

Key facts

Primary health care is the **foundation of a strong health system**, leading to more equitable health for everyone, everywhere.

In the Western Pacific Region, **up to 50% of people** in some countries **lack access to essential health services**, and **50% of countries** do not have enough health workers to provide these services.

People should not face financial hardship accessing the health care they need, yet **1 in 5 families** in some countries in the Region **spends more than 10% of their income on health care**.

New health technologies are providing opportunities to strengthen primary health care.

In the Western Pacific Region, **up to 50% of people in some countries struggle to get the essential health services** they need due to cost, distance from health facilities, gender or other cultural norms. Many countries also have a shortage of health workers trained to deliver safe, effective, people-centred care for everyone. Health emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, worsen the situation as services are disrupted and health workers are redeployed.

Strengthening primary health care means making services available **closer to communities**, acting to **reduce the cost people face** to access services, or providing more trained health workers. The growing incidence of noncommunicable diseases, from which 1 in 6 people in the Western Pacific Region will die before age 70, requires stronger primary health care to reduce the burden on national health budgets in the future.

The **expansion of innovation and digital technology** can be used by some countries to bring primary care services closer to those who may otherwise have difficulty getting to them, or to train front-line health workers to deliver better services.

All this requires **greater investment** in health systems, particularly primary health care services, to achieve better health outcomes. Since good health also requires actions outside the health sector, **the health sector needs to work with other sectors**, such as social services or water and sanitation, to maximize health for their populations now and for the future.

Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic response can guide decisions and actions that can help build stronger primary health care systems to achieve universal health coverage and improved health security.

WHO response

Making the right decisions on the design of the primary health care system is an important step every country must take. WHO continues to work with Member States to **strengthen political commitments** to universal health coverage and **increase investments** in strong primary health care.

WHO provides technical support to countries in the development of their **national health policies, strategies and plans** to strengthen primary care so that all people receive whole-person care for their health needs throughout the life-course.

Using evidence, WHO provides advice to countries on actions they can take to **provide better-quality primary health care services and address the social determinants of health**. These include barriers to accessing services, such as cost or distance or other cultural and/or social factors.

WHO continues to strengthen **country engagement with other sectors** to address the factors outside the health sector that have a positive impact on population health, such as education, water, sanitation and housing.

WHO is working in **partnership** with other stakeholders at regional and country levels to support countries on the implementation of primary health care in a way that matches their local context.

