

Driving Progress Towards Universal Health Coverage - UHC Stakeholder Forum

Forum Reflections

The first UN High Level Meeting (UN HLM) on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is a pivotal moment for UN Member States to commit to a coordinated global response to provide universal access to affordable and quality health care services, in line with SDG target 3.8.

Recognising the significance of this landmark meeting, the Global Health Alliance Melbourne (GLHAM) hosted a stakeholder forum to consider UHC priorities and policies that are of direct relevance in Australia, the region and at a global level.

Held on Friday 5th April 2019 in Canberra, the forum had representation from a broad cross section of the Australian health community including local and international NGOs, academia, public health, law and professional associations. In identifying how value can be added to the current global UHC movement, participants discussed learnings and experiences from an Australian perspective that can be drawn upon to accelerate progress towards achievement of UHC by 2030.

Key themes discussed during the forum broadly reflect the UHC2030 Key Asks¹ and therefore have been distilled and categorised against each ask. The UHC 2030 Key Asks are:

1. **Ensure Political Leadership Beyond Health** – Commit to achieve UHC for healthy lives and well-being for all at all stages, as a social contract.
2. **Leave No One Behind** – Pursue equity in access to quality health services with financial protection
3. **Regulate and Legislate** – Create a strong, enabling regulatory and legal environment responsive to people's needs.
4. **Uphold Quality of Care** – Build quality health systems that people and communities trust.
5. **Invest More, Invest Better** – Sustain public financing and harmonise health investments.
6. **Move Together** – Establish multi-stakeholder mechanisms for engaging the whole of society for a healthier world.

With one of the strongest and most inclusive health systems in the world, Australia has much to contribute in supporting the development of UHC globally, while also being able to demonstrate firsthand how UHC is a “catalyst for social-economic development and a key

¹ Developed by UHC2030, the UHC Key Asks will feed into the UHC Political Declaration, and are the foundation for coordinated advocacy efforts that all partners can promote together throughout the preparation of the UN HLM, the Financing for Development Forum and the SDG Summit as well as other regional or economic fora in 2019. See: https://www.uhc2030.org/fileadmin/uploads/uhc2030/Documents/UN_HLM/UHC_Key_Ask_final.pdf

contributor to equity, social justice and inclusive economic growth”². This document seeks to capture the input of participants expressed during the forum.

1. Ensure Political Leadership Beyond Health

Key learnings from the Australian public health system that can be replicated in the region in order to accelerate progress towards UHC by 2030

- A whole of government approach towards healthcare that involves all three levels of government at the federal, state and local level and results in health policy coherence
- The importance of the rule of law and democratic rights of the individual leading to the provision of health services for all
- Bi-partisan and longstanding commitment to uphold healthcare for all

Key challenges experienced within the Australian public health system that can inform, shape and support the strengthening of health systems in the region to accelerate progress towards UHC by 2030

- Australia’s political model of federation results in:
 - differences between states in the delivery of health services
 - differences between states in public health promotions and priorities

Australia can sharpen investments in the aid program to support the development of strong health systems and progress towards UHC by 2030 in aid recipient countries

- Prioritisation of UHC as a core element of Australia’s health diplomacy including two-way capacity building
- Take a global leadership position by demonstrating Australian UHC expertise - as reflected in the Australian health system
- Increase the Australian aid budget

2. Leave No One Behind

Key learnings from the Australian public health system that can be replicated in the region in order to accelerate progress towards UHC by 2030

- Rights based health system that prioritises provision of access and equity for all
- Medicare as the foundation of Australia’s health system
- Concerted efforts to work with vulnerable communities

Key challenges experienced within the Australian public health system that can inform, shape and support the strengthening of health systems in the region to accelerate progress towards UHC by 2030

- Out of pocket fees, gap costs and fee for service model can create financial hardship
- Lack of equity reflected in:
 - health system coverage and access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
 - regional disadvantage (geography) – maldistribution of health care professionals

² UHC2030 <https://www.uhc2030.org/news-events/uhc2030-events/multi-stakeholder-hearing-in-preparation-for-the-united-nations-general-assembly-high-level-meeting-on-uhc-542996/>

- new migrants and people on restricted or temporary visas are excluded or restricted from accessing Medicare funded health services
- exclusion of key health services from Medicare e.g. dental care
- two tier health system

Australia can sharpen investments in the aid program to support the development of strong health systems and progress towards UHC by 2030 in aid recipient countries

- Work with aid recipient countries to shift health from a privilege to a human right
- Invest in more public health interventions alongside healthcare delivery

3. Regulate and Legislate

Key learnings from the Australian public health system that can be replicated in the region in order to accelerate progress towards UHC by 2030

- Strong regulation of health system matched by strong design and implementation of regulatory standards
- Presence of health and safety standards both within the health and associated sectors e.g. food industry safety standards
- Monitoring and surveillance of the health system

4. Uphold Quality of Care

Key learnings from the Australian public health system that can be replicated in the region in order to accelerate progress towards UHC by 2030

- Strong health workforce attained through a quality education and accreditation system
- Existence of the Productivity Commission that can support, advance and inform change management in the health system e.g. the occurrence of health reforms, the provision of incentives and the improvement of the NDIS
- Existence of integrity agencies at the national, state and local government level
- Government led investment in health research
- Public health approach towards disease prevention e.g. HIV, tobacco, skin care, road trauma
- Efforts of continuity of care across the health system
- Awareness and movement towards preventative care

Key challenges experienced within the Australian public health system that can inform, shape and support the strengthening of health systems in the region to accelerate progress towards UHC by 2030

- Poor patient experience within the health system – health as a maze
- Lack of integration of health and social care – especially for hard to serve populations and chronic diseases
- Health system disconnect from social determinants of health

Australia can sharpen investments in the aid program to support the development of strong health systems and progress towards UHC by 2030 in aid recipient countries

- Utilise state-level expertise from within Australia in the aid program and increase professional health expertise of aid program administrators
- Invest in long term aid projects to enable quality health outcomes not just health outputs
- Invest in health education over the long term
- Ensure that quality of care is not lost as coverage is expanded

5. Invest More, Invest Better

Key learnings from the Australian public health system that can be replicated in the region in order to accelerate progress towards UHC by 2030

- Existence of the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee for the express purpose of reducing costs and financial hardship

Key challenges experienced within the Australian public health system that can inform, shape and support the strengthening of health systems in the region to accelerate progress towards UHC by 2030

- Public health expenditure on prevention vs treatment
 - i.e. spending on education and primary health care in contrast to spending on hospitals
- Costs associated with purchasing medical devices and aids

Australia can sharpen investments in the aid program to support the development of strong health systems and progress towards UHC by 2030 in aid recipient countries

- Health investments to focus on health system strengthening as reflected in programmatic funding commitments and contributions
- Increased health bilateral aid– shifting balance back from just funding multilateral institutions
- Provide technical support to aid recipient countries including on health financing systems

6. Move Together

Key learnings from the Australian public health system that can be replicated in the region in order to accelerate progress towards UHC by 2030

- Nationally targeted and coordinated intervention programs e.g. National HIV strategy that engages all sectors, states and stakeholders
- Organisation of health networks
- Primacy of informed patient consent and patient perspective in health decision making processes
- Presence of active NGOs and consumer bodies
- Strong health literacy and education

Key challenges experienced within the Australian public health system that can inform, shape and support the strengthening of health systems in the region to accelerate progress towards UHC by 2030

- Duplication and inconsistency of key health definitions making it difficult to compare data
- Difficulties associated with communication across professions

Australia can sharpen investments in the aid program to support the development of strong health systems and progress towards UHC by 2030 in aid recipient countries

- Invest in bridging the gap between humanitarian and development aid agencies
- Aid programs to link global south – global north collaborations
- Interact and engage with WHO Collaborating Centres in support of the aid program, creating linkages between WHO Collaborating Centres and relevant Ministries of Health in aid recipient countries
- Utilise regional support strategies for coordinated approaches towards UHC in priority regions and countries

*For further information about the forum and the perspectives discussed contact GLHAM.
Note: Views represented in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of GLHAM and its members nor does it reflect an endorsement by GLHAM.*