



World Health Day 2019  
PRIMARY HEALTH CARE—everyone, everywhere

## *Message from WHO Representative to India*



**World Health Day** is celebrated every year on 7 April. The day marks the anniversary of the founding of World Health Organization (WHO) and is a unique opportunity to mobilize action around a specific health topic of concern. The **theme for World Health Day this year is universal health coverage (UHC)**, with a focus on the critical role of **primary health care**.

UHC is about ensuring all people and communities have access to quality health services — from promotion and prevention to treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care — without suffering financial hardship. This is best delivered through a strong primary health care system linked to referral hospitals. Primary health care is about bringing quality care closer to people and centered on the needs of communities.

### **Making health services universal**

As we know, people who are healthy can support their families and actively contribute to the nation's development. Access to quality health services and financial protection not only enhances people's health and life expectancy, it also reduces poverty; creates jobs; drives economic growth; and enhances gender equality.

**WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus** has said, "Today, instead of health for all, we have health for some. We all have a solemn responsibility to ensure that World Health Day accelerates efforts and enables every person, everywhere to access the care they need."

According to **Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia Region Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh**, "Now more than ever, the Region can harness the momentum from these global processes and drive real impact where it matters most: in countries, and at the grassroots. Doing so is crucial to achieving health and well-being for all, at all ages."

### **India's journey towards UHC**

This is an exciting moment for health in India. Health is firmly and squarely embedded in the public discourse. India is making great progress in UHC and in a year that India is commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, it is only appropriate that the focus will be on healthcare for all and ensuring equity in access.

India's National Health Policy (NHP) 2017 already commits the government to raise investments in health from 1% to 2.5% GDP by 2025 and transform the approach to provide comprehensive primary health care.

The **Ayushman Bharat** programme launched in 2018 has two key components: 1) **the health insurance programme known as Pradhan Mantri Jan Aarogya Yojna (PM-JAY)**; and 2) the creation of 150,000 **Health**

**and Wellness Centres (HWCs).** PMJAY aims to provide around 500 million poor and vulnerable Indians with an annual family coverage of INR 500 000 (about US\$6900) for secondary and tertiary care hospitalizations.

The proposed 150,000 HWCs are intended to become the main points of contact for communities with the public health system. These centres will provide comprehensive health care including free essential drugs, diagnostic services and referral access to secondary and tertiary health care.

### **The road ahead**

This is a proud moment for all of us at WHO. We have supported the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog in policy design including development of benefits and frontline service delivery models; deepening capacity to set appropriate pricing and reimbursement levels; and research to refine operational approaches.

There is already a strong momentum in India to move swiftly on the path of health for all. Let's join hands to accelerate progress towards UHC through a well-equipped primary health care delivery system linked to referral hospitals.



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