Urban Primary Health Care and Health Systems

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Section A

Historical and Current Context and the Importance of Effective Planning for Primary Health Care
Session Outline

- **Section A**
  - The historical and current context of urban PHC
  - Importance of effective planning for PHC

- **Section B**
  - Issues to consider in planning PHC
  - Possible solutions

Urban areas are more often known for tertiary and specialist care than for primary health care.
Successful PHC models in developing countries are largely limited to rural areas.

Health services in rural areas are delivered through detailed infrastructure developed by ministries of health.

There are issues of coverage, quality, and efficiency with rural health services as well.

Photo by William Brieger
Most urban areas do not have comparable infrastructures

Urban areas are characterized by a mix of providers offering various health services

There may be government services, private for-profit providers, informal providers, and a variety of NGO providers
Context: Multiple Providers

- Multiple providers with little or no coordination ...
  - Create duplications and gaps in services
  - Affect accessibility to and quality of services
  - Increase inequity
Context: Private Sector

- The private sector is the major provider
  - This sector, including informal providers, is poorly regulated and coordinated
  - Sometimes the private sector is better equipped
  - It may also have less formally trained staff
Private Providers’ Focus

- Private providers ...
  - Focus on curative care
  - Rarely engage in preventive care
  - Provide services that are largely unregulated
  - Contribute minimally to improving the health of the urban poor

Photo by William Brieger
Context—NGOs

- NGOs fill the gaps, but their services are selective and cover limited geographic areas.

- NGOs, while being not-for-profit organizations, rarely give free health care.

- They do, on the other hand, have adequate staff, equipment, and supplies.
Poverty and Financing Challenges

- Urban poor have limited access to affordable critical health services of acceptable quality

- There are critical gaps in essential services, with important consequences

- Urban poor spend a disproportionate share of their income on poor-quality health care, much of it from the private sector

Photo by William Brieger

Urban residents largely work in the informal economy and face poverty daily
A Challenge to Improve

- Improving the health of developing country urban populations is a major challenge

- There are many examples of urban health care delivery
  - However, most urban models have been limited to small, pilot areas
  - Often emphasize the role of NGOs in coordinating and providing service delivery
  - Rarely capitalize on the important private sector
Infrastructure Challenges

- Absence of government infrastructure may be an opportunity to plan and design more innovative strategies.

- Governments have a responsibility to ensure access to a minimum package of affordable and quality health care, particularly for the poor.

- Governments do not necessarily need to provide the services.

Clean water is a major urban infrastructural challenge for people and health facilities.

Photo by William Brieger
Role of Government

- Governments should take the stewardship role to ensure delivery of a package of essential services
  - Perhaps through optimization of existing services
  - Creating incentives to ensure delivery of an appropriate mix of services
  - Regulating services to ensure affordability and quality
Importance of Effective Planning

- Governments need to decide exactly what are the responsibilities of the state in public health
  - At the same time there needs to be acknowledgement of other health sectors
  - Regulatory and coordination mechanisms are needed to ensure a system-wide approach to urban PHC

- Planners need to examine what minimum package of essential services is appropriate and how to deliver it

- The complexity of the existing pattern of provision and financing means that planning cannot be prescriptive
The Importance of Planning

- Managers need to take into account ...
  - The current mix of services
  - The relationships between different established organizations, between different providers
  - Current utilization patterns
  - The quality of current services and gaps in services

- Planning needs to be based on a careful situation analysis or needs assessment
Possible Solutions?

- At the city level, there is a need for a comprehensive assessment of current provision and a formulation of a health service strategy.

- This may be done by the ministry of health or by the municipality.

- The starting point for the planning process is to identify guiding principles.

- If these are not explicit, they need to be drafted.

Source: Gordon et al. (1990).
For example, is the guiding principle equity of access or ensuring a simple, basic minimum package of health care that is accessible to all?

A crucial element of planning is the purpose of the agency. For example, is the municipality to ...
- Provide appropriate and affordable health services for all citizens?
- Provide for the poor?
- Facilitate quality private service provision for higher-income groups?
Internal and External Environment

- The planners need to assess the internal environment with respect to available resources, e.g., staff, money, and infrastructure.

- The planners should also evaluate the external environment, including:
  - The current national policy with respect to direct provision of services compared with promoting or regulating the private sector.
  - The direction of decentralization.
  - National policy for health sector financing.
  - National norms for setting service standards.
  - The level of flexibility the municipality has in interpreting these policies.
Information Needs for Planning

- The information should provide a sufficient basis for a realistic strategic plan, consisting of the goals of the organization, and broad objectives by which these goals will be achieved.

- Finally, this process leads to a series of detailed plans based on operational objectives that are formulated in the process of deciding what is needed to pursue the strategic objectives.
Summary

- Health services in most rural areas of developing countries are provided by the government.

- Most urban areas do not have a comparable government health infrastructure.

- Urban areas are characterized by their multiplicity of providers, including a large private sector.

- Therefore, design of urban health services delivery requires careful needs assessment and planning on how to optimize existing services.
Section B

Issues to Consider in Planning Primary Health Care, and Possible Solutions
Session Outline

- Issues to consider in planning urban PHC
- Possible solutions to meeting urban PHC needs

Photo by William Brieger
Issues to Consider

- Minimum package of essential services at primary care level
- Collaboration and complementarities between public and private sector
- Community participation or involvement in urban PHC
- Should governments target the poor or should they provide universal health care?
Essential Service Package

- Factors that are important in selecting the essential package of services should be
  - The size and distribution of the burden of health problems affecting the population
  - Relative cost-effectiveness of the interventions
  - Resources available to design and deliver health care
Essential Service Package

- Communicable diseases, including pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis continue to account for major burden of disease in urban areas

- However, non-communicable diseases like diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease are becoming increasingly important

- This epidemiological transition can be observed in most cities in developing countries

- In most circumstances, health services are not prepared for the emerging chronic diseases
Essential Service Package

- Design of the service package needs to consider ...
  - The epidemiologic transition
  - How to create demand for the essential services

- It should be noted that there is no universally accepted “gold standard” for designing a basic package of services

- Typically, the package of essential services consists of vaccination; outpatient care for common illnesses, such as pneumonia, diarrhea, and malaria; reproductive health care; ongoing care for certain chronic conditions; and promotional activities
Essential Service Package

- The package should link promotion, prevention, and treatment

- Packaging should also identify and coordinate required technical, administrative, and educational resources

Photo by William Brieger
New Components

- The epidemiological transition has brought new health care needs and demands which are not met by current packages

- Treatment for chronic and mental illnesses is hardly ever provided

- Identification of the scope, content, and quality of services provided by primary care services remains a major challenge

Photo by William Brieger
Complementarities: Public and Private

- In many cities, the private sector is the main provider of curative care.

- This is typical in many Asian cities, where the main providers of care, even in poor areas, are private practitioners.

- Many international agencies and governments are examining ways to provide care through the private sector.

- However, it is more complicated than it first appears.
Complementarities

- The private sector is responsible for creating demand for curative health care and is motivated by profit.

- Thus the objective of the state in ensuring health services to the population is different from that of the private provider.

- This “principal-agent problem” requires structural adjustments to ensure that the objective of the agent (in this case the private providers) and the principal (in this case the state) are made more compatible.

- This requires a complex mix of effective regulations and financial incentives, many of which are not currently in place or only partially working.
Complementarities

- The quality of care of private providers varies a lot, from very high to very low.

- In low-income urban areas, the quality of care is often low.
Prospects and Problems

- While private providers are often seen as a good way of reducing direct state responsibility, there are a number of problems ...
  - Private providers, driven by market forces, may not provide unprofitable services, causing preventive care to be neglected
  - Private providers may not operate to maximize operative efficiency, and therefore over provide services
  - A purely market approach to care provision compromises equity of access to basic services
Possible Ways to Deliver PHC

- Just to reiterate, we need effective planning

- The first step to planning is for governments to decide what their principles and objectives are

- Many governments may consider that their responsibility in health services is to ensure the availability of services at the primary and secondary levels

- Since private providers are well established in cities, enabling private care to expand is relatively easy and should be cost efficient, but regulating the private sector is difficult
Why Regulate?

- Any consumer product requires some regulation to ensure consumer safety.

- There are fundamental differences between health services and many other products:
  - First, health care is important, as it relieves suffering.
  - Second, health care can be dangerous if inappropriate therapies are given or care is not provided properly.
Basic Standards

- Governments have a responsibility to ensure a minimum quality of care

- This requires minimum basic care standards, packages of activities, and coverage including maximum fee for services
How to Regulate the Private Sector?

- Regulations require legislation, implementation procedures, information systems, monitoring mechanisms, and effective and rapid procedures for enforcement.

- One area of further exploration is voluntary accreditation by the government of private sector providers.

- The government may accredit facilities if they pass the various criteria and inspections.

- This requires inspections for renewal.

- The advantage for the providers is that accreditation may increase their market advantage.
How to Involve the Private Sector?

- Create incentives for private providers to provide a broader package of care—an example is the voucher scheme.

- Tanzania and Ghana evaluated the effectiveness of voucher schemes to improve coverage of vulnerable groups with insecticide-treated nets (ITNs).

- Experience suggests that there are problems with both issuing and redemption of vouchers.

- More evidence is needed on how specific contextual factors influence the success of voucher schemes and other models of delivery of ITNs.

- Rigorous monitoring is needed for successful scaling up.
The idea of community participation in health first appeared in the early 1970s as it became clear that basic needs in developing countries could be met only through greater involvement of local people themselves.

Photo by William Brieger
Paying More Attention

- From the 1980s onward, the international donor community and national governments began to pay more attention to people’s participation, along with good governance, democracy, and decentralization.

Photo by Carrie Jane Ngogo

Photo by William Brieger
Value of Community Participation

- It is believed that community participation increases efficiency and encourages greater self-reliance and governance by handing over decision making and control at the lowest level.

Photo by William Brieger
What Is Community Participation?

- The definition of both community and participation do vary

- Participation can be defined as the actions taken by community groups with shared needs living in a defined geographic area ...
  - In the identification of their needs
  - In the decision-making process
  - In the establishment and implementation of mechanisms to meet these needs

- There is a continuum of community participation, which can range from contribution to decision making to involvement in service delivery
Community Participation in Urban PHC

- Experience with community participation in urban areas is limited

- Since urban communities are different from rural communities, it will be important to ...
  - Understand the urban communities
  - Define what types of participation (and by whom) is feasible and most cost-effective

- Participation by ordinary citizens is determined by the balance between benefits and costs
Benefits and Costs of Participation

- Although benefits include collective goals, personal incentives and personal costs are important factors.

- The intensity of participation varies inversely with the participating group.

- The more intense the activity, the higher the cost to the participants, which may result in less overall participation and the overrepresentation of higher SES individuals.

- Exploring new and innovative ways of community participation in urban PHC.
Targeting the Poor and Vulnerable

- To tailor urban PHC to the poor and vulnerable, innovative approaches and ideas will be needed.

- Effective and efficient ways of identifying the poor can be a challenge.

- In resource-poor settings, governments could earmark available resources to the most needy through appropriate financing, payment, and delivery mechanisms (e.g., a voucher system, micro-insurance, contractual agreements).
Summary

- Discussed issues to consider and possible solutions
- Design of a minimum package of essential services should take into account the epidemiological transition
- Explore ways to improve collaboration and complementarities between public and private sector
- Community participation is important, but the scope and trade-offs need to be carefully evaluated
- Governments perhaps should provide a safety net for the poor instead of providing health care for all