



Health, Education, Social Protection

Strengthening health systems

The challenge

When health systems function well, the entire population, including poorer population groups, benefits from access to appropriate and effective medical care that is organised efficiently and financed equitably. In many countries, this is not yet the case. There are many reasons for this. Planning and management capacities are weak at all levels of the health system. Information systems do not deliver the data needed for health system management. The financial burden of health care is unfairly distributed among the population; overall financing is inadequate and often does not reach the health services. In addition, too little attention is paid to needs-driven, efficient financial planning for health care. There is a lack of qualified health workers, adequate infrastructure and equipment.

Our approach

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH works to strengthen health systems by supporting necessary changes and developing capacity at all levels. We apply a range of methods to do this, most of which are based on many years of experience. These methods include: concurrent and complementary interventions involving health institutions, regional authorities and health ministries; mutually complementary cooperation with the private sector; and cross-sectoral approaches for promoting health and preventing disease. Non-governmental organisations and the general public are also involved. Well-functioning networks with specialised national and international institutions contribute further to the high quality and good outcomes of our work.

Our services

The following are some of the areas and tasks on which we provide advice to partner governments as well as national and international organisations:

- Providing assistance to supra-regional institutions such as ECOWAS/WAHO, EAC and others, particularly in fragile states, with the aim of sustainably strengthening the structures for health care provision in their member states.
- Providing assistance to health ministries in developing health policies and legislation, regulating the health sector and planning and implementing programmes and joint financing.
- Strengthening the capacities of decentralised health authorities for planning, managing and supervising health services.
- Supporting partners in accessing and utilising global funds to strengthen health systems in the context of combating HIV, tuberculosis and malaria, and being prepared to deal with pandemics.
- Providing advice to health care facilities and administrations on improving health information systems and introducing e-health technologies.
- Encouraging health care financing that is socially equitable and sustainable, and promoting provider payment mechanisms that contribute to increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of care.
- Providing advice on introducing quality management and accreditation systems, and assistance in introducing modern management methods in health care facilities.
- Human resource and organisational development through personnel policy and human resource planning, training and professional development.
- Providing assistance with strategic approaches to working with the private sector.



- Providing advice on topics of cross-sectoral cooperation to promote health and prevent disease.
- Providing assistance for cooperation between public, private, faith-based and other non-governmental actors working in the health sector.
- Strengthening international networking among our partners, e.g. via south-south cooperation; providing assistance for cooperation between international initiatives and forums, including IHP+, HANSHEP and WHO.

The benefits

The services provided by GIZ contribute to higher standards of human health and greater social cohesion. Through working with us, our partners are able to develop their health systems to meet the needs of their citizens. The financial burdens of health care are distributed on a more socially equitable basis, and impoverishment resulting from the costs of medical treatment is reduced. Our partners build their capacities to design and implement future reforms themselves, while involving private service providers and civil society more fully in policy-making processes.

An example from the field

Since 2009, GIZ has been working with the KfW Development Bank in Viet Nam to improve access to high-quality health services. The programme advises provincial and district health authorities and hospitals on needs-based, cost-effective planning and modern management methods. Targeted training measures in selected preventive and curative services such as cervical cancer screening and care of new-borns, as well as the introduction of integrated quality

management mechanisms, serve to strengthen the capacities of health care personnel and improve the services provided by the health care facilities. The support provided to a tele-medicine network is helping to improve the services in remote areas. Experience from the provinces is being fed into the national policy dialogue to drive forward the development of national guidelines and standards.

Along with a 'delegated cooperation' arrangement with the EU, the programme's outputs and results include:

- Strategic five-year plans in hospitals as well as standardised work processes through the introduction of an electronic management information system.
- The development of a new course in hospital management. Once accredited by the Ministry of Health, it can be offered at over 1,000 hospitals nationwide.
- Training for doctors, nurses, midwives and pharmacists in the care of new-borns, emergency care, intensive medical care, x-ray and ultrasound diagnostics, rational drug treatment and holistic care.

These activities have in turn inspired a range of initiatives to improve quality. Among other things, they are helping to improve hygiene in the institutions, decrease hospital infections, reduce the use of antibiotics and lower infant mortality.

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