



HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE DAY

12 December is Universal Health Coverage Day, raising awareness for strong, fair health access that leaves no one behind, says Universal Health Coverage Day.

Universal health coverage (UHC) is about everyone having access to health services “when and where they need them, without facing financial hardship” explains Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO).

In truth, there’s still a long way to go.

What it’s like for the poor when they need medical care

WHO says that according to 2017 figures:

- “800 million people spend at least 10 percent of their household budgets on health expenses for themselves, a sick child or other family member.
- For almost 100 million people these expenses are high enough to push them into extreme poverty, forcing them to survive on just \$1.90 or less a day.”

WHO’s Director-General says “It is completely unacceptable that half the world still lacks coverage for the most essential health services”.

For an idea of people’s experiences on the ground, this study published in Reproductive Health Matters discusses the situation in Tanzania:

“Overall, health services continue to fail the very poor. The main issue was unaffordable charges”.

It’s not just affordability that’s a challenge, found the study: “After cost, respondents cited the obstacles of drug availability, waiting time and distance to the health facility”.

What can be done

The Reproductive Health Matters study relates how many women give birth at home because they cannot afford the costs of medical assistance.

In a recent update from WHO, the message is that all countries need to do more to increase health services and make them more affordable “despite the setbacks of the COVID-19 pandemic”.

How individuals can support universal health coverage

UHC2030, one of WHO’s partners, has some suggestions:

- Share useful resources with other partners via the UHC2030 website.
- Stay informed about the latest news and updates.