



# Stories

from the field

60 SEC  
summaries



World Health  
Organization

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#UHCPartnership

**2020** Building stronger health systems  
for UHC in the context of COVID-19

In 2020, WHO's UHC Partnership produced a set of six stories from the six WHO regions to form a special issue of 'Stories from the Field' on COVID-19. The stories document how countries are reshaping their health systems amid one of the most devastating pandemics in history.

UHC means that everyone, everywhere can access health services without experiencing financial hardship. The world was taking positive steps to deliver health for all by 2030 before COVID-19 fundamentally disrupted health systems, societies and economies. In less than a year, the pandemic has eroded the development gains achieved over the past 25 years.

The UHC Partnership, one of WHO's largest initiatives for international cooperation for UHC, is providing vital and timely support that is enabling countries to take advantage of the opportunity to emerge stronger from the pandemic. It is working to ensure that the investments made throughout the COVID-19 response will result in health system reforms that improve both health security and progress towards UHC.

This publication of 60-second summaries from the published Stories from the Field gives a flavour of the impact of work happening on the ground to achieve UHC.

Cover photo credit: ©WHO/Blink Media – Gilliane Soupe.

Time is precious. Catch up on what you need to know in 60 seconds. Here are the short versions of our longer stories contained in the magazine **Stories from the field: special issue on COVID-19**.



# About the Universal Health Coverage Partnership

The Universal Health Coverage Partnership promotes universal health coverage (UHC) by strengthening health systems through improving governance, access to health products, workforce, financing, information and service delivery, and enabling effective development cooperation in countries.

The UHC Partnership's aim is to build country capacity and reinforce the leadership of ministries of health to build resilient, effective and sustainable health systems in order to make progress towards UHC. We aim to bridge the gap between global commitments and country implementation and are part of the UHC2030 global movement to build stronger health systems for UHC.

The UHC Partnership is funded by the European Union (EU), the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Irish Aid, the Government of Japan, the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, the UK Department for International Development and Belgium.

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank all those people in country and regional offices who have supported the process of documenting the crucial work and experiences that can serve as valuable resources to be shared across countries; your efforts are much appreciated. We would also like to thank our donors and partners who have made this work possible, and to all the technical staff of WHO who continue to provide coordination and technical expertise to support the acceleration of progress towards UHC.



# Pakistan's drive to restore essential health services during COVID-19

## FACT

Resources are being redirected away from essential services in Pakistan as rising cases of COVID-19 overstretch the country's health system. Services for many other health conditions have come to a halt.

## WHY IT MATTERS

Disruption of essential services can have devastating consequences such as future outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases and increase in maternal mortality. The population could also lose trust in the health system and not take advice on infection control.

## IN PRACTICE

WHO and partners prepared an action plan to support the Government in maintaining essential health services; a significant pillar in Pakistan's Preparedness and Response plan for COVID-19.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

Pakistan is taking strategic decisions so that its limited resources can provide maximum health benefits to its people. Strengthening primary health care is a proven approach to ensure health for all, especially in times of crisis.

# Papua New Guinea tackles the threat of COVID-19 with an all-of-government approach



## FACT

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is on a state of high alert, tackling COVID-19 from community level all the way up to establishing new national legal mechanisms.

## WHY IT MATTERS

To implement testing and preventative measures effectively it is important to strengthen health services and improve public understanding about COVID-19, especially in countries like PNG where communal living is so widespread

## IN PRACTICE

WHO is providing technical support to the Government in key areas such as primary health care, mental health, surveillance and legal reform to respond to COVID-19 and maintain essential health services during the pandemic.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

Raising awareness of COVID-19 and maintaining essential health services through primary health care approaches will help protect the whole population during the pandemic and beyond.



Physical distancing being practiced during a community health awareness campaign for COVID-19 by the Western Highlands Provincial Health Authority in partnership with the Tambul-Nibilyer District Development Authority in Nibilyer, Western Highlands Province. ©Western Highlands PHA/Dannax Kupamu



# *South Africa* steps up hygiene in health facilities to protect against COVID-19

## FACT

The Government of South Africa urgently approved and is now implementing its 'National Infection Prevention and Control Strategic Framework', a critical strategy underpinning responses to epidemics and pandemics.

## WHY IT MATTERS

Effective infection prevention and control protects both patients and health workers, which is especially important when COVID-19 is spreading rapidly.

## IN PRACTICE

WHO supported the development of the South African National Infection Prevention and Control Strategic Framework and its roll-out to provinces.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

Strong infection prevention and control measures will help save lives among the 58 million people living in South Africa, especially in vulnerable populations. It has a direct impact on healthcare associated infections and the spread of COVID-19.

# Suriname's COVID-19 response boosts health system

## FACT

COVID-19 highlighted the urgent need to strengthen Suriname's health system. The Government is taking steps to ensure that the whole population can access essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

## WHY IT MATTERS

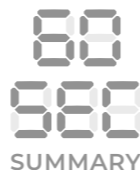
Suriname is seizing the opportunity to build a stronger health system that is more resilient to shocks so it can provide services to everyone, including the most remote and vulnerable populations.

## IN PRACTICE

The Ministry of Health and PAHO/WHO have together developed strategies and guidelines in four main areas: saving lives, protecting health care workers, slowing the spread of the virus and strengthening epidemic intelligence.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

The Government's strategic approach in responding to COVID-19 aims to save lives and address urgent needs while building a strong foundation to achieve universal health coverage.



PAHO/WHO supported Suriname in advancing preparedness and response capacities. The Central Laboratory of the Bureau of Public Health/Bureau voor Openbare Gezondheidszorg (BOG) was provided reagents for molecular testing. Laboratory technologists were trained in conducting screening and confirmatory tests for COVID-19. This photo was taken in February 2020, before COVID-19 hit the country. ©PAHO/WHO.



## *Timor-Leste's* swift action prevents community transmission of COVID-19

### FACT

Timor-Leste's quick and so far effective response to the COVID-19 crisis is a result of government leadership, supported by technical guidance from WHO and needs-based support from the UHC Partnership.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Timor-Leste has a fragile health system, with limited capacity for managing critical cases, few functional isolation facilities and difficulties procuring timely medical supplies. If the COVID-19 virus spreads widely, the health system could be rapidly overwhelmed.

### IN PRACTICE

WHO raised the alarm about the urgent need for COVID-19 preparedness and the UHC Partnership, along with other multi- and bi-lateral partners, provided critical technical, logistical and financial support for the COVID-19 response.

### EXPECTED RESULTS

Timor-Leste has now increased its capacity to respond to COVID-19 and is better prepared than before to deal with the emergence and control of new cases.



# Ukraine working towards universal health coverage while responding to COVID-19

## FACT

Ukraine has acted quickly during the COVID-19 crisis to ensure that people do not have to pay for COVID-19 testing and treatment services. Its recent reforms in health financing played a key role in the process.

## WHY IT MATTERS

Universal health coverage means that everyone can use health services when and where they need them, without experiencing financial hardship. Removing barriers to access is especially critical in a pandemic

## IN PRACTICE

WHO, including through the UHC Partnership, has supported the Ukrainian Government to strengthen health system financing, service delivery and governance for a faster, more effective response to COVID-19 while accelerating progress towards UHC.

## EXPECTED RESULTS

With a stronger health system and a foundation of effective primary health care, the whole population can safely and affordably access essential health services, including services related to COVID-19.

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SUMMARY



WHO field visit to Zhytomyr region, Ukraine, to strengthen prevention and infectious control programmes and increase the preparedness of facilities for the COVID-19 pandemic. (12 May 2020). ©WHO/Valerii Vodopianov.

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COVID-19 is not just a global health emergency, it is a vivid demonstration of the fact that there is no health security without resilient health systems, or without addressing the social, economic, commercial and environmental determinants of health. More than ever, the pandemic illustrates why investing in health must be at the centre of development.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General

Universal health coverage is defined as ensuring that all people have access to needed health services (including prevention, promotion, treatment, rehabilitation and palliation) of sufficient quality to be effective while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship.

World Health Organization

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