

Position on Strengthening Health Systems

Background

Globally, health systems are challenged to support growing healthcare needs. There are numerous considerations: balancing competing priorities, such as reaching universal healthcare coverage (UHC)¹ with a financially viable model; driving care delivery efficiencies without compromising quality and outcomes; preparing for and responding to other public health factors, including caring for an aging population; rise in non-communicable diseases in the presence of persistent communicable diseases; balancing preventive care with treatment services; and disruptions from pandemics and climate change. Strengthening health systems requires a comprehensive approach across an ecosystem of intersecting interests that involves multiple stakeholders, including governments, healthcare organizations, healthcare workers at all cadres and levels, civil society, the private sector and communities.

There is a lack of access to the healthcare services that can help advance good health for all and health equity remains a top policy priority in markets worldwide. Approximately half the world has limited access to essential health services and 400 million have no access to any health services.²

Despite best efforts, health systems, especially in low- and middle-income countries, are under-resourced and in need of further development and support.³ The COVID-19 pandemic has severely exacerbated these challenges, testing the resilience of national health systems worldwide. Furthermore, marginalized communities have experienced a long legacy of inaccessible or inadequate care based on their race, ethnicity or other social determinants of health status, resulting in negative health outcomes and leading to distrust of formal health systems.

Well-functioning health systems that deliver on UHC are anchored in strong primary healthcare, prioritizing the pursuit of health, not just the detection and treatment of disease. Frontline health workers (FLHWs) play a critical role in delivering primary care by helping communities manage their health and creating a trusted bridge to formal health systems. Yet the world is facing a critical health worker shortage as health systems strive to adapt to the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. And burnout is a pressing challenge globally, compounding the problems of insufficient numbers of health workers. The World Health Organization (WHO) projects a deficit of 10 million FLHWs by 2030,⁴ of whom more than 50% are nurses and midwives.⁵

¹ [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/universal-health-coverage-\(uhc\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/universal-health-coverage-(uhc))

² [Primary Health Care Vital Signs Report 2018](#)

³ [WHO, Tracking UHC – 2021 report](#)

⁴ https://www.who.int/health-topics/health-workforce#tab=tab_1

⁵ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/nursing-and-midwifery>

Relevance

As the largest, most diversified healthcare products company, Johnson & Johnson has significant reach and scale. We are committed to supporting countries in achieving UHC. Additionally, strengthening health systems through a range of approaches—including public policy and investment, the reinforcement of FLHWs, advancements in digital health and other innovations—enables us to reach more patients with our products and services and helps us maintain an ongoing positive impact rooted in Our Purpose to profoundly change the trajectory of health for humanity.

Guiding Principles

As stated in [Our Credo](#): “We believe our first responsibility is to the patients, doctors and nurses, to mothers and fathers and all others who use our products and services. We are responsible to the communities in which we live and work and to the world community as well. We must help people be healthier by supporting better access and care in more places around the world.” These words compel us to maintain a strong focus on strengthening health systems and supporting health workers around the world.

Our Position

At Johnson & Johnson, we believe strengthening health systems is essential to achieve a much-needed transformation in healthcare and advance global health equity. We believe a holistic, strategic, inclusive approach is necessary, involving all those with the power to influence healthcare access, delivery and outcomes from the public and private sectors and civil society. For example, we strongly support:

- **Universal Health Coverage (UHC):** We believe that everyone should have access to quality, affordable healthcare services that they need, regardless of where they live. Patients and communities must have access to care, including drugs, vaccines, surgical care, and other medical technologies necessary to prevent and treat diseases and address public health needs. We support health equity and engage stakeholders throughout the world to achieve broad and timely access to our medicines at sustainable prices that aim to be locally affordable.
- **Value-Based Healthcare (VBHC)** that aims to maximize the quality of care and health outcomes relative to expenditures.
- **Wide-ranging investment** in health systems efficiencies, including digital tools. Strategic investments in the medical innovation ecosystem and regulatory frameworks can help increase access, bring in new financial resources and strengthen the overall sustainability of healthcare systems.
- **Expanding and strengthening primary healthcare systems** and investing in FLHWs. See our [Frontline Health Workers Policy Position](#).

Actions we take to support strengthening health systems include:

- **Active involvement in promoting UHC and VBHC:** We support government efforts, particularly across emerging markets, to pioneer new community-based approaches to health, and we play an active role in helping develop such efforts on a country-by-country basis. See our [Frontline Health](#)

[Workers Policy Position](#) and also our [Position on Universal Health Coverage](#).

- **Significant investment in healthcare innovation and global public health:** Our ongoing investments are core elements of our business strategy and Health for Humanity approach. See our [Johnson & Johnson Impact Ventures website](#), our latest [Health for Humanity Report](#) and our [Global Public Health](#) site for more details.
- **Extensive support for FLHWs and community health workers around the world:** Our support for FLHWs addresses many aspects of frontline healthcare, both at the infrastructure level and at the individual level, keeping in mind the needs of those doing the work in our communities. We apply a strategic, multi-faceted approach that includes:
 - **Maintaining a team of specialists in community healthcare to lead Johnson & Johnson's programming:** Our Global Community Impact (GCI) organization drives programming for our community giving, social impact and other purpose initiatives around the world. GCI activities are funded by the nonprofit Johnson & Johnson Foundation and also by functional divisions and operating companies across the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies. Our GCI organization comprises specialists in community healthcare who engage globally to identify health workforce challenges and develop programs and interventions to address needs.
 - **Investing extensively in health workforce training and education:** We invest in education and training for the global health workforce who deliver treatments and support to our communities every day. We maintain a wide range of training and education programs, always conducted in partnership with the public or nonprofit sectors to ensure effective delivery in local settings. In many cases, we develop programs that support government aspirations to improve the health workforce in their countries, and collaborate with governments to deliver these, contributing from our extensive knowledge and resources. We also support a global portfolio of early-stage companies and partners working to accelerate access to affordable and quality healthcare for all, fueled by the potential of impact entrepreneurs to create new market-based solutions to address health inequities.
 - **Playing a strong advocacy role in support of health workers:** We advocate widely around the world to advance policies and programs that support health workers and that respond to issues of burn-out and retention. This includes ensuring labor market demand and sufficient compensation to motivate qualified individuals to choose these professions. We believe health workers should be supported with fair pay, ongoing professional development, support systems that ease the burden of their jobs and allow work-life balance, safety and security, and meaningful diversity in leadership.

Supporting a strategic, holistic approach to addressing the global health worker gap: During the United Nations General Assembly in September 2019, we launched the [Center for Health Worker Innovation](#) to address the health worker shortage. The Center, led by GCI, leverages the unique insights of Johnson & Johnson to reduce the health worker coverage gap, improve the quality of care through a thriving frontline health workforce, and strengthen primary and community-based health systems. Leveraging a people-first model, the Center focuses on equipping FLHWs, who are the first point of contact in the health system for most patients and communities, and are critical to achieving global health priorities, including UHC, with the skills, resources and support they need to improve quality of care and strengthen community-based health

systems. This includes helping them prioritize their own health and providing them resources to manage the stress and demands of the job.

We exceeded our Health for Humanity 2025 Goal and have supported over 1,300,000 frontline health workers in cumulative total.

Application

This Position is relevant for all business segments and companies in the Johnson & Johnson Family of Companies, as detailed in our [governance materials](#). We provide updates relating to strengthening health systems in our annual [Health for Humanity Report](#).

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