Chapter 6  The quality call to action
6.1 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, QUALITY AND THE WAY FORWARD

The health-related SDGs cannot be achieved through reliance on disease-specific achievements or financial reforms alone. It requires a strong commitment to creating people-centred, high-quality health services. Achieving universal health coverage built on a firm foundation of safe, high-quality care, together with all that is necessary to sustain it, is the imperative facing policy-makers today.

Most past efforts at quality improvement have relied on project-based methodologies. They have shown little promise for scale-up and sustainability. More focus is needed on the foundations of high-quality health services across the care continuum. Offering high-quality health services also means linking financial reforms and reorientation of the delivery model to goals on quality of care. Finally, building on strong foundations, health systems offering sustainable improvements in quality must use national quality policy and strategy tools to create an environment where local, regional and national champions can extend and expand what is working to improve services. In such an environment, governments and providers will make locally appropriate choices on which quality improvement interventions could have the greatest impact on improving the system environment, on reducing harm, on improving clinical care and on engaging and empowering patients, families and communities.

Advancing quality improvement, universal health coverage and people-centred approaches within the complexity of health systems requires systems thinking – a deliberate and comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of health systems in order to make them change for the better. By decoding the complexity of the health system, systems thinking helps foster systemwide implementation and evaluation of those interventions that are needed to support the achievement of health goals – equitably, sustainably and effectively.

6.2 CALL TO ACTION

This document, from the perspective of three global institutions concerned with health – OECD, the World Bank and WHO – proposes a way forward for health policy-makers seeking to achieve the goal of access to high-quality, people-centred health services for all. In this chapter, a series of high-level actions are called for from each of the key constituencies that needs to work together with a sense of urgency to enable the promise of the SDGs for better, safer health care to be realized (Box 6.1).

While no single actor will be able to effect all these changes, an integrated approach whereby different actors work together to achieve their part of the quality call to action will have a demonstrable effect on the quality of health services around the world.
Box 6.1  High-level actions by key constituencies for quality in health care

**All governments should:**
- have a national quality policy and strategy;
- demonstrate accountability for delivering a safe high-quality service;
- ensure that reforms driven by the goal of universal health coverage build quality into the foundation of their care systems;
- ensure that health systems have an infrastructure of information and information technology capable of measuring and reporting the quality of care;
- close the gap between actual and achievable performance in quality;
- strengthen the partnerships between health providers and health users that drive quality in care;
- establish and sustain a health professional workforce with the capacity and capability to meet the demands and needs of the population for high-quality care;
- purchase, fund and commission based on the principle of value;
- finance quality improvement research.

**All health systems should:**
- implement evidence-based interventions that demonstrate improvement;
- benchmark against similar systems that are delivering best performance;
- ensure that all people with chronic disease are enabled to minimize its impact on the quality of their lives;
- promote the culture systems and practices that will reduce harm to patients;
- build resilience to enable prevention, detection and response to health security threats through focused attention on quality;
- put in place the infrastructure for learning;
- provide technical assistance and knowledge management for improvement.

**All citizens and patients should:**
- be empowered to actively engage in care to optimize their health status;
- play a leading role in the design of new models of care to meet the needs of the local community;
- be informed that it is their right to have access to care that meets achievable modern standards of quality;
- receive support, information and skills to manage their own long-term conditions.

**All health workers should:**
- participate in quality measurement and improvement with their patients;
- embrace a practice philosophy of teamwork;
- see patients as partners in the delivery of care;
- commit themselves to providing and using data to demonstrate the effectiveness and safety of the care.