

Health financing country diagnostic: a foundation for national strategy development

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PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW OF PAPER

The purpose of this paper is to provide guidance to undertake a situation analysis of a country's health financing system and assess the existing system relative to the goal of universal health coverage (UHC). In turn, the purpose of the situation analysis is to inform the development of a health financing reform strategy (for which a separate set of guidance notes are available). Such a situation analysis will provide detailed insights into where the existing system is performing well or poorly, a diagnosis of the reasons why, and the challenges the country faces in moving towards universal coverage. A good situation analysis thus provides the “starting point” for a national health financing reform strategy.

Health systems' analysis is not an exact science in the sense that it is not a case of calculating an indicator and comparing that to a target that is set in stone. Instead, the analysis rests on describing elements of the existing system and critically assessing this on the basis of a clear understanding of health financing policy, the objectives associated with UHC, and relevant comparisons with and lessons from other countries. The paper attempts to provide guidance on how this can be done by highlighting the key issues that should be considered and some of the specific questions that should be addressed. It is not intended to provide a strict chapter-by-chapter outline for a system assessment, but instead to foster and guide a systematic approach to the analysis of the health financing system.

The paper begins with a brief discussion of core concepts and terminology in health financing for UHC, including the goals and objectives that are specifically linked to health financing.

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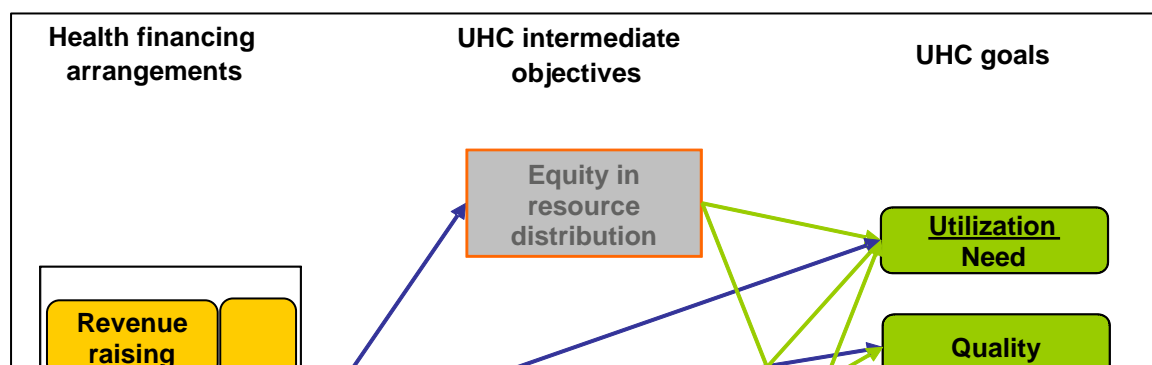
HEALTH FINANCING FOR UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE: KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMINOLOGY

Universal health coverage can be defined as providing financial protection from the costs of using health services for all people of a country as well as enabling them to obtain the health services that they need, where these services should be of sufficient quality to be effective (1). This definition embodies three specific policy goals (see Figure 1):

- Equity in the use of health services;
- Quality of care; and
- Financial protection.

While no country in the world can fully achieve all of these three “UHC goals”, each seeks to make progress on them; hence, “moving towards UHC” is relevant to all and can be used to orient the direction in which reforms are intended to move the system.

Figure 1. Goals and objectives of UHC that the health financing system can influence (2)



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