

## **How can the private sector support Universal Health Coverage to help deliver on the promise to leave no one behind?**

How can the private sector support Universal Health Coverage (UHC) – the idea that everyone should be able to access the healthcare they need without fear of financial hardship? That was the focus of a discussion convened by Save the Children and GSK as part of the first UN High Level Political Forum on the [Sustainable Development Goals](#).

The speakers from GSK and Save the Children were joined by representatives from London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Rockefeller Foundation, UN Foundation and the Every Women Every Child campaign. This combination of industry, academia and civil society made for a challenging and positive discussion focused on target 3.8, achieving UHC, as part of Goal 3 *Good Health and Well-Being*.

The clear message was that, while a mixed system can be highly effective, national governments must lead the way in providing a basic package of publicly funded healthcare services which can be supplemented and complemented by a well-monitored and incentivised private sector. The starting point for any government must first be to understand the balance within its own health system, and then to use the understanding that exists from all healthcare stakeholders, public and private, to plan for the future.

While governments must lead when it comes to funding and structuring healthcare systems, the scale of the challenge demands multiple players. The private sector should not only be viewed as a source of funding, but also as a source of experience and capabilities. The value and contribution that industry can bring to this process by delivering innovation, increasing access and helping to strengthen healthcare systems is being recognised more and more and the private sector must be ready to support governments in achieving UHC. Whatever shape that may take – be it as provider, financier or contractor – the private sector must be attuned to the government's healthcare objectives and ambitions. It needs to be a partner on the same path as the government, not an outsider.

That almost every country has a mixed healthcare system, combining private and public providers, is accepted; but what that system should look like and what the balance should be often remains unclear. When it comes to designing systems that help people get the care they need, at the right time and in the right place, one size does not fit all. As every country has a unique health system, tailored approaches and timelines will be required.

Therefore a clear need remains to better measure and understand the roles that different stakeholders play in achieving this goal. We need to make sure that meaningful data is collected in every country so that we can measure progress towards UHC. A crucial indicator in the Global Indicator Framework for the SDGs on UHC (3.8.2) remains problematic as it simply won't measure how many people are suffering financial hardship for the health services they need.

But there are unifying principles which every government can consider when making the journey towards UHC. GSK, with input from Save the Children, devised eight principles that should inform the design of UHC policies. They are: equity, efficiency, quality, inclusiveness, evidence-based decision making, availability, affordability & funding, and innovation.

The path towards UHC might be long, and potentially challenging. But with clearer measurement, more strategic integration between public and private providers, and strong leadership from government, we might be able to make that journey a little more quickly and smoothly.

*The panel was held on 13 July 2016 during the UN High Level Political Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals and consisted of Shira Kilcoyne (GSK), Simon Wright (Save the Children), Kara Hansen, (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) and Michael Myers (Rockefeller Foundation) and was moderated by Natalie Africa from the UN Foundation. The event was held in support of the Every Woman Every Child campaign and was convened under the [partnership](#) between Save the Children and GSK.*