



**World Health
Organization**

Health Systems Governance for Universal Health Coverage

Action Plan

Department of Health Systems Governance and Financing



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PART A

Action Plan¹

Background

Concepts, Definitions and Actions

I. Introduction

This document outlines a plan of action for the work of the Department of Health Systems Governance and Financing (HGF) in the area of health system governance and leadership, focusing particularly on governance for Universal Health Coverage (UHC). To motivate the plan of action, the document first reviews how governance has been defined as a general concept, then how the concept has been applied to health systems. The next section summarizes what others are doing in this field as a way of identifying where HGF's work could add value to on-going activities in and outside WHO, the topic of the last section.

The goal of helping countries move closer to UHC guides WHO's work on health systems strengthening, and is one of the key leadership priorities of the Organization for the period 2014-2019. The definition of UHC used here is based on two World Health Assembly Resolutions, which was also used in the World Health Report of 2010 on Health Systems Financing: the Path to

Universal Coverage.² UHC is the aspiration that all people can obtain the health services they need, of good quality, without suffering financial hardship when paying for them. Health services cover promotion, prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and palliative care, all levels of service delivery (from community health workers to tertiary hospitals) and services across the life course. As such, they also address communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Moving closer to this goal requires the needed health services to be available, of good quality and affordable which in turn requires attention to all the various components of a health system including infrastructure, medicines and medical products, health workers, health information and health systems financing. Governance and leadership is critical, relevant to all of these components as well as to the interactions between them. It is the focus of this action plan, complementing the plan of action that has already been developed for WHO's work on health system financing and the work that WHO is undertaking in the other health system areas.³

¹ This strategy draws heavily from a commissioned background document "Health System Governance for Universal Health Coverage" written by Loraine Hawkins, as well as the subsequent consultation of experts who discussed the document.

² World Health Organization, 2005, Resolution WHA 58.33 Sustainable health financing, universal coverage and social health insurance. Fifty-Eighth Session of the World Health Assembly; World Health Organization. 2011, Resolution WHA 64.9. Sustainable health financing structures and universal coverage. Sixty-Fourth Session of the World Health Assembly. Available at:

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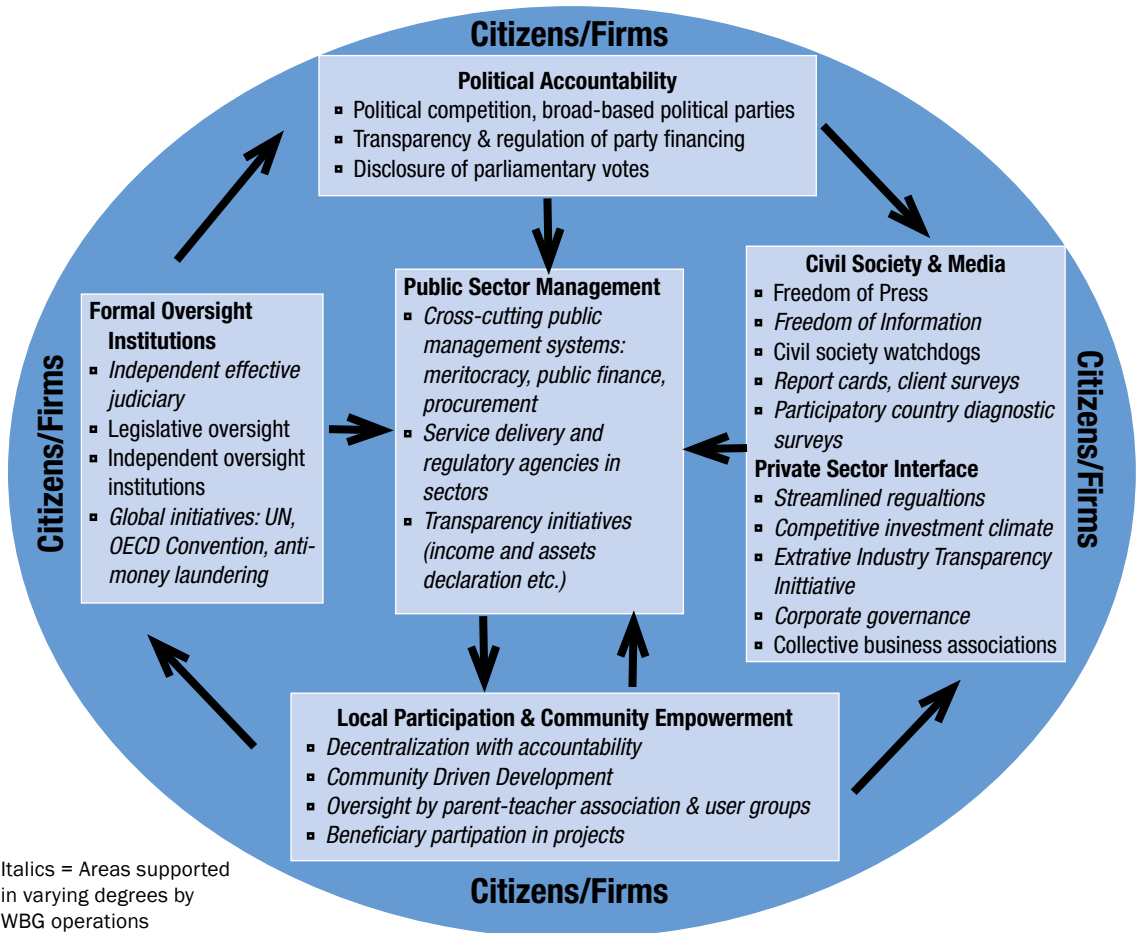
http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA64/A64_R9-en.pdf

³ Although this document is written to help guide the work of HGF, the work will be undertaken in collaboration with Regional and Country offices of WHO and other departments and clusters at Headquarters. Their inputs to this action plan are gratefully acknowledged.

II. Governance: General Concepts and Definitions

Governance has been defined in a variety of ways. Broader definitions encompass politics, policy, public administration, the interaction of these with civil society and the private sector, and the effects the various institutions have on socio-economic outcomes. These definitions encompass many functions, activities and interventions that apply to, and cut across, all sectors. The scope of governance summarized in a World Bank document (see Figure 1 below) captures most of the components found in the literature with the exception of human rights⁴.

Figure 1: Scope of Governance and Governance Interventions



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