

DON'T JUST ASK IF HEALTH SERVICES **EXIST.**



**HEALTH  
FOR ALL**

**12.12**

UNIVERSAL HEALTH  
COVERAGE DAY

UHCDAY.ORG

ASK IF THEY'RE **ACCESSIBLE, QUALITY & AFFORDABLE** FOR ALL.

## Where are we in the journey to Universal Health Coverage?

**In 2015, the leaders of the 193 United Nations Member States committed themselves to achieve universal health coverage by 2030. The journey towards patient-centric universal health coverage involves the development of effective policies around three pillars: services, finance, and population. Patient groups have an important role to play in this long-term path by making sure policies are reflective of, and are suitable to tackle patients' needs.**

### Introduction

On 25 September 2015, the [General Assembly of the United Nations](#) adopted Resolution [A/RES/70/1](#). By officially endorsing this document, the leaders of the 193 United Nations (UN) Member Countries agreed on a comprehensive set of goals and targets and committed themselves to work tirelessly to implement this Agenda fully by 2030. The [17 Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) and 169 targets of Agenda 2030 identify the global priorities that will guide, inspire, and stimulate UN Member Countries' political action for the next 15 years.

Action is expected to take place and develop around “areas of critical importance” for humanity and the planet: People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnership.

[Strategic Goal 3](#) is centred on good health and well-being. This strategic goal builds on the firm belief that ensuring health lives and promoting well-being for all is crucial in building prosperous societies.

Whilst significant progress has been made in tackling the threat posed by diseases such as polio, malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, much work is still needed to ensure that no-one is left behind and every person can lead a healthy life.

### Definition

Strategic Goal 3 is underpinned by a set of specific targets. Although these targets are global in scope and ambition, each government can establish how to best incorporate them in their national policies, processes, and plans of action by taking into account national circumstances. While multiple roads can be paved towards the fulfillment of the SDGs and related targets, the content of each target and the ambition behind them apply to all countries globally. Amongst the nine targets that underpin Strategic Goal 3, stands Target 3.8, which reads:

**To achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.**

Find out more at [www.iapo.org.uk](http://www.iapo.org.uk)

# Advocating for patient-centric UHC

The ambitious journey that is traced by the SDGs and Agenda 2030 will only be brought to completion successfully if actions are undertaken in cooperation with “all countries, all stakeholders, and all people”. A global impact can only be made by thinking globally and by mobilising all the resources available.

Patients and patient groups recognise that achieving universal health coverage is a necessary condition to build sustainable and prosperous societies. To achieve this, though, universal health coverage must be patient centric, and patients’ organizations and groups are in a key position to suggest what patient centricity entails in this regard.

To make their voice heard by decision-makers, patients must be empowered and ready to contribute as equal partners to all levels and stages of decision-making. Equally, the other stakeholders must be ready to adopt the principle of partnership outlined in the Resolution and create an enabling environment for patients to play a central role. Each year, the 12<sup>th</sup> of December marks the [UHC Day](#), which is organized by the [University Health Coverage Coalition](#). The coalition brings together “more than 1,000 organizations in 121 countries advocating for stronger, more equitable health systems that leave no one behind”.

The UHC Day represents an opportunity for people and organisations to mobilise and demand political action around the principle of healthcare for all as a human right.

## Where we are and where we are going

As mentioned, all of the 193 UN member countries have agreed to work towards the achievement of universal health coverage by 2030. In doing so, they have acknowledged UHC as a global priority and have pledged to develop appropriate policies and frameworks to ensure UHC becomes reality.

While UHC represents a globally relevant target, the means through which it is pursued are generally chosen and implemented at national and local level. In deciding which strategy to adopt in the pursuit of UHC, each country has to face specific challenges that are determined by a combination of political, social, and economic circumstances. This represents an important opportunity for patient groups operating on a national and local level to mobilise and hold decision makers accountable. This would ensure that national policies are properly reflective of the ambition and vision outlined in Agenda 2030.

In 2015, the World Health Organization and the World Bank co-authored *Tracking universal health coverage: First global monitoring report*. In the [report](#), UHC is identified as the combination of three dimensions: **health services** (what services are covered?) **finance** (what proportion of costs are covered?), and **population** (who is covered?). Developing and implementing effective policies around these three dimensions simultaneously can be challenging, even for countries whose healthcare systems are established and performing well.

Patient groups have an important role to play in this long-term journey. First, patients are well placed to ensure that governments develop and properly follow-up on feasible policies in the three dimensions of UHC. Depending on local and national context, the degree of urgency with which these dimensions are perceived will vary considerably across countries. Patients are called on to identify which are the most sensible and urgent priorities, around which political and policy action is needed in order to progress towards UHC for all.

