



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM PART 1 OF THE 5th ANNUAL HEALTH FINANCING FORUM

When faced with unexpected shocks like COVID-19, how do we build resilience in health financing?

Your questions got answered at the Part 1 of the 5th Annual Health Financing Forum. In July 2020, Part 1 of the forum drew over 500 policy makers, administrators, and experts on public finance and health financing from more than 55 countries. With Part 2 beginning November 9, here is a recap of key takeaways from the summer session.

Rapid access to funds

The COVID-19 crisis threatens progress towards universal health coverage and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals. Providing rapid access to funds means prioritizing healthcare in budget decisions, dedicating emergency funds for healthcare before the next crisis hits, and, as government revenues decline, increasing borrowing capacity. When the health sector demonstrates its own preparedness for emergency response, with an efficient and equitable plan for fund allocation, governments are more likely to prioritize healthcare funding.

New and modified purchasing arrangements

Expanding health services in a crisis requires flexible purchasing arrangements. For example, public sector budgets can expand provisions for purchasing telemedicine services from both the public and private sectors. Increased contracting with the private sector can also ensure more in-patient capacity for treatment, testing and contact tracing.

Modifications to public financial management rules

Rapid access to funds and flexibility in their use often requires modifications to public financial management. Governments need to evaluate which modifications should be rolled out widely, and which ones might need to be rolled back to ensure accountability in the recovery phase.

Innovations and other workarounds

Innovations can support adequate and flexible resource availability, particularly at the primary care level. Innovations can also increase absorptive capacity and the effective use of resources. For instance, governments can re-direct funds to the frontline by releasing national health insurance fund reserves to generate block funding for healthcare facilities. Each new approach must be designed to maintain equity, efficiency, and prevent leakages from the system.

The Future

The future is uncertain. We can't predict the next pandemic wave or how much funding it will require. We don't know when economies or government revenues will recover. We do know, however, that maintaining essential health services, testing and treating patients for COVID-19, and rolling out a coronavirus vaccine will require an increase in health spending. We also know that flexibility and resilience in health financing are critical to an effective response.

Join us November 9 - December 10, 2020 for Part 2 of the forum. We'll address the health financing concerns of countries where the first pandemic wave is yet to be controlled, where the second wave is growing, or where cases appear to have peaked, and much more.