iAHO
Integrated African Health Observatory

World Health Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR **Africa**

Fact Sheet
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What is UHC?

"I receive quality care when I need it, without incurring financial hardship."

Rather than *complicated*, UHC is *complex* – a complex and adaptive concept, with multiple parts and that is responsive to what is put into making it happen.

What is it, anyway?

UHC is one of the targets under SDG 3, specifically **target 3.8**.

More depth now, in one sentence: UHC is attained when populations are able to obtain the health and health-related **services**, of enough **quality** to be effective, that they **need** to ensure their health and well-being **without causing financial hardship**.

So yes, definitely lots of moving pieces in one sentence. Complex indeed.

But if we break it down further, let's look at the individual ideas:

Services
Across two dimensions:

- The public health functions, i.e., health promotion, preventative health care, curative health care (treatment), rehabilitative health care, and palliative health care;

- The different population/age cohorts (what we mean by "the life course"), i.e., pregnancy, neonatal life/infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, elderly life.

Quality
One measure of how well the health system is performing and includes attributes such as:

- Effectiveness of interventions > framed in the 'UHC sentence' as services that are of "enough quality to be effective;"

- Patient safety;

- Client experiences.

Need

This has to do with what individuals, households, and communities *demand* in terms of what services would help them achieve health and well-being, versus a focus on *supply* of services that are hypothesized to be good for the people without undertaking proper community engagement and capacity-building on health. This is important because low demand means low utilization; populations need to be aware of what is available and potentially useful for them, which helps in improving health-seeking behaviors and healthy actions overall.

Without causing financial hardship

This has to do with avoiding catastrophic or impoverishing health expenditure. One way is to increase public/government expenditure on health > some of our analytical work is beginning to strongly show the value of this approach.

With all those working parts understood, how do we actually get to the result outlined in that long, complex sentence? Through **investments** in the health system.