

ACTIVITY 4:

OBSTACLES TO GOOD HEALTH

AIM: Young people explore and identify some of the obstacles that keep young people from accessing their right to the best possible health and begin to consider how weak health systems put their rights at risk.

Preparation:

- Review and select breathing warm-up exercise
- Preview the video [The extraordinary lengths UNICEF go to reach every child](#)
- Review [Health Uncovered](#) podcast and select an age-appropriate episode
- Gather arts/PE materials for game making or obstacle course building

Facilitator materials and resources:

- Activity 4 presentation
- Prepare snakes and ladders board or materials for young people to create one (table or active option)
- [Health Uncovered](#) podcast by Cel Spellman
- [The extraordinary lengths UNICEF go to reach every child](#)

Participant materials:

- Blank cards and marker

This activity includes a reflection on medical obstacles that young people or their families may have experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic and could potentially trigger upsetting memories and feelings for young people who have had difficult experiences. Please be aware of this before starting the activity and be ready to support young people as necessary.

Facilitator introduction

In the last activity we learned that the health system in our community is a system created to look after us and get us the care we need. But what happens if this system – or parts of it – don't work the way they're supposed to, or if there are obstacles preventing young people from accessing this care?

In many places around the world, including here in the UK, weak parts of health systems and other obstacles prevent young people from having access to the care they need. This means that young people's right to the best possible health is at risk.

In this activity we'll explore why health systems sometimes don't work the way that they should, and how this puts young people's rights and futures at risk.





PART 1: BREATHING EXERCISE WARM-UP

1. Ask young people to give you their description of what an obstacle is. Explain that in today's activities they'll be discussing obstacles, or things that get in the way and stop us from getting where we need to go or doing what we need to do. Ask: "Can you think of a time when you've faced an obstacle? What feelings have you had when you couldn't do something that you needed to do?" Acknowledge that frustration, and sometimes even anger, can be a very normal feeling to have when we have to face an obstacle.
2. To prepare to talk about obstacles, begin by doing a quick warm-up breathing exercise. Breathing is an important way to help us manage strong emotions like frustration and anger.
3. Introduce the group to a simple breathing exercise, like [Take 5 Breathing](#) or [4-7-8 Breathing](#), or [Mindful Breathing](#) (for older young people). You can use a video to lead the exercise or teach the technique in class and ask a young person to facilitate the exercise when it's repeated.

PART 2: RECOGNISING RISKS AND OBSTACLES

1. Screen the video [The extraordinary lengths UNICEF go to reach every child](#).

2. Building on the information from the video and the completed health system mapping work from starter activity 2, invite the young people to consider two questions:

- 1) What are some of the obstacles that prevent children and young people from getting the healthcare that they need?
- 2) What might be some risks to children and young people if they can't access health systems because of these obstacles?

Invite the young people to answer these questions in groups with some focused on the risks, and others on the obstacles. Prompt them with ideas as needed, for example:

- 1) Obstacles might include clinics being closed, hospitals being full with COVID-19 patients, surgeries being cancelled, not enough healthcare workers, medicines or vaccines, or people not going to hospital because they're afraid of catching a virus.
- 2) If health systems aren't working, there's a risk people won't have anywhere to go when they're sick, and children won't get their immunisations or medicines they need and might miss school.

Encourage them to think beyond their own community and consider the obstacles that children in other places might face. For example – the war in Ukraine is stopping children there from getting healthcare, while in some areas, for example in parts of sub-Saharan Africa and southern Asia, children might not have a clinic within walking distance, or medicines may not have been delivered as planes weren't flying as often to many places for almost two years.

3. Invite each group to share the risks and obstacles they've identified. For each one of the risks and obstacles, ask the group if they could think of any action that could be taken to help overcome this challenge. Note these actions on a separate list. For example, if not having enough healthcare workers is a risk, more training might be an idea to overcome this problem, or improved pay and working conditions. Encourage young people to think creatively about not only addressing the problem, but finding a solution for each one of the obstacles through actions that would strengthen health systems.

4. Finish the session by reminding the young people that sometimes we have to look for the problems (risks and obstacles) so we know where to start to look for the solutions to make things better. You may also wish to finish with one more breathing exercise.





PART 3: CREATE YOUR OWN GAME OR OBSTACLE COURSE

1. Using the lists created in the previous part of this activity (obstacles, risks, and solutions) invite the young people to make and play their own health systems obstacle game. Some options might be to create a snakes and ladders type board game or design a life-sized 3D obstacle course that they can physically move through. Depending on the level and resources available, this could be an arts activity, a physical education activity, or even a digital activity. Remind young people to incorporate the obstacles, risks and solutions in their game.

2. After young people have designed and played their games, complete the activity with a quick debrief, allowing young people to share what they learned about the ups and downs and challenges of reaching universal healthcare (where everyone's rights to healthcare are realised), and why efforts to strengthen health systems are very important to help achieve this.

PART 4: CEL SPELLMAN'S PODCAST PART 1

1. Invite your group to listen to one or more episodes of Cel Spellman's [Health Uncovered](#) podcast. You may wish to pre-select the podcast episodes that are age-appropriate for your young people. (Topics cover mental health, social media and wellness, bullying, and sexual health for adolescents.)

2. In addition to listening to and discussing the content, ask the young people to consider how taboos around discussing the selected topic openly, whether due to personal beliefs or cultural beliefs in some cases, could be an obstacle for people, especially children and adolescents, to having the best possible health.