

ZAMBIA - Universal Health Coverage: Statement of Intent

Under the directive of the Secretary to the Cabinet, we the leaders representing multiple stakeholders including government, UN, private sector, the labour movement, cooperating partners, the church, professional bodies and the academia, met for a leadership training to advance Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in Zambia for 3 days in Chisamba Protea Hotel from 16th to 19th February 2016, we recognise that:

- Zambia is a signatory to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda which includes target SDG 3.8 that seeks to achieve UHC;
- 60% of the Zambian population are poor and families incur high out of pocket expenditure when they fall sick, which drives them further into poverty;
- It is a well-known fact that UHC is one of the critical strategies to lift families out of poverty and drive economic growth for sustainable development;
- To achieve UHC with the current low allocation of 8.3% to the health sector budget, alternative mechanisms for sustainable domestic financing are needed including Social Health Insurance;
- There exists significant disparities in access to quality health care between rural versus urban as well as between different social groups;
- Achieving UHC requires appropriate legislation, and significant progress has been made as Parliament has drafted various Bills;
- As early as 2013 the Social Health Insurance (SHI) Bill was ready for submission to parliament for legislation, however, we note with concern the delay in the enactment of the SHI Bill;
- The process of developing the social protection Bill that pools together the SHI, different pension schemes and social cash transfer has resulted in the delay in implementing SHI;
- The other components of the proposed social protection Bill such as the pension schemes and social cash transfer are operational. The combination of these is delaying implementation of the SHI component that is critical to the achievement of UHC and denying the citizens their right to accessing quality health services; and
- Achievement of UHC requires a concerted and sustained multi-sectoral approach.

We therefore recommend that:

- The SHI component be separated from the rest of the social protection Bill;
- The original 2013 SHI Bill that has been extensively debated by local technocrats be taken to Parliament for enactment without further delay; and
- That because of multi-sectoral involvement needed to achieving UHC, there is need that leadership of this effort must rest in the Vice President's Office, under the Ministry of National Planning.