Position on Strengthening Health Systems

Background

Globally, our health systems are straining to support growing healthcare needs. There are numerous 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, including 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 workers at all cadres and levels, civil society, the 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, 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), including nurses, midwives and community health workers (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 health systems adapt to the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic. The World Health Organization (WHO) projects a deficit of 18 million FLHWs by 2030,\(^4\) of whom more than 50% are nurses and midwives.\(^5\) Additionally, recent studies have shown that fully resourcing midwife-delivered care by 2035 could avert 67% of maternal deaths, 64% of newborn deaths and 65% of stillbirths—saving an estimated 4.3 million lives per year.\(^6\)

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1. [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](https://www.who.int/health-topics/health-workforce#tab=tab_1)
5. [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/nursing-and-midwifery](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/nursing-and-midwifery)
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.
We are committed to supporting countries in achieving UHC. Additionally, strengthening health systems through a range of approaches, including public policy and investment and the reinforcement of FLHWs, enables us to reach more patients with our products 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 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, 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. 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 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 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:

  o **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 around the world to identify frontline healthcare challenges and develop programs and interventions to address needs.

  o **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 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.

  o **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.

  o **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:** maximizing opportunities to grow as leaders and effective managers;
- **Well-Being & Resilience:** developing an ability to prioritize their own health and access resources to manage the stress and demands of the job; and
- **Connection & Integration:** learning to connect with each other, and also with communities and health systems.

By 2030, the Center intends to support one million nurses, midwives and CHWs, and to 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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