Countries should be held accountable for providing quality, affordable health care services those populations that are left behind
- In developing and/or updating policies and budgets, countries should pay particular attention to issues of intersectionality (such as gender/disability/sexual orientation/gender identity/cultural background etc.)
- Countries need to address legal and policy barriers that prevent marginalized and criminalized groups from receiving health services
- Civil society demands that health facilities create environments that are free of stigma and discrimination

3) Focus on health workers/Grow the health force

- Countries should recognize the importance of and commit to financing of community health workers (CHWs) as an integral part of the health workforce
- Countries should regulate and professionalize CHWs as a way of promoting decent work and gender equity
- Donor funding should help mobilize CHWs
- National and global campaigns on CHWs should be at the heart of UHC and promote CHWs to reach the “Last Mile”
- Countries should complete analysis on the health workforce to meet the demands/health needs of their population
- Countries should address not just the number of health workers but also the quality of the services they provide through a well functional health systems

4) Engaging civil society and community in the process to ensure accountability

- Countries should recognize the important role civil society plays in both service delivery and accountability
- Countries must institutionalize community engagement in health governance to ensure transparent decision-making and accountability
- Countries and civil society should come together to develop accountability frameworks that monitor UHC with a particular focus on marginalized populations
- Countries should ensure data collection and analysis includes cross-cutting issues such as gender and sexuality which go beyond health sector (i.e. female genital mutilation, gender-based violence)

- Countries should make political commitments focused on the health needs of populations in emergency and humanitarian settings