Generating knowledge on the role of non-state providers in moving towards UHC

While research has been done to study the impact of non-state providers, we know much less about how the actual processes underlying these engagements and contextual factors interact to influence their performance.

Understanding these factors is of critical importance to be able to learn lessons to both improve the effectiveness of these engagements as well as inform the design and implementation of similar measures in other settings.

Why Non-State Providers?

In many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) non-state providers play a significant role in the delivery of health services. Critics argue that these providers are often inadequately unregulated, and that their use has been associated with high out of pocket spending and impoverishment. On the other hand, the fact that people continue to use these providers, often in preference to public systems points to the important role that they play. One fact is certain; non-state providers are major players in many health systems and will continue to have a prominent role into the foreseeable future.

Given this reality, governments and donors have increasingly recognized that in many settings moving towards universal health coverage (UHC) requires states to consider systematic and substantial engagement of non-state providers towards public health goals. This can take a variety of forms including subsidies for non-state providers, contracting, developing regulatory standards, franchising and accreditation.

Research Programme

In 2014 the Alliance launched a call to develop a series of analytical case studies to explain the performance of measures taken up by governments to engage non-state providers in strengthening health systems towards the achievement of UHC.

Eight country teams have been awarded research grants to develop case studies over three years.
Expected Outputs and Products

National-Level
- Policy briefs (project learnings; options for action)
- Policy dialogues (facilitated by pre-existing linkages between the research teams and national decision-makers)
- Journal articles

Global-Level
- Multi-country policy briefs (cross-national learning; broader lessons of the research programme)
- Journal articles (cross-country comparisons on particular themes from this research programme, including regulation, faith-based providers and contracting mechanisms)

What will the research help to inform?
- How to best design and implement regulatory mechanisms to ensure the compliance of diverse groups of non-state providers
- What are the attributes underlying successful contracting initiatives for the delivery of primary care and the factors that enable and hinder these initiatives in post-conflict settings, in crowded urban slums and in far flung rural areas
- How to engage with faith based groups
- What kind of strategies can be employed to develop synergies between the public sector and non-state actors

Research Projects

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The Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research is an international collaboration hosted and administered by the World Health Organization.

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