

Position on Strengthening Health Systems

Background

Globally, our health systems are straining to support growing healthcare needs. There are numerous a host of challenges: 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 such as caring for an aging population with longer life expectancies; the rising number of patients with chronic conditions; and disruptions such as pandemics and large-scale health emergencies. Strengthening health systems requires a comprehensive approach involving all stakeholders, including governments, healthcare organizations, healthcare professionals and community health workers (CHWs) at all levels, civil society, private sector and communities.

Despite the growing need, there is a lack of access to the services that can help advance good health for all. Approximately half of the world has limited access to essential health services and 400 million have no access to any health services.²

Further, despite best efforts, healthcare systems, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), 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), including nurses, midwives and CHWs, 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 healthcare systems adapt to the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a deficit of nine million nurses and midwives globally—plus a lack of training, resources, supervision, growth opportunities, emotional support and recognition—impacting those serving on the front lines to deliver quality care. Further, the World Health Organization (WHO) projects a deficit of 18 million FLHWs by 2030.⁴

Relevance

As the world's largest and most broadly based healthcare company, with operations in all major geographic regions of the world, Johnson & Johnson has significant reach and scale.

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 – 2017 report](#)

⁴ <https://www.who.int/hrh/news/2019/addressing-18million-hw-shortfall-6-key-messages/en/>

We are committed to supporting countries in achieving UHC. Strengthening health systems through a range of approaches including public policy, investment and the reinforcement of FLHWs and CHWs will help vital consumer health products and services, medical devices and pharmaceutical products reach those who need them, enable administration of treatment in more efficient and effective ways and improve not only the health, but also the lives, of billions of people around the world. For Johnson & Johnson, this is not only the right thing to do—it also enables us to reach more patients with our products and to strengthen our business and reputation in the process; further, it helps us maintain an ongoing positive impact that is profoundly changing the trajectory of health.

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 those who are tirelessly working at the front lines of health around the world.

Our Position

At Johnson & Johnson, we believe strengthening health systems is essential to achieve a much-needed transformation in healthcare, particularly in resource-limited settings. 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)** that promotes inclusive health coverage for all based on the premise that everyone who needs health services is able to get them without undue financial hardship and without discrimination. This includes promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative essential health services and safe, affordable, effective and quality medicines and vaccines.
- **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 and CHWs.

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 play an active role in helping develop such efforts on a country-by-country basis. See also our [Frontline Health Workers Policy Position](#) and [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 latest [Health for Humanity Report](#) and our [Global Public Health](#) site for more details.
- **Extensive support for FLHWs and CHWs around the world:** Our support for FLHWs and CHWs addresses many aspects of frontline healthcare, both at the infrastructure level and also at the individual level, considering 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 philanthropic initiatives around the world. GCI activities are funded by the nonprofit Johnson & Johnson Foundation and other functional divisions and operating companies across our Johnson & Johnson Consumer Health, Medical Devices and Pharmaceutical business segments. GCI comprises specialists in community healthcare who engage around the world to identify frontline healthcare challenges and develop programs and interventions to address needs.
- **Investing extensively in FLHW training and education:** We invest in education and training for the global health workforce, including the people on the front lines of healthcare, such as nurses, midwives, CHWs, caregivers and others 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 local organizations from 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.
- **Playing a strong advocacy role in support of FLHWs:** We advocate widely around the world to advance policies and programs that support FLHWs and ensure the global health workforce is adequately resourced to care for future generations. This includes ensuring labor market demand and sufficient compensation to motivate qualified individuals to choose these professions. We believe FLHWs 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. The Center focuses on nurses, midwives and CHWs, 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. Priorities for the Center for Health Worker Innovation include working to ensure FLHWs are supported through:
 - **Respect & Recognition:** being valued by the communities they serve, and accredited and compensated by government and health systems;
 - **Training & Education:** gaining the skills and capabilities required to deliver their services with confidence and quality;
 - **Leadership & Management:** provided with opportunities to grow as leaders and effective managers;

- **Well-Being & Resilience:** ability to prioritize their own health and access resources to manage the stress and demands of the job; and
- **Connection & Integration:** helping health workers connect to each other, to communities and to health systems.

By 2030, the Center intends to support one million nurses, midwives and CHWs, and strengthen health systems across five continents.

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 relevant progress updates in our annual [Health for Humanity Report](#).

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