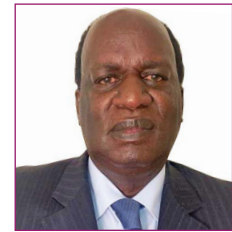


# Re-imagining Health and Well-being in the Era of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Universal Health Coverage (UHC)



## Introduction

In the past four decades, numerous countries have undergone significant transformations in the delivery of primary health care (PHC) services at the community level, all in pursuit of universal health coverage (UHC). Initially pioneered by nations like Bangladesh, this approach has demonstrated a remarkable 10:1 return on investment in community health worker (CHW) programs. Countries such as Pakistan, Brazil, Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Liberia have followed suit. Recently, Uganda unveiled its groundbreaking National Community Health Strategy (NCHS), empowering communities to take control of their health.

Achieving 'good health' and 'well-being' as articulated in SDG3 involves addressing a multitude of health-related challenges and improving the overall quality of life for individuals, especially in remote areas with limited access to healthcare and essential services. Utilizing appropriate measurement tools, including community-based approaches and technology, enables us to gauge progress and tailor interventions to meet specific community needs.

## Defining 'Good Health' and 'Well-Being'

But what exactly constitutes 'good health' and 'well-being'? While most healthcare practitioners understand 'good health,' 'well-being' remains a broader and multidimensional concept. It encompasses various facets of an individual's life and their overall state of being. Beyond physical health, well-being considers the holistic and subjective experience of contentment, satisfaction, and fulfillment in life.

Key contributors to well-being encompass mental and emotional health, social connections, financial stability, work-life balance, personal growth, spirituality, and the physical environment, including safety, cleanliness, and access to green spaces. Quality healthcare access and the ability to receive medical treatment when needed are vital for maintaining physical and mental health. Cultural norms, societal values, and public policies also play significant roles in shaping well-being. However, well-being is a dynamic state that evolves over time and demands ongoing attention and effort for its enhancement. Also, different cultures and societies may prioritize well-being differently.

## Going Beyond Disease-Centric Approaches

Traditional health assessments have concentrated on quantifying disease burden and physical limitations. However, this article advocates for a shift towards a more holistic and inclusive health definition, one that encompasses mental well-being, social connectedness, economic security, and environmental sustainability. This

perspective aligns with the World Health Organization's definition of health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Such a shift also involves embracing the Social Determinants of Health framework, recognizing that health outcomes are influenced by factors beyond medical care, including income, education, housing, and social support systems. Even the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights refers to health as part of the right to an adequate standard of living.

While interventions like immunization, water, sanitation and hygiene, antenatal care for pregnant women, and nutrition education contribute to population health, measuring the impact of these interventions has mostly relied on proxy measures of good health. Inadequate efforts have been made to identify tools capable of directly measuring the 'good health' and 'well-being' of individuals and communities.

## Measuring 'Good Health' and 'Well-Being'

National Census and Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) are nationally representative household surveys providing data on various monitoring and impact evaluation indicators related to population, health, and nutrition. These surveys cover diverse topics such as fertility, mortality, family planning, marriage, reproductive health, child health, nutrition, and HIV/AIDS. The national census occurs every decade at a minimum, while standard DHS Surveys are typically conducted every five years.

We propose the incorporation of specific tracking information for 'good health' and 'well-being' into the National Census and DHS. This will involve integrating questionnaires into these population survey instruments to gather responses from individuals and families about their overall health and well-being. We also propose that data on health status undergoes regular analysis to identify the proportion of the population that experiences 'good health' and 'well-being.' Further, countries should make deliberate efforts to celebrate good health; currently, disease outbreaks and overall disease burdens dominate the news, while individuals enjoying good health rarely receive national recognition.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it is imperative to reassess our definitions and assessment methods for 'good health' and 'well-being' within the context of SDGs and UHC. By transcending the narrow focus on disease burdens and adopting a more comprehensive health perspective, policymakers and healthcare professionals can better address the complex challenges of promoting health and well-being for all. This approach ensures that no one is left behind in the pursuit of a sustainable and equitable future.

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