

What is a health system?

“The set of things working together to ensure I get the quality health care I need. I understand that the system in my country is probably different than the system in other countries.”



A health system promotes, restores and maintains health. It is a complex whole made up of **all the actions, actors, resources, and mechanisms involved in delivering health care services to meet the health needs of populations.**

Framing structure

The overall framing structure within which health operates in a particular setting, a health system is the foundation upon which health actions may be enacted and the central space where populations interact with the institutions, people and tools whose primary aim is to address concerns of health and well-being.

Systems approach

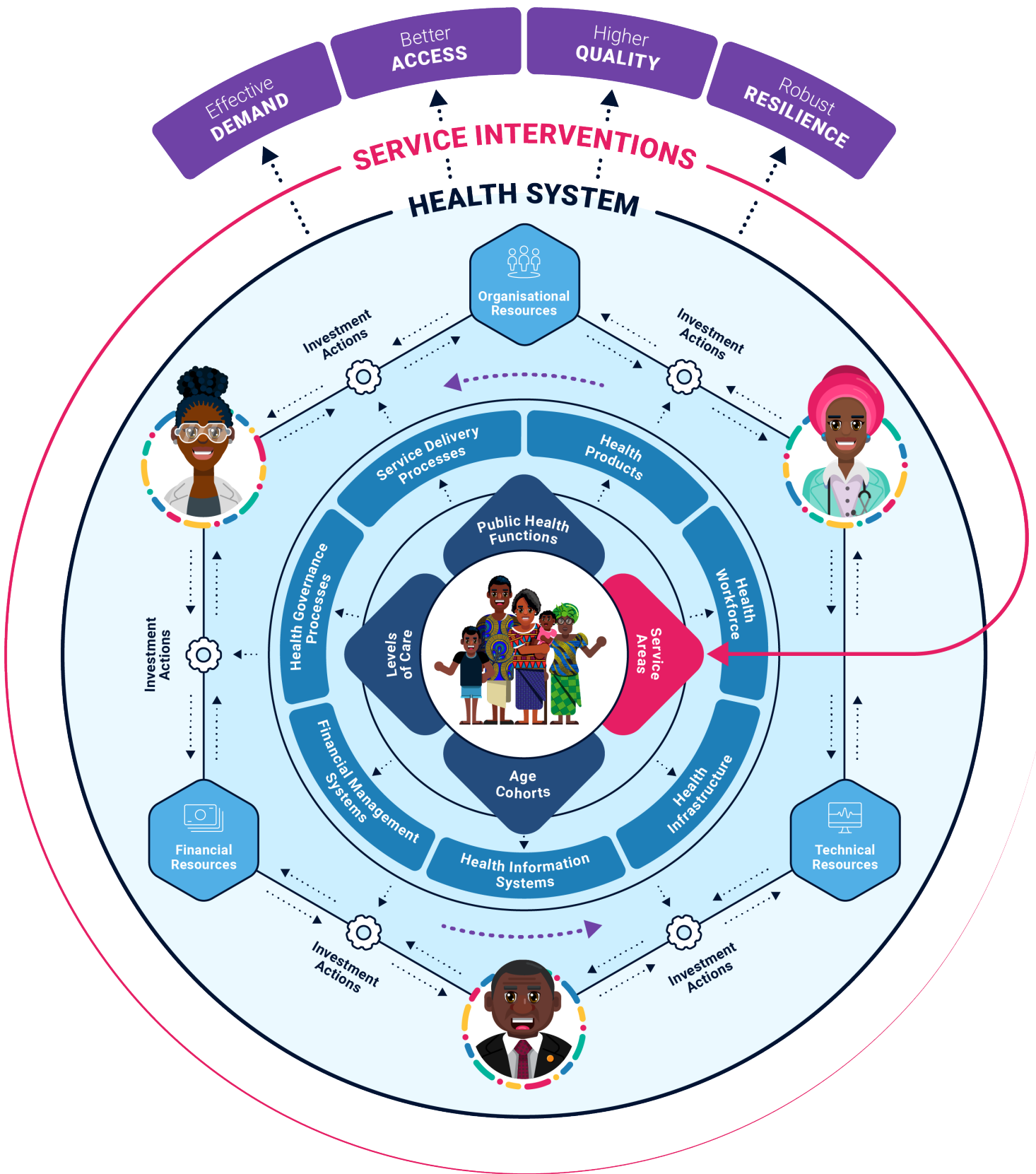
A systems approach to health provides us with the opportunity to improve the health of populations in a comprehensive manner that cuts across **all** service areas (disease- or condition-specific programs), touches **all** age cohorts, and incorporate **all** categories of essential health services: health promotion, preventive care, curative care, rehabilitative care, and palliative care. This perspective places the person at the centre and examines their health-related needs throughout the life course and the range of interventions that could affect them.

Multidimensional integration

Working to improve health outcomes through a horizontal **systems** lens (cross-cutting many areas as each health system building block caters to all service areas) that incorporates the needs of the more vertical **service interventions** (specifically focused, stand-alone programme areas) creates an all-inclusive architecture whereby health needs are addressed multi-dimensionally and the emphasis is placed on ensuring that health system investments are connected to health service outcomes.

Facilitating better health outcomes

Improving the performance of health systems is expected to facilitate the attainment of UHC in countries. At a basic level, a well-functioning health system results in better health outcomes and the achievement, for all at all ages, of the WHO definition of health: **“a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”** (1948).

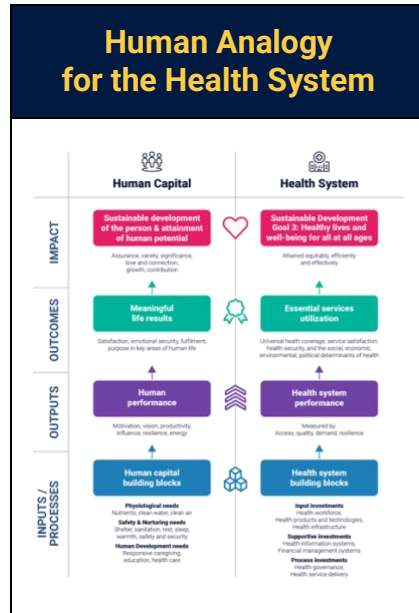


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