

Concept Note

Strategic investments for resilient health systems: Strengthening health systems and advancing universal health coverage in a changing world

Sixth annual ministerial meeting of the Group of Friends of Universal Health Coverage & Global Health

Co-hosted by the co-chairs of the Group of Friends of UHC & Global Health (Georgia, Japan and Thailand)
Co-sponsored by WHO, UHC2030, others TBC

Date: 26 September 2025

Time: 8.15 – 9.30 AM

Venue: Conference Room 12, UNHQ

Registration: TBC

Livestream: TBC

BACKGROUND

As the 2030 deadline fast approaches, a challenging global landscape—marked by geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainty, climate shocks, conflict, and rising inequalities—demands urgent action. Progress towards SDG3 has stagnated or declined in recent years and the systemic deprioritization of health in government spending is having dire consequences in a context where 4.5 billion people worldwide lack access to basic health services and 2 billion people face financial hardship due to health costs.¹ With sharp cuts to external aid and global health funding, often compounding domestic financing challenges already present, countries are facing the imperative of delivering better health and more health for the money, while ensuring that no one is left behind.

Universal health coverage (UHC) with adequate protection from financial hardship is critical for promoting good health and addressing both present and future health challenges. Through targeted policies and investment in smart, high-impact interventions, which enable access to an affordable comprehensive benefit package that includes health promotion, disease prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care, governments can ensure better and more equitable health outcomes. For example, reorienting health systems to prioritize health promotion and preventative measures, such as early screenings for cancer, diabetes and hypertension will help alleviate the non-communicable disease (NCDs) burden – the leading cause of death and disability worldwide.

Adequate and sustainable health financing and global solidarity are critical for achieving UHC and resilient, equitable health systems. Yet, health financing challenges persist across all income groups and are especially acute in low- and middle-income countries, where rising debt burdens and limited fiscal space make it increasingly difficult to invest in the health system strengthening required to achieve UHC.

¹ World Health Organization and World Bank (2023) Tracking universal health coverage 2023 global monitoring report. Geneva. Available at: <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/374059/9789240080379-eng.pdf?sequence=1>.

In the face of the shifting global health landscape, strong partnerships for capacity building and strengthening public financial management, along with strategic investments aligned with long-term health goals are needed to deliver measurable progress towards SDG3.

OBJECTIVES

Participants will discuss how to strengthen health while adapting to the current financing landscape to chart actionable pathways toward a more effective and sustainable global health future.

- **Exchange strategies and best practices** to strengthen health systems through smarter, more sustainable investments that deliver measurable health outcomes.
- **Discuss the implications of shifts in global governance and the evolving ODA landscape**, and their impact on advancing UHC.
- **Reimagine new models of global cooperation and sustainable financing**, building resilient and equitable health systems that leave no one behind, restore trust and ensure inclusive participation.
- **Reaffirm political commitment to UHC** as a cornerstone of achieving SDG 3 and strengthening resilience in the face of global crises.