

## **Advancing Social Participation for Universal Health Coverage** **Building support for a resolution at the 77th World Health Assembly (WHA)**

**(Short version)**

**March 2024**

This short brief is part of a toolkit which has been developed to support civil society actions towards building support for the draft resolution titled, [Social participation for universal health coverage, health and well-being](#), which is due to be considered at the 77th World Health Assembly (WHA) taking place in Geneva, Switzerland from 27 May - 1 June, 2024. This document provides background information on the process and practical actions that advocates can take to ensure the successful adoption of this resolution on social participation.

*For more detailed information, please refer to the full [Advocacy brief](#).*

### **Making the case for social participation**

Social participation relates to the empowerment of people, communities, and civil society to participate in - and thereby influence - decision-making processes for health. It is the cornerstone of equitable, inclusive, transparent, and responsive health systems that leave no one behind. This inclusive approach not only promotes healthier behaviors and practices but also fosters community resilience, reduces health inequalities, and builds trust in healthcare systems.

In 2021, during a [dialogue on social participation and accountability](#), Dr. Tedros highlighted the importance of social participation in promoting health for all: *“As we build forward better and prepare for future emergencies, we need to empower community ownership, enhance participatory governance, rebuild trust in public health, and strengthen global solidarity. This is true not only for emergencies but in every area of health, and especially in making progress towards universal health coverage.”*

Social participation was also included in the 2023 [Political Declaration](#) on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in which world leaders renewed their commitment to accelerate progress towards achieving UHC and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

### **WHA resolution on social participation**

Last year, the governments of Thailand and Slovenia — now supported by Brazil, Colombia, Croatia, Ecuador, Finland, France, Guatemala, Norway, Qatar, Slovakia, Sri Lanka, Tunisia and the United States of America— started pursuing a resolution on social participation for universal health coverage, health and well-being. If this resolution is adopted at the 77th WHA, it will signify commitment to:

- Strengthen public capabilities and support Member States to implement, strengthen and sustain regular and meaningful social participation in health-related decisions.
- Promote equitable, diverse, and inclusive participation, focusing on those in vulnerable or marginalized situations and ensuring their voices are considered in decisions made.
- Promote gender-sensitive/responsive, age-responsive and disability-inclusive perspectives in the development and implementation of health-related policies and plans.
- Ensure a supportive, conducive environment for dialogue between governments and people, communities, and civil society, to achieve broad and meaningful engagement that can improve health and well-being.
- Support investing and allocating predictable and sustained public resources for social participation.
- Enforce monitoring and evaluation to learn and improve implementation.
- Harmonize technical support on social participation across WHO and the three levels of the Organization.

### Take action now

The 77th WHA in May is a critical moment for ensuring that Member States affirm their commitment to institutionalize social participation to advance health for all. If the resolution is endorsed, it will outline priority actions for national governments to take to advance social participation for health and act as a catalyst for political support at the national level. Civil society plays a critical role in building political support for this resolution on social participation, and it is pertinent that you write to or meet with your Minister of Health urging them to support the adoption of the resolution.

### Tool box:

**1.Asks:** Use [our advocacy template letter](#) to ask your relevant government official, such as your Minister of Health, to commit to show leadership and support for implementing, strengthening, and sustaining meaningful social participation in health-related decisions. This includes:

- Co-signing the draft resolution on social participation and endorsing it at WHA77.
- Attending the high-level ministerial side event on the resolution on social participation on Tuesday 28th May, led by Norway, Slovenia, Thailand, The Civil Society Engagement Mechanism for UHC2030 (CSEM), European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, UHC2030, UHC Partnership.
- Supporting the implementation of the resolution, which could include convening a multistakeholder dialogue to discuss the status of social participation in the country, the recommendations listed in the resolution, and what specific actions the government should take to advance implementation of the resolution in the short-medium and longer term, before and/or after WHA77.

**Tips:** To ensure a greater impact, you are encouraged to rally as many coalition/organization signatories as possible to your letter. You can find an example [google form](#) to send to your networks to request their signatures. Please contact CSEM at [laura@wacihealth.org](mailto:laura@wacihealth.org) if you need additional support.

**2. Amplify messages:** in addition to sending this letter to your permanent mission in Geneva and your Minister of Health, you can show your support by:

- Disseminating the [open letter addressed to Ministers of Health, signed by the co-chairs of UHC2030](#).
- Participating in social media campaigns on X before and during the WHA. Follow [@UHC2030](#), [@CSOs4UHC](#) and [@georgeinstitute](#) for more information.

### **Reference materials**

- [Voice, agency, empowerment - handbook on social participation for universal health coverage](#)
- [WHO Social Participation for Universal Health Coverage Technical Paper](#)
- [Advancing Social Participation for Universal Health Coverage - Building support for a resolution at the 77th World Health Assembly \(WHA\)](#)
- [Are we listening? Acting on commitments to social participation for universal health coverage](#)
- [The 2023 UN Political Declaration on UHC](#)
- [SPHERE, Social Participation for Health, Engagement, Research and Empowerment](#)