We commend President Samia Suluhu move to Universal Health Insurance Bill; But urge key principles of UHC to be adhered to.

Statement by Health Promotion Tanzania. Dar Es Salaam. May 27th, 2021

A: Introduction: About Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

Achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) means that all individuals and communities receive health services without facing financial hardships. This includes full spectrum of essential, quality health services from health promotion to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care. With UHC, people are able to access better and quality services thus improving the economy and wellbeing of the people. UHC is relevant to Tanzanian government, in particular to the agenda of industrialization of Tanzanian economy. Three reasons explains this: (i) the population covered by primary healthcare (PHC) will increase and be productive (ii) Improved health services will lead to better client satisfaction and (iii) the burden of cost sharing will be reduced, making economic saving. We recommend that the ministry of health take advantage of the comprehensive report and recommendations we did on UHC, available here UHC 2030 Policy Recommendations for Tanzania. Together with this, five UHC policy briefs. These resources will provide lessons and direction for a good start and successful UHC program.

B: Benefits of the Universal Health Insurance and UHC

UHC is not a mere health issue but benefits a range of other sectors; for example our analysis shows that investing in UHC will impact SDG1 poverty, SDG 3 equitable health outcomes, SDG 4 quality education, SDG 5 gender equity and SDG 8 inclusive economic growth. Directly, it will achieve SDG 3.8.1 and 3.8.2. Investing in Universal Health Coverage will reduce the possibility of families to be pushed into poverty and families will be healthy. If productivity strategies are put in place, families will produce, and their average expenditure will be above USD 1.9 per day hence reduction in poverty. When the household expenditure increases, government tax collection will equally increase. Likewise, a well-designed and financed UHC is a vote-winning strategy. Every beneficiary will remember times of illness and appreciate how the government took part in addressing health related issues. UHC reforms can be extremely popular with the public as they deliver quick wins.

C: Policy Recommendations

While we refer to resources referred to in the introduction section to inform the content of the bill, we remain open for consultation. Tanzania can reach the heights of UHC by increasing levels of public financing for health to 4% GDP by 2023. It is also very crucial to ensure efficiency and equitable allocation of resources to strengthen vital health systems and reducing the financial burden on households.

Below, are specific recommendations to be taken into action:

1 Health Promotion Tanzania is a national non-Governmental Organization committed to support Government and community efforts towards quality health for all.
I. Formalizing social participation by bringing representative stakeholders together (Government, Donors, Private Sector and CSOs) to align all funding schemes such as GFTAM, GAVI, PEPFAR/PEPFAR to reach UHC in Tanzania.

II. Approve and implement a health financing strategy as well as operational legal framework that will replace private voluntary health financing (especially out-of-pocket payments) with compulsory progressive public financing and health system strengthening. This will result into healthy and wealthy subsidizing the sick and poor.

III. Undertaking tax reforms to start pro-health taxation on items such as cigarettes, sugar, and fossil fuels to generate resources and aim to allocate 4% of GDP by 2023.

IV. Accelerating the scaling up of the integrated national health insurance scheme offering free, or heavy subsidized, improved community health funds (iCHF) membership to all households in the informal sector who are not eligible for the NHIF scheme.

V. Allocate and disburse resources for health care, aiming to reach government health expenditure of 4% of GDP by 2023.

D: Conclusion:

Universal Health Coverage strategy is expected to have constructive impacts both in the short, medium, and long run. In the short term for example, (i) the population covered by health services will increase (ii) increasing in higher levels of satisfaction (iii) reduction in the burden of cost sharing fees. In the medium term, poor people in denial of health services would decrease and increasing in customer satisfaction will lead to political bonuses. In the long run, spending on health of the people is a huge investment. Tanzania will have a healthy population, a healthy workforce thus increasing in production.

Contact:

Health Promotion Tanzania
Advocacy Program
Email: advocacy@hdt.or.tz
Tel" +255 653 677 337
Website: www.healthpromotiontanzania.org
Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/healthpromotiontanzania.org
Tweeter: https://twitter.com/healthpromotiontanzania.org