Media Update
11 December 2019

United Nations
SECRETARY-GENERAL'S MESSAGE

INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE DAY
12 December 2019

This past September at the United Nations, world leaders endorsed an ambitious political declaration on universal health coverage, reaffirming that health is a human right. The agreement is a significant achievement that will drive progress over the next decade on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

On this International Universal Health Coverage Day, I call on leaders to keep the promise and ensure health for all is a reality for everyone, everywhere. While more people are accessing essential health services than ever before, far too many still miss out. It is unacceptable and unjust that half of the world’s population still lacks access to these essential services and 100 million people are driven into extreme poverty every year due to healthcare costs.

A person’s health coverage should never depend on their wealth or where they may live.

On our path to health for all, we must prioritize the needs of those most vulnerable and furthest behind, through increased public investment in resilient primary health care systems, including for mental health needs. We must also recognize the increasing burden that pollution and the climate crisis place on health and healthcare systems.

Universal health coverage is integral to delivering the Sustainable Development Goals, our blueprint of a better future for people and planet. On this International Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to health for all as an investment in humanity, wellbeing and prosperity for everyone.
UNICEF PRESS RELEASE

WORLD AIDS DAY
1 December 2019

Despite significant increase in birth registration, a quarter of the world’s children remain ‘invisible’ – UNICEF

Proportion of registered births increased almost 20 per cent over past decade, yet 166 million children under-five have never been officially recorded

NEW YORK/ISLAMABAD, 11 December 2019 – The number of children whose births are officially registered has increased significantly worldwide, yet 166 million children under-five, or 1 in 4, remain unregistered, according to a new report released by UNICEF.

Birth Registration for Every Child by 2030: Are we on track? – which analyses data from 174 countries – shows that the proportion of children under-five registered globally is up around 20 per cent from 10 years ago – increasing from 63 per cent to 75 per cent.

“We have come a long way but too many children are still slipping through the cracks, uncounted and unaccounted for,” said UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore. “A child not registered at birth is invisible – nonexistent in the eyes of the government or the law. Without proof of identity, children are often excluded from education, health care and other vital services, and are more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.”

Global progress is driven largely by great strides in South Asia. Pakistan, with 42 per cent registration of children under five years of age, is striving to achieve universal birth registration by 2024. UNICEF is providing technical support to the Government through the Ministry of Planning Development and Reform (MOPD&R) at the federal level and Local Government, Social Welfare and Planning and Development Departments in all four provinces.
and territories. The objective is to strengthen the realization of the right of the child to birth registration.

In 2019, Local Government Departments, with assistance from UNICEF, have registered over one million children in selected districts of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Baluchistan.

The report notes that nearly 1 in 3 countries – accounting for around a third of the global population of children under the age of five – will need to urgently speed up progress in order to meet the target of providing legal identity for all, including birth registration, as set out in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

Barriers to registration globally include lack of knowledge on how to register a child’s birth, unaffordable fees for registering a birth or obtaining a birth certificate, fees for late registration and long distances to the nearest registration facility. Traditional customs and practices in some communities – such as new mothers staying indoors – may also deter or prevent formal birth registration in the permitted timeframe.

Even when children are registered, possession of a birth certificate is less common, with 237 million children under-five globally – or slightly more than 1 in 3 – lacking this official proof of registration.

In Birth Registration for Every Child by 2030, UNICEF calls for five actions to protect all children:

- Provide every child with a certificate upon birth.
- Empower all parents, regardless of gender, to register their children at birth.
- Link birth registration to other systems to facilitate every child’s right to services including health, social protection and education.
- Invest in safe and innovative technological solutions to facilitate birth registration.
- Engage communities to demand birth registration for every child.

“Every child has a right to a name, a nationality and a legal identity, so any improvement in increased registration levels is welcome news,” said Fore. “But as we have just marked the 30th anniversary of these rights – as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child – we must not stop until every child is counted.”
About UNICEF
UNICEF works in some of the world’s toughest places, to reach the world’s most disadvantaged children. Across more than 190 countries and territories, we work for every child, everywhere, to build a better world for everyone.

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