

Health Financing in Sierra Leone

Health Systems Strengthening and Epidemic Prevention in Sierra Leone

Background

The unprecedented Ebola Outbreak in West Africa between 2014 and 2016 significantly impacted Sierra Leone's fragile health system. Until now, a sustainable effective financing of the Sierra Leonean health sector is a challenge. Health financing is a central and important pillar of the health system, cutting across all areas from human resources for health, to drugs and commodities, to the building and maintenance of physical infrastructure and health information systems.

The National Health Accounts 2014 estimates that the total health expenditure in Sierra Leone is 1.1 billion USD compared to 590 billion USD in 2013. This means that each Sierra Leone consumed health services valued at about 690,000 Leones (160 USD) in 2014. External resources as well as government allocations for health increased considerably during the Ebola Outbreak. Government expenditure on health, however, is mostly spent on the payrolls of the health workforce. Already now, the number, distribution and competences of the health workforce is not enough to provide adequate health care to the population indicating the necessity for increased government spending for its health workforce. Thus, there is a need to improve efficiencies in deploying resources for health.

The Government of Sierra Leone has developed several strategies and plans which give an overall direction to the health system. Still, each of these plans has its own financing strategy. A common National Health Financing Strategy for Sierra Leone is therefore necessary to provide a coordinated and effective approach to financing. Moreover, financial disbursements from the government are often late, leaving District Health Management Teams and hospitals without resources to finance public health services. Especially Primary Health Units are lacking funds even though they are essential to the health sector since they are more accessible than hospitals for

the population and more cost efficient to be used instead of overburden hospitals with cases better be treated at primary care level.

Additionally, the lack of data on health financing and health costs weakens the public financial management structures and increases the costs extremely. This links with the low knowledge and capacity on financial planning and management of the administrative staff in hospitals and Primary Health Units.

Approach

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) supports the Sierra Leonean Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) to build up a resilient health system.

As one of its priority fields, the GIZ Health Systems Strengthening and Epidemic Prevention Project focuses on the political anchoring on comprehensive financing strategies for the development of health workforce and development of Social Health Insurance.

The GIZ project will support implementing partners to direct participatory procedures to frame financing strategies, facilitate interministerial dialogue, and promote consultation among the participant partners, donors and NGOs. The Health Finance Unit of the MoHS will be assisted in this process and advised on introducing and applying standards as well as operating procedures. A monitoring and evaluation system will supply facts and figures for analyzing the efficiency and effectiveness of the financing strategy implementation. It will entail cooperation with training institutions/ universities and their operators to ensure efficient and effective resource allocation.



Photos: Participants at the MoHS-GIZ Strategy and Operational Planning Workshop in October 2017



Left: Group discussion on health financing at the MoHS-GIZ Strategy an Operational Planning Workshop in October 2017

Right: A MoHS officer explains the relationship between key actors in health financing at the MoHS-GIZ Strategy an Operational Planning Workshop in October 2017

To achieve this aim of developing health financing strategies the GIZ project is focusing on the following approaches:

- Capacity and needs assessment of the the Health Finance Unit of the MoHS and the Sierra Leone Social Health Insurance (SLeSHI)
- Assessment of the technical and financial feasibility and appropriateness of a National Health Insurance for Sierra Leone
- Assessment of the technical and financial feasibility and appropriateness of a financing strategy for human resources for health
- Working towards a comprehensive health financing strategy

Activities

As a result of the MoHS-GIZ strategy and operational planning workshop in October 2017, it is planned to implement the following activities:

- Conduct preparatory studies on health financing to feed into a financing summit
- Convene health financing/human resource financing summit
- Establish the thematic groups: Strategic purchasing
Resource mobilization
- Establish National Health Financing standing Group

Capacity Development on various levels within the MoHS and others

The MoHS-GIZ project is planning on sustainable workforce financing in health facilities in close collaboration with all the district health management teams, local councils, hospital management and health workers in primary healthcare units.

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