

Research Title: An Impact Evaluation of the Voluntary Student Health Insurance Scheme in Vietnam

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Category: 1G: Cutting-edge Research: Financing for people-centred and equitable health systems

Background

Vietnam implemented a nationwide Voluntary Student Health Insurance (VSHI) scheme in 1998 with the aim of strengthening the school health system and reducing the level of health inequity among school-aged children. After more than a decade of its implementation, challenges remain in terms of high out-of-pocket (OOP) health spending and low access to health services, especially among rural and poor children.

Methods

A panel dataset was constructed from a cohort of children from the Young Lives (YL) study in Vietnam. Demographic, health and education information were captured using two household survey rounds conducted in 2006 and in 2009. A difference-in-differences (DID) approach was applied to the panel dataset in order to exhibit that the VSHI scheme is associated with differential improvements on health, learning and household-spending outcomes among primary school students in Vietnam.

Results

The scheme was estimated to have contributed to improvements in nutrition status among school-aged children, with a 4.7-5.1% increase in their recorded body mass index (BMI). There was also an observed 10-10.8% increase in the probability of a health facility visit. However, the increase in health care utilization translated to an 11.8-14.2% rise in the probability of incurring OOP expenditures for their treatment. Conversely, the scheme is associated with increased household non-health spending for food and non-durable goods. Finally, the results suggest a positive association between VSHI coverage and learning ability, with VSHI-enrolled students scoring 3.712-4.070 points higher on a standardised vocabulary test.

Conclusions

The results suggest that improving access to a school-based social health insurance program has a positive impact on the health and well being of primary school children in Vietnam. Important policy implications include ensuring continuous coverage and integrating lessons learned from the implementation of the voluntary scheme as the government embarks in its goal to attain universal coverage in Vietnam.

Research Title: A Framework to Promote Good Governance in Health Care

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Category: 1A: Cutting-edge Research: Governance, accountability and participation

Background

This paper aims to give an overview of corruption and ethical dilemmas in the Philippine health care system and to provide a framework of strategies and solutions in order to promote good governance in the health sector. In its complexity, the Philippine health care system is full of vulnerable areas for adverse practices, which has led to the inefficient delivery of services, the rising cost of health care, and the erosion of public trust in government institutions.

Methods

The study findings are confined to the results of two focus group discussions (FGDs) with experts and representatives from the Philippine government, private sector, the association of health care professionals and patient groups, the academe, and civil society organizations. The first FGD focused on mapping out corruption cases and ethical dilemmas in the health sector, while the second FGD involved the formulation of solutions and gathering of best practices in response to the identified cases.

Results

Within the complex interactions that comprise the Philippine health system, several areas stand out as possible areas of corruption and ethical dilemmas. Cases of adverse practices have been documented under five main categories: the local government, the health regulatory system, medical practitioners, commercial enterprises and the social health insurance system. A framework of strategies has also been identified in response to the identified cases. These strategies include the establishment of incentive systems, improving transparency in government transactions, encouraging participation through partnerships and access to information, and strengthening the health regulatory system.

Conclusions

The efficient provision of health care services has been a major challenge to the Philippine government, and it is further compounded by corruption in the health sector. The key to providing concrete solutions against adverse practices is to maintain transparency through consultations and cooperation between the private sector, civil society and the government.