



STRATEGIC PURCHASING FOR PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

ABOUT SP4PHC

The Strategic Purchasing for Primary Health Care (SP4PHC) project aims to improve how governments purchase primary health care (PHC) services, with a focus on family planning (FP) and maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH). The project is implemented by ThinkWell in collaboration with government institutions and local research partners in five countries: Burkina Faso, Indonesia, Kenya, the Philippines, and Uganda. SP4PHC is supported by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The purchasing context in these countries is quite different; large national health insurance schemes cover most of the population in some countries, while ministries of health at the national and sub-national levels dominate the purchasing landscape in others. Across these different geographies, the project is working to strengthen schemes that are critical for improving the delivery of PHC and addressing the needs of the poor, while also improving alignment across different purchasing arrangements within the health system. Through its learning agenda, the project aims to generate and diffuse knowledge about strategic purchasing for PHC to influence policy and practice at the country, regional, and global levels.

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OUR APPROACH

- We implement strategies tailored to the country context.
- We have country-based teams in each of the five geographies, which are at the forefront of implementing country activities.
- We work with the public purchaser and other relevant government institutions in each of the countries to facilitate policy dialogue on strategic purchasing reforms.
- We use analytics to diagnose existing challenges, design potential solutions, and test the sustainability of those designs through pilot studies.

WHAT IS STRATEGIC PURCHASING?

As countries implement strategies to achieve universal health coverage, they are undertaking health financing reforms to mobilize more financing for health and ensure that available funds for health are used optimally and equitably. Strategic purchasing is linked to the second objective. Purchasing refers to how institutions controlling pooled funds – like ministries of health and health insurance agencies – allocate them to healthcare providers. Making purchasing strategic involves basing purchasing decisions on information about provider behavior and population health needs in order to improve health system performance in terms of equitable access, quality of care and financial protection.





The Philippines' R.A. 11223 (UHC Law) offers an unprecedented opportunity to make the purchasing of PHC more strategic. The law mandates radical structural reforms in the health sector, including universal insurance coverage through PhilHealth, expanded PHC benefits, provincial level pooling of funds for public sector services, and health care provider network (HCPN) contracting. SP4PHC is providing technical support to the Department of Health (DOH) and PhilHealth to design and implement the provisions of the UHC law in order to strengthen purchasing of PHC – especially FP and MNCH services – through the following strategies:

DESIGNING AND OPERATIONALIZING HCPNS THAT PROMOTE PHC DELIVERY

The UHC law calls for the reorganization of providers into HCPNs, which have the potential to enhance continuity of care, and to reduce barriers to patient referral between the public and private sectors, between competing institutions, and across political boundaries. SP4PHC is working with the DOH to develop national-level HCPN guidelines and tools and is directly supporting two provincial UHC Integration sites in Region 6 to test the implementation of HCPNs and to document and share lessons learned.

SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT TO BETTER ENGAGE PRIVATE PROVIDERS

Demand outstrips supply for FP services in the Philippines, especially for long-acting reversible contraceptives. Reimbursements from PhilHealth, the agency that manages the country's national health insurance scheme, should offer an opportunity for the private sector to fill service delivery gaps, but uptake has been limited. SP4PHC is supporting government to explore why private PHC facilities are not registering with PhilHealth to deliver reproductive health services, especially FP. Building from our findings, SP4PHC is collaborating with PhilHealth and the Commission on Population and Development to identify policy changes that will encourage private providers to engage with PhilHealth, and to offer quality FP services.

SUPPORTING PHILHEALTH EXPAND THE PHC BENEFIT PACKAGE TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO QUALITY FP AND MNCH SERVICES

High coverage of key MNCH interventions has had limited impact on maternal mortality in the Philippines. A critical challenge remains in improving not only the volume of services but service quality. SP4PHC is working closely with PhilHealth to design expanded benefit packages for PHC and to establish quality standards for these benefits. The team will support PhilHealth in the monitoring and evaluation of the new benefit package in UHC Integration sites, including an evaluation of impact on MNCH and FP quality.

For more information, visit <https://thinkwell.global/projects/sp4phc/> or write to SP4PHC@thinkwell.global.

ThinkWell is a health systems development organization with experience designing, implementing, evaluating, and diffusing new solutions to persistent health system challenges. Using tailored strategies that meet context-specific needs, we have supported health financing and governance reforms in over 30 countries. www.ThinkWell.global