

Committee: SOCHUM 2

Topic: The question of universal healthcare

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Summary

Universal healthcare care (UHC) is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as “all people having access to the full range of quality health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship”. Currently, the world is off track to make significant progress in towards achieving UHC as this has majorly stalled since 2015 and was further majorly disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic which, according to WHO, has disrupted services in 92% of countries at the peak in 2021, with 84 % of countries reporting that they were still facing the significant long-term impacts in 2022.

The tracking universal health coverage report of 2023 highlights that during 2021 around 4.5 billion people were not supported by essential health services. In addition to this, in 2019 around two billion people experienced financial hardship due to health expenses. This significant financial strain contributed to 344 million people facing extreme poverty due to health-related costs. These figures outline the need for comprehensive global health care systems that work towards putting an end to ‘out of pocket’ health care spending and the urgent need to adapt and strengthen these systems.

Definition of Key Terms

WHO – World Health Organisation

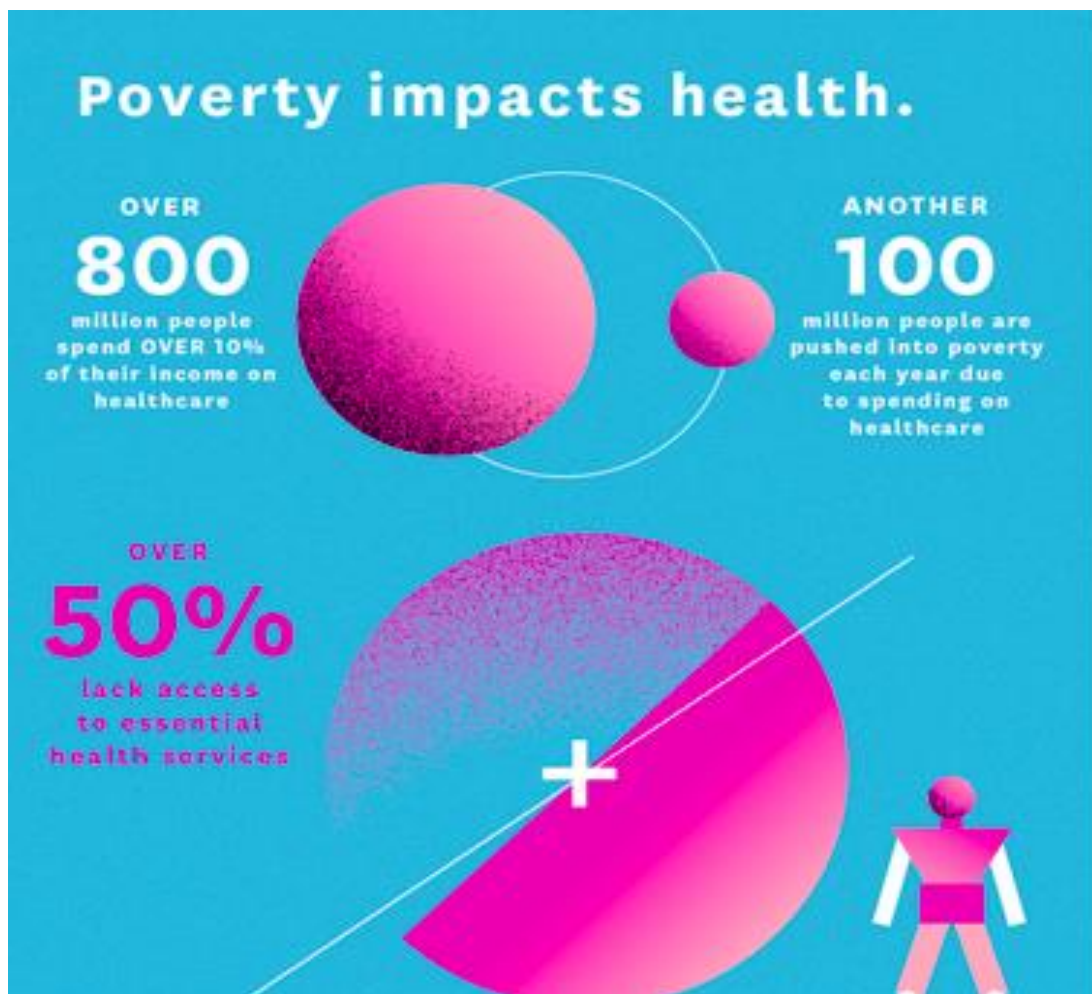
UHC – Universal healthcare care

SDG – sustainable development goals

Background Information

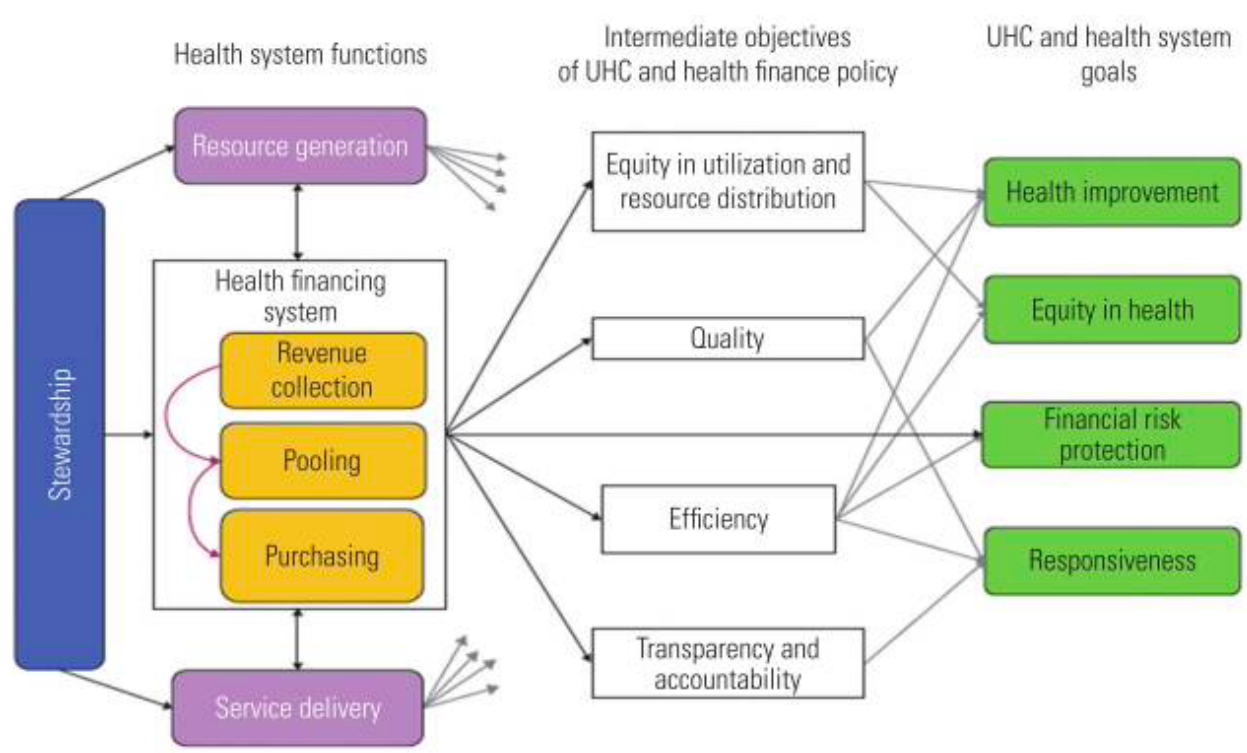
The concept of universal healthcare is one that has evolved significantly over the years as the world faces different health challenges and has needed to adapt. One of the first significant instalments of a UHC system was in late 19th century Germany under Chancellor Otto Von Bismarck insurance schemes; the early model laid the foundations for further UHC developments and popularising the idea of government intervention to provide essential health services.

According to WHO estimates as of 2023, around 70% of the global population have access to essential health services. Despite this progress, evidence from the Tracking of Universal Health Coverage Global Monitoring Report Of 2017 shows that each year close to 100 million people are experiencing extreme poverty due to health expenses. This proves that achieving universal health care is not just about improving people's access to health services but the SDG overall, which means trying to put an end to extreme poverty.



There are often concerns raised around this issue about its viability and sustainability and whether schemes such as UHC would further increase the strain on governments, particularly in LEDCs and those struggling to recover from the coronavirus pandemic, and whether UHC would potentially decrease care quality and increase waiting times if inadequately funded.

In summary, the implementation of UHC is complex but it is a key feature of the world sustainable development goals and global health equality. While several challenges do exist, the benefits of reducing the burden of health expenses on the public are many. International cooperation, unified commitment and clear planning are essential to progress and achieving the targets set forth by member states.



Major Countries and Organizations Involved

World health organisation, (WHO) - recognises the right to healthcare for everyone and believes that universal healthcare will provide the world with a wide range of essential services, promote prevention, treatment and palliative care and for countries to adopt it they must “have strong, efficient and equitable health systems that are rooted in the communities they serve.”

Germany - the first country to set up a social health insurance programme, health insurance is mandatory.

United nations children's fund (UNICEF) - works to ensure that all children have access to essential health care and particularly focuses on vaccination, nutrition and maternal child health and access to services.

Australia - Australia's Medicare system implements universal health care funded by taxes, covering a vast range of medical services.

World bank - who says that they view healthcare as an investment and not as an expense

Action for global health - UK organisation calling for the government to make healthcare truly universal as they view it as a human right

United Kingdom - the United Kingdom's NHS system was created to provide comprehensive healthcare for all citizens funded through taxation and is an example of the single payer system.

The pan American health organisation (PAHO) - recognises there are many ways in achieving universal healthcare and believes that all member states should make their own individual action plan

Timeline of Events

Date:	Description:
1870	Introduction of the first health insurance laws, Germany introduced mandatory health insurance for workers
1906	The American association of labour legislation led a campaign for health insurance.
1946	The National Health Service was founded and is the public health sector in the UK
1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights, includes Article 25 which underlines the rights to adequate medical care
2006	Convention of rights of a person with a disability, Article 25 addresses the right of a disabled person to experience access to high quality care without discrimination
2010	The affordable care Act ACA created the first path to universal health care in the USA, millions gained health coverage as a result
2015	Adoption of the SDG, sustainable development goals which promotes a high quality of wellbeing and healthcare for all regardless of age
2020	WHO's global strategy post covid-19, where they released updated strategies and emphasised the overall importance of universal healthcare and unified response when addressing global health issues

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

25th June 2001 - UN General assembly session on HIV and AIDs that emphasized the need for preventative testing, further research and treatment.

25th September 2015 - A resolution for world transformation: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development set the target of achieving universal healthcare by 2030 which included information around financial risk protection and access to all essential care medicines and vaccines for all.

12th of December 2017- the UN passed a third resolution on global health and foreign policy which focused on the health of the most vulnerable to promote an inclusive society and encouraged all member states to increase dialogue with all stakeholders and act towards the UHC goals. The 12th of December was also named universal healthcare day to increase awareness of the need for resilient and strong healthcare systems.

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

The Alma-Ata Declaration 1978- aims to support countries in creating framework in building innovative health systems that ensure universal healthcare, which lays the groundwork for improving high quality care by financing the issue.

Global Health Workforce Alliance 2006- the formation of the Global Health Workforce Alliance a partnership that supports the development of health systems working forward to achieve universal healthcare.

Sustainable development goals SDGs 2015- aims to encourage healthy lifestyles for all ages. Target 3.8 particularly outlines the need for achieving universal healthcare and mentions the importance of consistently high-quality care and access to financial security and protection.

High level meeting 2019- a discussion assuring the global commitment to achieving universal health coverage. Outlined were challenges that could be faced and strategies on how UHC could be achieved.

Possible Solutions

- Expanding under the idea of progressive universalism, which shall ensure that poor and vulnerable citizens are not left behind.
- Effective resource allocation, ensuring that adequate planning goes into making sure that there is correct availability of resources for all.
- Developing new purchasing strategies: expanding health benefits systems in a way that supplies healthcare providers with incentive to deliver.
- Improving the availability of quality healthcare providers and digitalising health system.
- Raising money sustainably and investing into subnational health systems

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