

Partnerships towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC) ^[1]

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At the [World Economic Forum Africa](#) ^[3] in Kigali last week, health was a major topic, in particular how we can achieve universal health coverage (UHC) through public-private partnerships and how the world can manage future epidemics.

When thinking about fighting epidemics like chronic diseases, funding is at the core of the debate. But how can we make progress when only 1% of all donor funding goes to chronic diseases? Clearly, new, sustainable, solutions are needed to ensure more people are trained to prevent, diagnose and treat these diseases and others. Prevention in particular was highlighted as one of the most cost-efficient ways to build capacity and generate positive health outcomes.

There was also widespread consensus that if we want to make a lasting impact on global health, we need true partnerships that allow trial and error. Partnerships are central to [Novartis Access](#) ^[4] and will be key to ensure the program delivers on its promise to increase access to treatment in lower-income countries; yet, because our approach is unprecedented and we are a first-mover, it is more difficult to advocate for paradigm shifts. We must also remain flexible and pragmatic, otherwise we run the risk of missing on improvements in search of the perfect solution. As the saying goes, “the perfect is the enemy of the good.”

A common thread to all the discussions in Kigali was that UHC does not offer a “one-size-fits-all” approach and models that work in Europe or the US will most likely not work in low- and middle-income countries. Governments need to build their specific systems, “home-grow” them so to speak, so that they are adapted to their health needs. This also means they will need to try new approaches, for instance buying into integrated healthcare solutions that go beyond the pill. By providing operational and process innovation, I am convinced Novartis Access can support such “home-grown” UHC solutions.

A dollar each month to treat a chronic disease may yield four dollars in economic value, but still this may not be enough to attract a venture capitalist. Which engagement models will lead us toward the most robust and sustainable healthcare solutions? [Africa has a new health challenge, and we need a plan to fight it](#) [5].

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[3] <https://www.weforum.org/events/world-economic-forum-on-africa-2016/>

[4] <https://www.novartis.com/about-us/corporate-responsibility/expanding-access-healthcare/novartis-access>

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