

Health reform manual eight practical steps

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Anuska Kalita, Anya Levy Guyer and Winnie Yip

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Foreword

The Alliance is committed to ensuring that research insights lead to better policies, stronger systems and healthier populations. That commitment underpins everything we do, and it is especially critical at a time when the pressure to deliver on universal health coverage and health security has never been greater. It is imperative that health policy and systems research drives real-world change.

Health reform manual: eight practical steps reflects that belief. It is designed not only to guide reformers through complex systems challenges but also to spark transformation – whether through changes at the local level or full-scale national reform. It builds on decades of learning across diverse contexts, offering a practical, sequenced approach that can help reformers make sense of complexity while using research and learning to inform decisions at every stage of the process.

One of the conceptual anchors of this manual is the control knobs framework. This framework is one of several that help us to understand that reform is not a mystery – it can be managed. By deliberately adjusting the key levers of system performance, decision-makers and other stakeholders can shape more equitable, efficient and resilient health systems. This manual recognizes that reform is not just technical – it is inherently political – and it helps reformers in navigating these messy processes step by step.

This manual – and the Alliance’s broader mission – is about turning ambition into action for more equitable health systems. We hope this guide equips you with the strategies, tools and tactics to implement effective and sustainable health reforms. After all, health systems won’t transform themselves.

Dr Kumanan Rasanathan

Executive Director, Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research
World Health Organization

Preface

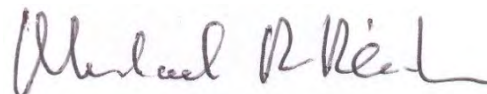
Health reform manual: eight practical steps was written to assist people who are seeking to improve the performance of health systems in countries around the world.

This manual was developed as part of the India Health Systems Reform Project at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. The primary objective of the Project is to conduct collaborative research and build capacity to improve equitable and affordable access to good-quality health care in India. The manual was originally written as a tool for the Project to support the ongoing health system strengthening efforts of India's central and state governments.

Once we completed the manual, we found broader interest in using the text in other countries and settings. We therefore appreciate the decision by the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research at the World Health Organization (WHO) to publish this version. In writing this document, we sought to create a practical tool, written in accessible language, for all health policy-makers, analysts, implementers and other stakeholders shaping health reform efforts. We hope the manual will be useful to policy-makers and analysts around the world.

The key concepts of this text are founded in the book *Getting health reform right: a guide to improving performance and equity* (GHRR), which was published two decades ago by the late Marc J. Roberts, William Hsiao, Peter Berman and one of this manual's coauthors, Michael R. Reich (Roberts et al., 2004). GHRR presents an approach to health system analysis and reform that is often called the control knobs framework. This framework has been adopted (and adapted) for national and state health system reforms in many countries. This manual serves as a companion text to GHRR, with a focus on the practice of health reform.

We believe that there is room for improvement in any system, including our systematic approach to health reform. We look forward to hearing from you, the readers, about your experiences using this manual. And we welcome your suggestions on how to improve the manual to support efforts to strengthen the performance and equity of health systems around the world.



Professors Winnie Yip and Michael R. Reich

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

Acknowledgements

While key concepts in this manual are founded in the book *Getting health reform right: a guide to improving performance and equity* (Roberts et al., 2004), the content of this manual has been developed and refined over time, with rich context, examples and practical worksheets incorporated to support health systems transformations. It has also undergone a rigorous review and adaptation process led by the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research at the World Health Organization (WHO) to ensure that it meets international quality and transparency standards. Its adaptation for publication at WHO has been technically overseen by Zubin Shroff and Jeffrey Knezovich.

This manual was developed by a team at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Michael R. Reich drafted the Introduction and steps one, five and eight; Anuska Kalita drafted steps three and four; Paola Abril Campos drafted steps six and seven; and Anya Levy Guyer drafted step two. Winnie Yip reviewed the entire manual and provided comments and revisions, especially for steps three and four. Reich and Guyer made revisions based on reviewers' feedback and edited the full document, with final changes overseen at the Alliance by Shroff and Knezovich.

All external experts submitted to WHO a declaration of interest disclosing potential conflicts of interest that might affect, or might reasonably be perceived to affect, their objectivity and independence in relation to the subject matter of this guidance. WHO reviewed each of the declarations and concluded that none could give rise to a potential or reasonably perceived conflict of interest related to the subjects covered in this manual.

We appreciate the thoughtful comments and suggestions provided by all reviewers on previous versions of the text. Koku Awoonor-Williams, Keith Cloete, Joanna Fottrell, Zarni Lynn Kyaw and Walaiporn Patcharanarumol reviewed the manual for publication by the Alliance. Other colleagues who reviewed earlier drafts include: Peter Berman, William Hsiao, Heather Lanthorn, Adolfo Rubinstein, Susan Sparkes, Sian Tsuei and Veronika Wirtz. In addition, Evangeline Liao, Sarah Payne, Hanne Vonen, Celline Wijaya, Hao Yi and other participants in the Autumn 2023 graduate course on Doing Health Reform Better at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, provided valuable suggestions.

Financial support from The Gates Foundation enabled the drafting of this manual and the incorporation of real-world insights through the India Health Systems Reform Project at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

Abbreviations and acronyms

CHE	catastrophic health expenditure
DHS	Demographic and Health Surveys
GHE	government health expenditure
GHRR	<i>Getting health reform right: a guide to improving performance and equity</i>
LMIC	low- and middle-income country
OOPE	out-of-pocket expenditure
SHI	social health insurance
THE	total health expenditure
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive summary

Health reform manual: eight practical steps guides readers on navigating the complex challenges of health system reform. It builds on the 2004 book *Getting health reform right: a guide to improving performance and equity* (GHRR), which presents a framework to understand and achieve success in health reform (Roberts et al., 2004). The GHRR framework (also known as the control knobs model) forms the foundation of this manual's eight practical steps. The manual presents accessible guidance in general terms that can be used by government policy-makers, analysts, advisors, advocates and other stakeholders in any country to plan and implement health reform. This approach focuses on government-managed large-scale reform, but the steps can be adapted for use with smaller reforms and systems.

The eight steps are:

- 1) Decide to start a health reform process
- 2) Create a Health Reform Team
- 3) Assess health system performance and define performance problems
- 4) Diagnose the causes of performance problems
- 5) Decide your reform package
- 6) Conduct political analysis and design political strategies
- 7) Manage the implementation of health reform to achieve results
- 8) Evaluate impacts and create resilience for health reform

The manual describes each step in a short chapter, highlighting between four and six key actions and noting references for more details. The eight steps can be read (and applied) in different sequences, depending on the needs and circumstances of health reformers. The manual includes 14 worksheets and five annexes to assist its users to adapt and apply the eight steps to the real-world complexities of health reform.

Introduction

What is this manual?

This manual offers a systematic eight-step approach to designing and implementing health system reform. Its goal is to provide strategic and practical guidance for people who seek to be health reformers. This manual explains in relatively simple terms considerations for grappling with the complex, conflictual and controversial processes of health reform.

While it can be used on its own, the manual is based on and designed to accompany the book *Getting health reform right: a guide to improving performance and equity* (GHRR), which was first published in 2004 and then republished with a new preface in 2019 (Roberts et al., 2004; Reich, Hsiao & Berman, 2019). Over the past two decades, GHRR has been read by tens of thousands of people and used in hundreds of courses on strengthening health system performance around the world. The book presents an overview of the complexities of health reform, drawing on principles and practices from a range of disciplines, including economics, political science, organizational theory and ethics. The book discusses in great depth why and how to engage in health reform. It also cites evidence and actual experiences to support its analysis of health reform goals and processes.

This manual is shorter than GHRR. And it offers both instruction and sample tools to help you adapt the concepts and methods from GHRR to apply them in your specific setting. Policy reform processes in the real world can be frustratingly slow for long periods – and then suddenly move quickly. This manual can help you prepare to make good use of both urgent and slow periods. Because it is aimed at a global audience, the guidance sometimes is idealized and generalized. For example: you may be reading this manual because you already have a good sense of the health system problems you want to address and how you want to address them. If this is the case, the assessment and diagnosis processes may appear redundant. However, it is still worthwhile going through those steps, as they are critically important. Other readers will be at other stages of considering and doing health reform.

The ideas and materials in this manual should be adapted to make the health reform process work for you and for the system or institution you seek to reform. Depending on what you aim to achieve, how you plan to go about it and where you work, you may decide to, for example, take the steps in a different order (or even skip certain steps). You may translate the worksheet tools or even redesign them with additional (or fewer) categories. The intention is that you reshape and adapt the broad ideas and the suggested steps to support your particular objectives, to address your particular challenges, and to make the process appropriate to your particular environment and health system. In short, this is not a cookbook with simple recipes. Instead, it is more like a guide on becoming a good cook. It is expected that you will adapt the recipes in this

manual to make use of locally available ingredients, to work well in your kitchen, and to satisfy your tastes and preferences.

Defining health reform, health system and performance

The operational definition of health reform used throughout this manual is: **the purposeful use of policy options to effect changes that are intended to improve the performance of the health system.**

This statement raises another question: What is a health system? The operational definition in this manual starts with the premise that the health system is the means to an end: namely, the well-being of a population. The means that comprises the system is the network of institutions, people, policies and processes that together work towards that end. GHRR (p. 5) notes three important characteristics of a health system: “its complexity, its resistance to change, and the diversity of perspectives within it”. These three features affect how health reform occurs.

It is also important to define health system performance. Performance, in the language of GHRR, encompasses **how well the health system achieves six goals** (which are separate but related). Three of these are **intermediate performance goals**:¹

- 1) Access: Ensuring health services are available to, affordable for and used by the population;
- 2) Quality: Delivering health services in ways that increase clinical effectiveness, patient safety and patient-centredness; and
- 3) Efficiency: Using inputs to the health system to produce optimal outcomes with limited wastage.

The other three are the **final performance goals** of the health system:²

- 4) Health status: Improving the health of the population;
- 5) Financial risk protection: Protecting people from financial ruin due to health care costs; and
- 6) Public satisfaction: Increasing how satisfied citizens feel with the health system.

Each goal is a complex concept with various definitions in the literature. The short definitions above do not adequately address or explore the many issues involved in each goal. These concepts are discussed in more detail in step three (and in Chapters 5 and 6 of GHRR).

For each goal, it is critically important to consider both the overall impact and whether the benefits are distributed in a just and fair manner across various groups in a population. As noted in GHRR (p. 92), “From a reformer’s point of view, the distribution

¹ In both GHRR and this manual, intermediate performance goals are sometimes also called intermediate performance measures, outcomes or objectives.

² In both GHRR and this manual, final performance goals are also referred to as ultimate goals, measures, outcomes or objectives.

of outcomes – across regional, income or ethnic groups – will generally be the most relevant consideration”. This is the principle of equity, and it is so central to this approach to health reform that it is explicitly mentioned in the full title of GHRR.

Now that its goals are clear, it is possible to understand health reform as governments’ “efforts to... reorganize their health-care systems” to improve performance with a focus on achieving equity within their national population (GHRR, p. v). Some examples of health reform are policy changes designed to: improve primary care delivery; introduce social insurance models; and change hospital governance and payment systems, rather than leaving them solely to market forces. Health reform traditionally focuses on health care delivery systems, but it can also address changes in other sectors (such as infrastructure, agriculture, technology and education, to name a few) that affect health status, financial risk protection and public satisfaction.

What is the scope of health reform?

Health reform efforts can have a range of intended scopes, from incremental improvements to system-wide overhauls. This manual focuses on so-called large-R Reforms – namely, efforts that aim to achieve transformative and system-wide changes. Much of the guidance and principles, however, are also applicable to incremental (or little-r) reforms with a narrower scope (either in terms of the goal of the reform or the size of the system).

For the sake of clarity and simplicity, this manual presents health reform as a discrete and orderly process. In practice, however, health reform is a continuous, iterative and messy process that can generate new problems even as it addresses existing concerns. Thus, the 2019 preface to GHRR notes that health reform:

... is not a one-shot effort but typically continues over many years (and even decades), as a major reform is introduced and then adjusted and modified as new problems arise and are addressed. Reform is not simply about creating a law and getting it adopted; it is a years-long process of learning how to improve the performance of a health system, through trial-and-error, measurement and evaluation, systematic thinking, and analysis. (Reich, Hsiao & Berman, 2019: x)

In sum, health reform is the process of developing, adopting and implementing policies that: provide good technical solutions to health system problems; are politically viable; and advance socially determined ethical principles. In this approach, health reform seeks to advance the overall goal of improving health system performance.

Who is the audience for this manual?

The primary audience for this manual is people seeking to undertake health reform while working within a government. This group includes the policy and personal advisors of political leaders who decide to pursue reform, and the senior government officials charged with designing and carrying out health reforms and health system strengthening. High-level policy-makers, such as ministers of health, may also refer

to this manual, but it is more aimed at their advisors. They can examine the manual's details as they develop suggestions, strategies and questions for the decision-makers.

The second audience is the group of people who make up a Health Reform Team. This team, discussed further in step two, comprises the officials whose work it is to make health reform happen through diligent planning, negotiating, promoting, communicating and pushing the health reform process forward. Health Reform Teams should find the guidance in this document particularly practical and useful.

Other important audiences sit both inside and outside government. Within government, key health reform stakeholders include legislators, bureaucrats in various agencies, and local political and health system leaders. Outside government, health reform stakeholders include advocacy and interest groups (such as health professional associations and health worker unions), hospital administrators, health workers, health care companies and organizations, pharmaceutical companies, health foundations and donors, patient groups and the population at large. All these groups have profound interests in the outcomes of health reforms, so they also need to understand how to do health reform.

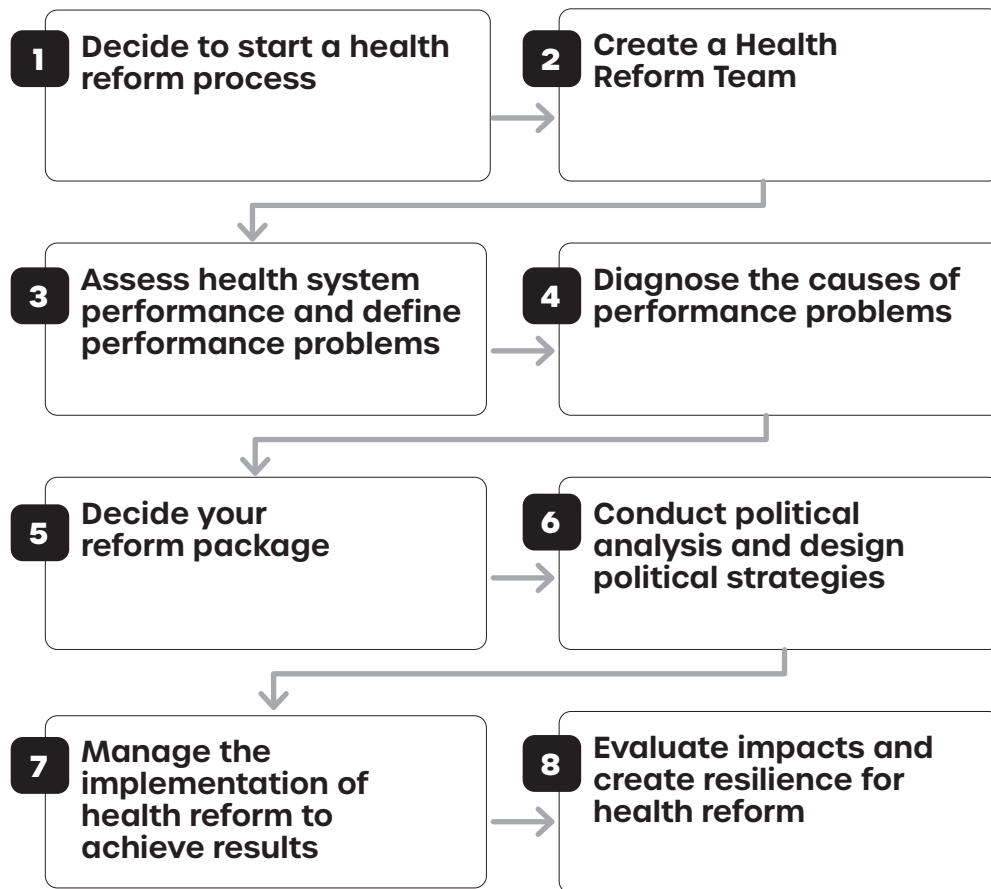
A final audience for the manual is students learning about health systems, health policy and reform processes. The manual will be a useful accompaniment when studying GHRR and when undertaking course projects on health reform.

Regardless of which audience you fall into, you need to be prepared to grapple with the significant challenges involved in designing and enacting health reform. These challenges span many domains, including the technical, political, economic, social, cultural, ethical, organizational, bureaucratic and legal. Addressing them requires you to engage with stakeholders and experts across sectors and disciplines. The authors of GHRR used their engagements with health reform in many countries to highlight challenges that arise when seeking to improve health system performance, and they have shared strategies to address those challenges. This manual also highlights common challenges and relevant strategies for health reformers.

How is this manual organized?

The text of this manual is relatively short so that it can serve as both a strategic support and a resource directory to help you navigate the health reform process. The manual is intended to be used as a companion to GHRR. You can think of GHRR as a detailed atlas of the health system, filled with high-resolution maps of the various roads, rivers, cities, mountains and obstacles that make up the terrain. The atlas has critically important information in it – but the details may be overwhelming as you plan out your health reform journey. This manual, on the other hand, provides you with an overview map of the journey, broken down into eight practical steps (see Fig. 1). This manual should help you in planning out your path, step by step, and in moving forward as you embark on your health reform expedition.

Fig. 1. Overview of eight practical steps in the health reform process



Source: the authors.

Each step is presented in a separate chapter, with core concepts and key actions to consider. Chapters include straightforward suggestions and implementable instructions. They also include brief descriptions of concrete examples, with citations that you can refer to for more detail on these particular health reform experiences.³ There are also supplementary materials: 14 sample worksheets to use in collecting necessary information, an annex that includes brief definitions of key concepts, and four annexes with additional technical detail. The Introductory worksheet provides a complete checklist of each of the key actions mentioned for all eight steps.

³ You can find additional case examples of health reform efforts from around the world in several ways. Depending on the specific topic or region you are interested in, you may wish to search health policy and/or regional journals and reports from global health institutions (including WHO, the World Bank, donor and technical agencies, and universities). It is also useful to browse through collections of publications and case studies gathered by health policy research institutions. Here are a few places to start:

- The Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research publications (<https://ahpsr.who.int/publications>)
- The European Health Observatory collection (<https://eurohealthobservatory.who.int/publications/all-publications>)
- The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Case Library (<https://caseresources.hsph.harvard.edu/case-library>)
- National ministries of health often have case studies and useful data sources on health system performance available on their websites

Every effort has been made to make this manual readable and usable. It aims to be both easy to understand and practical, with ideas that you can use in real-time and real-world settings. Each chapter is somewhat independent, in case you are focusing on just one step or you are reading the manual out of order. In seeking succinctness, specifics have sometimes been sacrificed – but details are readily available elsewhere. Throughout the manual, the relevant GHRR chapters where you can find more detailed discussions of the central concepts and analytical methods are indicated. Other selected resources for each step are also provided.

Returning to the atlas and maps analogy: Fig. 1 and the Introductory worksheet provide a bird's-eye view of the health reform terrain from 10 000 meters up. The rest of the manual maps each step and directs you to other relevant resources for even more detail.

If you are reading this manual before you start to engage in health reform, this resource will help you to consider such questions as: How do I figure out where I want to end up? What does the full process look like? And what do I do first? You may even ask yourself: Do I really want to engage in health reform, and why?

Once you have an overview of the reform process, you can then look to further resources as you undertake each task to explore more detailed discussions of specific concepts and methods.

Before you start

Before writing this manual, it seemed an impossible task to answer all questions that arise when undertaking health reform. And, of course, using this manual cannot guarantee the success of health reform efforts. There will always be other factors – sudden events, contextual challenges and political conflicts, for example – that you cannot anticipate or influence.

With these caveats in mind, however, it is a pleasure to share with you this eight-steps approach, based on rigorous analysis of real-world experiences. The goal with this manual is to assist you to do health reform better.

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Reich MR, Hsiao W, Berman P (2019). Preface: what we have learned in the 15 years since this book was published. In: Roberts MJ, Hsiao W, Berman P, Reich MR (2019) *Getting health reform right: a guide to improving performance and equity. Anniversary Edition*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press (<https://read.amazon.com/sample/0190077204?clientId=share>).

Roberts MJ, Hsiao W, Berman P, Reich MR (2004). *Getting health reform right: a guide to improving performance and equity*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Step one:

Decide to start a health reform process

All systems, including health systems, can be improved. Deciding to improve a system requires a series of choices, beginning with which problems to address – and understanding why to focus on those particular problems (and not others).

A core principle of this manual is that health reform requires combining technical analysis with ethical and political analyses. This principle is relevant regardless of whether you seek to reform a national system or a single institution. Viewing health reform solely as a technical process is a recipe for failure. Doing health reform better requires paying equal attention to all three dimensions: technical, ethical and political. This principle has significant implications for each of the eight steps of this manual, including the first step: answering the question of whether you really want to engage in health reform.

The decision to undertake health reform is not trivial for any entity (whether that be a nation, a state, a municipality or an organization, public or private). Health reform requires being willing and able to negotiate and compromise – with both allies and opponents – to achieve a viable health reform. Regardless of the scope of your health reform, the process requires significant resources of various kinds, not least budgetary commitment, political capital, human resources, and the time and attention of key people, often including high-level leaders. Furthermore, the viability of reform may be directly influenced by the political context – major reforms may not be possible in some periods or situations (although other types of reform could still be achieved).

Extensive reforms require more resources, as addressing bigger problems typically involves influencing multiple aspects of the system and confronting multiple challenges. Health reforms often end up requiring more resources than initially anticipated – due to unexpected events, controversies and obstacles – even when plans are made for the unexpected.

So how do you reach the decision to commence health reform? It is important to make a careful decision to start the health reform process, including reflection on all three aspects: the technical objectives of improved performance, the political risks and opportunities, and the ethical values of the society. Four key actions can help you make the decision:

Key actions in step one:

-
- Senior political leaders reflect on core values that shape social expectations of the health sector, especially the role of the market and state in their society, in consultation with a small circle of key advisors, allies and experts.

 - Identify ethical principles for health system performance (related to consequences, rights and community virtues) that justify or motivate the selection of certain problems as the basis for starting a reform process.

 - Examine the benefits and risks of engaging in health reform and the political opportunities to achieve reform, in order to decide whether to move forward.

 - Decide, in consultation with a small circle of key advisors, allies and experts, to start a health reform process.

Engage political leaders and articulate core values

The decision to engage in a major national health reform often involves the respective minister of health or senior national leader (for example, the president or prime minister). There are many examples of this in recent history, such as when Mexico's Minister of Health, Julio Frenk, initiated and led that country's health reform efforts in the early 2000s, producing the landmark (but ultimately short-lived) Seguro Popular (Gómez-Dantés, Reich & Garrido-Latorre, 2015; Reich & Campos, 2024). Another example is Türkiye's Minister of Health, Recep Akdağ, who led that nation's Health Transformation Programme efforts for a decade, from 2002 to 2012 (Akdağ, 2015). The United States of America serves as a case in which the highest ranked political leader, President Barack Obama, became deeply and personally involved in pushing for health reform, such that, when it was achieved in 2010, it was informally called Obamacare (Oberlander, 2020). India's experience is similar: in 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his administration became the main proponents of health reform. As Richard Horton, editor of the *Lancet*, wrote, "Modi is the first Indian Prime Minister to prioritize universal health coverage as part of his political platform" (Horton, 2018). While that effort is officially called Ayushman Bharat, it is popularly known as Modicare. In these – and many other – instances, the political leadership (of either the nation or the health sector) seized responsibility for pushing health reform. They took on the role of the key policy entrepreneur, someone willing "to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money" to promote a policy or reform (Kingdon, 1984: 191).

This does not mean that health reform must be driven by a high-ranking political leader. Cases exist where other factors precipitated health reform and other policy entrepreneurs drove the processes. For example, in Ghana in 2003, electoral competition between political parties drove the launch of its National Health Insurance Scheme (Novignon, Lanko & Arthur, 2021). In many places, public opinion about the cost, accessibility or quality of health care is a key factor in driving politicians to consider health reforms.

The high stakes of health reform mean that high-ranking political leaders often must be involved from early in the process to define the core values that underpin the high-level goals of a reform. These leaders also address the risks, shape who benefits, assess political timing and make final decisions. Advocacy for health reform may come from outside of government, such as from civil society, public health experts or private companies. Ultimately, however, major reforms must involve senior political leaders to achieve success.

Identify performance problems

This manual follows GHRR in arguing that the reform process starts with identifying some specific problems in health system performance. Decisions about which problems to focus a reform on require a systematic assessment of performance, based on available and newly collected data and thorough analysis – as described in step three. But advocates for reform and political leaders considering reform typically begin with a strong intuitive sense of the problem. At this early stage, intuitions about performance problems provide a starting point for deliberation, especially regarding the ethical dimensions of health system reform. Deciding on the problem to be addressed through reform requires deliberate considerations of ethics and social values.

Ethical theory and health system performance

The key point in this section is that understanding principles of moral philosophy can be helpful in making difficult decisions about health reform. Coming to agreement on the ethical and moral principles that underpin health reform goals helps policy-makers and policy analysts be more effective in their work (GHRR, p. 20). This manual agrees with GHRR (p. 40) that “judging health-sector performance requires ethical analysis”. Chapter 3 of GHRR focuses in detail on using ethical theory to judge health system performance.

GHRR explores three forms of moral philosophy: utilitarianism, which focuses on well-being and consequences; liberalism, which focuses on rights, both positive and negative; and communitarianism, which focuses on virtues embodied in communities. This manual will not repeat the details of that discussion here, except to note that a basic understanding of ethics provides the foundation for critically important discussions and decisions about which health inequities and problems are important to your society. There is an infinite set of questions that can only be answered if you have clarity about the underlying ethical values. For example: Should your reform focus on the health problems of rural or urban residents? On people with health insurance or those without? On people requiring treatments for infrequent but high-cost illnesses or on treatments for common low-cost illnesses? On vaccines for which illnesses and which populations? And myriad others.

Ethical theory also provides a foundation to define the roles of markets and the state in shaping the health sector in your society. For example: Should the state deliver services

at no cost to the population? Where should the market be allowed to sell services with limited government intervention? Which parts of the health sector should be regulated by the government? Where should both the state and the market provide similar services with different quality and cost to patients?

An example that demonstrates the important relationship between ethical principles and health reform priority-setting is from China, whose national approach to health reform has shifted multiple times since 1978, when it began to liberalize its economy (Yip & Hsiao, 2015). For the next two decades, China let markets offer health care with limited government intervention; however, this approach led to rising costs and low-quality health care. In the early 2000s, government priorities shifted to promoting equity and a so-called Socialist Harmonious Society. High-ranking leaders then initiated a major reform to introduce social health insurance, eventually covering more than 95% of the population. Subsequent reforms have since reintroduced a more pro-market approach to health resource allocation – even as the country continues to explore how to cope with increasing rates of noncommunicable diseases and expanding financial risk protection (Li et al., 2023).

This manual does not argue that all health reforms should take a particular ethical position. However, people who are considering a serious health reform journey should begin by clarifying ethical values regarding health system performance.

Step one, therefore, involves engaging political leaders and policy-makers in a process of ethical reflection before deciding to move forward with health reform. The process of reflection can help to identify ethical goals to serve as the foundation of the health reform, and to propose performance problems that go against the defined ethical principles (GHRR, Chapter 3; Roberts & Reich, 2002). Worksheet 1.1 presents an overview of the types of questions that can be used in deliberations about the ethical principles for health reform.

There is no single formula or strategy for ethical reflection. The process needs to be adapted for the society and culture, the leaders and advisors, and the experts on social values of each specific environment. Even without a dedicated process, key ethical principles for reforms may be found in party platforms, speeches by political leaders and government planning documents. However, some countries have appointed steering committees to collectively establish a set of explicit principles (these committees may also continue to monitor the reform). Members for these committees should be drawn from a range of social sectors and backgrounds, and it helps to have ethicists or other people with experience in applied ethical analysis to guide the discussions.

The identification of ethical principles and associated performance problems helps provide the justification for starting a health reform process. They will also shape the specific government interventions identified to improve performance. Revisiting your ethical principles and analysis periodically while moving through the reform process can help keep the effort focused on its core purpose.

Risk assessment for health reform

The process of ethical reflection may also help you identify potential risks of undertaking health reform. Similarly, you should also quickly review the other steps described in this manual to estimate the various resources (time, money, effort, political commitment, etc.) that the process will require. The potential benefits of a reform are important to identify, but you should also consider the potential risks of pushing for health reform. These, again, will vary depending on the context, as well as the focus, scope and timing of your proposed reform. Regardless of the details of your reform, there are three categories of risks to consider:

- 1) What are the risks of pushing for health reform?
- 2) What risks do you anticipate if the reform effort succeeds?
- 3) What risks do you anticipate if the reform effort fails?

A successful reform effort could trigger new social problems, while unsuccessful reform efforts risk wasting resources. These may be material resources (such as the money invested in the health reform effort) and less tangible resources (such as political power, social capital, authority and even your job).

Worksheet 1.2 provides a list of questions to guide you through an informal risk analysis. In this situation, and at this stage of thinking about health reform, risk analysis is not a scientific process – it is a rough assessment based on objective data and subjective judgements. Identifying potential risks and benefits allows you to assess whether you think the benefits will outweigh the risks, and thus whether to start the reform process. If you do decide to move forward, you can then include risk mitigation strategies to lessen the risks you have anticipated. You can also reevaluate your risk assessment periodically as the situation evolves.

Decide to start the reform process

Step one concludes with the decision: whether to start the reform process (or not). As previously noted, there are several related factors to consider. Is the problem identified for reform considered an issue that deserves government attention? Is a reform of the health system an effective way to address this problem? And can you secure sufficient support from leadership to start the reform process?

The commitment of a high-ranking political leader is especially critical in step one, because the leader will play essential roles, including: communicating the health reform plan and the reasons for reform; negotiating with key stakeholders both inside and outside the government at different steps in the reform process; and deciding how to address opposition to the reform as it arises. In some cases, this leader may become the public face – and name – of the reform.

In addition to ethical and risk analyses, consider reviewing all the steps described in this manual (using the Introductory worksheet). As you do this, develop a preliminary draft of

an anticipated process and timeline to achieve health reform. This will help you decide whether your reform is feasible, begin to tailor the steps in the manual to your particular context, and develop preliminary estimates of the different resources required at each step. This draft process is preliminary because it is inevitable that the process, timeline and resources will all change drastically along the way!

Summary

The first of the eight steps is to make the decision to pursue health reform. Health reform is complicated and difficult, so you should proceed only if you are ready for a sustained effort, open to making some compromises along the way and willing to risk failure.

The decision to undertake health reform should incorporate three sets of considerations: ethical, technical and political (this refrain is repeated in every step). It requires engaging with political leaders to secure their support, articulating core values and goals of the health system and the reform effort, and assessing the potential benefits, risks and opportunities for moving forward. You also need to begin identifying the resources (budget, human resources, an institutional home, and the support of stakeholders and leaders) that you will need.

Once you have decided, in consultation with a small circle of key stakeholders, to start a health reform journey, you can move on to step two: creating the Health Reform Team. This group will be responsible for constructing and implementing plans for the upcoming technical, ethical and political analyses and actions to improve performance problems.

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Step two:

Create a Health Reform Team

Designing, gaining approval for and then implementing health reform is a massive endeavour. Health reform must be a team effort. It thus requires assembling a group of people with diverse skills and connections to focus on a single mission: pushing your health reform forward. GHRR calls this group the change team, while this manual refers to it as the Health Reform Team.

GHRR (pp. 140–41) states: “The change team requires, not only technical capacity for policy design, but also the political capacity to mobilize relevant groups and individuals”. The size and nature of your team will depend on the scope of the reform you are proposing. Furthermore, different steps in the health reform process require different kinds of skills and expertise, so the Health Reform Team may need to add new members periodically, and to spin off teams to focus on certain key tasks (such as assessment in step three or implementation in step seven).

The following steps will guide you to build your core Health Reform Team:

Key actions in step two:

-
- Using the policy cycle, sketch out a preliminary health reform process.

 - Using your policy cycle sketch, identify the key skills and areas of expertise you need on the Health Reform Team for each step.

 - Identify and recruit a small group of people with the necessary skills and expertise to start as the core group of your Health Reform Team.

 - Position and provide resources to the team.

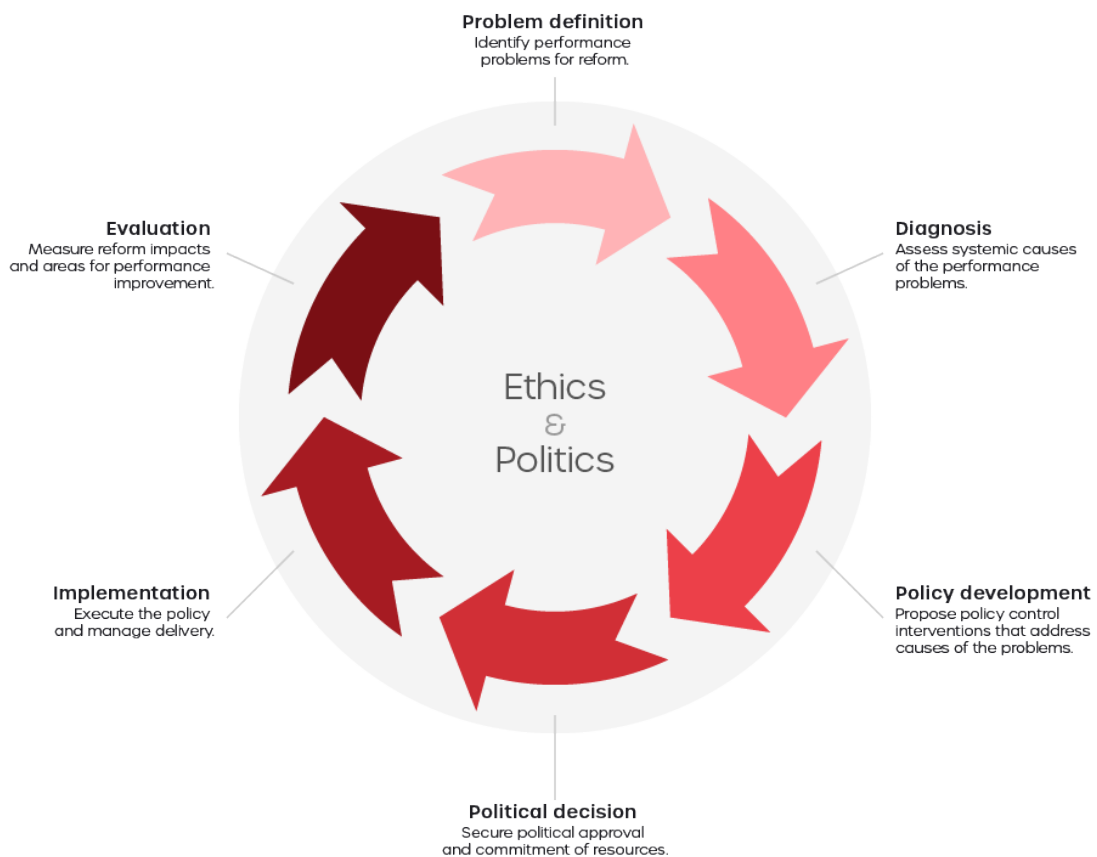
 - Support the team to develop a shared mission, effective methods of communication and collaboration, and strategies to manage the rest of the steps in the health reform process.

 - Support the team to create technical and advisory groups, network with partners and stakeholders, and engage consultants to fill gaps and bolster support for the proposed health reform.

Create a team appropriate for the policy cycle stage

To select members for your Health Reform Team, you must understand the activities they need to undertake. That requires a baseline understanding of what is required at different stages of the policy cycle. The policy cycle is a model for how public policy is developed, adopted and implemented. The policy cycle is also the conceptual basis for the eight practical steps of this manual. Fig. 2 shows the stages of the policy cycle: problem definition, diagnosis, policy development, political decision, implementation and evaluation.

Fig. 2. The policy cycle



To move your proposed reform through the policy cycle, you need people on your Health Reform Team with expertise relevant to each step. You may decide to start with a small team of trusted experts and advisors (for example, with expertise in the policy process and in health system assessment) and then gradually expand the team as you move the reform process forward.

Worksheet 2.1 provides an outline of the reform process that you can fill in as you identify the skills and expertise you need on your Health Reform Team. The worksheet is intended to generate a sketch, not a definitive picture, as your strategies will change and expand as the reform effort progresses. However, this initial exercise can help you consider the kinds of skills, expertise and networks you will need. As you review the other seven steps, use the worksheet to note necessary tasks and functions – and to explore what kinds of team members would fulfil those needs.

Build a team with skills, experience and commitment

The key questions in step two are: Which are the most important skills to have represented on the Health Reform Team at the start of your health reform journey? Who is appropriate and available from your own organization? And which skills do you need to obtain externally, from consultants or partners within and from outside the health sector?

It is important to have a multidisciplinary Health Reform Team, but it also works best when the group remains small enough to have excellent internal communication and collaboration. That is, the group needs to work as a team. Use the worksheet to highlight skills that you need on the Health Reform Team so you can focus on recruiting people who match those requirements.

In addition to their professional backgrounds, it is also important to consider the networks and professional connections of potential Health Reform Team members. That is: do members of your Health Reform Team have effective access to the experts you need as advisors and to the decision-makers whose support the reform needs? If your reform focuses on particular subpopulations, are there representatives from, or people with experience working with, those groups on the Health Reform Team?

The types of expertise you select for your team will vary depending on your intended reform, local context and which stage you are at in the policy cycle. In general terms, you need people with the following sets of skills:

- **Understanding the technical requirements of the proposed reform.** This team member (or members) will be responsible for determining how the proposed policy reforms would lead to the intended outcomes. This person may be directly involved in designing the details of the reform or they may delegate to technical working groups that this person coordinates. However, the technical expert(s) must be able to lead the process of evaluating all proposed components of the reform to consider whether these would achieve the intended effects.

People with this type of expertise may be found working as health policy professors, researchers at think tanks, or analysts working in health care delivery systems, in health care companies and in government health agencies.

- **Assessing the political landscape and building support for the reform.** As is discussed in depth in step six, if you wait until all the technical details are worked out before you consider the political landscape, your health reform is likely to fail. Most successful health reforms efforts begin negotiating with key stakeholders early on to ensure that their perspectives are understood and to build support. These stakeholders may include, for example, representatives of the legislature, subnational governments, medical and health professional associations, the pharmaceutical industry, labour unions, informal health providers, patient groups and others. The political expert(s) should be involved from the outset to guide the team on assessing political feasibility and on proactively engaging and negotiating with stakeholders for their input and support.

People with this type of expertise typically include the staff of successful politicians, political scientists and analysts, journalists who cover politics, lobbyists and the staff of advocacy organizations.

- **Communicating effectively about complex topics.** Health reform is complicated, which sometimes makes it difficult or overwhelming for non-experts. And inherently, health reform aims to change the status quo – this can make it hard or even daunting to imagine, especially if it is viewed as challenging strongly held beliefs. It is therefore important to consider from the beginning how you will promote and communicate about your proposed reform. You should have communications/public relations expertise on the Health Reform Team to guide you on how to present your work to key stakeholders and to the wider public. The communications expert(s) can also coordinate communications consultants and work with supportive stakeholder groups to determine the types of messages they find compelling and useful.

People with relevant expertise in policy communication may be working for media outlets, in corporate public relations, in politics or in education.

- **Leading and coordinating the Health Reform Team.** Every team needs a leader – your Health Reform Team leader may or may not be you. In many cases, the person who initially comes up with an idea for health reform may have significant technical expertise or a vision for a more equitable and just society. However, they may not have the strategic, managerial and practical problem-solving skills (much less the interest) to lead the team.

The Health Reform Team leader needs to be able to keep big-picture goals in mind, guide the creation of a strategy to achieve the goals, and inspire and manage the team to implement that strategy. It is also critical that the team leader has a strong and trusting relationship with a political leader who can champion the health reform effort.

People with these skills and relationships may include political strategists, chiefs of staff, chief executive officers and others with high-level management experience.

The people selected for the Health Reform Team will come from a variety of professional and political backgrounds. To construct a true team from this disparate group requires all members to commit to a shared belief in the importance of getting the reform done.

Create a structure, budget and office for the Health Reform Team

In addition to aligning the team through a shared vision, the group needs a structure that enables members to do their work. GHRR (p. 141) notes: “the composition, location, incentives and power of the change team can make a critical difference in the changes for successful health-sector reform”.

Deciding where the team literally sits is a key decision. The closer you can locate the team in relation to key decision-makers, the more visible the health reform can be throughout the process of developing it. In step five you will determine which key

decision-makers you are targeting; this is done in part to strategically situate your team. If you need legislative approval, who are the key legislators you can work with? If you need executive approval, can the team sit within the president's or the prime minister's office? However, remember that it may make it difficult to operate efficiently if the team is constantly observed or micro-managed. Furthermore, you may need to find neutral locations for certain meetings to secure the participation of certain stakeholders. Finding the right balance is important.

You also need to ensure that the team gets the budgetary, administrative and material resources needed. This necessitates thinking about how long the health reform effort will take, what it will cost to pay the salaries of the Health Reform Team, what activity costs you can anticipate, whether you need to hire consultants and what hiring mechanisms you can use, and, in general, where funding can be found for all of these costs.

Placing the team in a well-funded, well-run and prominent office within a ministry or administrative department can be helpful. While this might be in the health ministry, it also might not. In some cases, it may be more strategic and more effective to place the Health Reform Team within, for example, the finance ministry or the vice president's office, depending on whose support you need and can secure. In other situations, it may be better to locate the Health Reform Team outside of an existing bureaucratic agency to allow more independence and creativity.

Bring in other expertise as needed

As mentioned, while you want a robust team, you also want to keep it lean in order to be both focused and manageable. Consultants and consulting companies can be hired to complete specific tasks as needed. Further, there are various structures you can use to widen the range of expertise available to the Health Reform Team, including:

- **Advisory groups:** Advisory groups generally comprise senior experts who meet periodically to review and provide high-level guidance on your proposed strategies. You may wish to create, for example, a political advisory group, a communications and outreach advisory group and a policy advisory group that can advise the relevant team members.
- **Technical working groups:** Technical working groups typically include people with deep technical expertise who meet regularly to shape details in one area of the proposed reform. They are most likely to work directly with your team's technical lead.
- **Stakeholder groups:** As you identify the range of stakeholders who will be affected by your proposed changes (see steps six and seven), create platforms to invite their input on relevant elements of the reform. In particular, consider how to engage representatives from specific subpopulations that the reform especially aims to reach, or those who would be affected by the reform disproportionately. Proactively engaging with stakeholders will both enhance the analysis your team can conduct and help build wider support for the reform.

Summary

Creating, locating, motivating and protecting a strong Health Reform Team is a critically important part of successful health reform efforts. GHRR (p. 141) describes examples of change teams in three Latin American countries, leading to the conclusion that “the creation of a change team thus represented a significant political strategy in itself”. An important foundation for a successful reform is: finding the right people for your Health Reform Team; building the team’s capacity, coherence and focus; and providing them with the resources to get their work done.

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Selected further reading

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Step three:

Assess health system performance and define performance problems

Step three involves a systematic assessment of the health system in order to identify problems that will be addressed through reform. This requires measuring various dimensions of health system performance and then using the findings – as well as the ethical principles previously defined – to help you select specific performance problems for deeper examination and reform interventions. The primary objectives of step three are to identify: (1) the areas in which your health system is performing well, and (2) those in which it is performing poorly. This information allows you to select which areas your reform will focus on; it also establishes a baseline for monitoring and evaluating changes over time (as described later in step eight). Step three has four key actions:

Key actions in step three:

-
- Decide what to assess, including the kinds of performance problems to assess (based on the intermediate and final performance objectives), and the types of analysis and analytic skills required.

 - Decide who will undertake the assessment, considering external analysts outside of government and people on the Health Reform Team and in government agencies.

 - Design the assessment, including the scope, the time and resources required, existing data sources and new data to be collected, with deadlines for deliverables.

 - Analyse both primary and secondary data to generate a comprehensive assessment and identify major problems in need of diagnosis.

Decide what to assess

The first action in step three is deciding which aspects of health system performance to assess. This requires a clear understanding of how to define and measure the performance of a health system.

What is a health system? As noted in the Introduction, this manual views the health system as a means to achieve certain population-level ends. In this model, the means covers five policy controls (also called control knobs or policy levers) that are commonly available to policy-makers: financing, payment, organization, regulation and persuasion. The ends are represented by the three final outcomes and the three intermediate outcomes for a health system. The final performance objectives are: (1) health status, (2) financial risk protection and (3) public satisfaction with the health system (GHRR, Chapter 5). The three intermediate outcomes (which can be influenced by the policy

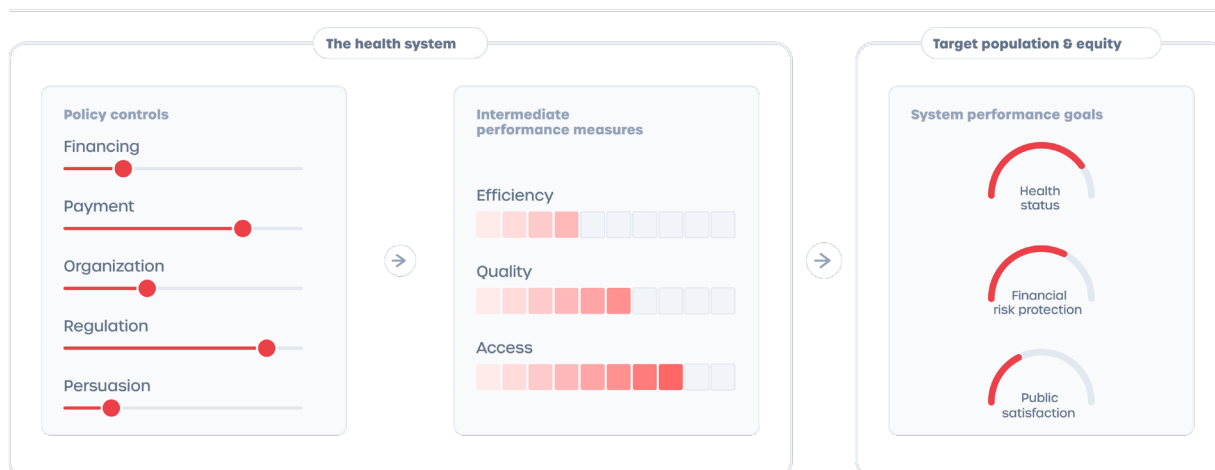
controls) are: (4) access to health services, (5) quality of care and (6) efficiency in the health system (GHRR, Chapter 6). How well a health system performs is assessed by how well it achieves these six objectives. These achievements, according to this model, should be assessed in two ways: the level of achievement, and how equitably the benefits achieved are distributed across the target populations. (There are, of course, other models of health systems and health system performance – these are not addressed in this manual.)

Fig. 3 shows our model of health system performance. It illustrates that the five policy controls affect intermediate performance measures, which, in turn, determine the achievement of the three final performance outcomes. Annex 2 presents detailed definitions of these performance outcomes and outlines common ways to measure and interpret each one.

Fig. 3. Health system policy controls, intermediate and final performance measures

Health system control panel

Adjusting policy controls affects intermediate performance, resulting in system performance changes for the target population and for equity.



Note: Levels are illustrative and not based on actual measurements.

What you choose to assess and how you conduct the assessments are ultimately judgement calls. These may be determined by several factors, including: how much time is available to generate and analyse evidence, the timelines of key decision-making processes, the priorities of supportive political leaders and key stakeholders, the available analytical capacity and the budget. The spectrum of assessments ranges from simple to comprehensive (such as the India Health Systems Research Project's assessment of the health system in the state of Odisha (Yip et al., 2022)). A comprehensive assessment typically involves a sophisticated design, primary data collection and expert analyses – and therefore it requires significant time and budget. A simple assessment uses existing data and examines fewer performance measures, and it is thus less resource-intensive. It may produce a less detailed, less reliable or narrower assessment. Most assessments fall somewhere between these extremes.

Deciding what you will assess has important implications, as the assessment later influences the scope and timeline of the health reform process. It is therefore a topic

for discussion with senior political leaders, in addition to within the Health Reform Team. Assessment decisions shape (and reflect) the overall directions of the health reform process. Deciding what to assess is not a simple technical decision; like every step in the health reform process, it has political and ethical implications.

Decide who will conduct the assessment

Finding the right group to undertake the assessment depends on two key factors: 1) what is being assessed, and 2) what resources are available for the assessment. Regardless of the scope of the assessment, some governments prefer to hire external assessors, such as consulting agencies or academic experts, who are often selected through a competitive bidding process. Conducting a comprehensive assessment of all six performance outcomes typically requires hiring an external group of experienced analysts and a substantial budget. It can also involve using experts from outside the country. Commissioning a comprehensive assessment, with primary data collection, of the health system performance in a nation (or a state in a large country) can easily cost US\$ 1 million or more, involve dozens of analysts, and require two or more years for data collection, analysis and report development.

The other option is to use an internal assessment group, such as one located within a government agency or a government-related research group. This option has different risks and benefits. It may cost less. However, the quality of the assessment may be compromised if the group does not have the right expertise or experience. In this instance, a joint internal/external group may build assessment capacity. Using an internal group can also constrain the objectivity of the assessment if the analysts are subject to pressure from government officials seeking to influence the results.

The ideal health system assessment team has people with extensive experience in assessing system performance. Typically, the team includes members with expertise in health system analysis, quantitative research methods (for designing and analysing household surveys, claims data, medical records and other large data sets) and qualitative research methods (for designing and analysing key informant interviews, focus group discussions and other qualitative datasets). The assessment group can also include members of the Health Reform Team, as happened in Thailand's health reform for universal health coverage in 2002 (personal communication, Walaiporn Patcharanarumol, August 2024).

The Health Reform Team should work closely with the assessment group for several reasons: to facilitate access to data sources (for example, administrative data or policy guidelines); to provide necessary financial resources; to offer overall guidance and insight into the local context; and to ensure that the assessment findings are understood fully by the wider Health Reform Team. The external assessment group can provide a report and recommendations, but they do not usually have responsibility for implementing the recommendations. Close collaboration and communication between the assessment group and the Health Reform Team can ensure that the health system assessment aligns with the ethical, political and economic priorities of the overall reform effort.

Design the assessment

The design of the performance assessment must be informed, first and foremost, by the decision about what to assess – such as which performance outcomes are the focus of the assessment. Defining the key questions for the assessment determines the appropriate methodologies to use, the relevant data sources, and the time and resources required. A well-designed assessment has data collection tools linked to each performance outcome. Thus, a comprehensive assessment will likely require a combination of existing and new data sets, and both quantitative and qualitative methodologies; a simple assessment needs less data and fewer resources.

Identify and analyse existing data sources

Regardless of the assessment's scope, the first activity (for either the Health Reform Team or the assessment group) is to carry out a landscape analysis of available information and secondary data about the different performance outcomes. By identifying existing data sources, you develop a sense about the extent to which data exist that can inform the assessment, you discover critical data gaps and you identify questions that require the collection of new data.

Analyses of these secondary data are an important part of the assessment's design. Health systems generate reams of statistics from different sources, including management information systems; insurance claims systems; national-, state- and district-level health surveys; and national and state health accounts, to name a few. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and WHO also collect significant volumes of national health data (some common data sets and their interpretations are presented in Annex 2 by performance outcome). Many nongovernmental organizations collect relevant data (often at the community level) that can be used in looking at specific vulnerable populations. The assessment team should determine which data sets are relevant for assessing the selected performance outcomes. Carefully collating and analysing secondary data can go a long way towards generating a broad assessment of the health system on several performance outcomes. Even if secondary data are not sufficient for a full assessment, they can be used to begin the analysis, to identify important data gaps and to inform decisions on new data collection.

Deciding how much to rely on secondary data depends on the availability and quality of the data. Most high-income countries and some middle-income countries, like Brazil and Malaysia, have extensive and robust data sets that could allow health system assessments, covering almost all six performance outcomes. However, many low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) – and, in particular, most low-income countries – have limited or irregular secondary data. Countries affected by conflict may face particular challenges if routine data collection has been interrupted or if data repositories have been destroyed.

Not all performance outcomes have equally complete and robust data. Most countries can effectively assess their population's health status and access to care with secondary data from vital registrations and Demographic and Health Surveys. Many countries also have some data on public satisfaction and financial risk protection, or they can add a few questions on these topics to existing national- or state-level surveys. For the quality outcome, however, most countries will likely need to design new assessments, as many health systems do not collect clinical effectiveness or patient safety data through national surveys or health information systems.

Identify data gaps and collect new data

Through a landscape analysis of data sources and an analysis of secondary data, the Health Reform Team will likely discover several important data gaps. You may then choose to undertake (or commission) new research to allow for a more complete assessment of the health system or to develop a nuanced understanding of causes underlying poor performance (more on this in step four, on diagnosis).

Designing new research starts with defining research questions and selecting appropriate methods to answer them. Then the assessment group can design data collection instruments. Depending on what data you are seeking, these instruments may include survey questionnaires, clinical vignettes or interview guides. It is easiest to utilize instruments and indices that have been previously validated and used. However, if there are research areas without comparable indices, the assessment group might have to create new instruments and go through the process of validating them locally. Again, Annex 2 lists some existing instruments and data sets that have been used globally to measure health system outcomes.

When primary data collection is required, this function is usually outsourced, for two reasons. First, significant expertise in designing data collection instruments and collecting data is necessary to ensure quality. Second, using a third party for data collection helps maintain independence and objectivity. The necessary skills for data collection teams, and the costs involved in data collection, vary depending on the type of data and the size of the dataset. For example, a nationally representative household survey will need a large team; in some countries, you will need multiple teams fluent in different local languages. Conducting chart reviews or standardized patient interviews to assess quality, on the other hand, needs data collectors with clinical training.

Alternatively, the Health Reform Team may decide to conduct their own data collection and analysis. This decision to collect and analyse primary data on health system performance will depend on having adequate technical expertise, financial resources and time. Many low-income countries do not have the conditions necessary to collect and analyse primary data using their own internal resources. In addition, they may decide to hire a specialized data-collection organization outside of government in order to assure independence and objectivity (as noted above). On the other hand, the Health Reform Team (and its government authorities) may decide to use this opportunity to

improve the government's data collection and analysis capabilities, as an investment over the long term. This important decision depends on the particular context, especially the level of available resources and technical capacity.

Here again, the Health Reform Team inevitably needs to consider available funds and timelines. An assessment that uses secondary data is both faster and far less expensive than one that requires collecting new data. New research could cost anywhere between a few thousand US dollars to upwards of a million US dollars, depending upon the scope and research questions. For example, a hospital chart review to assess clinical effectiveness may be fairly quick and inexpensive, especially compared to a large household survey to assess financial risk protection or public satisfaction. Time is another important consideration. If you are trying to link your health reform effort with election or budget cycles, there may not be time for extensive primary research. In short, the Health Reform Team will decide the assessment design based on these contextual realities and the proportions of secondary and primary research required.

A comprehensive health system assessment with both secondary data analysis and extensive primary data collection was undertaken in the Indian state of Odisha by the Harvard India Health Systems Reform Project (see Table 1 for an overview and Yip et al. (2022) for more detail). Health system assessments in Malaysia and Türkiye were conducted primarily using secondary data, with only limited new data required (Atun et al., 2016; Johansen & Guisset, 2012).

Thus, health system assessment does not always require resource-intensive collection of new data. While desirable if time and resources permit, a comprehensive assessment with extensive primary research is not necessarily a prerequisite for health reform. An assessment based on secondary data analysis, or an assessment of some but not all of the performance outcomes, may be sufficient, depending on your specific objectives for improving health system performance.

Once the assessment team has generated the relevant statistics and performance measures, they should work with the Health Reform Team to identify and compare the performance of your health system to suitable benchmarks.

Table 1. Overview of the Odisha health system assessment

Primary data collected: 10 surveys including: 30 654 individuals (7657 households); 1485 patients; 553 public- and private-sector health facilities and 1035 private pharmacies; 1124 providers (794 at facilities, 685 in solo practice).

Secondary data used: the National Sample Survey (NSS), National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and Sample Registration System (SRS).

Category	Outcome	Key findings: positive (+ve) and negative (-ve)
Ultimate	Health status	+ve: Notable declines in recent years in infant mortality, maternal mortality, malaria -ve: Compared to national averages, high infant and maternal mortality -ve: High rates of infectious disease mortality -ve: Increasing burden of noncommunicable diseases
	Financial risk protection	-ve: 24% of households incur catastrophic health expenditures (CHE) (most due to out-of-pocket expenditures (OOPE) for medicines at private pharmacies) -ve: Only 14% of households reported having health insurance coverage
	Public satisfaction	+ve: 57% of respondents were very confident about receiving treatment -ve: 89% of respondents expressed the need for either major changes or a complete overhaul of the health system
Intermediate	Access	+ve: 94% of households lived within 30 minutes of a public health facility +ve: Nearly 90% of people who were ill within the past two weeks sought care -ve: Fewer than 50% of essential medicines were available at subcentres, primary health centres and private pharmacies
	Quality	-ve: Only 58% of providers made correct diagnoses and 2.2% prescribed correct treatments without additional unnecessary medicines -ve: Significant problems with patient safety culture -ve: Lack of patient-centredness, especially for vulnerable population subgroups
	Efficiency	-ve: Latent capacity in public-sector facilities -ve: Unfilled positions in some cadres of health worker -ve: Suboptimal mix of providers in public facilities

Source: Based on Yip et al. (2022).

Identify benchmarks for comparison

You need to compare the findings on your system's performance metrics with benchmarks in order to interpret whether performance on a particular outcome is good, average or poor (see GHRR, Chapter 6, p. 123). For example, simply stating that "a country's infant mortality rate is 20 per 1000 live births" or that "out-of-pocket expenses constitute 30% of the country's total health expenses" does not give you a sense of what the findings mean in terms of performance level.

Thus, statistics must be compared against standard benchmarks or measures. Benchmarks can be determined using national averages, statistics from other states/cities/regions within the same country, or from other similar countries. For example, countries commonly compare their health status indicators (such as mortality rates and life expectancy) against other countries with similar levels of economic development. For clinical effectiveness measures, clinical guidelines and standard treatment protocols are generally used as the benchmarks, as they are usually highly standardized and accepted across countries. Benchmarks for other outcomes, such as public satisfaction and patient satisfaction, are less standardized.

If improving equity among groups within your population is one of the goals of your health reform, you may choose to use internal benchmarks. Consider a health reform intended to reduce infant mortality: if the national infant mortality rate is 20 per 1000 live births, but the rate is 3 per 1000 among the wealthiest 10% of the population, you may choose to use the latter figure as the benchmark against which you compare the overall performance of your reform.

As part of data analysis, the assessment group needs to identify (and provide justification for the selection of) appropriate benchmarks for comparison. Additional details are provided in Annex 2 and GHRR (Chapter 6) discusses different benchmarking strategies..

Analyse the data to prepare for step four: diagnosis

The final part of step three is **analysing the data** collected using appropriate quantitative and qualitative analytical approaches. This prepares you for moving on to the next step, diagnosis.

Summary

In step three, the Health Reform Team leads a health system assessment to understand how well or poorly their health system performs on its intermediate and final performance goals. This will help you to prioritize which performance goals to focus on for reform. The assessment lays the foundation for step four – diagnosis – by identifying performance problems that need further examination. It also lays the foundation for step eight – evaluation – by establishing baselines and identifying what should be monitored and evaluated going forward.

Data analysis and health system assessment should not be overlooked or underestimated. In practice, some health reform efforts have been carried out without rigorous assessments or even baseline data. This may seem like an easier path (especially when the reform effort faces time constraints or when everyone just seems to know what the problems are). The reform process may even proceed smoothly. However, these efforts typically fail to generate meaningful improvements in the final performance outcomes of health systems. Without first understanding the status quo (by conducting the assessments in step three) and then investigating the root causes of the problems identified (which is the focus of step four), you cannot confidently select appropriate reform options.

The assessment of health system performance is a foundational step in health reform. While no assessment will be perfect, assessment also does not need to be a one-time activity. The Health Reform Team may decide to undertake assessments of different performance outcomes at different points in time. You may also decide to vary the scope and depth of assessments based on contextual factors, such as the availability of resources, current political priorities, policy timelines and windows of opportunity for change. All assessments can serve as baselines for monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of the reform, as discussed in step eight.

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Step four:

Diagnose the causes of performance problems

The primary objective of step four is diagnosis: examining the possible causes of specific performance problems in the health system and tracing these causes to one or more of the five policy areas represented by the control knobs – namely, the aspects of the health sector that can be changed by public policy (see Fig. 3).

Just as a doctor diagnoses a disease based on symptoms presented by a patient, the Health Reform Team seeks to diagnose the underlying cause(s) of the performance problem(s) found through the health system assessment. And just as the doctor uses the diagnosis of a disease to determine an appropriate course of treatment, the findings from the diagnostic process in step four form the basis for the design of appropriate reforms based on the policy control knobs. Focusing on the policy areas represented by the control knobs will help you avoid a common mistake made in this step: tracing the cause of poor performance to determinants or factors that are beyond the influence or control of policy-makers.

In this step, the Health Reform Team takes five key actions:

Key actions in step four:

-
- Decide which performance problems to diagnose, using the assessment(s) from step three as well as the priorities defined by the Health Reform Team and political leadership.

 - Decide who will undertake the diagnosis, considering both external analysts outside of government and internal analysts (on the Health Reform Team and in government agencies), and the time and resources required.

 - Using a systems approach, describe the structure and functioning of the current health care system that is challenged by the selected performance problems.

 - Using a systems approach, and primary and secondary data, construct a diagnostic tree to reveal the root causes of the performance problems.

 - Link the root causes to the policy control knobs (and map linkages among the underlying causes) to identify areas for intervention in preparation for selecting reform options.

Decide what to diagnose

The first action in this step is to decide which performance problems to examine in your diagnostic analysis. The health system performance assessment conducted in step three typically uncovers many performance problems in the health system. From that set of identified problems, the Health Reform Team now has to prioritize and select specific problems for deeper diagnosis.

As you make this selection, the Health Reform Team should take several factors into account, including your reflections on – among other aspects – ethical principles, current

political and economic priorities, and the opportunities, sociocultural norms and current public health emergencies within your health system.

The Odisha Health System Assessment in India (Table 1) found multiple performance problems (Yip et al., 2022). Regarding the system's final outcomes, the assessment concluded that health status had improved, but chronic diseases were on the rise, that financial risk protection was poor, and that public satisfaction with the health system was low among vulnerable population groups. On the intermediate outcomes, notable achievements were found in access to care, but quality of care and efficiency were problematic. Significant equity issues existed for both final and intermediate measures.

So how do you decide which of the many challenges you have identified you will focus on for diagnosis?

Start from ethical principles. If Odisha's political leaders indicate that equity and distributive justice are their key ethical priorities, the Health Reform Team might begin by diagnosing the reasons for inequities among socioeconomically disadvantaged groups in public satisfaction and access to care. On the other hand, given that the state government has already invested in establishing a flagship health insurance programme, the Health Reform Team might instead prioritize analysing the causes behind the low achievement in financial risk protection. Yet another possibility is that Odisha's government might see quality of care as the most critical performance problem, and thus the Health Reform Team might decide to make clinical effectiveness the top priority for diagnosis.

Identify available resources. Diagnosis requires significant time and effort to identify the underlying causes of performance problems. Thus, the selection of which performance problem to focus on has important implications because it affects the scope of reform, the budget required, the timeline and the necessary capacity of the Health Reform Team. The Health Reform Team must have direct and honest discussions with high-level political leaders, as this decision will shape (and reflect) the overall strategic direction of the health reform process and the kinds of improvements in health system performance to target. These discussions may need to take place informally, in order to explore fully the ramifications and implications of the choice.

Once again, a decision in the health reform process – in this instance, deciding what to diagnose – is not a simple technical choice. As with previous decisions, the Health Reform Team must consider the overall political and ethical objectives of the health reform process, as well as technical feasibility.

Plan a diagnostic process

Once you have decided on the performance problem(s) to focus on, you can plan out a diagnostic process – keeping in mind that the primary goal of diagnosis is to trace the determinants of poor performances to root causes in the five policy control areas. This step requires the Health Reform Team to develop and incorporate a clear and

shared understanding of the policy control knobs, as these will be used, together with the performance assessment results from step three, to identify underlying causes of poor performances. Diagnosing the causes of performance problems and identifying the relevant policy control knobs, in turn, form the basis of step five, devising the health reform package. The feasibility of various reform options will be constrained by how the health system functions.

Decide who will conduct the diagnosis

Generating a good diagnosis is challenging. Therefore, it is important to engage analysts and experts with qualifications and prior experience in health system analysis (again, with emphasis on system). They should be familiar with key concepts, relevant theories and methods, and the empirical evidence that links the five control knobs with health system performance.

In addition to system-level experts, you also need people with subject-matter and local expertise on the selected performance problem(s). For example, analysts trained in health economics, actuarial science and public finance can assist with the diagnosis of financial risk protection problems; medical clinicians with experience in quality improvement can support the diagnosis of quality-of-care problems; and epidemiologists can focus on the diagnosis of health status problems.

As with the assessment process in step three, finding the right mix of people to undertake diagnosis is critically important. The mix is determined by what you seek to diagnose and the resources available for the diagnostic process. Just as a doctor may need multiple pathology and imaging tests conducted by specialists to make a diagnosis, the Health Reform Team may need multiple analyses and expert inputs. And again, budgets, timelines and hiring rules are key considerations as you determine whether to use an internal group (located within a government agency or research group) or to hire an external expert group.

It is advisable for some core members of the assessment group involved in step three to continue on as members of the diagnostic team in step four. This will ensure familiarity with the assessment findings and continuity when thinking through the diagnostic questions.

Finally, as in step three, the Health Reform Team needs to work closely with the diagnostic group. Collaboration and communication with the Health Reform Team can help to align the diagnosis process with the ethical, political and economic priorities of the overall reform effort, as well as with the timeline.

Describe the existing health care system

The policy control knobs linked to health system performance (see Fig. 3) are each discussed in detail in a separate chapter in GHRR. The five policy control knobs are:

1. **Financing:** how money is raised, how risks are pooled and how funds are allocated – and how these processes affect both performance and equity in the health system (GHRR, Chapter 8).
2. **Payment:** which organizations and individuals in the health system are paid, how and how much they are paid, and the incentives created by those payments (GHRR, Chapter 9).
3. **Organization:** how activities in the health system are divided among public and private entities, the degree of reliance on market competition, and the distribution of functions among centralized and decentralized agencies, clinics and hospitals, as well as internal organizational management issues (GHRR, Chapter 10).
4. **Regulation:** government efforts to alter behaviour in the private and the public sectors by imposing rules that are backed by sanctions (GHRR, Chapter 11).
5. **Persuasion:** efforts to convince health system actors (doctors, patients, policy-makers, etc.) to change their behaviours through education, social and behaviour change interventions and by aligning incentives (GHRR, Chapter 12).

Describing the health care system requires collecting information about the current state of each policy control knob. This may be more or less difficult to do depending on how familiar the Health Reform Team is with the existing system, and how well it is documented. Worksheet 4.1 presents a table of key types of information to gather for each control knob, as well as likely sources of information and the common connections to health system performance.

Construct a diagnostic tree for each performance problem selected

Once the Health Reform Team has an accurate description of the health system, you can begin an analysis to reveal the root causes of a selected problem. One option is to use a diagnostic tree to systematically map different branches of the various causes that contribute to your selected performance problem. Starting with the performance problem, and then working backwards to seek underlying causes, leads you in the direction of potential solutions.

A common pitfall in diagnosis is confusing the symptoms with the causes of a problem. One way to avoid such confusion is to ask why five times, which enables you to work your way from a problem to its causes. Repeatedly asking why pushes you to discover causes that lie behind and beneath the obvious symptoms (Serrat, 2009; American Society for Quality, n.d.).

Answering each why is not a simple process, however. Answers should be based on well-defined theory, analytical logic and, when possible, on evidence, data and prior studies. The relevant theories, analytical logic and data for diagnostic analysis will be determined by the performance problems being examined and the probable underlying causes of poor performance. Depending on the problem under examination and the

specific situation, the Health Reform Team may decide to undertake (or commission) additional studies to further explore the causes of some performance problems. Getting a good grasp on the probable causes of critical problems is important, because it shapes decisions about what to do to improve performance.

Returning to the example of the Odisha Health System Assessment, consider a diagnostic process of the causes of the problem of low financial risk protection, as indicated by the high OOPE documented during the performance assessment (Haakenstad et al., 2022). During the assessment, it was determined that the majority of OOPE is spent on medicines. Fig. 4 and Fig. 5 provide two diagnostic trees that result from asking why multiple times. They show that the problem of high OOPE has several levels of causes (and these two diagnostic trees are only indicative – there are other possible causes, and other diagnostic trees, that the Health Reform Team could consider).

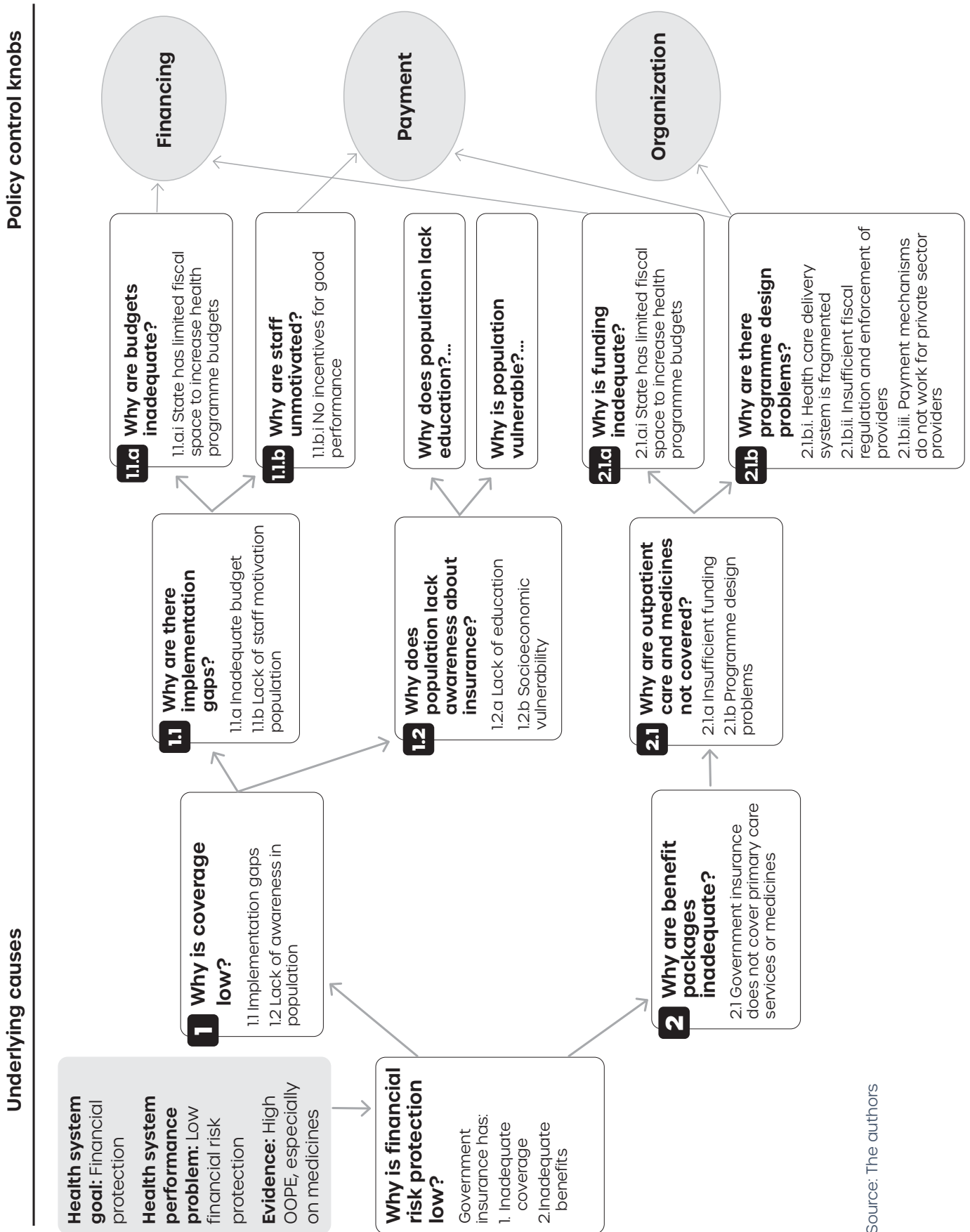
These illustrative diagnostic trees trace two possible causes of low protection from health care-related financial risk: Fig. 4 addresses inadequate insurance coverage and Fig. 5 addresses high OOPE on outpatient care in the public and private sectors. Here, it is useful to repeatedly ask why a particular problem exists in order to work back through the chain of causality, using theories, logic, experiences from other contexts and local data to identify the answers at each branching point of the diagnostic tree. Continue asking why until you have reached one of the five policy control knobs – financing, organization, payment, regulation or persuasion – as a possible root cause for the performance problem.

It is essential to continue asking why until you reach the policy control knobs because they represent possible ways of addressing the performance problem through health reform interventions. When you examine Fig. 4 and Fig. 5, you will notice that it is only after the fourth or fifth branch of asking why that causes related to the policy control knobs are identified. You will also notice two other things: first, we may arrive at the same control knob from different branches. This is a reminder that the control knobs cover a large number of interventions, and that they influence each other as well as affect performance. Second, some causes come from outside the health sector and cannot be directly influenced by a control knob. With causes identified, it is now possible to move to step five to identify possible health reform interventions, based on the five policy areas, to address the performance problem.

Apply a systems approach

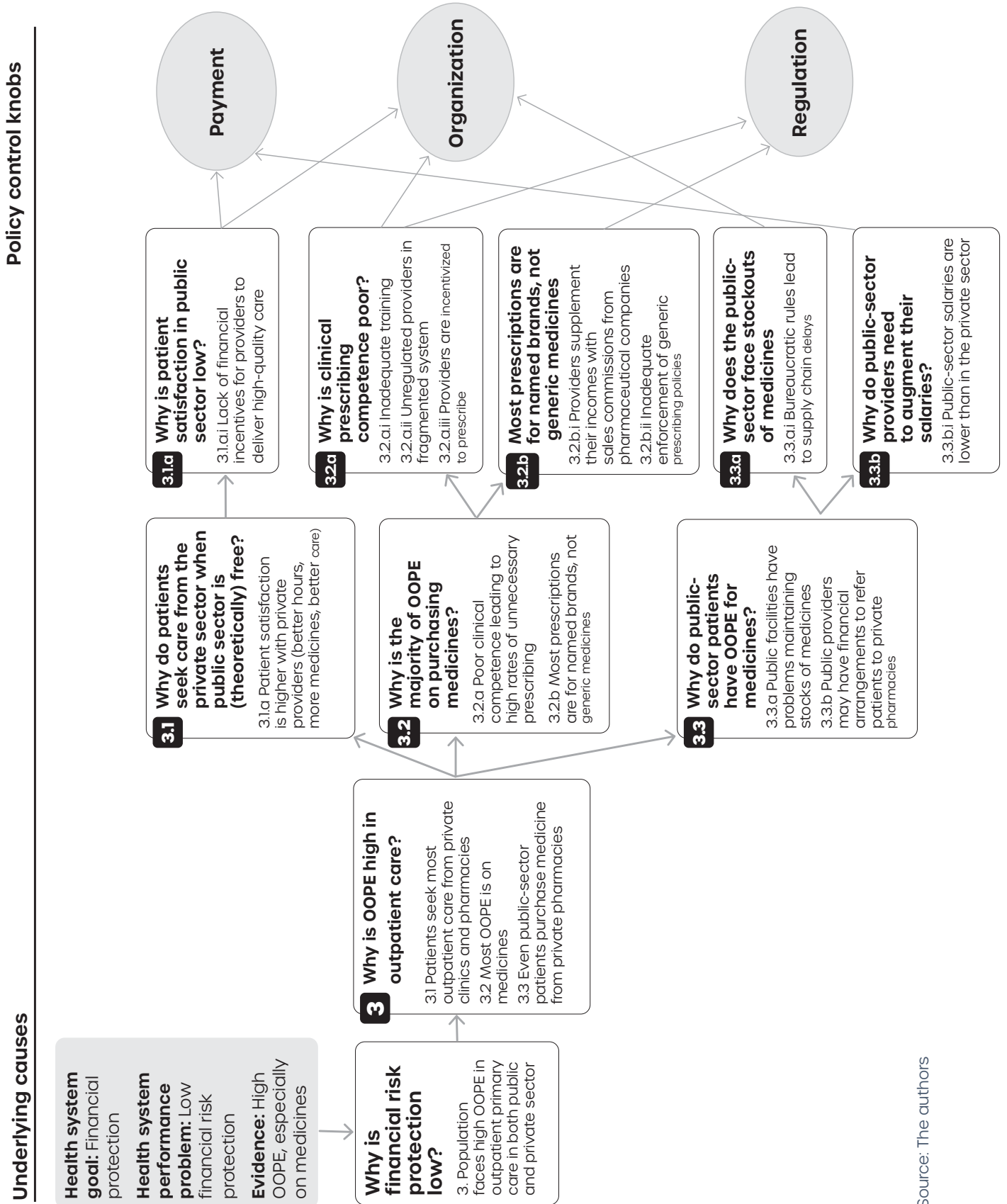
Regardless of which analysis you are conducting (including performance assessments, health care system descriptions and diagnostic trees), it is important to use a systems approach. This means considering how each indicator or outcome measure relates to multiple different aspects of the health system. Taking a systems approach generally leads you to identify multiple causes for performance problems and multiple interventions to improve performance.

Fig. 4. Sample diagnostic tree diagnosing causes of low financial risk protection, first branch



Source: The authors

Fig. 5. Sample diagnostic tree diagnosing causes of low financial risk protection, second branch



Source: The authors

It is especially important to take a systems approach in diagnosis. The root causes of most problems do not lie in only one single policy control knob. Instead, the underlying causes are typically systemic. This is evident in the Odisha example. Public clinics do not have convenient opening hours and do not stock the medicines that patients want, so patients choose to utilize private pharmacies even though these stores are largely unregulated in both quality and pricing. Furthermore, private pharmacies generate supplier-induced demand, and they often sell unnecessary and expensive medicines to patients. So, why are the public-sector pharmacies' opening hours inconvenient and medicines unavailable? Root causes can be traced to several sources: poor management at public hospitals, lack of incentives for doctors to show up for work in public-sector facilities, and the fact that public facilities are not held accountable for performance. These factors combine to contribute to high OOPE by patients and families.

Health systems are complex and dynamic. The causes and effects of performance problems can interact, occur simultaneously, act in concert to mutually reinforce each other, or act in opposition, cancelling each other out. Any policy intervention can give rise to multiple changes, both intended and unintended. Taking a systems approach as you develop the diagnostic tree helps identify linkages among problems and causes. This will help you prepare for possible effects of the reform interventions decided next, in step five.

Analyse linkages among causes and possible effects, and prepare for step five, devising your reform package

Our sample diagnostic trees (Fig. 4 and Fig. 5) highlight a few potential causal chains for a performance problem, thus demonstrating that diagnosis does not result in simple answers. Health system performance outcomes are linked to each other, as are their root causes. For example, Fig. 5 shows how financial risk protection is linked to quality of care. Possible causes identified when asking the third why are poor-quality clinical care and the prescription of multiple, and often unnecessary, medicines. Both can lead to high OOPE.

You may also notice that, while the first-level causes are different in the two figures, the final and common set of root causes reach a high level of generalization. In this example, the root causes behind low financial risk protection in Odisha are traced to four of the five control knobs: financing, organization, payment and regulation. Now that causes that can be addressed through government policy action have been identified, it is possible to generate policy options to address the performance problem.

Step five considers how to select a package of policies for a health reform. Once you select the policy option you will pursue, you may want to create another tree. Instead of working backward as you did above, in this tree you project forward from the intervention to predict how the changes in your reform are likely to affect health system performance (including both improvements and possible unintended or negative consequences that may occur).

Summary

Step four enables the Health Reform Team to develop a clear understanding of why the health system is performing poorly on the selected intermediate and final outcome(s). Understanding the multiple root causes does not determine definitively which reforms you should pursue, but accurate diagnosis of the causes of the problem is a necessary step towards devising a set of potentially effective solutions.

Diagnosis thus sets the foundation for step five, in which you design the reform package, by helping identify the root causes for performance problems and indicating which policy controls could be used to address these problems. As with the other steps, diagnosis of performance problems need not be a one-time activity. The Health Reform Team may undertake diagnoses of different performance problems at different points in time during the reform process. The team may also decide to periodically diagnose newly emerging performance problems to trace changes in root causes (created by the policy reforms or other factors).

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Selected further reading

- De Savigny D, Adam T, editors. (2009) *Systems thinking for health systems strengthening*. Geneva: Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, WHO (https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/44204/9789241563895_eng.pdf?sequence=1).

Step five:

Decide your reform package

In many ways, step five is the most important stage in the health reform process. This is when you decide which actions you will take to improve performance in your health system. The reform package depends on everything that you do in the four previous steps. Deciding what to do is not easy – and this manual cannot cover all possibilities. In step five, therefore, the focus is on pointing out the factors you must consider in putting together your reform package. There is also a suggested process for decision-making.

Key actions in step five:

-
- Decide the scope of your reform, using evidence from the diagnosis, assessment and other policy studies.

 - Decide on the package of interventions to include in your reform, considering the five policy control knobs.

 - Decide whether to start with pilot tests or a full-scale approach.

 - Decide the mechanism you will use to enact reform (legislation or executive decree).

 - Decide a name for the reform package.

 - Decide the timing of the reform effort.

In this step, the Health Reform Team uses various types of evidence to identify interventions that are likely to create pathways through which the health reform package would lead to your intended outputs and outcomes. These interventions should relate to the available policy control knobs.

The evidence that the Health Reform Team should use includes the health system assessment from step three, the diagnostic findings from step four, and any available studies or reports that examine how particular policy changes can affect performance. Examples of interventions undertaken in other (similar) countries or states can provide persuasive evidence to support the particular reform actions you decide to propose. However, you should be aware that borrowing policy interventions across national boundaries always involves complex questions about how policies will perform in different contexts (it is beyond the scope of this manual to examine when policy borrowing works, and when it does not).

Using a systems approach may increase the likelihood of achieving your desired results. In this step, a systems approach typically requires that you combine several interventions to address a performance problem. This means you will probably be using more than one of the policy control knobs to take action, and therefore you need to consider any possible interactions among your chosen interventions. This will be

especially true if you have decided to address major performance problems in your health system (for example, inequity in health outcomes across geographic divisions, low levels of public satisfaction with public facilities, or a high incidence of catastrophic expenditure in low-income groups due to OoPE on medicines).

As in the previous steps, you should consider who to involve in the process of identifying and selecting the policy actions to include in your health reform. To make appropriate choices about policy interventions, your Health Reform Team needs members (or consultants) with technical expertise in the areas you are focusing on and with experience in systemic reform. Therefore, you may need to bring new people into the team again.

This manual does not address the technical details that different reforms involve (readers interested in exploring the technical dimensions of the five policy areas should consult the relevant chapters in GHRR). Instead, it explores some of the broader strategic questions and considerations about how you decide your package of reform interventions.

Decide the scope of your reform

As mentioned in the Introduction to this manual, one of the key decisions you must consider is scope, or how ambitious your reform will be. This decision begins with selecting how many, and which, of the performance problems you have identified and diagnosed you will now seek to address. Here is what GHRR (p. 123) says about deciding on the scope of your reform:

Some might choose to focus quite narrowly on one or two specific performance parameters (like high infant and maternal mortality rates in poor rural areas). Such a problem definition is likely to lead to a relatively targeted set of reforms; the development of new reimbursement mechanisms or selective investment in certain facilities or training programs, for instance. On the other hand, broader problem definitions are likely to lead to a broader and more complicated reform agenda. Concern about widespread simultaneous failures of risk protection, popular dissatisfaction with the health-care system, and high costs could lead reformers to a much more ambitious reform program. The country might decide to create a new social insurance fund, new payment schemes for doctors and hospitals, and new forms of hospital organization – all at once. In making decisions about the scope of problems to tackle, reformers are well advised to think carefully about the administrative and political feasibility of a more or less ambitious agenda.

Thus, the question of scope refers to whether you are seeking targeted incremental changes or broad-scale systemic changes to the health system (Reich, Hsiao & Berman, 2019).

As stated, this manual focuses more on efforts aimed at large-R Reform – that is, efforts seeking to achieve major systemic transformations aimed at improving multiple significant performance problems. However, this approach can be easily adapted to gradual, incremental changes (or little-r reform efforts), such as those that are directed, for example, at managerial adjustments or at particular health facilities. Little-r reforms typically seek to change particular inputs into the health system, such as the use of funding, management of human resources and medications, and the role of information. When adopting little-r reforms, you still need to be concerned about overall policy coherence and whether these changes align with a particular health system performance goal. Little-r reforms can be important in improving health system performance (and they can face significant challenges in adoption and implementation). Sometimes, therefore, a Health Reform Team may decide to start with a little-r reform to test the appetite for larger systemic reform or while waiting for a window of opportunity for large-R Reform. This strategy may also be appropriate for those working in states that are affected by conflict and that are fragile, where instability makes it difficult to undertake large-R Reform.

The wider, more transformative and more systemic the reform, the more interventions are required with several control knobs. Large-R Reform, according to the new preface to GHRR (p: x):

... is not a one-shot effort but typically continues over many years (and even decades), as a major reform is introduced and then adjusted and modified as new problems arise and are addressed. Reform is not simply about creating a law and getting it adopted; it is a years-long process of learning how to improve the performance of a health system, through trial-and-error, measurement and evaluation, systematic thinking, and analysis.

Making decisions on the scope of your reform incorporates the results from the previous four steps (deciding to do reform, creating your Health Reform Team, conducting a health system assessment to identify performance problems, and diagnosing the causes of the identified problems). It also requires understanding administrative or budget constraints, and then thinking ahead so that you are prepared to face the many challenges – of implementation, stakeholder management, effective communication, and designing for resilience and sustainability – that are discussed in the final three steps.

The decision to undertake a large-R Reform should not be taken lightly – this is another stage where risk analysis is critical. Large-R Reform efforts involve major political risks, economic costs, and personal commitments of time and energy, plus all sorts of uncertainties. And large-R Reform does not happen often. It can only be achieved at those rare historical moments when a window of opportunity opens for major social change. It therefore pays to be prepared so that, when you determine such a moment has arrived, you are able to move quickly before the window of opportunity closes.

Decide your package of interventions

The key operational decision in step five is to decide the package of interventions, that is, the set of actions that you propose to include in your reform to improve health system performance. Health reform typically requires a package – a set of multiple interventions – rather than a single policy because of the complexity of health systems and because addressing a performance problem generally requires using more than one control knob. Another benefit of the package approach is that you can include short-term, easily achievable goals that demonstrate progress, while you continue to pursue other long-term, more complicated goals.

This manual urges you to select interventions based on the performance problems that you want to address and the results of your diagnostic journey. Together with the Health Reform Team, consider: What package of interventions is most likely (according to your diagnostic analysis and your reviews of examples from other places and the literature) to improve your selected performance problem(s)?

For example, look back at the illustrative diagnoses provided in step four (see Fig. 4 and Fig. 5 in which high OOPE, particularly on medicines, created the problem of low financial risk protection for the population). The diagnosis identifies a number of possible interventions, including: 1) Change payment and incentives for state officials to cover gaps in the government health insurance programme; 2) Increase government financing to improve policy implementation; 3) Expand outpatient benefits so that patients can receive more services and pay less out of pocket; and 4) Improve the effectiveness of regulation and enforcement so that providers do not misuse insurance funds.

Consider whether to start small or go big

As you select the package of policy interventions, you must consider whether to start small (for example, by undertaking pilot projects to test out your proposals), before you go big (that is, undertake a full-scale implementation). Conducting a pilot test is generally considered good practice, especially for large-scale reforms (or in large countries). In China, for example, pilots have been used successfully to test out options for payment reforms (Yip et al., 2019). However, pilots are not always feasible, depending on the financial resources available, political timeline and policy experiences. (Occasionally a pilot test may even be unnecessary, especially if you have clear and incontrovertible evidence available from other health reform efforts.)

Pilots can have various purposes, including:

- demonstrating the feasibility of the reform to political leaders and key stakeholders;
- identifying how a change in one control knob may require interventions in other control knobs;
- identifying implementation challenges that the reform interventions will face – and testing out possible ways to address them;

- learning how providers and the population react to the changes the reform interventions create in the health system; and
- determining if the proposed package of interventions actually produces performance improvements as intended in your setting.

Pilot projects are thus useful to test a proof of concept, enabling you to show with some certainty that the proposed reform will have the desired effects. In addition to generating empirical evidence for the proposed package, undertaking pilot projects can also generate visibility and public support for the reform.

Be forewarned, however, that rigorous assessment of a pilot project can take significant time and resources to conduct, analyse and write up. You need to balance these factors with the reality that you have limited time and funds to produce change. While you are waiting for additional certainty, the opportunity to produce change may pass. On the other hand, when you implement a package of untested reforms widely, you may not actually be able to improve health system performance. Assessing this critical trade-off – between increasing certainty and making use of opportunity – should be a topic for frank and detailed discussions within the Health Reform Team, which can inform decisions made by political leaders.

Decide on an executive decree or legislative action to adopt your reform

Where and how will you get your health reform adopted? While it is not possible to cover all strategic options in this manual, broadly speaking, there are two choices for adoption:

- 1) through executive action (within an existing government body); or
- 2) through legislative action (by amending a current law or passing a new law).

Your decision on the instrument and setting for adoption has important implications for the trajectory of your reform, including: how the package is presented; who has to be contacted, negotiated with and persuaded to adopt it; how the reform will be implemented; and how difficult it would be for opponents to dismantle it if they gained power in the future (in other words, creating political resilience). Your decision on where and how to adopt the reform will depend on the specific political and legal contexts where you are working. But the choice between the executive and the legislative pathway is a critical decision point that can affect the success of your reform efforts.

In general, adopting your reform through executive action gives you more control over what happens, especially if the motivation and main advocate of the reform is a major political figure (such as the national leader or minister of health). However, declaring policy changes through executive decree may also limit the scope and complexity of the reform, depending on the political context. It could also make the reform vulnerable to reversal by a subsequent political leader. Administrators governing under martial law, for example,

may be able to declare broad policy reforms without going through a legislative process, as happened with Bangladesh's pharmaceutical policy after a 1982 military coup (Reich, 1994). Under normal democratic conditions, however, the scope of reform that can be enacted through executive action (without legislative review and approval) is usually more limited, according to constitutional law and practice. On the other hand, executive action gives the political leader more control over how the reform is designed, since such action does not require negotiation with legislators to achieve approval.

If the party in charge of the executive branch also controls the legislature (either through its own party or a coalition), then a legislative path for reform becomes more attractive. Mexico's President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, for example, accomplished his restructuring of the national health system (eliminating the previous reform enacted in 2003 and creating a new organization) through a legislative action that amended the General Health Law in November 2019. This was possible because his political party gained control of both houses of the Mexican Congress in the 2018 general election (Reich, 2020). The number of seats the ruling party holds in the legislature can affect the ease of getting a reform package passed – but keep in mind that even a majority can get stalled, blocked or otherwise derailed by a well-organized minority. It may be necessary to negotiate (and compromise) some aspects of the reform to gain support from the opposition.

Sometimes reformers find ways to combine these two approaches (executive and legislative actions).

Finding the right form and forum for adoption of your health reform is a critical decision that has important political, judicial, implementation and continuity implications. These decisions need to be made carefully, according to the specific characteristics of your reform and your context. How your reform is adopted is an important element in creating and assuring its political resilience over time and through changes in regimes.

Decide the name of your reform

The name given to a health reform package sends signals to different audiences. It can be used to capture the overall goals and vision of the reform, especially if the reform seeks systemic transformation. Hence, deciding the name deserves serious consideration. This task may be undertaken by the Health Reform Team or by the high-level political leader in consultation with key allies and advisors. You can also seek advice and suggestions from public relations or policy strategy firms. Naming your reform helps shape the public image and understanding of the reform and what it seeks to achieve, and this represents the start of your branding and communications strategies.

Consider the names of some recent prominent health reforms. President Barack Obama's reform in the United States of America was formally called the Affordable Care Act, but it became widely known as Obamacare. This name cemented the linkage of

the reform to Obama and his political legacy, but it also made the reform into a major political target for the opposing Republican party and the subsequent administration. In Mexico, the name *Seguro Popular* sent a positive message about insurance for the people, as in Spanish *seguro* can mean either insurance or safe and *popular* can mean either for the people or well-liked. However, this name also exposed the reform to attacks by the political opposition, who declared it to be *ni es seguro, ni es popular* (neither safe, nor well-liked), contributing to its eventual elimination by President López Obrador (Reich, 2020).

India's example also illustrates the importance of reform names. Prime Minister Narendra Modi named his health reform Ayushman Bharat (sometimes translated as "bless India with long healthy life"). It included the national insurance programme Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY), which translates to "the PM (Prime Minister)'s programme for the health of the people". The reform later acquired the name Modicare, echoing Obamacare and directly connecting the policy to Modi's legacy.

A good name alone does not guarantee policy success or political survival. But it is a key part of the communication strategies that can contribute to policy implementation and political resilience. Communication strategies are discussed in more detail in step seven.

Decide the timing of your reform

Finally, the timing of each step – including the design, introduction, passing, implementation and evaluation – of your reform is crucial. For large-R Reforms, the timing will be influenced by elections and political campaigns. A potentially controversial major reform may be best introduced in the window of opportunity immediately after an election, when leaders have political capital to spend, reliable majorities to mobilize, and time to demonstrate positive impact. This is especially true if you are using a legislative path for adoption. On the other hand, politicians with both majority control of the legislature and high levels of support within their parties may decide to announce a major reform just before an election (as Prime Minister Modi in India did in September 2018) as a campaign strategy to promise rewards to voters.

Summary

Step five is a pivotal moment in a health reform process: using the findings from assessments and diagnoses to select the main policy interventions to be included in the reform package. From this point forward, the process shifts focus to building widespread support for (and reducing opposition to) the health reform (step six), implementing the health reform as efficiently and effectively as possible (step seven), and tracking whether it has the intended effects through evaluation (step eight).

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Step six:

Conduct political analysis and design political strategies

Any policy reform is a profoundly political process, so advocates for health reform need to manage the politics of change through careful political analysis and creative political strategies. Understanding and managing the politics of health policies is crucial to improve the chances of effectively designing, adopting and implementing health reforms that can achieve their intended objectives. Step six involves assessing the political feasibility of your proposed reform options, and then designing political strategies and adapting proposed reforms as needed, through negotiation, to improve the political feasibility of the reform options. These efforts require applied political analysis, that is, a systematic consideration of the positions, power and interests of stakeholder groups regarding a policy, in order to develop strategies to manage change and perceptions in the political landscape.

The approach outlined in this manual to applied political analysis is based on and explained more fully in Reich & Campos (2024). Applied political analysis helps you improve your chances of successfully changing public policies by:

- designing strategies to put a particular topic (such as introducing a new cadre of health worker, creating new forms of health insurance, or controlling pharmaceutical prices) on the policy agenda;
- increasing the likelihood of securing the support of important groups for your proposed policy – and decreasing opposition by other groups;
- managing the perceptions of key stakeholders who will be affected by the proposed policy (such as physicians' associations, government agencies, unions, associations of pharmaceutical companies, insurance organizations, taxpayers or patient groups);
- identifying and addressing implementation risks early on; and
- communicating with different interested organizations (by working with journalists, holding regular press conferences and reaching out via social media).

Political analysis is not a one-off exercise. Instead, it should be done early and often. You can use Worksheet 6.1 as you conduct applied political analysis for health reform.

Key actions in step six:

-
- Agree on the process for conducting an applied political analysis.

 - Begin the stakeholder analysis by identifying persons or organizations with an interest in your policy and the potential to influence related decisions.

 - Assess the position, interest and power of your stakeholders.

 - Design and implement a set of political strategies to increase the likelihood of success for your health reform.

 - Assess the political feasibility produced by your strategies and repeat your analysis as often as needed.

Agree on the analysis process

The aim of applied political analysis is to improve the chances that your policy will be politically feasible and achieve its intended objectives. The first step is to reach an agreement (formal or informal) between the analyst (or analyst team) and the Health Reform Team about how the analysis will be done. The agreement should include:

- **the Health Reform Team (or other user):** state who will receive the results of the analysis to consider using the political strategies;
- **the health system problem:** list the health system performance problem(s) to be addressed;
- **the policy solution/reform package:** consider the major elements of the reform that are intended to address the performance problem(s); and
- **likely political problems:** summarize the likely political challenges that the Health Reform Team is concerned about and wants to address.

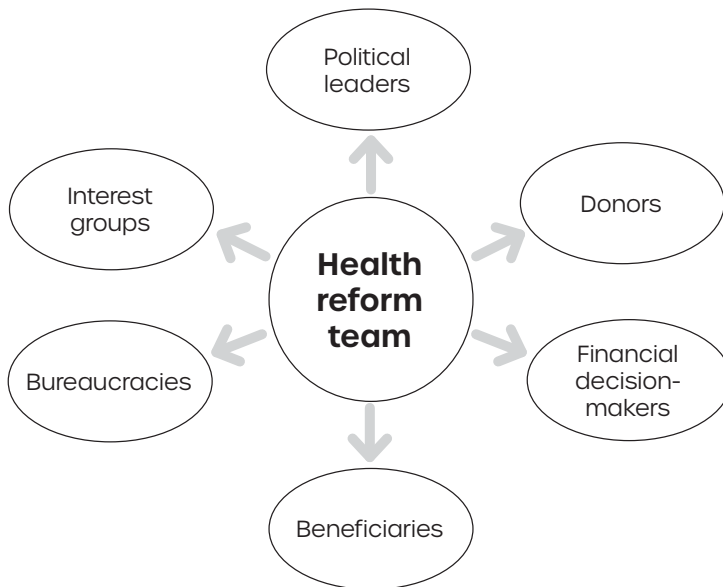
Political analysis can be done by one analyst or a full team, depending on the resources available; it can also be conducted by policy-makers themselves.

Begin the stakeholder analysis

The second step in political analysis is to identify key stakeholders, their positions on the policy under analysis, and the power of each stakeholder to affect that policy. Whether you are identifying a health issue, designing solutions to address it or implementing solutions already adopted, you are likely to encounter the stakeholders shown in Fig. 6.

Worksheet 6.2 provides guidance on identifying your stakeholders and a sample table to record your findings. The list of stakeholder categories in Fig. 6 is not exhaustive and should be adjusted based on your context and reform package. You may think of other groups of stakeholders who are relevant to your specific objective (for example, expert academics). Consider actors at different levels, including the national, state and community levels. Remember that stakeholders can be from the health sector, but they

Fig. 6. Categories of stakeholders to engage in health reform



Political leaders – executive and legislative branches of government, and political parties

Donors – external actors or partner organizations who are invested in the issue

Financial decision-makers – those who control the budget and financing of the solution

Beneficiaries – those who will (directly or indirectly) benefit from the solution

Bureaucracies – those who carry out the work of government, from ministries to frontline workers (known as “street-level bureaucrats”), and a range of agencies and directorates

Interest groups – associations of persons or organizations with an interest in the issue or solution who are (often) trying to affect policy, such as the private sector, lobbying groups, civil society, non-governmental or non-profit organizations, professional associations, the media, etc.

Source: Campos & Reich (2019).

may also be from other sectors that have an impact on health, such as energy, finance, labour, transportation and education.

Stakeholders can have many reasons to support or oppose the reform package. They may have personal, organizational, monetary or value-based interests in the problem you are trying to address, in the solution(s) you are proposing, and/or in being (visibly) involved in the reform process itself.

Assess the position and power of your stakeholders

Once you have identified your key stakeholders, you need to get to know them better. How do they view the policy problem and your proposed solution? How important is this reform to them? And, how can you influence their views on the reform? Knowing your stakeholders (including their respective positions on the reform and power to influence the process) enables you to seize opportunities, anticipate and navigate challenges that are bound to arise, and determine how best to collaborate and communicate with key actors.

One way to learn more about your stakeholders is to conduct interviews with them. (If you decide to conduct interviews, consider asking interviewees if they can suggest other stakeholders to consult.) But interviews are not the only way to understand the perspective of a stakeholder – media articles, position statements and other materials can also be used.

Use the information you gather to assess each stakeholder’s position on the proposed health reform and how much power they have to support or oppose it. This is not an

easy task. It requires a careful triangulation of perspectives, using interview and other data (that is, published and unpublished documents).

Here are some key questions to guide your stakeholder analysis (and help you decide whether you need to conduct interviews to answer the questions):

- Who are the most important stakeholders for the issue that your reform addresses? Who holds power related to the issue? Who has access to decision-making processes?
- What is each stakeholder's position on the proposed reform? Do they support it, are they neutral or do they oppose the reform? With what level of intensity?
- How does the policy problem affect stakeholders and how would the reform affect them?
- Which stakeholders have (or might form) alliances?
- What are effective communication channels to reach each stakeholder?

The aim of stakeholder analysis is to establish: first, the position of each stakeholder (support, non-mobilized or opposed) and the intensity of support or opposition (high, medium or low); and second, their power (financial and administrative resources, and access to decision-making processes, also assessed as high, medium or low), and their formal and informal relations with other stakeholders.

Assessing the power of key stakeholders also entails identifying the political resources available to each player. These resources can include material and financial resources, the capacity to mobilize (an organization, votes or social media followers) and other symbolic resources (such as leadership and charisma), as well as actual decision-making power. Asking different stakeholders about who holds the most power over a specific policy arena or decision can be useful when assessing the power of stakeholders. Worksheet 6.3 provides further guidance on analysing your stakeholders and presenting your conclusions.

You can also use the downloadable PolicyMaker software (Reich & Cooper, 2010) to help you through the applied political analysis process, including to produce a visual representation of the political map of stakeholders in the policy landscape. A map will help you in the next step: identifying key areas of opportunity or challenge for which you can develop strategies to improve the political feasibility of the reform. Glassman et al. (1999) provides an example of applied political analysis using the PolicyMaker software.

Design and implement political strategies to increase the likelihood of success

How does categorizing stakeholders help you understand who might support, resist or obstruct the implementation of a proposed reform? And how does it help you figure out what actions you need to take? Stakeholder analysis is not an end in itself, but rather

a tool to manage change – and just describing the political landscape is not sufficient to produce change. The results of the stakeholder analysis should be used to develop strategies to change the political landscape in ways that improve the political feasibility of the desired policy reform.

Implementing health reform successfully requires an active commitment to engage stakeholders. You are more likely to be successful in enacting health reform if you can figure out how your allies can be mobilized, how neutral stakeholders can be turned into allies, and how opponents can be managed or disarmed. All these efforts require political strategies.

Political strategies have four main purposes:

1. to change the power of actors
2. to change the position of actors
3. to change the number of actors (supporting or opposed) involved
4. to change perceptions of the problem or the proposed reform solution.

These four factors all influence the political feasibility of the adoption of a proposed policy or the implementation of an accepted policy.

Annex 4 provides additional questions to help you develop a set of political strategies. For each salient stakeholder, the Health Reform Team can identify a strategy that will improve the political feasibility of the proposed reform, including: the specific action to be taken, the expected effects of that action (on power, position and number of actors), and any anticipated problems with the action. (Indeed, the creation of the Health Reform Team itself can be considered a political strategy, as the composition of the team can help to ensure that different stakeholders are involved and that explicit attention is given to the political dimensions of change.)

Political strategies can be creative, but they can also involve risks and potentially adverse consequences. They are also often time-limited. Your chosen strategies may only work for so long, or they may prove relevant during one political administration but not the next. So, the Health Reform Team should assess periodically whether its current political strategies are having the intended effects. If not, it is time to repeat the applied political analysis process.

You may also find that the proposed reform itself needs to be reshaped through negotiations with opponents for it to be adopted or implemented. Changing the substance of the proposed reform can thus be considered a strategy to improve political feasibility. One key challenge in making compromises to improve political feasibility is to avoid reducing the technical effectiveness of the proposed intervention(s).

Past experiences with reforms in the local context (in health and other sectors) is one great source for ideas of useful political strategies. You can also look further afield. Applied

political analysis has been used to help reformers successfully manage the processes of adopting health financing reforms in Mexico (Gómez-Dantés, Reich & Garrido-Latorre, 2015) and in Türkiye (Rossetti, 2004). The literature includes many case studies on health policy processes and political strategies used to promote adoption or implementation. Finally, the PolicyMaker software includes a toolbox of around 30 possible political strategies that can be adapted to different contexts (Reich & Cooper, 2010).

Assess the political feasibility of your policy, using the political strategies

The last step in applied political analysis is to assess whether you have adequately increased the political feasibility of your reform package.

This assessment of political feasibility is not an exact science, and political strategies can also interact in ways that make it difficult to predict their consequences. Assessing the impact of political strategies on feasibility requires using your judgement. One approach is to develop hypotheses for each strategy and identify indicators to measure its impact. Group discussions among team members may help this assessment. Ask the team: Do you think we have reduced the intensity of opposition from a key stakeholder who resists the reform? What are the chances that compromises with a non-mobilized group will encourage them to publicly support the reform?

Summary

Policy reform is inherently political (while it also requires ethical judgement and technical expertise). To increase the feasibility and likelihood of achieving a successful reform, policy advocates and the Health Reform Team should engage with competent political analysts to conduct systematic applied political analysis. This approach will help you manage and influence the politics of change. It combines identifying and understanding the key stakeholders who can influence your reform, along with developing strategies to manage the political landscape in ways that increase the likelihood of success. Although this manual introduces it as step six, political analysis can be undertaken at multiple points in a health reform process – and it contributes to the creation of a strong foundation for step seven: implementation.

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Step seven:

Manage the implementation of health reform to achieve results

In step five, you decided a package of health reform interventions related to the policy control areas; then, in step six, you learned how to use applied political analysis to design political strategies to support the adoption and implementation of your interventions.

If you have been successful in achieving the adoption of your reform: Congratulations! Now you must move on to step seven: implementation. This step brings all the pieces together to develop, plan for and manage the implementation of your reform package. Just because a reform is on the books does not mean that it is implemented or implemented as intended (Chriqui et al., 2023). This chapter suggests tools and approaches to help drive implementation of the reform package.

Implementation is the complex and uncertain process of turning policies into practice. The Health Reform Team needs to set up a system to ensure that the new policy results in its intended changes. In addition to technical decisions, implementation requires continuous progress monitoring, periodic course corrections and sustained stakeholder engagement. In some instances, implementation can result in significant changes in reforms. Thus, implementation can become a kind of policy-making process itself.

As with the previous six steps, implementation involves many considerations. Implementing health reform involves more than just providing instructions or even designing standard operating procedures. It necessitates continued engagement with key stakeholders as you: 1) integrate the technical and political analyses to put your reform into practice; 2) define indicators and set targets; 3) design implementation strategies; and 4) establish systems to measure progress and solve implementation problems. Accomplishing each task will often require capacity-building within the Implementation Team and throughout the health system, especially in low-resource settings.

Step seven first discusses typical implementation challenges. Next, it considers how to develop an implementation plan and create a communications strategy. Finally, it prepares for step eight (monitoring and evaluating implementation). These actions will enable you to build and sustain the support and engagement required to implement your reform.

Key actions in step seven:

-
- Assess your team’s capacity to drive delivery and implement the proposed interventions.

 - Conduct an analysis of the politics of implementation.

 - Develop an implementation plan with clearly defined indicators and targets, team assignments and timelines.

 - Communicate effectively with stakeholders.

 - Monitor progress towards objectives and address problems that arise.

Implementation challenges

The challenges of implementation are well known, especially for reforms that are seen to threaten the interests and values of some stakeholders. A classic text on implementation, written by Pressman & Wildavsky (1973), includes the lengthy and wonderful subtitle: “How great expectations in Washington are dashed in Oakland; or, why it’s amazing that federal programs work at all, this being a saga of the economic development administration as told by two sympathetic observers who seek to build morals on a foundation”.

So, beware the realities of implementation. If your Health Reform Team does not anticipate and manage the challenges of implementation, your chances of successfully having an impact on health system performance drop sharply.

Implementation is when reform gets real. And when the redistribution of power and the changing of practices inherent in any reform begin, stakeholders will react. Some groups who previously opposed the changes may come to accept and welcome the reform and its implications. On the other hand, people who were supportive of the reform may resist what is required for implementation. Those who were opposed to adoption may look for new ways to block or dilute changes. In addition, previously unmobilized groups (including the general public) may start to feel disrupted by the new practices.

Although GHRR does not include a separate chapter on implementation, the book emphasizes the importance of paying attention to “matters of practicality and implementation” throughout the health reform process (GHRR, p. 5). GHRR describes key factors affecting so-called implementability in Chapter 7 (pp. 142–43), including: capacity, enforceability, social and cultural conditions and norms, and others. Each GHRR chapter on the policy controls (Chapters 8–12) includes a practical guidance section with suggestions on how to use its concepts in real-world settings. Chapter 2 (pp. 33–35) of GHRR lists multiple challenges of implementation for the Health Reform Team to consider, namely:

- Health reform implementation requires organizations and individuals to change their behaviours. This may require changing mindsets, norms and perceptions.
- Change typically has costs for specific groups and individuals.
- New procedures and arrangements take time and effort to learn.
- Existing hierarchies can be upset.
- People and organizations often find it difficult to give up familiar ways of thinking and acting.
- Few people have experience in leading and managing change in health systems (and ministers of health usually serve short terms in office, leaving before implementation can be accomplished fully).
- If key actors and interest groups feel they have not been consulted sufficiently in the design of the reform, they may undermine implementation.

You can probably think of other challenges as well. In short, implementing reform is not easy. Health system reform requires organizations and individuals to behave differently. Yet modifying behaviours is a difficult task and change is almost always resisted. Change disrupts established power structures and ways of getting things done; it requires both the breaking of old habits and relationships and the starting of new ones. Transforming a newly adopted policy into specific activities, outputs and outcomes involves the redistribution of resources and responsibilities (Campos & Reich, 2019), and constant communication with all involved and affected.

This manual provides some practical guidance for managing the implementation process, specifically for health reforms and using a policy perspective. It does not address all the complexities of implementation, but it does borrow concepts from the field of implementation science. Implementation science emerged together with evidence-based medicine (Nilsen et al., 2013). It seeks to bridge the so-called know-do gap – that is, the difference between what is known to work and what is actually put in place to improve population health (Peters, Tran & Adam, 2013). Implementation science has focused mostly on evidence-based practices or interventions in specific settings, most notably in health care settings (Chriqui et al., 2023). Both policy implementation and implementation science share a concern with understanding, explaining and addressing problems associated with translating intentions into desired changes. This manual also draws on other approaches, including performance management, the science of delivery, the practice of deliverology (Barber, Moffit & Kihn, 2011), and the work of Bullock et al. (2021), who proposed an integrated framework for the implementation process from a policy perspective.

Assess capacity before beginning implementation

Before beginning implementation of the approved interventions, the Health Reform Team needs to assess the health system's capacity to deliver (Barber, Moffit & Kihn, 2011). This

is important because, as Barber and colleagues note, making change happen requires two things: first, a clear understanding of the ecosystem of people and organizations that will play a role in implementing your reforms; and second, a set of defined activities that will push delivery forward. To gain a clear understanding of the ecosystem – that is, the complex administrative context that your proposed policies will affect – health system reformers need to first analyse two key areas: 1) the system’s delivery capacity, and 2) the politics of implementation.

Delivery capacity review

To review the health system’s delivery capacity, begin by asking: Who are the main actors in the health system? What are their roles? What are their relationships with each other? As starting points to find the answers to these questions, revisit your health system assessment (Worksheet 4.1) and stakeholder analysis (Worksheet 6.2). You may wish to create a visual map of the system, or you can just create a list.

Once you have a clear picture of the current system your reform will affect, expand the analysis to focus on each stakeholder’s capacity to implement (or obstruct) the adopted reforms. This entails assessing the ability of each organization in the system to drive the implementation of the selected interventions.⁴ Worksheet 7.1 provides a series of questions to guide this work. For the delivery capacity review, it can be helpful to convene a small cross-cutting group that brings together members of the Health Reform Team with people who represent key stakeholders and political leadership.

While the delivery capacity review is important, it should be conducted quickly, not as a comprehensive academic exercise. However, the time required will depend on the system’s complexity and the availability of team members. Depending on what data are available (and what resources you have), you may even need to conduct additional surveys, hold focus groups or interviews, observe committee meetings, or review past meeting minutes to identify the delivery capacities of system actors at all levels.

The delivery capacity review examines the system’s current capacity to deliver on the proposed reforms and highlights the gaps in capacity. To fill those gaps, you may need to find ways to improve delivery capacity. This review should inform how the Health Reform Team focuses its attention and energy during implementation (and may also require adding additional staff to the Health Reform Team). You may even discover that the system currently does a poor job of understanding its own performance, including the underlying causes of performance problems – in this case, monitoring and evaluation (which are discussed in step eight) should be identified as a priority area during implementation.

4 This is a complex undertaking – for one set of instructions on how to conduct a delivery capacity review, see Barber, Moffit & Kihn’s book *Deliverology 101* (2011).

Stakeholder analysis for implementation

Successful implementation depends on the active participation of system stakeholders. Thus, stakeholder analysis is also a key tool in implementation science. In addition to the delivery capacity review, the stakeholder and political analyses that you conducted in step six will help the Health Reform Team understand the roles that various groups – including community leaders, political parties, medical associations, donors and others – could play in implementation. The important stakeholders should be considered as possible members for your Implementation Team.

You can draw on your political analysis from step six to assess the positions, power and interests of each stakeholder involved in implementation, and to develop effective strategies to manage stakeholders as you move implementation forward. In particular, consider whether there are implementation risks from stakeholders whose participation is required to transform the reform into practice. For example, health workers and their unions may not have been involved in the reform design or approval process, but they may play essential roles in implementing new policies. Similarly, the reform may require subnational government units to take on new roles, such as regulating reform activities or funding new health programmes, and these units will need adequate administrative guidance and financial support.

As shown in Fig. 6, six categories of stakeholders need to be considered and managed during implementation: beneficiaries, bureaucracies, donors, financial decision-makers, interest groups and political leaders (Campos & Reich, 2019). Stakeholder management for implementation becomes a process of managing in six directions (managing down, managing within and around, managing donors, managing money, managing outside, and managing up) to reach each stakeholder category, depending on the specific context. The Health Reform Team can use Worksheet 7.2 to develop a stakeholder management table as an input for the implementation plan.

Once the stakeholders are clearly defined, the Health Reform Team can invite key individuals and organizations to form an Implementation Team. This new team includes members of the Health Reform Team and representatives from the various organizations involved in implementation. (In addition to collaborating on planning and overseeing implementation, the Implementation Team also needs to create systems for internal learning and feedback. However, these kinds of management strategies are beyond the scope of this manual.)

Develop an implementation plan

Health reform implementation works best when a systematic and consistent approach is used to actively manage the change process. This includes being able to measure your progress in moving towards the objectives and to assess if you are on track at any given time (WHO, 2023). Creating an implementation plan will help you:

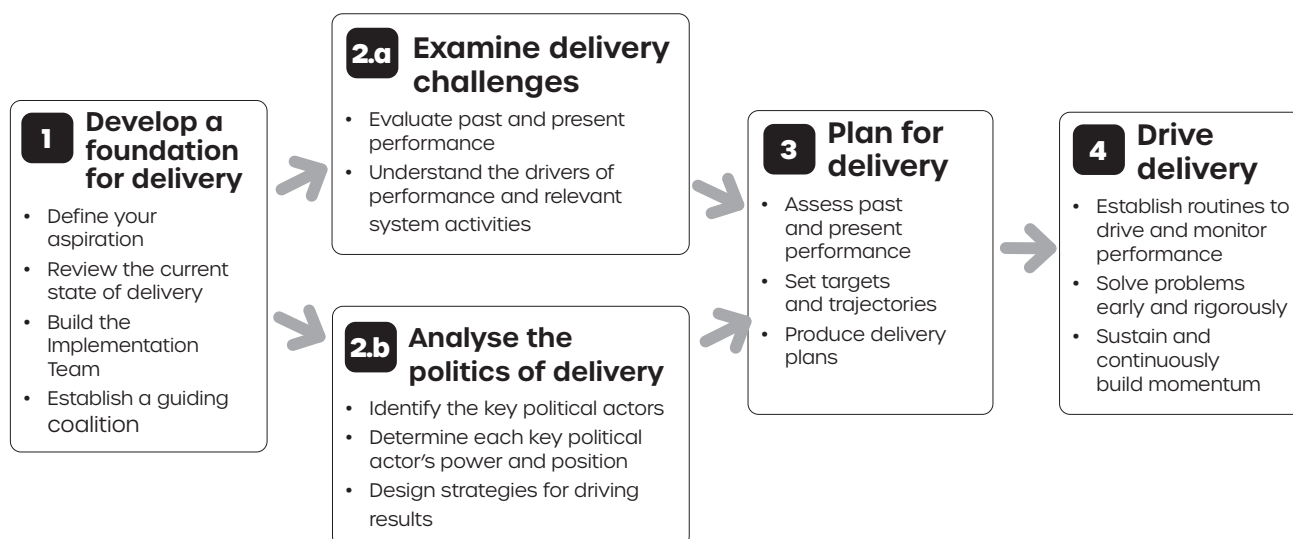
- be clear about the performance problem that your reform addresses and the solutions that you plan to implement;
- be clear about your goals and targets (the changes that you expect to see and by when);
- be clear about what you will implement and how (the interventions based on the policy control knobs);
- define roles and responsibilities;
- establish a vision of success, including processes, targets and milestones;
- set progress-tracking routines (such as regular data collection and meetings to assess progress); and
- communicate effectively with your stakeholders.

An implementation plan can be presented in many different ways. You need to determine what works best in your context and for your Implementation Team. Worksheet 7.3 provides a set of guiding questions to help you prepare your plan, and Worksheet 7.4 is a sample template that you may choose to use or adapt to track progress. There are many other resources, such as *Deliverology 101* (Barber, Moffit & Kihn, 2011), that provide additional assistance.

An implementation plan should summarize your goals and then connect each goal to objectives, activities and expected outcomes that will drive progress towards the targets of your health reform. At a minimum, your plan should list the main activities, the responsible actors, measures of success and resources required. It should also acknowledge any anticipated potential risks and how these will be identified and handled.

An important part of creating the plan is defining indicators to monitor the progress and the impact of implementation. As discussed in step eight, regularly tracking progress against indicators allows the Implementation Team to correct the course of implementation as needed. The following questions should be asked regularly: Are we on track? If we are not, what are we doing about it? *Deliverology* outlines four actions that drive implementation and deliver results in public-sector endeavours. Fig. 7 presents an adapted version of a figure from the book with the addition of a fifth suggested action: to analyse the politics of delivery (action 2.b).

Fig. 7. Driving implementation and delivering results



Source: adapted from Barber, Moffit & Kihn (2011).

Track progress and solve problems

Thoughtful planning for implementation is important but not sufficient. Concrete actions and follow-up are key. One way to drive action is to hold regular progress-tracking meetings. These meetings serve to hold the various actors accountable for their assigned actions and they enable the team to identify whether implementation is on track. During these meetings and other progress-tracking routines, the Health Reform Team should ask:

- Are we doing what we said we were going to do under this health reform?
- By doing what we said we were going to do, are we delivering on commitments made to the people and communities we aim to serve?
- Are we implementing effectively and efficiently?
- Are we measuring the right indicators to assess implementation progress?
- Are the indicators moving in the right direction?
- What can we do to improve/accelerate/scale up implementation?
- What bottlenecks or implementation challenges are we facing and how can we address them?

Tracking implementation collaboratively with stakeholders is key to solving problems. In some cases, this means involving other groups in monitoring specific indicators; in other cases, it means ensuring that stakeholders are kept informed about the process and progress. This leads to the final consideration for implementation: communication.

Communicating with stakeholders

Transforming reform policy into practice is complicated. There is no magic wand you can wave to implement your health reform. In short, implementation requires hard work. You also need to collaborate with the people and organizations who will be affected by your health reform and convince them that the proposed changes are important, beneficial to them, and worth their attention and action. Doing this means both involving these stakeholders in the health reform implementation process and regularly communicating with them to ensure they are up to date with (and engaged in supporting) your health reform programme. Different stakeholders will require different messages – perhaps even in different languages. A well-crafted communications strategy is therefore crucial.

You will need both formal and informal communication strategies to assure key stakeholders that they are respected by the Health Reform Team, and to encourage them to remain committed to the reform process and its goals. Formal communications include written and oral statements about the health reform package. Written materials may include: informational brochures on the key components of the health reform package; regular updates (via newsletters or social media) on the progress of policy development and implementation; active social media strategies and presence on

multiple platforms; a health reform website and other digital marketing materials; media briefing materials; and academic articles and evaluation reports. Oral communications may include official speaking engagements and media interviews by members of the Health Reform Team and core supporters of the health reform (these generally require prepared talking points or full speeches to ensure that the key messages are clear, consistent and accurate). Informal communications may include: one-to-one conversations with key individuals in meetings, social events and calls; social media posts by individuals; and any other unscripted or unplanned interactions during which the health reform is discussed.

As noted in step two, you may choose to engage communications professionals as members of your Health Reform Team. You may also decide to hire a dedicated communications consulting firm. Either way, everyone on the Health Reform Team should be fully aware of the requirements of your communication strategies and key messages. Creating effective communication strategies is a core component of your implementation. Note the wording: strategies, not strategy. You need to adapt your communications to reach different audiences. Worksheet 7.5 provides guiding questions to help you develop your communication strategies for implementation.

Your communication needs and strategies will evolve over the course of the implementation process, in part by incorporating feedback from the recipients of the messages. Assessing what you are communicating to each target audience at any given moment is an important practice, as is determining whether these audiences are understanding and responding to your messages as you hope they will.

This leads to a final point: Communication should be interactive. Information should flow back to you as well as being sent out. Your communication plan should involve creating forums and processes through which you listen to your audiences' viewpoints on how the health reform is going in order to get their feedback both on the content of the reform and on whether you are successfully communicating with them. If you are not successfully reaching and convincing your audiences, you can use Worksheet 7.5 to determine whether the problem lies with the message, the medium, the messenger or the timing of the communication.

Summary

This manual consistently emphasizes throughout that health reform is intended to change the performance of a health system. The Health Reform Team needs to keep its focus on the outcomes of health system performance. Efforts to improve health system performance face many of the common challenges of policy implementation. The Health Reform Team needs to learn how to work with and through multiple actors and organizations to: communicate policy objectives, ensure availability of resources, achieve ownership of the policy by implementers, manage conflict and cooperation, and develop strategies to sustain your policy changes through successive governments and political parties in power (Campos & Reich, 2019).

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Step eight:

Evaluate impacts and create resilience for your health reform

As this manual emphasizes, the purpose of engaging in health reform is to improve the performance of the health system, especially for the performance problems selected as targets for action. Step eight focuses on evaluating how the selected interventions influence health system outcomes. This could involve incorporating monitoring and evaluation into a learning agenda that seeks to assess how health reform interventions actually improve health system performance. Monitoring and evaluation are essential to help you in this endeavour.

While evaluation is at the end of the manual, you should in fact consider monitoring and evaluation throughout each step.

As mentioned in step five, one best practice when designing and implementing health reforms is to try proposed interventions in pilot tests (or field trials) to demonstrate that they will have the intended impact. With this approach, pilot tests are typically conducted after you have assessed the feasibility of implementing the interventions in a real-world context (step seven). However, implementation of health reform is sometimes pushed through without preliminary trials. Even in this case, regular monitoring is critical to implementation, and comprehensive evaluations should be conducted after implementation of the health reform plan.

Key actions in step eight:

-
- Devise your evaluation strategy early in the reform process, before implementation begins, including determining whether you will use before-and-after comparison, control groups or region-by-region implementation at different times.

 - Decide how you will collect data needed for evaluation, including who will collect the data, how much it will cost, measures to assure reliability, and how to avoid collecting too little or too much data.

 - Decide whether to use an external organization or an internal agency to perform the evaluation (after assessing the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches).

 - Answer five questions when planning the evaluation:
 1. Why conduct an evaluation?
 2. Who undertakes the evaluation?
 3. What do you evaluate?
 4. Who are the main audiences and how do you communicate the evaluation?
 5. Who will evaluate the evaluation?
-

Devise your evaluation strategy

It is worthwhile to distinguish between monitoring and evaluation as concepts.

- Monitoring refers to data collection and analysis undertaken during implementation so that you can take timely corrective action to improve both the process and the effects of your efforts. The intention of monitoring is to create relatively rapid and simple feedback loops on how you are doing, to provide information that assists in making immediate changes and in achieving specific targets. As noted in step seven, monitoring is typically conducted by the Implementation Team for its own use.
- Evaluation, on the other hand, occurs after implementation has reached a significant point (either at the end of a project or at regular points in implementation, such as after one year or every couple of years) in order to determine whether the reform is achieving its intended goals. Some evaluations seek to determine whether the reform interventions are actually driving changes in performance; others may be designed to capture data on unintended consequences of reform efforts.

The Health Reform Team should begin considering the evaluation strategy at the start of the reform process and continue thinking about evaluation throughout. Unlike some aspects of monitoring, evaluation should be conducted by an entity with some (arm's-length) objectivity. It could be performed by (or contracted to) an external agent, by an audit group within the government, or by a group situated at some distance from the Implementation Team. Assigning evaluation to an internal group involved with implementation can create conflicts of interest that may undermine the legitimacy, rigour and conclusions of the analysis.

There are different types of evaluations. For example, for a before-and-after comparison evaluation the Health Reform Team needs to collect baseline data before starting implementation and set up administrative systems to collect (and preserve) relevant information during implementation. Another option is to include control groups (such as geographical areas where the reform is not implemented, or where the reform is implemented after a certain period) to enable the evaluation to draw causal inferences between the interventions and the outcomes. If the latter option is preferred, then control groups need to be selected carefully and data collection needs to begin at an appropriate time before implementation starts. The decision to implement a reform successively region by region over time can create a so-called natural experiment to assess impacts, as occurred in Mexico (King et al., 2007). Broad strategic questions about evaluation designs need to be discussed, debated and decided by the Health Reform Team early in the health reform process.

Decide on data collection for evaluation

Chapter 2 of GHRR presents several lessons and cautions about data collection for evaluation. First, data collection is not free, and better data typically cost more to collect.

Second, the costs of data collection typically fall on the people doing the reporting. If the costs to them of gathering good data are too high, they will usually provide poor data. Third, it is possible to collect too much data, creating data cemeteries in which piles of dead data accumulate but are not analysed.

For certain types of evaluations (such as those requiring household or facility surveys, for example), and as discussed in relation to the performance assessment in step three, the Health Reform Team may decide to hire an external organization to collect and analyse data. The extent of data collection required for evaluation depends on many factors, including the evaluation's objectives, budget and timetable.

Plan the evaluation of your health reform

As the Health Reform Team plans to evaluate the health reform, the following five questions can guide strategic and operational decisions. (They may seem very similar to questions asked in the previous steps; however, the answers will vary in each step.)

1. **Why conduct an evaluation?** Think about the technical, ethical and political reasons for evaluation. Evaluation serves important technical objectives by seeking to determine whether the interventions selected are having the intended consequences on key measures of health system performance (both intermediate and final outcomes). Evaluation can provide lessons about how to improve the impact of a reform on health system performance and it can promote learning about the reform by many audiences.

Evaluation can also help you to assess core ethical concerns, including transparency and accountability when using public resources as well as the achievement of important distributional and equity goals (for example, in improving maternal mortality of disadvantaged ethnic groups or of specific geographic regions). Are the intended beneficiaries actually receiving the services targeted at them, with the expected impacts on outcomes?

Evaluation can also serve political purposes. For instance, it can generate evidence about the effectiveness of the health reform in achieving an administration's promised improvements in the health system, with the potential to rebut possible future efforts to roll back or even eliminate the policy changes introduced. In this sense, by showing that the reform is having its intended impacts, evaluation can serve as a kind of insurance policy against potential political opposition.

2. **Who does the evaluation?** As noted earlier, usually, an evaluation is not conducted by the organization responsible for implementation. However, a decision still must be made about whether to use an evaluation group within or outside government. This decision, along with the allocation of financial resources and budget, can affect the quality, timetable and accountability of the evaluation. Using an external organization may require a competitive bidding process; it will

usually require a written agreement and negotiation with the evaluation group, to ensure that the evaluators have the necessary technical skills and capacity to complete the evaluation in the required time (which can be influenced by political factors, such as the end of an administration and upcoming elections). The selection of the evaluation group also has important implications for the legitimacy and influence of the evaluation and final report.

3. **What do you evaluate?** An evaluation can focus on specific outcomes as measurable objectives as well as on various processes required for implementation. The decision about what you evaluate will determine the kinds of quantitative and qualitative methods that are used to assess health reform interventions. The design of the health reform may include specific objectives as targets. The evaluation group may also decide to assess performance achievements according to benchmarks, using other similar entities (other states or regions within a country, for example, or nearby countries for a national-level evaluation). The evaluation can assess health system processes using qualitative methods, as well as specific numeric targets using quantitative methods. The decisions about what to evaluate should be stipulated in the agreement with the evaluation group, and they will be shaped by the overall evaluation strategy (for example, a before-and-after evaluation versus an evaluation with control groups). The agreement can include specific benchmarks on what and when the evaluation group decides to evaluate, to allow for sufficient discussion and negotiation between the evaluation group and the Health Reform Team.
4. **Who are the main audiences for the evaluation and how do you communicate with them?** Deciding the audiences for your evaluation is critical to shape your communication plan for the evaluation and its conclusions. The audiences could include the senior political leaders for the country, national legislators, administrators for different parts of the health system, labour unions for the health sector and the general public – as well as international experts, multilateral organizations and donor agencies (depending on the country and the reform). Each audience could require different messages and communications strategies, ranging from social media to high-ranking scientific journals. For a major health reform evaluation, it may be appropriate and necessary to hire a professional communication strategy company to plan the messages and their effective delivery. This decision is best made early in the evaluation planning process. As noted earlier, evaluation is more than a technical exercise: it has ethical and political objectives too. The Health Reform Team needs to manage the process and perceptions of evaluation carefully to help assure the success of the overall reform process.
5. **Who will evaluate the evaluation?** This question concerns the legitimacy and credibility of the evaluation. There are three mechanisms to support positive perceptions of the evaluation: 1) assign the evaluation to an institution with a

strong international reputation for rigorous studies; 2) seek publication of the evaluation in an international peer-reviewed scientific journal with a strong reputation; and 3) create an advisory committee to oversee the evaluation process. However, in a polarized political environment, these mechanisms may not be sufficient to deter criticism of an evaluation and its underlying reform from the public and opposition groups.

Example evaluations

There are many textbooks, guides, articles, courses and other resources on how to evaluate health policies. The limited space and the objectives of this manual preclude a full review of the array of materials on policy or programme. Annex 5 highlights and provides references for a selection of health reform evaluations to illustrate what can be done, depending on your objectives, capacity, budget and reform.

Promote the sustainability and resilience of your reform

By itself, a positive evaluation of a health reform and its impacts does not guarantee policy sustainability and political resilience. The continuity of your health reform into the future depends on multiple factors, including financial resources, political competition and public support for the policy changes that have been implemented. There is a tendency among policy-makers to assume that path dependency will occur, such that positive feedback loops from key beneficiaries will sustain the reform against opposition (Pierson, 2000). But things do not always happen that way.

The near demise of President Barack Obama's health reform in the United States of America, which survived an attempted rollback by one single vote in the Senate shows how precarious that expected path dependency can be (Scott & Kliff, 2017). And the elimination of Seguro Popular in Mexico demonstrates that path dependency can be reversed – even after 16 years of implementation – when a new administration with different political priorities assumes power (Reich, 2020).

The key questions for the Health Reform Team are: How can you build in political resilience against the low probability that your opposition will come to power and seek to weaken, reverse or eliminate your reform? How can health reformers build legislative and judicial safeguards so that their changes will be sustained if the political opponents come to power? How can health reformers create political support among key stakeholders, and popular understanding and support among the general public and beneficiaries?

In a real sense, the success of a health reform is measured not only by its policy impacts (its consequences for key health system performance indicators), but also by its political resilience (its ability to survive and continue when the political opposition comes to power).

Summary

Step eight focuses on determining whether your health reform has in fact improved the performance of the health system – and on protecting these gains over time. While these actions are presented at the end of the manual, they should be considered at each stage. It uses monitoring and evaluation to answer the questions in your health reform’s learning agenda (which has its origins in step three and step four, among others). And it applies many strategies from the previous steps – including ethical appraisal, risk assessment, political analysis and strategic communication – to foster the resilience and continuity of the reform. Ultimately, step eight helps you see the current challenges facing the health system and may even lead you to begin the process again: asking whether to undertake a new health reform (step one).

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Introductory worksheet

Checklist of key actions for each step of health reform

This worksheet brings together the key actions from all eight steps, providing an overview of the entire health reform journey.

There are many ways that you could use this worksheet. You can use it to prepare to undertake health reform: using the checklist as the basis for drafting your anticipated process, adapted and tailored to your particular context. You can use it to develop agendas for Health Reform Team strategy discussions. You can also refer back to this checklist periodically as you move your health reform forward to ensure that you are addressing key tasks in each step.

Step one: Decide to start a health reform process

- Senior political leaders reflect on core values that shape social expectations of the health sector, especially the role of the market and state in their society, in consultation with a small circle of key advisors, allies and experts.
- Identify ethical principles for health system performance (related to consequences, rights and community virtues) that justify or motivate the selection of certain problems as the basis for starting a reform process.
- Examine the benefits and risks of engaging in health reform and the political opportunities to achieve reform, in order to decide whether to move forward.
- Decide, in consultation with a small circle of key advisors, allies and experts, to start a health reform process.

Step two: Create a Health Reform Team

- Using the policy cycle, sketch out a preliminary health reform process.
- Using your policy cycle sketch, identify the key skills and areas of expertise you need on the Health Reform Team for each step.
- Identify and recruit a small group of people with the necessary skills and expertise to start as the core group of your Health Reform Team.
- Position and provide resources to the team.
- Support the team to develop a shared mission, effective methods of communication and collaboration, and strategies to manage the rest of the steps in the health reform process.
- Support the team to create technical and advisory groups, network with partners and stakeholders, and engage consultants to fill gaps and bolster support for the proposed health reform.

Step three: Assess health system performance and define performance problems

- Decide what to assess, including the kinds of performance problems to assess (based on the intermediate and final performance objectives), and the types of analysis and analytic skills required.
- Decide who will undertake the assessment, considering external analysts outside of government and people on the Health Reform Team and in government agencies.
- Design the assessment, including the scope, the time and resources required, existing data sources and new data to be collected, with deadlines for deliverables.
- Analyse both primary and secondary data to generate a comprehensive assessment and identify major problems in need of diagnosis.

Step four: Diagnose the causes of performance problems

- Decide which performance problems to diagnose, using the assessment(s) from step three as well as the priorities defined by the Health Reform Team and political leadership.
- Decide who will undertake the diagnosis, considering both external analysts outside of government and internal analysts (on the Health Reform Team and in government agencies), alongside the time and resources required.
- Using a systems approach, describe the structure and functioning of the current health care system that is challenged by the selected performance problems.
- Using a systems approach, and primary and secondary data, construct a diagnostic tree to reveal the root causes of the performance problems.
- Link the root causes to the policy control knobs (and map linkages among the underlying causes) to identify areas for intervention in preparation for selecting reform options.

Step five: Decide your reform package

- Decide the scope of your reform, using evidence from the diagnosis, assessment and other policy studies.
- Decide on the package of interventions to include in your reform, considering the five policy control knobs.
- Decide whether to start with pilot tests or a full-scale approach.
- Decide the mechanism you will use to enact reform (legislation or executive decree).
- Decide a name for the reform package.
- Decide the timing of the reform effort.

Step six: Conduct political analysis and design political strategies

- Agree on the process for conducting an applied political analysis.
- Begin the stakeholder analysis by identifying persons or organizations with an interest in your policy and the potential to influence related decisions.
- Assess the position, interest and power of your stakeholders.
- Design and implement a set of political strategies to increase the likelihood of success for your health reform.
- Assess the political feasibility produced by your strategies and repeat your analysis as often as needed.

Step seven: Manage the implementation of health reform to achieve results

- Assess your team's capacity to drive delivery and implement the proposed interventions.
- Conduct an analysis of the politics of implementation.
- Develop an implementation plan with clearly defined indicators and targets, team assignments and timelines.
- Communicate effectively with stakeholders.
- Monitor progress towards objectives and address problems that arise.

Step eight: Evaluate impacts and create resilience for your health reform

- Devise your evaluation strategy early in the reform process, before implementation begins, including determining whether you will use before-and-after comparison, control groups or region-by-region implementation at different times.
- Decide how you will collect data needed for evaluation, including who will collect the data, how much it will cost, measures to assure reliability, and how to avoid collecting too little or too much data.
- Decide whether to use an external organization or an internal agency to perform the evaluation (after assessing the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches).
- Answer five questions when planning the evaluation:
 1. Why conduct an evaluation?
 2. Who undertakes the evaluation?
 3. What do you evaluate?
 4. Who are the main audiences and how do you communicate the evaluation?
 5. Who will evaluate the evaluation?

Worksheet 1.1

Guiding questions to define ethical principles for health reform

At the beginning of a health reform process, it is important to define the ethical values that underpin the effort. Clear ethical principles can serve as a guide to the Health Reform Team, political leaders and other stakeholders as they make many complex decisions.

However, agreeing on shared ethical principles is easier said than done. How your team goes about this complex undertaking can vary widely. Some health reformers use ethics case studies as a basis for collaborative deliberations, while others consult with experts (such as philosophers) to define the principles. Your process must be determined by what is appropriate and effective in your specific political and social context.

Regardless of which process you use, the goal is to reach agreement on a few clearly stated ethical principles for the overall health reform effort. The Health Reform Team (or process facilitator) should work with the people involved in the consultation to prepare a memo or other written document that details the ethical principles articulated. This document can then be referred to throughout the rest of the health reform effort.

The sample questions that follow can help you prepare for, conduct and document the results of the deliberation process (you may decide to include others that are relevant in your specific context).

Considerations for creating a process to define the ethical principles of your health reform:

- **Who facilitates the process?** The process facilitator should have expertise and skills in both ethical analysis and in leading difficult discussions. It might be important to use an external facilitator, such as an expert facilitator from another country, to guide the process, as someone seen by all participants as being objective can be helpful. On the other hand, the facilitator must also have sufficient local standing to authenticate the process.
- **Who is involved in the process?** Consider including a wide range of stakeholders who are affected by and involved in the health system (including people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and with relevant experience in ethical analysis).
- **What process is used?** It is important to create time and space for meaningful deliberation, but the process also needs to be goal-oriented and time-limited.
- **Do the deliberators have a shared vocabulary for the discussions?** Ensuring that they do may require presentations on ethical perspectives (such as utilitarianism, liberalism and communitarianism) and other relevant issues (such as measurements of population health and individual health).

Sample topics for deliberation

- How should we measure health and well-being? How do we compare the importance of short-term and long-term impact? Which aspects of health and well-being will this reform prioritize?
- Whose well-being does this health reform aim to improve? Do we invest in the health of all people equally or scale investments based on people's actual needs? What is the population this reform targets?
- Which civil and human rights pertain to health? Which aspects of health care are the responsibility of the government, and which are the responsibility of the individual? How will this reform contribute to meeting the government's obligations to promote human rights?

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Selected further reading

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Roberts MJ, Reich MR (2002). Ethical analysis in public health. *Lancet*. Mar 23;359(9311):1055-59 ([https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(02\)08097-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(02)08097-2)).

Voorhoeve A, Tan-Torres Edejer T, Kapiriri L, Frithjof Norheim O, Snowden J, Basenya O et al. (2017). Making fair choices on the path to universal health coverage: applying principles to difficult cases. *Health Syst Reform*. 3(4):301-12 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/23288604.2017.1324938>).

WHO (2014). *Making fair choices on the path to universal health coverage: final report of the WHO Consultative Group on Equity and Universal Health Coverage (especially Chapters 3 and 5)*. Geneva: World Health Organization (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/112671>).

Worksheet 1.2 Guiding questions for an informal risk assessment

These questions provide starting points for a basic analysis of the possible risks and benefits of health reform. You can adapt or add to this table as appropriate in your specific context.

As you identify possible risks and harms, assign two ratings (of low, medium or high): one rating is the likelihood of a particular risk occurring; the second rating is the magnitude of the possible harms that would result.

Once you have identified the most concerning risks (either because they are highly likely to occur or because they would create significant harm), you can prioritize developing risk management and mitigation strategies for them.

Guiding questions	Your notes	Likelihood (low, medium, high)	Magnitude of harm (low, medium, high)
Ethical considerations			
What ethical values would be advanced if the health reform is enacted?			
Who opposes these values?			
What harms could occur if opponents mobilize against the reform?			
What ethical values would be undermined if the health reform is enacted?			
Who opposes these values?			
What harms could occur if supporters mobilize against the reform?			
Political considerations			
Which stakeholder groups would be affected by the health reform?			
Which groups would gain and which would lose?			
What harms could occur if the losing stakeholders mobilize against the reform?			
What harms could occur if the winning stakeholders are strengthened by the reform?			

Guiding questions	Your notes	Likelihood (low, medium, high)	Magnitude of harm (low, medium, high)
Which political leaders/parties would benefit if the reform is approved? What would they gain (power, influence, achievement of campaign promises, institutional authority, access to resources, etc.)?			
What harms could occur if these political leaders/parties accrue gains?			
Which political leaders/parties will be harmed if the reform is approved? What would they lose (power, influence, achievement of campaign promises, institutional authority, access to resources, etc.)?			
What harms could occur if these political leaders/parties incur losses?			
What are the political ramifications if you undertake the reform and it fails to be enacted?			
What political harms would occur if the reform fails?			
Technical considerations			
What are the possible repercussions if the health reform package you select is enacted but it fails to improve health system performance?			
What harms could be created for the population if the health reform package fails (health status, confidence in the state and the health system, financial risk, etc.)?			
What harms could be created for health care providers if the health reform package fails?			
What recurring costs would be generated if the health reform succeeds? Where will the resources come from? What endeavours would be defunded?			
What harms could come from allocating the required resources towards the reform?			

Guiding questions	Your notes	Likelihood (low, medium, high)	Magnitude of harm (low, medium, high)
What harms could occur if the reform is enacted and then later repealed?			
Other considerations			
What resources are required for the process of designing, passing and implementing health reform? Where will the resources come from? What would happen if the resources were removed before the process is complete?			
What harms could occur by allocating resources to pursuing health reform?			
What harms could occur to you and other proponents of the reform if it is fails to be enacted?			
What harms could occur to you and other proponents of the reform if it is enacted but fails to improve health system performance?			
What are the three most likely risks? What strategies could be implemented to manage or mitigate these risks?			
1. 2. 3.			
What are the three most potentially harmful risks? What strategies could be implemented to manage or mitigate these risks?			
1. 2. 3.			

Worksheet 4.1

Information required to understand the policy control knobs in the current health care system

Control knob	Information needed	Suggested data sources	Affected outcomes
Financing	<p>Resource mobilization</p> <p>Figures and multi-year trends for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> total health expenditure (THE) per capita THE as share of gross domestic product (GDP) government health expenditure (GHE) as a share of government expenditure (to assess how the government prioritizes health) government spending as a share of GDP (to assess the fiscal capacity of a country) 	<p>National health accounts</p> <p>Government budget</p>	<p>Financial risk protection</p> <p>Equity</p>
	<p>Risk pooling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compare share of THE from various sources, including: OOP/E, GHE, social health insurance (SHI), community-based insurance, private insurance, international/donor aid. How many SHI schemes are there? For each one, identify: share of the population covered; eligibility criteria; value of premiums/contributions; who pays premiums/contributions; share of eligible population actually enrolled. If private insurance exists, in addition to the information asked for from SHI, also document: What does a scheme typically cover (for example, does it replace or augment public coverage)? Is it an indemnity policy; group health insurance sold via employer, rider policy for life insurance 	<p>National health accounts</p> <p>Policy documents from SHI agencies and private insurance schemes</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Equity</p> <p>Financial risk protection</p> <p>Access and (un)equal access</p>
	<p>Resource allocation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % GHE spending by type of facility (hospitals, clinics, public health, etc.). % GHE spending by function (curative, preventive, primary care, secondary/tertiary care, public health). SHI benefit packages (what services and/or providers are covered; cost sharing). 	<p>National health accounts</p> <p>SHI policy documents</p>	<p>Efficiency (allocative)</p> <p>Access and (un)equal access</p>

Control knob	Information needed	Suggested data sources	Affected outcomes
Payment	<p>Public-sector provider payment mechanisms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are public hospitals/clinics paid for services/facilities provided (by the government, SHI programmes, patients, etc.)? • At public hospitals/clinics, how are health care personnel paid (including specialists, physicians, nurses, other staff)? What is the mix of fixed salaries and incentives? If incentives are provided, how are they determined? <p>Private-sector provider payment mechanisms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are private health facilities typically paid for services provided? If they are contracted/empanelled by SHI programmes, how are they paid? • How are private-sector personnel typically paid (including specialists, physicians, nurses, and other staff)? How are financial incentives determined? 	Interviews SHI policy documents	Efficiency Quality
Organization	<p>The roles, scale and scope of public and private providers in health care delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share of admissions/visits (at tertiary, secondary and primary levels) and beds for public, private for-profit and private not-for-profit providers. • Share of inpatient services at public versus private facilities (disaggregated by urban/rural and by income level). • Share of outpatient services at public versus private facilities (disaggregated by urban/rural and by income level). • Prevalence of informal-sector providers (where applicable). • For inpatient services (tertiary and secondary), how do public and private facilities differ regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • services provided (for example, general versus speciality)? • locations? • opening hours? • amenities? • patients' perceptions of clinical and personal quality? • fees? 	Government statistics Surveys Informant interviews	Access and (un)equal access Quality Efficiency

Control knob	Information needed	Suggested data sources	Affected outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For outpatient/primary care, how do public and private differ in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • services provided (for example, general vs. specialty)? • locations? • opening hours? • amenities? • patients' perceptions of clinical and personal quality? • fees? • care provider qualifications (including informal providers)? • Why do people choose public- versus private-sector services? • To what extent does dual practice exist? • Are there any vertically integrated delivery systems? If yes, describe or find a case study. • What is the geographic distribution of different types of providers? • If there is SHI, do they empanel public and private providers? What are their criteria for empanelment? 			
<p>Market-level organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe, in general, the market structure and dynamics for inpatient services. For example, are they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dominated by the public sector, with the private sector playing a complementary or supplementary role? • dominated by a few large public and private hospitals? • competitive? If so, what do they compete on? 		Existing studies Informant interviews	Efficiency Quality
<p>Institutional-level organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public hospitals and clinics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are their primary sources of funding (for example, government budget, SHI payments, patients' direct OOPe)? • How are physicians/other staff employed? How are they paid? What promotion criteria/opportunities exist? How are positions assigned? Do they use contracts or a tenure system? Is dual practice common (and is it allowed or just occurs in practice) 		Existing studies Organizational policy documents Informant interviews	Efficiency Quality

Control knob	Information needed	Suggested data sources	Affected outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What autonomy do hospitals/clinics have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in hiring/firing staff? • financially (for example, are they allowed to raise additional capital? Can they decide on use of savings or investments? Do they procure and pay for their own supplies?)? • What is the accountability structure? What are they accountable for, to whom and what consequences do they face? • Private (describe for-profit and not-for-profit institutional systems separately): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who owns the institutions? • What are the institutions' primary objectives/missions? • What relationship do the institutions have with the physicians and other staff? Are they contracted or employed as staff? What are the arrangements for compensation, privileges, cost/revenue sharing, etc.? 		
Regulation	<p>What are the main government regulatory agencies and authorities involved in the health care delivery system?</p> <p>What regulations exist, and how are they enforced (for public, private for-profit and not-for-profit, formal and informal service providers) regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • entry? • prices/fees? • quality/safety? • advertising? <p>What regulations exist, and how are they enforced, regarding pharmaceuticals?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there an essential drug list? If so, set by which agencies? • How are the prices of medicines set and regulated? • How are medicines procured? • Is advertising allowed? <p>What regulations exist, and how are they enforced, for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SHI (if present)? • significant private insurance schemes? <p>How are professional associations (for example, medical associations, hospital associations, associations of pharmaceutical manufacturers, etc.) involved in developing and enforcing regulations?</p>	<p>Policy documents</p> <p>Existing analyses</p> <p>Interviews</p>	<p>Quality</p> <p>Access</p>

Control knob	Information needed	Suggested data sources	Affected outcomes
Persuasion	<p>What major government efforts (excluding financial incentives) exist to persuade various key actors (providers, patients, general population, policy-makers, etc.) to change their behaviours?</p> <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • public education campaigns • social marketing campaigns • behaviour change interventions • information dissemination on SHI eligibility, enrolment, benefit packages. 	<p>Government documents/ websites</p> <p>Informant interviews</p>	<p>Access</p> <p>Quality</p>

Worksheet 6.1

Get ready to begin your applied political analysis

In preparing for your applied political analysis, you should discuss and decide:

Item	Key information
Audience/client for the political analysis: Who will read your report?	
Who will put into action the political strategies suggested by your analysis?	
What is the key health system performance problem to be addressed by the reform?	
What is the current stage(s) of the health reform in the policy cycle?	
Policy proposal: What is the proposed solution to the performance problem you have identified?	
What are the key elements of the policy proposal?	
What is the current level of stakeholder knowledge about the proposal and its details?	

Worksheet 6.2

Identify your stakeholders

Consider the following questions as you complete the stakeholder table (overleaf) for each category:

- Who is affected by the health system performance problem? Who is currently disadvantaged or benefits from the status quo?
- Who is likely to be affected by the changes that would result from your policy reform? Who will be affected positively or negatively?
- How will these benefits or losses be distributed across different groups or subgroups?
- Who are the key actors making decisions about the performance problem or the policy reform to be implemented? Who has influence over them?
- Who will lead implementation of the reform?
- Are there any civil society groups that might influence the perception of the issue, or the alignment of actors for or against your chosen solution?

In compiling your list of stakeholders, think of groups who are already mobilized around the performance problem, including those who are affected directly by it, those who will have a major role in deciding whether and how the performance problem is addressed, and those who would like to shape whether and how the problem is addressed.

Experienced policy-makers, political advisors and activists often have in their minds their own list of important stakeholders, with a good intuitive sense of each stakeholder's position, level of power and interest in an issue. Find someone you trust and use them as a guide in the political analysis.

You should seek to compile a comprehensive list of stakeholders, but one that is not so long that it is hard to manage. There is no correct number for your list of stakeholders. But the Health Reform Team (or a subteam on political analysis) should discuss each potential stakeholder and reach agreement about which groups to include in the stakeholder analysis.

The table on the next page is designed to help you create a preliminary list of stakeholders, with your initial estimate of their position on the health reform and options for how you might contact them. As always, you can modify the table to add to its relevance in your particular context.

List of stakeholders

Stakeholder category	Stakeholder	Anticipated position on reform	How to reach them
Bureaucracies			
Interest groups			
Political leaders			
Financial decision-makers			
Donors			
Beneficiaries			

Worksheet 6.3

Analyse the positions, power and interests of your stakeholders

You can expand your list of potential stakeholders from Worksheet 6.2 using the format overleaf to analyse each stakeholder's position on the reform, their level of power and their interest in the effort.

You can also use the downloadable PolicyMaker software (Reich & Cooper, 2010) to create a visual power and position map.

How can you ensure that your assessments in the position map are accurate?

One way to systematically assess stakeholders' positions on your health reform proposal is to conduct interviews with key individuals. You need to develop an interview guide for this.

Keep in mind that some stakeholders, even in a direct face-to-face interview, may not state their positions and interests explicitly. Other stakeholders may refuse to participate in interviews. You may need to approach certain stakeholders with extra care and sensitivity, depending on the context.

Identifying the position and power of stakeholders can be assisted by triangulation of information across different interviews (including the views of other stakeholders) and sources (such as public statements, news articles, social media posts, and published and unpublished documents).

Assessing the power and position of stakeholders inevitably involves some degree of subjective judgement. This subjectivity can be reduced to some degree through discussion and debate among members of the political analysis team.

See Reich & Campos (2020) for additional instructions on how to conduct an applied political analysis.

References

Reich MR, Campos PA (2020). A guide to applied political analysis for health reform. Working Paper No. 1. Boston, MA: India Health Systems Project, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/2216/2020/08/Guide-Applied-Political-Analysis-final-2020.08.29-FINAL.pdf>).

Reich MR, Cooper DM (2010). PolicyMaker 4.0: computer-assisted political analysis, [software]. Brookline, MA: PoliMap (<https://michaelreich.com/policymaker-software>).

Worksheet 7.1

Guiding questions for a delivery capacity review

The following questions can guide your delivery capacity review process:

- Do the organizations that are important for implementation and their senior leaders share the objectives that are embodied in the reform?
- Is there a coalition that can drive and lead the pursuit of those objectives? What capacity do they have? If committees and taskforces already exist, how often do they meet and can they take on additional efforts?
- Does the Health Reform Team understand the delivery challenges?
- Does the Health Reform Team have the ability to collect and analyse performance data related to your reform objectives? Do the leaders of the Health Reform Team use these data to understand the most important patterns of performance? Do they regularly assess the drivers of their biggest performance challenges?
- Do the leaders of the Health Reform Team have a written strategy for implementation of the reform? Have they conducted a rigorous and evidence-based analysis of that strategy's capacity to influence the performance problem(s)? Does the Health Reform Team have sufficient data to set ambitious but realistic targets?
- Does the Health Reform Team have defined strategies to drive delivery? What regular routines have been established to ensure that leaders are getting the information they need, on a regular enough basis, to know whether implementation is on track? When problems arise, what is their approach to solve issues quickly?

Worksheet 7.2

Stakeholder analysis for health reform implementation

Use this table to summarize and track key stakeholders, any challenges you anticipate each stakeholder will face (or create) during implementation, and the political management strategies you could use to address the challenges. (You will definitely need to add more rows in each category.)

You may want to consider if you have defined appropriate strategies to manage in all six directions shown in Fig. 6.

Stakeholders	Anticipated political challenges during implementation	Political strategies to mitigate implementation risks
Beneficiaries		
Bureaucracies		
Interest groups		
Political leaders		
Financial decision-makers		
Donors		

Worksheet 7.3

Implementation plan questions

The following questions can be used to guide the development of your implementation plan:

- Have you detailed a specific and complete set of implementation activities in the plan? Are the interactions/intersections between the various activities well-defined? Does each activity have a target timeframe defined?
- Is each implementation activity clearly connected to one or more of the objectives of the health reform? Does every objective of the health reform have activities associated with it?
- Is there an owner (a person or stakeholder group) responsible for implementing each activity?
- Is it clear who else (in addition to the owner) needs to contribute to implementing each activity? Is it clear when and how these contributions will happen?
- Is there an indicator of success (or progress) for each activity? Does the plan describe how to measure success for each activity?
- Is there a target for each indicator? (A target is the desired performance level you want to achieve on an indicator. It should be defined as specifically as possible, in terms of quantifiable values and time).
- Do you have systems in place to collect and analyse implementation monitoring data effectively?
- Does the plan include a reasonable schedule for reviewing monitoring data (and other assessments of progress)? How will the results of reviews be communicated back to the implementers?
- Does the plan identify the most likely and most severe anticipated risks that could prevent the achievement of each reform objective?
- Does the plan include reasonable strategies to identify, mitigate and manage these risks?

Worksheet 7.4

Track implementation progress

You can use this template to plan and track implementation, adapting it to your context.

Activity	Who is responsible? (leader, team)	When will it be done? (timeline)	What is the indicator of success?	Budget (or other required resources)	Anticipated risks	Current status/ date
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						

Worksheet 7.5

Guiding questions to develop communications strategies

The following questions can guide the development of your communication strategies:

- **Who are your audiences?** You will have multiple target audiences, including, for example: the various stakeholder groups, supportive political leadership, oppositional political leadership, health service providers and other staff working in the health system, your intended beneficiaries and the general population. You also have internal audiences, including members of your Health Reform Team and other experts and consultants you have brought on board during the reform process.
- **What message do you want to convey to each audience?** Knowing your different audiences allows you to shape your messages. This is the core of your communication strategy: the specific framing of your efforts to appeal to each audience. Your messages should be presented in simple language and framed to demonstrate how the health reform fits with the ethics and values of your different audiences. As you develop your messages, consider what you want each audience to learn, understand or do.
- **How do you reach each audience?** This consideration includes three components of communication: medium, messenger and timing. When you have determined the messages you want to deliver, next you have to figure out: the best way to deliver it, who you want to be seen representing the health reform, and when the audience is open to receiving information. These factors can vary depending on your local context and the reform package. Are members of the Health Reform Team influential enough to deliver your messages (for example, on talk radio programmes) or do you need a celebrity spokesperson to draw attention? Are written materials and a passive website enough to share information or do you have to train community advocates to go house-to-house to share details on the reform package?
- **What resources are required to develop and deliver your communications?** Think about the budget (how much, where it comes from, what restrictions it comes with, what reporting is required, etc.). Also, think more broadly about resources, such as: staff time and skills, expert guidance, technological requirements, materials and supplies, access to mass media and social media, time to prepare and test messaging with intended audiences, and time and effort involved in engaging and educating spokespeople and other influential supporters.

Annex 1

Methods

This publication was developed over a two-year period (starting in February 2023) by a multidisciplinary and international team. The goal was to present a practical approach on how to do health reform in real-world settings. The eight-step method presented in this manual is based on a recognized body of work on health reform and related teaching, research and technical support to national governments and bilateral and multilateral agencies, all using the textbook *Getting health reform right: A guide to improving performance and equity* (Roberts et al., 2004) as a foundation. This manual provides government officials and other users with practical actions that can be considered in addressing challenges that arise in health reform processes. The document does not recommend specific substantive policy measures.

The process for developing this document included: reviews of peer-reviewed and grey literature, pilot-testing early drafts with national health reform teams, and using full drafts in health system reform courses in national and international contexts. For example, a draft of the manual was used in the Capacity Strengthening Programme for Health Systems in India, which has trained over 90 mid-career and senior health systems researchers, policy-makers and practitioners in India. The manual was also presented at academic seminars and conferences, including a half-day capacity strengthening session at the Eighth Global Symposium on Health Systems Research in 2024 in Nagasaki, Japan, which included over 100 participants from 16 countries. The manual was required reading in three Harvard graduate courses on health reform (taught during three years with a total of over 100 students from more than 20 countries). Following each event, revisions were made to the manual based on the discussions, feedback and comments received from participants.

The authors solicited multiple reviews from external experts. Reviewers for earlier drafts of the manual included leading public health professors on health systems, a former minister of health and other national health officials, and officials in international agencies. Feedback from each reviewer was addressed through repeated revisions by the authors.

In June 2024, the document was submitted to the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research at WHO for consideration for publication. The Alliance sent the draft to independent reviewers with research and practical experience in health reform processes. The authors made revisions to the text and responded to all comments received from the reviewers. The revised text and responses were incorporated into a final version that followed WHO style and standards.

The manual mentions various examples of national experiences with health reform to illustrate specific analytical points but does not provide detailed case studies. Countries mentioned in the text include Bangladesh, the Dominican Republic, China,

Ghana, India, Mexico, Türkiye and the United States of America. For each example, the manual provides references to peer-reviewed articles from the scientific literature. These references describe and explain the reform experiences in relation to the eight steps of health reform. The examples in the text were selected because they illustrate specific analytical points in the health reform process (and some examples are based on the authors' research and work experiences). The examples in Annex Five were selected to illustrate a range of the different kinds of evaluations that have been undertaken for three prominent and well-studied cases of health reform (Mexico's Seguro Popular, Ghana's National Health Insurance Scheme, and Andhra Pradesh's Aarogyasri Health Insurance Scheme in India). The types of evaluation presented are an impact evaluation, a process evaluation, a utilization assessment, and an assessment of impacts on access and financial risk protection.

In conclusion, this document offers guidance on how to do health reform in eight practical steps. The document provides government officials and other users with practical actions for consideration when addressing challenges that arise in health reform processes strategically and methodically. However, the manual does not recommend specific substantive policy measures. The document does not argue that this is the only way to do health reform. Instead, the manual provides an overview of possible approaches, questions to consider and how to anticipate likely challenges.

Annex 2

Key terms and concepts

This list of key terms and concepts is excerpted from a glossary prepared for the Workshop on the Flagship Learning Program, which was held in July 2018 and was sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development's Health Finance and Governance Project in partnership with the World Bank. The Flagship Learning Program and its framework (hereafter, the Flagship Framework) are both based on the GHRR approach to health system reform.

Term	Definition
Access	In the Flagship Framework, access is an intermediate performance goal that refers to how health services are made available to, and are reached by, the people who need them. Access combines the concepts of effective availability, physical availability (see separate entries) and utilization of services.
Analysis, ethical	A process to assess and select health policy according to a philosophical and values-driven point of view.
Analysis, political	A process to assess the political factors that affect the feasibility of adopting or implementing a selected health reform. More specifically, as a methodological approach, applied political analysis is the systematic investigation of the interests, positions and power of stakeholders regarding the formulation, adoption or implementation of a policy, including the development of political strategies to assist in managing change.
Analysis, technical	A process to determine the resources and capacities required to address a health problem in society, and how these should be applied in order to adopt and implement health reform. A technical analysis may include epidemiological, economic, demographic and implementation analyses.
Availability, effective	The degree to which it is possible for members of a population to find and receive appropriate health care for their health needs, despite barriers such as high prices, limited hours of operation or cultural appropriateness.
Availability, physical	The degree to which health goods and services (including providers, beds and commodities) are present and usable when and where a population needs access to them.
Benchmarking	The process of using the example (and measure) of the performance of one health system (or some other external standard) to assess the performance of another. Benchmarking is often used as the starting point for a discussion of performance problems.

Term	Definition
Causal chain	The series of successive explanations of the sources of a performance problem; a series of explanations within a causal tree created when causal analysis is conducted.
Change team	See Health Reform Team.
Communitarianism	The ethical perspective of communitarianism posits that the values of a community depend on the characters of those who are part of it, and that public policy should ensure that individuals can develop virtue (as defined by the community) in order to produce a good society. A universal communitarian believes that there is a single and universal model for a “good” individual and society, while a relativist communitarian believes that the definition of “good” is inherently contextual and varies across different societies.
Contracting	A payment arrangement in which a written agreement (contract) is created between a buyer, who agrees to provide a certain amount of money to the seller, and the seller, who agrees to provide certain goods or services within a given period of time. Contracting allows the parties to create detailed and flexible incentives and can foster market competition among sellers. All parties need to have certain technical and administrative capacities to manage the negotiation and implementation of contracts, and a system needs to exist to impose penalties if the terms of a contract are not met.
Control knob (or policy instrument)	An area of the health sector that can be changed by public policy, that is typically under the control of policy-makers and that affects the performance of the health sector. The Flagship Framework proposes five control knobs (or policy instruments): financing, payment, regulation, organization and persuasion (see separate entries).
Control knob, financing	The government’s ability to use different mechanisms to mobilize and allocate money to fund health sector activities. Financing (raising funds) determines how much money is available, who bears the financial burdens, who controls the funds, how risks are pooled, and whether health care costs can be controlled.
Control knob, organization	The government’s ability to shape how the health system is structured and how individual institutions function. Four primary characteristics of a health system that are included within this aspect are: the mix of institutions (public versus private) providing health care services; how activities are divided among these institutions; how these institutions interact with each other and with other political and economic systems in society; and the internal administrative structures and management of the institutions.

Term	Definition
Control knob, payment	The structures and mechanisms through which health care providers and facilities are paid for delivering health services. Different payment methods create different incentives for the buyers and sellers of health services; these incentives influence their behaviours and can be adjusted to change health system performance.
Control knob, persuasion	The government's ability to influence how individuals act (in other words, to persuade them to change their behaviour) on a population-wide basis to protect and promote health systems performance. Many persuasion control knob activities aim to change behaviour through information, education and social marketing, as well as other so-called nudge activities; behaviour control knob activities can also be more coercive, such as indoctrination or prohibitions. This control knob is typically directed at health service providers or patients.
Control knob, regulation	The government's ability to use coercive power to impose constraints on or change the behaviours of individuals and organizations in the health sector, both public and private. Regulatory actions can be used to organize and improve the functioning of markets, including protecting consumers against market failures. Regulation can include various forms of legal instruments to establish guidelines, set requirements and impose penalties for non-compliance.
Deliverology	A systematic approach to drive progress and create results in the implementation of public policy; the term was popularized by Sir Michael Barber (Barber, Moffit & Kihn, 2011).
Diagnostic tree	An analytical tool to determine and represent the series of causes of a problem. In a diagnostic tree of a health system performance problem, branching points represent possible causes for a situation, and multiple causes for a problem can co-exist.
Efficiency	A measure of how much can be accomplished towards set goals with finite resources. A health system can be considered efficient when the right services are produced, and they are produced in the right way, to achieve the desired goals. (See separate entries on technical efficiency and allocative efficiency.)
Efficiency, allocative	The degree to which a system, such as a health system, produces the most gains possible in a performance outcome (such as health status) through appropriate distribution of resources across different activities. Allocative efficiency affects what is produced, and it seeks to produce the optimal set of outputs to achieve the given goal. It is typically determined by planners and budget allocators, more so than by managers or providers.

Term	Definition
Efficiency, technical	The degree to which an output (such as a health service or commodity) is provided or produced at the minimum possible cost per unit. Technical efficiency depends on how inputs are used to create outputs, and it is often determined by managers and workers. This concept is also known as productive efficiency.
Equity	The degree to which every individual (or group) experiences the same benefits of a policy as every other individual (or group). It can be measured horizontally (among individuals within a group) or vertically (among different groups). (See separate entries.)
Equity, horizontal	The degree to which a public policy has a similar impact on all people within a single income group.
Equity, vertical	The degree to which a public policy has a similar impact on all income groups in a population.
Financial risk protection	An ultimate goal of health reform, in which individuals and households are able to avoid unexpected expenses or extreme impoverishment due to poor health and the costs of paying for health services.
Fiscal space (or fiscal capacity)	The financial resources available from different sources within a society that can be mobilized to pay for health expenditures.
Governance	A complex set of political processes undertaken by a government or other authority related to defining priorities and decision-making about policies and implementation. In addition, governance involves establishing regulations, assuring transparency and enforcing accountability.
Health benefit package	An explicit list of health services and products that are provided for individuals covered by a health insurance scheme.
Health insurance, private	A nongovernmental (either for-profit or not-for-profit) system in which insured parties voluntarily pay a premium in return for guarantees of specific compensation or benefits if certain unpredictable events (such as ill health) occur in the future.
Health insurance, social (SHI)	A system in which all eligible individuals must enroll and pay premiums in return for guarantees of specific compensation or benefits if certain unpredictable events (such as ill health) occur in the future. Many social insurance systems levy premiums as a percentage tax on an individual's wages. SHI systems may have a wider pool of risk, as well as a wider pool of revenue sources, than private health insurance systems.

Term	Definition
Health reform cycle	A model describing how policies for the health sector are designed, implemented and evaluated. In the Flagship Framework, the health policy cycle is an iterative process that involves: problem definition, causal diagnosis, policy development, political decision, implementation and finally, evaluation. Evaluation leads to the identification of new problems and the cycle begins again.
Health reform team	A group of people who collaborate to shepherd a health reform through policy design and adoption. Members of a Health Reform Team (also “change team”) are often people with policy expertise and the political capacity to mobilize others in support of the reform. The composition, positioning and power of a change team has a significant impact on the likely success of the reform efforts.
Health sector reform	The complex process of designing and implementing policies that purposefully seek to influence the societal and institutional policies and organizations that create, protect and promote the health of the population.
Health status	A measure of the health of a population, often assessed using an index that combines various measures such as life expectancy, mortality and morbidity rates, or prevalence of priority health problems.
Health system	A complex arrangement of treatment providers, prevention service providers, financiers and intermediaries, input producers, planners, administrators and regulators whose collective efforts result in the provision of health care services. The Flagship Framework views the health system as the means to achieve three ultimate goals: health status, customer satisfaction and protection from financial risks related to health care expenses.
Health system strengthening	A complex set of actions intended to improve structures and processes in the health system in order to enhance performance towards the ultimate achievement of: improved health status of the population, consumer satisfaction with health services and financial risk protection from the costs of health care.
Implementation	The process through which a public policy is carried out in practice to produce social impacts.
Incentive	A benefit that accrues to individuals or groups if they adopt the desired new behaviours.

Term	Definition
Interest group	A social group with a set of common interests that seeks to influence the government (or other institutions) to move in a particular direction to protect those interests. Examples of interest groups in the health sector include consumer groups, medical associations and pharmaceutical industry associations.
Intersectoral action	An intervention or action that involves multiple government sectors (such as health, education and agriculture) working together, often in a coordinated and integrated way, to improve health status in society.
Liberalism	An approach to ethics, based on the work of philosopher Immanuel Kant, that ascribes fundamental rights to all people on the basis of each individual's capacity for moral action. See also the entries for positive rights (the foundation of liberal egalitarian perspectives) and negative rights (which underlie libertarian perspectives).
Monitoring and evaluation	Monitoring and evaluation are two, often complementary, approaches to assess the success (or not) and impact of a programme or intervention. Monitoring focuses on tracking and analysing progress against the goals and objectives of an intervention, while evaluation assesses the significance and impact of an intervention on final outcomes.
National health accounts	A framework and tools to measure and track data on a nation's health expenditures.
Payer	The entity (such as a government or an insurance plan) that decides which health services to pay for and that manages the methods used to pay for these services.
Payment, out-of-pocket	A payment method in which the patient pays for health services and medicines from their own resources.
Payment, provider	A general term that refers to the method used to pay physicians and other health care providers for services offered. Payment options include: fee-for-service, capitation, salary or salary plus bonus. Each method creates different incentives related to technical efficiency and quality of health services.
Performance goals	The core aims of a health system. In the Flagship Framework, a health system's ultimate performance goals include: the health status of the population, citizen satisfaction with health services and financial risk protection from health expenditures (see separate entries).

Term	Definition
Performance measures, intermediate	Health system characteristics that can be influenced by policy change and are a means to having an impact on ultimate performance goals. The Flagship Framework focuses on three intermediate performance measures: efficiency, access and quality (see separate entries).
Performance problem	An area of health system functioning that is targeted for priority attention and reform. The Flagship Framework focuses on selecting a performance problem of a specific ultimate health system goal as the starting point to conduct a diagnostic tree.
Policy cycle	The process through which policies are designed and utilized. (See separate entry: health reform cycle.) The Flagship Framework's cycle is: problem definition --> diagnosis --> policy development --> political decision --> implementation --> evaluation. The Flagship Framework also emphasizes the role of ethics and politics throughout the policy cycle.
Political feasibility	The likelihood that a proposed health policy or reform can be adopted and implemented successfully within a particular society. Political feasibility depends on the relevant players, their levels of power, their positions on the proposed reform and perceptions of its likely impact.
Private provider	Individuals and institutions that deliver health care outside of the public sector.
Public satisfaction	A measure of how the public (including patients, other health system customers, consumers, citizens and taxpayers) evaluate the health care they receive.
Purchasing, strategic	Deliberate decisions about which health services and commodities to buy, from whom and how, to effectively strike a balance between gains in efficiency and improved quality and delivery of services.
Quality, clinical	An assessment of how the skills of health care providers, inputs and the system of health care delivery result in an increased likelihood of the desired health outcome.
Resource allocation	Decision-making about how finite funds, supplies and human resources are distributed to address the needs of a particular population.
Rights, negative	Protections that guarantee individuals' freedom to choose what they want to do with their own lives and property, without intervention by the government. Negative rights are the basis for libertarian ethical perspectives that see the role of the government as taking minimal actions to protect individual property rights and personal liberty.

Term	Definition
Rights, positive	Protections that guarantee individuals a certain level of services and resources (such as a minimum level of income, shelter, education or health care) that make other meaningful life choices possible and that establish equality of opportunity. Positive rights are typically associated with liberal egalitarian ethical perspectives that seek to redistribute social resources to help the worst-off and provide all individuals in a population with equal opportunities.
Risk pooling	The act of including people with widely varying levels of risk for disease in a health insurance programme. Risk pooling recognizes that illnesses and the associated health care costs are distributed unevenly among the people in a population. By combining people with diverse levels of risk into a programme, the contributions of those at low risk of needing health care subsidize the costs incurred by those who need health services.
Sector (public or private)	A sub-section of the economy, such as the health sector. The public sector refers to the set of organizations controlled by the government, while the private sector comprises organizations controlled by individuals, private corporations or non-governmental organizations.
Stakeholder analysis	The process of determining which individuals and groups have an interest in a particular policy, their positions on the policy and the level of power that each has, in order to develop strategies that improve the political feasibility of adopting or implementing a public policy by strengthening supporters and weakening detractors.
Total health expenditure (THE)	A measure of spending on health that combines all public and private payments within a society, often presented per capita.
Universal health coverage (UHC)	A health system that ensures that everyone obtains the health services they need without financial hardships.
Utilitarianism	A philosophical perspective that advocates assessing interventions by analysing their consequences and selecting those that maximize the degree of well-being (or "utility") that can be created for the population.
Utility	A concept in classical economics, articulated by Jeremy Bentham in 1789, that encompasses the feelings of happiness, satisfaction or well-being achieved when an individual's preferences are met.
Utilization of health services	The rate at which members of a population use health services, which can be measured in, for example, hospital admissions or outpatient visits per capita.

Annex 3

Measuring health system performance outcomes

This annex details the following information for the six health system performance outcomes (health status, financial risk protection, public satisfaction, access, quality and efficiency):

- How is the outcome defined?
- How is it commonly measured?
- What data are generally available?
- What are the common interpretations of this outcome (that is, what can and cannot be concluded from the relevant data)?
- What are the common data gaps?

For further information, refer to Annex 4 of this manual (which lists additional resources to understand assessments of the different outcomes), to GHRR (Roberts et al., 2004), and to the India Health Systems Reform Project website.⁵

Final outcome #1: Health status

How is it defined? The first goal of a health system is to improve the health status of the population it serves. Health status refers to health outcomes, indicated by disease prevalence, disease incidence, morbidity rates and mortality rates in the population or a subgroup of the population.

How is it measured? A wide range of health outcome measures are available to assess health status. Most are highly standardized. The key indicators for measuring health status are: rates of mortality, fertility and morbidity; life expectancy at birth; self-rated health; and summary measures such as disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) and quality-adjusted life years (QALYs). Health outcomes can be assessed at the level of the country, state, district or other geographical unit. They can be disease-specific (for example, prevalence of tuberculosis (TB) or hypertension in the population) or life stage-specific (for example, maternal, infant and neonatal mortality rate). Broader population-based health status indicators include crude birth and death rates and life expectancy at birth. The measurement of health status needs large datasets, such as those generated from surveys or records about births and deaths, verbal autopsies or causes of death.

⁵ See <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/india-health-systems/>

What data are commonly available?	Most countries have sufficient secondary and administrative data to assess health status without collecting new data specifically for a health system assessment. Health status data can be sourced from vital registration systems, Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) ⁶ and other population health surveys, global estimations such as the Global Burden of Disease Studies conducted by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), ⁷ and other national- or state-level administrative data that estimate mortality and morbidity burdens. Disease-specific indicators are available in several WHO databases (for example, the TB database ⁸ or the HIV database ⁹). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) compares countries in its biennial Health at a glance reports. ¹⁰
What are the common interpretations?	Population-level measures of health status indicate the population's health as a whole. However, analyses disaggregated by sociodemographic characteristics (focusing on race/ethnicity, age, gender, geographical and rural-urban differences, among others) are necessary to assess the distribution and inequities of health status.
What are the common data gaps?	Most health outcome surveys, including the DHS, focus on infectious diseases and maternal and child health. Data on noncommunicable diseases, mental health, accidents and injuries that constitute major burdens of disease are usually missing from these surveys, especially in lower-income countries. Vital registration systems, hospital records and verbal autopsies may not be sufficiently robust or regular to assess mortalities and morbidities.
Final outcome #2: Financial risk protection	
How is it defined?	Financial risk protection is achieved when direct payments made to obtain health services do not expose people to financial hardship and do not threaten their living standards. It combines two key questions: (1) What is the extent to which the health system protects people from the financial risks of disease? (2) Do health care costs require households to forego other essential goods and services (such as food, housing or education)?

⁶ See <https://dhsprogram.com/>

⁷ See <https://www.healthdata.org/gbd>

⁸ See <https://www.who.int/teams/global-tuberculosis-programme/>

⁹ See <https://www.who.int/teams/global-hiv-hepatitis-and-stis-programmes/>

¹⁰ See https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/health-at-a-glance-2021_ae3016b9-en

How is it measured?	<p>Measures of financial risk protection focus on OOPE or direct payments made to health care providers when goods or services are received. It includes two components. The first is the total amount of money spent in accessing health care (which includes direct health expenditures, for example, expenses for hospital fees, medicines, diagnostic tests, etc., and indirect expenditures, for example, wage loss and travel costs to access health services, informal payments or bribes to access care, etc.). The second component is how the system protects households from the unpredictability (or shock) of paying for an unplanned health event. One common measure of financial risk protection is catastrophic health expenditure (CHE), when OOPE exceeds a pre-defined share of household income or household consumption spending. The second common measure is known as impoverishing health expenditure (IHE), which measures whether a household's consumption expenditure falls below the poverty line after health spending is subtracted. Usually, OOPE exceeding 10% of total household consumption expenditure are considered CHE, and those exceeding 25% are considered IHE.¹¹</p>
What data are commonly available?	<p>The data for financial risk protection are generated from surveys in which households report on their spending, total expenditures and income. If these data are unavailable, analysts may also consider: the OOPE of a health care encounter or episode of illness; distress financing (for example, whether patients sell assets or borrow funds to cover health care costs); and foregone care due to health care costs. Common data sources are: national health accounts¹² undertaken by many countries, national household surveys and administrative data on consumption expenditures and insurance coverage (for example, the National Sample Surveys in India¹³ or the National Survey of Household Consumption and Expenditure in Mexico¹⁴), and the WHO¹⁵ and World Bank Global Health Expenditure¹⁶ databases that compile data on various health financing and financial risk protection indicators for most countries. DHS data in many countries also include basic financial indicators such as health expenses, household income and insurance coverage.¹⁷</p>

¹¹ See <https://databank.worldbank.org/metadataglossary/health-nutrition-and-population-statistics/series/SH.UHC.NOPI.ZS>

¹² See <https://apps.who.int/nha/database>

¹³ See <https://www.data.gov.in/dataset-group-name/National%20Sample%20Survey>

¹⁴ See <https://en.www.inegi.org.mx/programas/enigh/nc/2022/>

¹⁵ See <https://apps.who.int/nha/database/Select/Indicators/en>

¹⁶ See <https://databank.worldbank.org/databases/health-financing>

¹⁷ See <https://dhsprogram.com/>

What are the common interpretations?	Some financial risk protection metrics make the health system look like it is performing well but they fail to consider access to care and the need for health services. For example, data may show that CHE and IHE are low in a particular context, but this may be because high OOPe deter people from seeking necessary health services. Analyses of CHE and IHE should also be disaggregated by income level and sociodemographic characteristics in order to generate nuanced assessments and indicate equity.
What are the common data gaps?	In most lower-income countries, a common gap exists for disaggregated data on OOPe (for example, are households spending on outpatient or inpatient care? And which components of care: medicines, diagnostics, indirect expenses, etc.?).
Final outcome #3: Public satisfaction	
How is it defined?	Public satisfaction is the degree to which citizens (or the general public) are satisfied with the services provided by the health system. This pertains to the satisfaction of both users and non-users of the available health care services. It incorporates peoples' experiences of service provision with broader factors, such as trust in the health system, confidence that one would receive care if ill, and perceptions about whether the health system needs major changes.
How is it measured?	Public (or citizen) satisfaction is measured primarily by surveys, which ask respondents who are representative of the population of interest to report their satisfaction with the health system. These surveys involve face-to-face interviews with individual household representatives. The response categories almost always use a Likert scale with four or five points. Due to the nature of this outcome, citizen satisfaction is mostly measured for the national or state health system. (Levels below this, such as for individual facilities, are addressed through patient satisfaction assessments, which are discussed under quality of care below.)

What data are commonly available?	Some of the most prominent surveys that regularly measure citizen satisfaction are: the Eurobarometer Survey, which measures public satisfaction among European citizens in 15 member states of the European Union; ¹⁸ the Commonwealth Fund's health policy surveys ¹⁹ , which measure health care consumer satisfaction in selected countries; and the Gallup World Poll, ²⁰ which measures satisfaction with a range of public institutions (health, education and justice) across many countries. Several studies across the world have successfully adapted the Commonwealth Fund's International Health Policy Survey questions to measure different aspects of public satisfaction. Additionally, a number of (mostly high-income) countries ask questions about satisfaction in national health surveys.
What are the common interpretations?	Public satisfaction is a politically valuable outcome to assess citizens' perceptions of government programmes and policies. However, approaches for measuring citizen satisfaction are not as standardized as those for measuring health outcomes or financial risk protection. Health system analysts must think critically about how satisfaction questions are asked and interpreted in any given context. Because expectations mediate public satisfaction, it can be complicated to assess this outcome. Lower levels of public satisfaction among disadvantaged populations can indicate systemic inequities. But evidence shows that disadvantaged populations sometimes have lower expectations; therefore, they may report a higher level of satisfaction with the health system even when objective metrics of service provision, access, quality, financial risk protection and inequities indicate significant problems. Public satisfaction needs to be interpreted carefully and contextualized to sociocultural realities.
What are the common data gaps?	Public satisfaction data are not measured by national- or state-level surveys in most lower-income countries. In 2002–2004, WHO collected data on some public satisfaction-related variables via its World Health Survey ²¹ (for example, the responsiveness of health systems, from multiple countries). However, the findings are now out of date. Other studies have assessed public satisfaction and explored concepts such as citizens' trust and confidence in the health system across LMICs, but these data have not been collected regularly.

¹⁸ See <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/>

¹⁹ See <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/surveys>

²⁰ See <https://news.gallup.com/poll/4708/healthcare-system.aspx>

²¹ See <https://apps.who.int/healthinfo/systems/surveydata/index.php/catalog/whs>

Intermediate outcome #1: Access	
How is it defined?	Meaningful access to health care is when the appropriate health care provider or service is supplied in the right place and at the right time to meet the prevailing needs of the population, and that the population utilizes the services. Thus, access does not just mean physical availability (of health facilities, health care providers, medicines, vaccines, diagnostics or other medical products). It also means that the population knows what is available, seeks out health care and uses it to prevent, manage and treat health conditions.
How is it measured?	Access is measured through both supply-side and demand-side indicators. Data to measure the supply-side (what is offered) aspects of access are collected using facility/provider surveys (which are undertaken at national or state level in most countries) or health information systems (HIS) that generate data about the number of facilities and health workers in a given geographical unit. Indicators of the supply side of access include various assessments of physical and human resource inputs (for instance the ratio of doctors to nurses, the number of hospital beds per 1000 population, or attributes of health care facilities, such as whether they have water, electricity, essential medicines and equipment). Demand-side aspects of access are measured through large household surveys conducted at national, state or district level. Indicators for the demand side of access include: utilization of health care services, number of fully vaccinated children, number of institutional births and the percentage of women receiving antenatal care. In some cases, what is known as a care cascade measure is used – this tracks the entire process of care from the time an individual “enters” the health system, beginning with them seeking care, through management and treatment, to rehabilitation. Care cascades are commonly used to measure access for chronic diseases that require continuous use of health services.

What data are needed for assessment?	Access to care is one of the most commonly measured outcomes for health system performance. Most countries have extensive and regular data on both supply- and demand-side access indicators. Common datasets that are available for most countries are: DHS that capture indicators on utilization of services (for example, antenatal care, institutional childbirths, vaccinations, etc.); ²² Service Provision Assessments (SPA) that are conducted as part of DHS to collect data on supply-side indicators related to physical and human resource attributes; ²³ Service Availability and Responsiveness Assessments (SARA) conducted by WHO; the World Bank's Service Delivery Indicator Survey; ²⁴ and health information systems used in most countries, which report number of health facilities, ratios of health personnel, vacancies, etc.
What are the common interpretations?	Access-to-care measures are useful for assessing the inputs invested in the health system. These measures are also closely associated with other outcomes – thus, access to care cannot be interpreted meaningfully without also understanding the affordability and quality of the services available. Further, the physical availability of health services does not indicate whether the services are effective or if they are being used by the population. Similarly, uptake/utilization of health services by the population does not indicate that people are receiving high-quality care or that good health outcomes are being produced. As with other indicators, access to care also needs to be disaggregated by sociodemographic characteristics of the population to examine equity.
What are the common data gaps?	While most countries have extensive data on access, these are usually limited to the public sector and formal health care providers. Private-sector providers, including informal or unlicensed providers, are rarely included in supply-side facility surveys – even when a majority of the population receives care from private providers. Another major data gap is on care cascades. Most demand-side surveys focus on access at one point in time (or for specific visits), but this does not capture people who need care but either forego or drop out of care, especially in the case of chronic diseases.

²² See <https://dhsprogram.com/>

²³ See <https://dhsprogram.com/methodology/Survey-Types/SPA.cfm>

²⁴ See <https://datacatalog.worldbank.org/search/dataset/0042030>

Intermediate outcome #3: Efficiency

How is it defined?

The concept of efficiency is based on the relationship between a health output and the inputs required to produce this output. In an efficient system, the amount of input utilized should result in the production of the maximum amount of output that is possible. Efficiency is usually defined in three ways:

1. Technical efficiency (TE) – when the maximum possible output is produced from a given set of inputs. Alternatively, this implies minimizing the amounts of inputs used to produce a given amount of output. TE involves making sure that the right mix of physical inputs (such as personnel, equipment, supplies and facilities) are used to produce a health output.
 2. Price efficiency (PE) – when the maximum possible output is produced at the lowest possible cost of inputs. PE refers to the right mix of monetary inputs used in the production process. PE incorporates the idea of TE, since minimization of costs can be achieved by reducing the misuse of inputs as well as by reducing unnecessary expenditures.
 3. Allocative efficiency (AE) – when more than one output is produced in a health system, the question of how the inputs are distributed among the production of each output becomes relevant. AE captures the extent to which the inputs are being used to produce the correct mix of outputs to maximize health status gains.
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How is it measured? Two broad approaches are commonly used to measure the efficiency of a health-providing unit: ratio-based and frontier analysis.

1. Ratio-based measures are the most common efficiency measure. It is a ratio of a health system input to the output that it produces. A ratio indicates the resource used per unit of health system output; the greater the ratio, the more efficient the health-providing unit. TE is calculated by dividing any measure of health output by the physical unit of input. For example, a physician's productivity is calculated as the total number of hours the physician spent in patient care (input) divided by the number of visits (output), which is a measure of TE. Similarly, the generic prescribing rate (the total number of generic medications prescribed in a day divided by the total number of patients examined in a day) is also a TE measure. Using input costs as the denominator generates an indicator of PE. Cost per episode is an example where the output is a bundle of services (including visits, medications, procedures and urgent care services provided for the care of a specific illness) and the input is the monetized total costs of the care.
 2. Frontier analysis measures are based on the production function (the relationship between the health inputs and outputs), and the efficiency of a health-providing unit involves comparing its actual performance with the optimal performance located on the production frontier. Since the true frontier is unknown, an empirical approximation is needed. That is, efficiency scores for each unit are based on the frontier function estimation, followed by the distance of the unit from the efficient frontier. These methods can be used to obtain technical, price or allocative efficiency scores depending on the function – production, cost, profit – that is estimated. There are different ways to estimate the production function, but two methods are typically used in the study of health systems: data envelopment analysis and stochastic frontier analysis.
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What data are commonly available?	<p>Data on health inputs and outputs are needed to calculate any measure of efficiency, and the information is usually available at different levels of the health system (national, state, district, facilities, providers and households). The choice of the data source depends on the unit of analysis (for example, if efficiency is calculated at the country level or facility level). Common data sources include health information systems that provide a count of the number of health inputs (number of physicians/nurses, hospital beds, medical equipment, etc.). Budget and expenditure data can be used to calculate the cost inputs; other data sources like the Service Provision Assessment can be used to assess health system inputs and service provision outputs (for example, total number of physician hours spent in patient care). If the efficiency analysis focuses on health outcomes, then health surveys (like those mentioned under Final outcome #1 (health status) such as DHS) or insurance claims data can be used.</p>
What are the common interpretations?	<p>Ratio-based efficiency indicators are useful when an assessment focuses on a particular input or part of the production process. A ratio also allows for comparison across health systems or health-providing units of different sizes/levels. However, each ratio provides a very narrow view of efficiency without accounting for the many interdependent inputs that go into the production of multiple health outcomes. A key advantage of the frontier-based efficiency measures is that they account for multiple inputs and also allow for the statistical testing of hypotheses on the relationship between external factors (unit ownership, competition, etc.) and the estimated efficiency scores. But note that these measures are complicated to implement and require specialized software and econometric training among analysts.</p>
What are the common data gaps?	<p>Health facility-level data on inputs and potential outputs are often difficult to obtain. Facilities, especially for-profit providers, may not be willing to share this information. Even when available, most input data focus on hospitals, and data are scarce about primary care providers or individual providers. The other gap is in meaningfully linking the inputs to outputs. While health outcome data are available, they are determined by various factors, including those outside the health system. This makes it difficult to attribute outputs to the inputs in efficiency assessments. Usually, health service provision indicators are used as a proxy, but disaggregated data on these indicators are difficult to obtain in many lower-income country health systems.</p>

Annex 4

Additional resources to assess health system outcomes

Financial risk protection

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Access

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Quality of care

Clinical effectiveness

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Patient safety

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People centredness

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Annex 5

Developing political strategies

These questions can help you develop a set of political strategies to influence key stakeholders.

Objective	Guiding question	Sample political strategies
Change the position of opponents	How can a key opponent be persuaded to change their position from high opposition to low opposition – or even support?	Negotiate a change in a technical aspect of the policy Provide desired resources elsewhere
Decrease the power of opponents	How can the power of opponents be decreased?	Publicly question opponents' motives Reduce opponents' public visibility Deny opponents material resources
Increase the power of supporters	How can the power of supporters be increased so that they have more influence over the policy process?	Increase the financial resources available to supporters Increase supporters' visibility in media and public dialogues
Increase the number of supporters	How can the number of supporters be increased?	Mobilize neutral actors (provide them with technical analysis about how the policy would benefit them; offer them incentives to show public support for the policy)

The PolicyMaker software (Reich & Cooper, 2010) offers an expanded set of suggested strategies, organized by the categories of power, position, player and perception.

Samples include:

3B. Suggested Strategies	
Double click on a suggested strategy to build a strategy.	
Power Strategies:	▲
Increase the organizational strength of supporters, by providing increased material resources or by providing experienced staff or	
Increase access to political leaders, by organizing through a lobbying campaign.	
Mobilize supporters in groups and communities in public demonstrations to call for action	
Create a coalition of supporting groups or players, with a recognizable name and sufficient resources.	
Provide information and evidence to supporters, including technical and political information.	▼
Position Strategies:	▲
Persuade supporters to strengthen their position, by reminding supporters of the promised benefits compared to other policies.	
Persuade supporters to strengthen their position, by adding more benefits as an incentive.	
Persuade supporters to strengthen their position, by changing the policy to remove contested goals or mechanisms.	
Persuade supporters to strengthen their position, by adding desired goals and mechanisms to the policy.	
Persuade non-mobilized to take a position of support, by promising them benefits compared to other policies.	▼
Player Strategies:	▲
Create a new organization or partnership of existing organizations and individuals.	
Persuade non-mobilized groups to take a supporting position, by providing incentives, removing objections, or adding desired poli	
Persuade political candidates or elected officials in the legislature or executive to adopt your issue, through personal meetings, po	
Change the decision-making processes (eg, through public hearings) in order to expand the number of supporters.	
Create a new organization or partnership of existing organizations and individuals, to involve non-mobilized	▼
Perception Strategies:	▲
Enhance the legitimacy of supporters, by connecting them to positive social values.	
Use symbols to increase public support of the policy, by organizing a media campaign or finding sympathetic vic	
Use the media to increase public visibility of the issue and change perception of problem and solution	
Persuade supporters to take a more public stand on the policy.	
Enhance the legitimacy of policy, by connecting it to positive social values.	▼

Source: Reich & Cooper (2010).

Reference Reich MR, Cooper DM (2010). PolicyMaker 4.0: computer-assisted political analysis [software]. Brookline, MA: PoliMap (<https://michaelreich.com/policymaker-software>).

Annex 6

Example models used to evaluate health reforms

King G, Gakidou E, Imai K, Lakin J, Moore RT, Nall C et al. (2009). Public policy for the poor? A randomised assessment of the Mexican universal health insurance programme. *Lancet*. 373:1447–54 ([https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(09\)60239-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(09)60239-7)).

This high-quality technical evaluation was conducted 10 months after the start of implementation, to assess impacts on both intermediate and final performance objectives. The study finds a reduction in CHE, but not in medication spending, health outcomes or health service utilization. This assessment contributed to the health reform's continuity across two subsequent administrations in Mexico, but not when a new opposition government came to power in 2018.

Nigenda G, Wirtz VJ, González-Robledo LM, Reich MR (2015). Evaluating the impact of Mexico's health reform: the case of Seguro Popular. *Health Syst Reform*. 3:217–28 (<https://doi.org/10.1080/23288604.2015.1031336>).

This article combines information from four external evaluations of Mexico's health reform (conducted by a team at the National Institute of Public Health) to conduct a process evaluation on the use of financial resources in purchasing health services. The article focuses on implementation processes related to the federal government's financial transfer mechanisms to the states, the purchase of medicines and the contracting of health workers. The assessment finds a number of significant challenges and identifies various government responses to problems that have sought to improve performance, "with mixed results".

Blanchet NJ, Fink G, Osei-Akoto I (2012). The effect of Ghana's National Health Insurance Scheme on health care utilization. *Ghana Med J*. 46(2):76–84 (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22942455/>).

This study examines the impact of Ghana's health reform implemented in 2003 on the utilization of health services, using data from the Women's Health Study of Accra on medicines and health services. The assessment finds that women with health insurance are "significantly more likely" to obtain prescriptions, visit clinics and seek health care from formal providers when sick. In short, they have access – an important intermediate objective for health reform. This academic study, however, was not conducted with the goal of a government-sponsored evaluation of the policy.

Bergkvist S, Wagstaff A, Katyal A, Singh PV, Samarth A, Rao M (2014). What a difference a state makes: health reform in Andhra Pradesh. World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 6883. Washington, DC: World Bank (<https://doi.org/10.1596/1813-9450-6883>).

This World Bank study assesses Andhra Pradesh's Aarogyasri health insurance scheme, which provides coverage for around 900 high-cost procedures delivered in secondary and tertiary hospitals. The study finds that patients still paid "quite large" OOPe during hospitalization, even for services covered by the scheme. A comparison with a neighbouring state (Maharashtra), however, finds that Andhra Pradesh showed better access (higher rates of inpatient and surgery admissions) and better financial risk protection (lower growth rates of certain costs). The report indicates a number of areas for improvement in the health reform, although this is not an official government evaluation.

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