

# Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day



Save the Children

HELPING TO SAVE ONE MILLION CHILDREN'S LIVES

UHC is the principle that **everyone, everywhere should have access to quality essential health services** without experiencing financial hardship, and according to the WHO, half the world's population do not have access to the health services they need.

For a decade the Save the Children and GSK partnership has been working together to **strengthen health systems** and build **community resilience against disease**. This type of work is critical to achieving equitable health for all, and is integral to progress for the Sustainable Development Goals. Drawing on our partnership experience, we would like to share 5 examples from our programmatic work that capture the key principles of UHC.

## Ensuring no one is left behind.

In Ethiopia's Somali Region, we have been expanding access to routine immunisation services to pastoralist<sup>1</sup> communities. The programme focuses on training and mentoring health workers, providing equipment (e.g. vaccine refrigerators), and improving data monitoring systems to increase efficiency. A crucial part of the intervention is building trust with communities and raising awareness of immunisation.



To achieve UHC, **we must address systemic inequities and prioritise access for vulnerable groups by fostering trust between these communities and healthcare providers**. Where possible we must establish public safety nets for the most vulnerable children and their communities.

## Upholding quality healthcare through a strengthened workforce.

As Covid hit we had to adapt and focus our resources across our programmes in DRC, Kenya and Nigeria. We responded by training hundreds of frontline healthcare workers and community health volunteers on C-19 prevention and detection; and by launching significant community engagement, education & awareness campaigns.



Frontline health workers are a key component of realising UHC, and **we must systematically support, protect, train and mentor them**. Their skills are especially critical during emergencies, where their access to communities & their experience is key to maintaining health services.

## Building better surveillance and information systems

In the DRC, the political instability has resulted in further destabilising a fragile health system, with children dying from preventable illnesses, including malaria, pneumonia, diarrhoea and malnutrition. A key component of our programming was training 1400 community health workers in Kinshasa, Kasai and Lomami, on disease surveillance, to spot outbreaks, and either treat children and their communities directly, or refer them to appropriate services. This is part of a comprehensive health systems strengthening programme uniquely designed to promote humanitarian- development nexus programming.



Global health **leaders must support and enable social participation to ensure community voices are central in shaping emergency and disaster readiness & response strategies**. We must recognise the important role of community-led health systems.

## Working in partnership

Our flagship INSPIRING Programme in Nigeria is focused on preventing deaths from pneumonia and other childhood infectious diseases by improving policies, plans and budgets to ensure better detection, diagnosis and treatment. INSPIRING grounds its strategy in research driven through partnerships. Save the Children & GSK brought together universities UCL and UCH Ibadan, and key national technical experts, to research the specific needs of children and their communities before co-designing the programme. The research highlighted significant differences between states in the management of pneumonia, and the need to tailor interventions to specific needs.



Strong health systems are rooted in the communities they serve and will respond to their needs accordingly. **We must build partnerships which can leverage resources, innovation and influence, and adopt a holistic "whole-of-society" approach**. This requires the commitment of various stakeholders and must be built on community needs & participation.

## Political leadership for improving health

In Kenya, we are working to improve the wider policy environment for maternal and newborn health. Together we have successfully advocated for a revision of health reporting tools to include indicators at the national level for Kangaroo Mother Care (where the child maintains skin to skin contact which keeps them warm and improves breastfeeding – making them stronger to fight infection); the use of chlorhexidine (an antiseptic which prevents umbilical cord infections). We continue to advocate for an increase in the budget allocated to health at the county level, as increased domestic resources for health is a crucial part of achieving UHC. Through advocating with others, we also helped support the addition of vitamin D3 and elemental iron for preterm and low birth weight babies to be included in the 2019 Kenyan Essential Medicines list.



Building healthier societies and resilient health systems, requires **strong political leadership and collaborative input from a range of stakeholders**. Save the Children and GSK are committed to **bringing these key voices together to advocate for change** and ultimately improve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable children and their communities.

<sup>1</sup> livestock keepers who may have a nomadic and highly mobile lifestyle making accessing health services challenging.