

Hi everyone, my name is Tomoko Fukuda. I'm the Regional Director of East, South East Asia and Oceania Region of IPPF, International Planned Parenthood Federation. My experience with Universal Health Coverage goes back to about 15 years ago, when I visited Laos in search of real stories on maternal mortality. In that visit, I met a man who have recently lost his wife during delivery, and his story was that he had been out in the fields when his neighbors came to call him that his wife was experiencing difficulties. He rushed back and the first thing he did was not to take his wife to the hospital, but his first action was to go to his relatives to ask for money. So it took him almost a whole day to go visit his relatives and collect about 300 dollars that he could actually visit the hospital. By the time he arrived at the hospital, his wife had died. So that was my first experience to actually meet somebody who had experienced financial hardship in trying to access health services.

I have been working in this field for 25 years, in promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights. All this time I've been working with the civil society, with a NGO, and I've also being able to be a part of networks and advocacy movements for universal health coverage. During that time, I learned and thought about our role as civil society in promoting universal health coverage, and today I would like to share with you three key roles that I feel we need to take.

One is advocacy. As civil society, we need to raise our voice so that governments place priority on health among all the other competing issues in the national budget. We need to advocate with them and make sure that they also deliver to their promises. The second role is that we need to be the watchdog and ensuring that it is actually implemented and reaching the people as it should be. We should also ask governments for data, for reports, for financial reports to see and ensure that it is actually been implemented as promised. Third role, I feel that the civil society needs to go hand in hand with government services so that we make sure that no one is left behind in this strive for universal health coverage. We are the ones who can find the people within the society who are actually having difficulties. We are the ones who can also cater the services to actually reach these people, overcoming stigma, overcoming not only financial difficulties, psychological difficulties in accessing health services.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights is a fundamental health issue that shapes the whole lifecycle and the whole life course of a women, and universal health coverage and SRHR need to come hand in hand. So in my work I will continue to work with my colleagues to ensure that we contribute to achieving universal health coverage.

For young people, I would like to challenge you to go out in the world and actually see and experience the real life in various corners of the world. There is still a lot of problems and universal health coverage will not achieved in one day, one night or even ten years. Even when it is achieved, there will always be issues that need to be tackled and the young people are the ones who will take us into the next level and to the future. It will all depend on how the young people now take action in the course of the next ten years or so, and universal health coverage is such a fundamental key issue that we need to tackle as human rights, and so I challenge you to take on and take interest in this field of work and learn and experience in the years to come. Thank you very much.