



Ministry of Health and Sanitation

Directorate of Policy Planning and Information

REPORT ON UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE PRE- LAUNCH AND LAUNCH



1. Background

The provision of equitable access to quality and affordable healthcare for all without undue financial hardship to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC), as defined in target 3.8 of the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), is now a national priority of many low and middle-income countries. Hence, increasing numbers of countries are in the process of expanding health coverage and uptake of their population, particularly to people working in the informal sector and other vulnerable groups and providing financial protection. Since there is no one size-fit-all approach to providing healthcare for all, each country needs to develop its own unique strategy, approaches and tools to achieve the UHC goal.

In Sierra Leone, despite the importance attached to efforts to improve the quality of healthcare by policymakers and health managers, significant deficits persist in accessing quality healthcare. This is anticipated to compromise efforts towards the achievement of the UHC goal. The 2017 global Universal Health Coverage (UHC) monitoring report estimates that Sierra Leone had a service

coverage index of 36% in 2015 with 10.42% of the population facing catastrophic out-of-pocket health expenditure¹.

In fulfilment of the aspiration of the SLMNDP to enhance Human Capital Development (HCD) to achieve middle-income status by 2039, the Government of Sierra Leone has embarked on a comprehensive health sector reform. The aim is to transform the under-resourced health sector into a technologically integrated and functioning national healthcare delivery system that is fit-for-purpose and guarantees universal access and coverage. This UHC Roadmap vision is aligned with that of the new National Health Policy (NHP) and the National Health Sector Strategic Plan (NHSSP) for UHC. Thus, the development of this UHC Roadmap serves as the framework to guide the reform process.

2. Purpose and Scope of the Roadmap

This UHC roadmap is intended to support the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) in the planning process directed at the progressive realisation of UHC. The GoSL envisages a roadmap that describes the pathway of the health reform processes required to achieve universal access to quality healthcare services (including prevention, promotion, treatment and rehabilitation) based on the WHO's three dimensions of access, i.e. physical accessibility, financial affordability, and acceptability. With a focus on the entire population and the whole health system, the roadmap seeks to:

- a) Identify the challenges and gaps patients face in accessing healthcare;
- b) Outline the necessary steps towards a coherent and effective design of the feasible pathway, taking into consideration the political and socio-economic context, the current state of the healthcare system and stakeholder preferences;
- c) Propose how to address health system building blocks and design elements appropriate in the context of Sierra Leone;
- d) Provide concise descriptions of the priority intervention actions and milestones that indicate progress towards set goals; and
- e) Embed in a National Health Sector Strategy that ensures processes are aligned with other relevant national priorities and policies, providing risk mitigation is adopted as appropriate.

This roadmap adopts the vision defined in the National Health Policy (2021-2030) and operationalises the goal and objectives for the next ten years. The National Health Sector Strategic Plan (2021-2025) and the result-based Monitoring Framework are developed based on this UHC

¹ World Health WHO and World Bank, *Tracking Universal Health Coverage: 2017 Global Monitoring Report*, 2017 <<http://pubdocs.worldbank.org/en/193371513169798347/2017-global-monitoring-report.pdf>> [accessed 20 November 2018].
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Roadmap, which sets the priority interventions for investment and resource mobilisation for the next ten years in the health sector at large.

2.1 Planning Process

At the launch of the regional 'flagship programme' by WHO AFRO Regional Director to operationalise the UHC Actions framework, Sierra Leone made a specific request for Technical Assistance resulting in a scoping mission in June 2019. The scoping mission identified amongst other things bottlenecks in the country's quest towards UHC. A nine-day intensive workshop was also held where strategies were determined to address the bottlenecks identified in the scoping mission findings. Also, the report on UHC readiness assessment in two districts, Karene and Bonthe Districts (Dibia and Sogbini Chiefdoms, respectively), were reviewed. The findings, especially the weaknesses, were compared to those of the scoping mission before identifying the appropriate strategies towards UHC. The Ouagadougou Declaration on PHC and Health Systems and the framework for implementation and the Astana Declaration were carefully reviewed to inform the process.

2.2. Pre –Launch Activities of the UHC Roadmap (Photos)

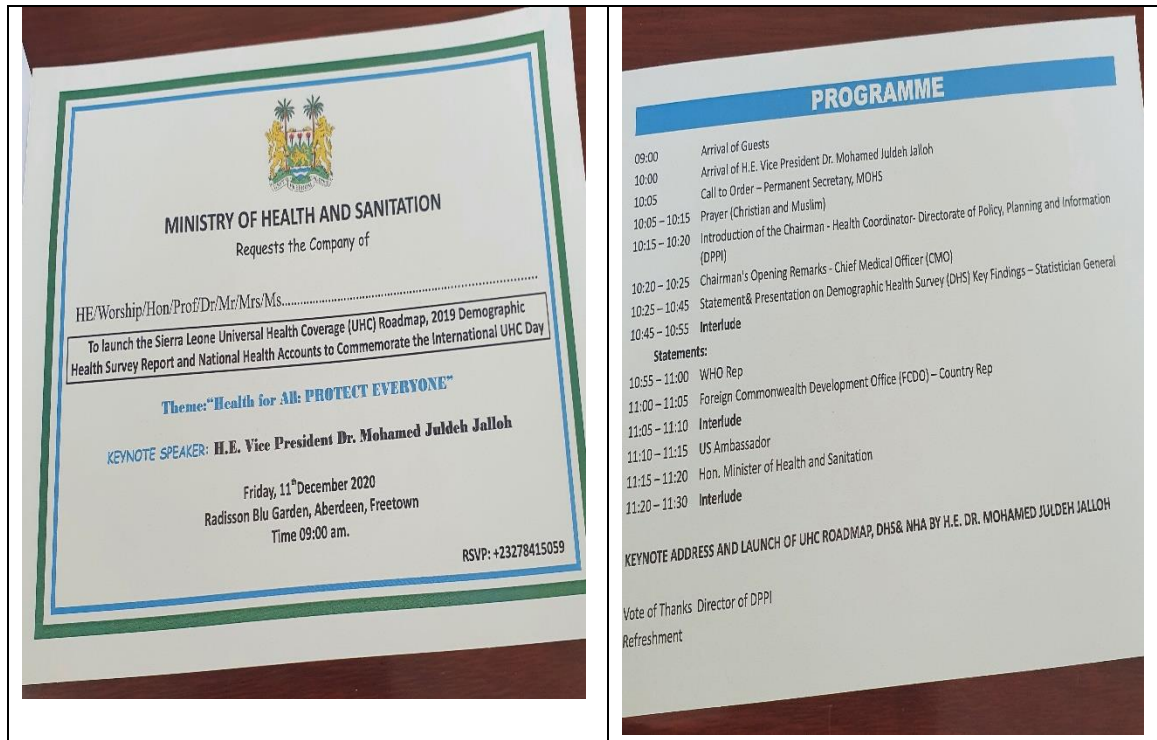
1. **Video clip:** This was recorded by a consultant from the Health promotion team and aired in various social media forums as well as district levels
2. **UHC Jingle:** was also recorded and aired nationwide at renowned radio stations
3. **Radio and TV discussions:** These pre-launch activities were done to inform the public about Universal Health Coverage and the strides the Government is taking to join the global commitments to provide a healthier population and preventing the risk of the financial burden. Panellist included MoHs senior management and WHO
4. **Press briefings at the Ministry of Information and communications:**
On the 10 December 2020, a press briefing was held to inform the media on current happenings at the ministry (UHC Roadmap develop, DHS-2019 and NHA launch the next day). The Hon Minister of Health and Sanitation 2 gave the keynote address in which he stated the ministries achievements and what it plans to do in the coming years. The Chief Medical Officer commended the efforts of the DPPI and all partners for their support to this achievement of developing a UHC Roadmap for Sierra Leone. He urged all partners to buy in and help strengthen the Health sector. Various statements were made by UNICEF, WHO, DFID, CSO, Rep Statistics Sierra Leone. They were stunned that we could complete such document given setbacks with the Pandemic. There were Questions from invited media houses and answers from the MoHS panel. The meeting was chaired by the deputy Hon Minister of Information and Communications.

3. Launch of UHC Roadmap to commemorate International UHC Day (11 December 2020)

1. **Welcoming and the invitation to the high table:** This was done by the Principal Health Coordinator of the MoHS-DPPI who coordinated the entire launch of the UHC Roadmap, 2019-DHS and NHA.

2. **Call to order:** Dr. Francis Smart, Director DPPI, made the call to order and gave the welcome statement. He gave a presentation on the overview of the UHC Roadmap.
3. **Chairman's opening remarks:** Rev Cannon Dr. TT. Samba, Chief Medical Officer.
4. **Presentation on DHS Findings:** Was Done by Professor Osman Sankoh

Statements from the WHO Representative, the British High Commissioner, United State-CDC Country Representative who spoke on behalf of the US Ambassador and Minister of Health and Sanitation formed part of the event's agenda.



4. Statements

4.1. WHO Representative

In his statement, he mentioned that this strategic document would contribute to achieving the sustainable development goals target 3.8. He thanked H.E. the President and Vice president for their commitments towards accelerating the achievement of UHC, Hon Ministers of Health and Sanitation and the entire senior management of the MoHS for their effort amidst the Pandemic in making the roadmap a reality.

4.2. British High Commissioner

He started by stating that he was delighted to be at the occasion. Mentioning, "this is a real testament of the MoHS commitment towards healthcare delivery and praised the ministry on this milestone achievement". He further welcomed the VP's response on this issue. Providing

accessible, affordable, and quality healthcare for all Sierra Leoneans is crucial to His Excellency's goal for human capital development and ensuring that we can reach our full potential. He was pleased to see improvement in the DHS as they have also invested in education and RCH. Mentioning there is still more to be done and urges donors to support and adopt the roadmap as we all have a collective interest in improving the results in patients' health outcomes. He promised all that the UK will stand with the Government in every step of the way.

4.3. US Embassy Representative

He mentioned, there is an opportunity in every crisis. The recent pandemics and natural disasters have served as an eye-opener to our weak health system, and the need for resilience amidst these debilitating disasters. Investing in human capital is essential for every healthcare system. He highlighted their commitments in training and capacity building at the end of his statement. He was confident with the collaborative approach and constructive communication from stakeholders to continue to share and improve global health collectively and achieve UHC.

4.4. Hon Minister of Health and Sanitation

He threw highlights on the ministry's overall achievements: reduction of MMR to 717 in 2019 and hope to reduce to 400 by 2023, restructuring the management of the MoHS were key amongst those achievements mention.

4.5. Keynote Address: H.E. the Vice President of Sierra Leone

The Vice President, Juldeh Jalloh launched the UHC Roadmap, National Health Accounts and the 2019 Demographic and Health Survey to commemorate Universal Health Coverage Day in collaboration with Health development partners and private organisations. The event took place on the 11 December 2020 at the Radisson Blue Hotel in Freetown.

While launching the three documents, Vice President Jalloh said that the move was a follow-up action by the Government to operationalise the commitment made by President Bio at the last UN General Assembly where he stressed the need for countries around the world and Sierra Leone, in particular, to put mechanisms in place to provide accessible, affordable and quality health care for all, thereby attaining Universal Health Coverage. He furthered, highlighted the five key strategic directions of the UHC Roadmap – Health System Reform for UHC, Equitable access to health services, Quality health services, Sustainable financing and financial protection and

Health security. Noting that these will form the basis on which the health sector will ride in the coming years for better patient health outcomes.



HE Vice President Dr. Juldeh Jalloh, Launched Sierra Leone's 2021-2030 UHC Roadmap

The event was attended by Market Women, Pupils, Students, Health Workers, NGO Partners, Civil Society, the Media and UN Partners.

5. Conclusion

There were many hitches in the development of Sierra Leone's first-ever UHC Roadmap. Still, the UHC Technical Working Group ensured to work hard and finalised a product which will shape the Health sector, thereby achieving sustainable development goal 3.8.

Thanks to all our partners for supporting this process technically and financially.

6. Challenges

- Late planning because of lack of funds,
- A direct Implementation was done by some partners and this placed constraints on the delivery of certain pre-activities

7. Recommendation

- Early planning by UHC planning committee members
- Remover of Direct implementation by partners
- Capacitating the UHC Secretariat
- Convey as soon as possible a meeting with NSC-UHC for buy in and overall decision making

8. Annexe





