The World Bank Health Systems Flagship Framework

Transforming health sectors requires stakeholders to adopt principles and practices of systems thinking, building leadership capacity, and developing competencies to manage complex change across diverse constituencies. The Flagship framework provides participants with a comprehensive and strategic approach to health system reform, with the ultimate goal of achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC). The framework starts by identifying the health system goals and then analyzing policy levers that can be used to bring about change.
The Flagship framework proposes three ultimate health system performance goals: (i) health status, (ii) citizen satisfaction/responsiveness, and (iii) financial risk protection. Several intermediary objectives are also offered in the course such as access/utilization, quality, efficiency, and resilience. These intermediary objectives serve as steppingstones towards achieving the ultimate health system goals. Other sectors such as education, food, justice system also influence health outcomes. The Flagship learning framework begins by engaging participants in a discussion on how to prioritize goals based on the unique characteristics of each country or region.

Strategic intervention to improve health system performance involves policy action by resorting to the policy levers seen on the right side of the Flagship framework. The 5 policy levers are: (i) organization, (ii) financing, (iii) regulation, (iv) persuasion, and (v) public health. In a health system, any specific aspect of poor performance will typically have multiple—interconnected—causes. More than one policy lever is often needed to bring about sufficient change. We use the so-called “diagnostic tree” approach to analyze the pathways connecting policy action with health system ultimate performance goals.

Lastly, the health system is dependent on the overall environment in which it operates, including ethical, political, environmental, cultural, gender, demographic, economic, and other variables. The Flagship framework also aligns with the World Bank human capital agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which link health system performance with social and economic development and individual well-being.