

GHANA PRIMARY HEALTH CARE YOUNG LEADERS NETWORK

UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE DAY 12TH DECEMBER, 2018

PRESS RELEASE

TO ALL MEDIA HOUSES

December 12 is celebrated as the universal health coverage day worldwide and it is promoted by the United Nations to ensure every person-no matter who they are, where they live, or how much money they have should be able to access quality health services without suffering financial hardship. The theme for this year is “Unite for universal health coverage: Now is the time for collective action. The theme is timely because to achieve this vision of universal health coverage by 2030, we need a united and collaborative action now.

Many years ago, the world began conceptualizing health as a basic human right and therefore, there was the need for all necessary stakeholders (governments, Health and Development workers, International Organizations) to come together to champion the course of equitable accessibility to basic health services regardless of one’s geographical location or financial status. This led to the adoption of the declaration of Alma Ata in 1978, which underlined the importance of Primary Health Care in achieving “Health for All” by year 2000.

Some successful inroads were made in certain countries especially the Western world whilst others greatly lagged behind. 40 years on, another declaration has been adopted called the Astana Declaration with the objective of achieving Universal Health Coverage by the year 2030. A day

has been set aside to commemorate and reflect on the achievements so far and the work required to attain the goal of UHC by 2030.

The concepts that are center stage in the agenda embraced by World leaders, Governments, International organizations such as UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA etc are Primary Health Care (PHC) and Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

According to the World Health Organization, UHC means that all people and communities can use the promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services they need, of sufficient quality to be effective, while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship. Three objectives underpin the UHC concept, which are equity, quality/ standardized services and protection against financial risk. PHC on the other hand, is essential health care based on methods and technology made universally accessible to individuals, families and communities through their active participation and at an affordable cost. PHC is the foundation for achieving Universal Coverage within the targeted time frame.

Ghana has made great strides in mainstreaming primary Health Care across the ten regions of the country. Primary Health care is the first point of contact in times of infirmity, the health system of Ghana developed an innovative strategy to bring healthcare to the doorsteps of the populace, and that is the CHPS program.

The birth of the Community Based Health Planning Services (CHPS) program is greatly helping to bridge the gap of inequitable access to basic and essential health services in the country. The system is functioning systematically in achieving the equity and quality service objectives of UHC. The CHPS program has community health nurses stationed in communities (rural and urban) where they provide vital health services ranging from immunization, growth monitoring

of children 5 and below, provision of antenatal care for pregnant mothers among other important services. The works of community health nurses and the CHPS program is greatly helping to accelerate and advance primary health care towards Universal Health Coverage by 2030. The recent idea of drone delivery of vital medical products in times of emergency is a brilliant one that needs to be supported by all across board. The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) has also been pivotal in the journey towards UHC protecting the citizenry against financial risk. The scheme covers certain essential services and drugs at the hospitals helping the masses to access them for free.

In spite of all these great efforts, the system still has some challenges of inadequacy in logistics to execute activities of the CHNs, the unmotorable nature of some of our roads especially those in the rural areas are still a hindrance to healthcare delivery, inadequate infrastructure, low wages of health professionals, the ineffectiveness of the NHIS among others that need to be tackled appropriately in order to accelerate PHC towards UHC by 2030.

According to the WHO, 90% of a person's health needs across their lifetime can be covered by primary health care. This reechoes the salience of strengthening PHC in communities in order to improve health outcomes in Ghana.

The Government of the day and key stakeholders need to put in place policies and structures that are inclusive and comprehensive leaving no one behind when it comes to health.

We encourage all stakeholders to ensure the following 5 pillars of UHC day 2018 is achieved in Ghana

1. **Ensuring Political Commitments and multi-stakeholder Action** : Government of Ghana need to be committed and increase investments in Primary Health by mobilizing domestic financing for health
2. **Leaving no one behind**: Ghana needs to ensure we reach every person and community with comprehensive, quality health services and people centred-care, putting the poorest and most marginalized first. We acknowledge the efforts made in the CHPS policy and the yet to be drone services. We will also advocate for more ambulances and well equipped health facilities and the use of mobile clinics to ensure we leave no one behind.
3. **Engaging Community Voices**: we need to make health systems everybody's business- with engagements of citizens, communities, civil society. This should be done regardless of race, gender, and age. There should be more inter-sectoral collaboration in order to improve the outcomes of our health system.
4. **Investing more and smarter**: With the aim of Ghana beyond Aid, Ghana needs to mobilize more domestic resources equitably and efficiently, including aligning funds across diverse issue area to ensure everyone can get the health care they need without fear or financial hardships. The NHIS should be more comprehensive in terms of the services and products they cover, and also reimburse facilities their funds frequently to address such issues.
5. **Hold leaders accountable**: There should be proper monitoring and mechanisms in place to hold our leaders accountable to promises on health for all and progress toward stronger, more equitable health systems.

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