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Universal Health Coverage in the Republic of Chad – a national commitment for intersectoral governance and greater equity that leverages all available opportunities and innovations



In the drive to achieve the health-related Sustainable Goals, Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is a rallying call – a call for revitalized health sector reform and the creation of stronger health systems that can deliver basic, quality care to populations at the time of need.

The goal of the Swiss Cooperation's *Health District Support Project* in Chad (PADS) is to reduce maternal and child related morbidity and mortality, through a systemic approach including governance, infrastructure, drug supply, health information system strengthening, capacity building and outreach services including health promotion. It is a comprehensive approach to improving the wellbeing of the largely rural population and integrating the nomadic population.

The Program is also active at national level to inform evidence-based policy making. In collaboration with other donors the PADS is supporting the Ministry of Public Health in its ambition to make UHC a reality and to stop the poorest and the hard to reach segments of the population, which rely mostly on informal economy, from being continually left behind.

Chad has adopted its *National Strategy for Universal Health Coverage* in 2015 and benefits from the financial and technical support of the Swiss Cooperation through the P4H Social Health Protection Network. The intersectoral coordination unit was set-up in 2016. Taking the World Health Organization dimensions for assessing the coverage of services (capacity, expansion, reduction of direct payment) into account, the Strategy covers 6 main areas to:

- 1) Develop mechanisms against financial risks;
- 2) Use resources more effectively and equitably;
- 3) Promote Public-Private Partnership to strengthen the supply of health services;
- 4) Prevent risks that affect health;
- 5) Take into account the wishes of the population;
- 6) Mobilize financial resources for UHC.

Several partners are accompanying Chad in its quest to implement UHC, including our program PADS. We join forces with main partners of the health sector but also with those of other sectors (insurances, social action, statistics, economy and livestock and agriculture) who all can contribute to the implementation of UHC. This is particularly true in remote rural zones in win-win situations by making use of synergies between sectors. A 3-days workshop with 90 participants is held 2nd-4th May 2018 to share experiences with national, regional and international stakeholders in N'Djamena and to draft next action lines on fostered cooperation between sectors.

As this week's *The Economist* indicates, there is a powerful case for making this investment. In Chad and its neighboring countries too many people are pushed into poverty on one hand because of so called catastrophic expenses and on the other hand because of bad care giving due to the poor quality of care and/or to financial barriers. The costs of the lack of UHC are paid by the poor in sickness, human suffering and premature death and by the whole society as a result of its negative effects on the workforce and on education and because of the lack of efficiency of the health system in general. UHC offers an alternative vision: the needed investment to make it work also brings substantial benefits for communities, individuals, and society as a whole. A healthy society is a wealthier and more resilient one – where people can work productively and children can attend school.

However, in Chad with the deep economic crisis starting in 2014, a prevailing question is: Who will pay? Even the poorest are prepared to share in a solidary system to health insurance for the benefits of their communities. Here again, other sectors may have easier access to poor and remote populations to act as entry points for community insurances. New opportunities on this will be discussed during the workshop as well as the need of more data for financial and operational planning.

We should not forget that this means mobilizing health care workers so they have are motivated, capacitated and have the equipment and referral systems in place to reach even the most remote communities. This is the key to equity – and the challenge that Chad has to face as one of the world's poorest countries.

The P4H global network – also supported by Switzerland among other partners – is dedicated to health financing, economics and social health protection for universal health coverage. P4H seeks to support countries like Chad to learn from one another as they set out to implement strategies and interventions to translate UHC into policy and practice. Our workshop – out of the need to cooperate between the health and other sectors – will also depict success stories from Chad such as joint human and animal health services among mobile pastoral communities where both sectors benefit by sharing resources. This informed health programs also in better-off countries – since health financing and its resourceful use are universal topics. Progress that can be made despite the challenging situation in Chad can be very helpful for other countries to learn from.

Quotes:

The interministerial coordination unit of the UHC national strategy stated:

“This workshop is very timely since we need to foster our exchange with partners!”

“Some prevailing operational questions include if new insurance schemes can promote the national plan and if agricultural professional organizations (livestock breeders, crop plant cultivators) can serve as entry points for insurance schemes in rural populations”.

The General Secretary of the Ministry of Health emphasized, that they want to have more information on the plan UHC operational implementation scheme – but to better exchange, we need a technical platform for exchange between partners, notably between the interministerial UHC unit and the Ministry of Health.

“Many health indicators improved over the past decades – however, there remains much to do.”

“Intersectoral cooperation with the Ministries of Finances, Planning, Social Action and many more sectors is nowadays a key strategy of the MoH.”

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation representative commented:

“We have projects in health, education and livestock production, humanitarian aid and food security in the same zones of Chad. We want to see more harmonized approaches between these programs in future in view of improved governance as well as a better coordination between financial and technical partners for synergy complementarity.”

“Switzerland supports the financing and implementation of UHC in resource-poor countries – because we can - and we need - to succeed.”

Dr. Boukari Ouedraogo, Coordinator of PADS, added: *“Quality services that are accessible and accepted are critical for progress towards UHC – quality and access are the door-openers for engaging communities, finding community champions for health, and putting greater equity into practice.”*

Read more:

Ministry of Public Health, Chad

<https://www.sante-tchad.org/>

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation:

<https://www.erweiterungsbeitrag.admin.ch/deza/en/home/countries/chad.html>

P4H Social Protection Network:

<https://p4h.world/en/>

Economist: <https://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21741138-case-it-powerful-oneincluding-poor-countries-universal-health-care-worldwide>

Swiss TPH: <https://www.swisstph.ch/de/projects/project-detail/project/support-project-for-the-health-districts-in-chad-yao-and-danamadi/>

Centre de Support en Santé Internationale (CSSI): <https://www.swisstph.ch/en/about/our-partners/> AND <https://td.cssi-int.org>