

Current Health Event

Universal Health Coverage

At least 50% of the world's population are not able to obtain essential health services and resort to out-of-pocket payment, as estimated by WHO and the World Bank. In addition, an estimated 800 million people spend at least 10% of their budgets on health expenses. Having to pay for healthcare out of their own pockets is pushing people more and more into poverty.

Editorial note:

Universal health coverage (UHC) means that all people can obtain the health services they need (including prevention, promotion, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliation), of sufficient quality to be effective, and without suffering financial hardship (*World Health Report, 2010*).

Cutting across all of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UHC is seen as a key pillar for sustainable development as well as reduction in poverty and social inequities. Equity in access to essential quality care while ensuring financial protection will improve people's health and life expectancy as well as prevent them from being pushed into poverty due to out-of-pocket (OOP) payments on health services.

In every country, a proportion of the population is too poor to contribute to health coverage via taxes or insurance premiums; this proportion needs to be subsidized from pooled funds which are usually government revenues. Three dimensions are to consider when moving towards UHC; using pooled funds to extend coverage to more people, offer more services as well as reduce direct payments needed for each service.

Achieving UHC is a main goal of the National Health Strategy in Lebanon. The MOPH is already providing universal coverage for tertiary care and

Figure 1: Out-of-pocket (OOP) expenditure on health—Lebanon (1996-2014) (World Bank)



other treatments (such as open heart surgeries, cancer drugs, etc.) through its policy of insurer of last resort for around half of the Lebanese population. The challenge in reaching UHC is increasing access to preventive services and early diagnosis and treatment. For this, the MOPH has been working on scaling up primary health care services through the affiliated network of centres. It has also successfully reduced OOP from 60% in 1998 to 36.4% in 2014 (figure 1). In addition, through a grant from the Multi Donor Trust Fund and with the support of the World Bank, the MOPH has engaged starting mid-2016 in piloting the delivery of a pre-paid set of services to the most vulnerable Lebanese. Through this pilot project, 150,000 Lebanese with limited income will be able to receive essential preventative and curative healthcare packages from 75 centres across Lebanon. Moreover, this project builds the capacities of PHC centres and health human resources in delivering health services. The second phase will target all PHC centres and increase the number of targeted poor for the pre-paid packages of services offered.

WHO response

WHO was founded on the principle that health is a right for everyone and has chosen the 70th anniversary year to celebrate this right and increase political will towards its achievement.

The theme of 2018 World Health Day is Universal health coverage: everyone, everywhere under the slogan is "Health for All".

In addition, through guidelines and capacity building, WHO supports countries in moving towards UHC:

- *World health report 2010: Health systems financing: A path to universal coverage* provides practical guidance on how to identify appropriate strategies for UHC;
- *Organizational ASsessment for Improving and Strengthening Health Financing (OASIS)* is an analytical framework;
- *Aligning public financial management and health financing* is a process guide for fostering dialogue;
- *Developing a national health financing strategy* is a reference guide.

Notifiable Diseases in Lebanon [cumulative n° of cases among all Residents] as of 25 March 2018

Disease	2017	2018	Feb.	Mar.
Vaccine Preventable Diseases				
Polio	0	0	0	0
AFP	77	22	6	6
Measles	126	147	63	59
Mumps	235	12	4	3
Pertussis	92	6	4	1
Rabies	1	1	0	0
Rubella	10	3	1	0
Tetanus	0	0	0	0
Viral Hep. B	321	58	19	15
Water/Food Borne Diseases				
Brucellosis	460	45	19	9
Cholera	0	0	0	0
Hydatid cyst	18	1	0	0
Typhoid fever	656	64	24	2
Viral Hep. A	776	150	51	18
Other Diseases				
Leishmaniasis	140	0	0	0
Meningitis	366	84	23	21
Viral Hep. C	130	22	9	4