



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 Government of Uganda (GOU) has continued to push forward meaningful reform of public purchasing arrangements for primary health care (PHC). Building from the 2016 Health Financing Strategy, results-based financing (RBF) and ongoing efforts to design and initiate a National Health Insurance System (NHIS). ThinkWell has directly supported these efforts through close working relationships with the Ministry of Health (MOH), Ministry of Finance, and our learning partner Makerere University School of Public Health. Additionally, ThinkWell has engaged in a close working relationship with the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) Public Health and Environment directorate to develop a COVID-19 monitoring system that is used to allocate resources every week and to develop solutions to overcrowded public referral facilities through service- delivery purchasing model with private health providers of select RMNH services. This collaborative work has been done by pursuing two SP4PHC strategies:

HARMONIZE AND STRENGTHEN PURCHASING ARRANGEMENTS

SP4PHC supports the MOH to harmonize and strengthen purchasing arrangements as per the 2016 Health Financing Strategy. Seconded ThinkWell staff have supported the MOH efforts to achieve a nationwide rollout of the World Bank-financed Uganda Reproductive, Maternal, and Child Health Improvement Project (URMCHIP), which includes an RBF component for PHC facilities. Supporting these efforts, ThinkWell has conducted primary research on facility autonomy, the COVID-19 response, provider use of RBF income, medicines procurement using RBF monies study, and a bottleneck study of the RBF invoice verification and payment system. The highlight of our efforts has been the direct work with the MOH to formulate a strategy to mainstream RBF into government PHC purchasing systems as donor support comes to the end of its project cycle. We have also provided close support to MOH efforts in the design of NHIS through direct technical assistance and research on national health insurance experiences in sub-Saharan Africa.

SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN APPROACH FOR GOU THROUGH THE KAMPALA CAPITAL AUTHORITY TO EFFECTIVELY PURCHASE FP AND MNCH SERVICES FROM PRIVATE PROVIDERS

In many urban settings, public sector infrastructure is limited, and there is an abundance of mostly disconnected private providers. Public facilities offering services are overburdened, and service delivery is highly congested. ThinkWell has worked closely with the Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) at their request to formulate an approach that can strategically purchase congested FP and MNCH services from private providers to improve the overall delivery of these essential PHC services. Through facilitated dialogue between the MOH, KCCA, and other key stakeholders, a detailed purchasing model that creates a public-private hybrid network of providers has been designed. It is expected that this formative work, informed by ThinkWell's primary research efforts, will be employed by KCCA as they seek opportunities to put in place much-needed urban health system reforms.

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. We have supported health financing and governance reforms in over 30 countries using tailored strategies that meet context-specific needs. www.ThinkWell.global.