

Improving Local Governance for Better Health Care in the Philippines

Following the passage of the Local Government Code of 1991, the Philippines decentralized the provision of basic services, including health, to local governments. This code was part of an effort to bring the agencies responsible for these services in direct contact with the people who need them. The devolution process has empowered local government units (LGUs) to manage and finance service delivery. However, many LGUs still need additional skills—such as strategic information management, procurement and logistics, human resources management, and budgeting and planning—to effectively provide sustainable and quality health care to constituents. Limited resources and the migration of skilled health workers to more affluent countries exacerbate the problem.

With funding from the U. S. Agency for International Development (USAID), RTI is implementing the 5-year Philippines Strengthening Local Governance for Health (HealthGov, 2006–2011) Project. Key partners include Jhpiego, Centre for Development and Population Activities, Philippine NGO Council for Population, Health and Welfare, and Orient Integrated Development Consultants, Inc. HealthGov seeks to strengthen health systems management, financing, and service delivery in 550 LGUs, in 23 provinces, across the country’s three major island groups—Luzon, Mindanao, and Visayas.

Strengthening Management Systems

HealthGov supports the implementation of the Department of Health (DOH)’s flagship program, *FOURmula ONE* for Health (F1). The F1 program assists LGUs to better integrate health sector investment plans into their development strategies and budgets.

HealthGov has provided assistance to 23 provinces in formulating and integrating their health sector plans, programs, and activities into 5-year investment plans for health. As a result, 12 of these provinces have already received funds from the DOH.

During HealthGov’s start up, several LGUs expressed the need to strengthen the implementation of Contraceptive Self-Reliance plans at the provincial and local levels.



In response, HealthGov developed Contraceptive Self-Reliance planning tools to assist LGUs in client classification, financing, and resource mobilization. A forecasting tool was developed to facilitate LGU forecasting of family planning commodity requirements for the poor and nonpoor. In addition, HealthGov prepared technical references for the assessment and validation of data on current users of family planning.

HealthGov has facilitated the formulation of Contraceptive Self-Reliance plans in 20 provinces, preparation of a 5-year forecast of commodity requirements in 15 provinces, and formulation and enactment of related policies.



Expanding Financing for Health

HealthGov supports LGUs in improving financing for health services by expanding their financial base beyond the often insufficient resource transfers from general block grants and local taxes. The project also assists LGUs in accessing DOH performance-based grants and in completing client classification for the implementation of the PhilHealth Sponsored Program. This program provides additional financing for health care through the proper management of PhilHealth reimbursements and capitation funds.

HealthGov assists the DOH to train LGUs in preparing local health accounts so that local policy makers have access to information on the adequacy, efficiency, and equity in aggregate health spending and to help them better manage funds. Local health accounts generate data on expenditures for health care in a given year, who directly paid for health services, what health services were purchased, and/or who provided them.

Ensuring and Sustaining High-quality Service Delivery

Several tools have been developed to assist LGUs assess the status of their health service delivery in areas such as family planning, maternal and child health, micronutrient supplementation, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and other infectious diseases. For example, the service delivery implementation review tool introduced by HealthGov helps LGUs obtain the following two important outputs:

1. Baseline data on key indicators for health service delivery, governance, financing, and regulation
2. An “acceleration plan,” which identifies milestones to increase service delivery coverage and serves as an advocacy tool to win the support of local leaders

To ensure sustained delivery of quality health services, HealthGov modeled a client-focused continuing quality improvement approach at the local level. The approach, *Service Delivery Excellence in Health*, has been adopted by 41 health facilities in 32 municipalities/cities, in seven provinces.

HealthGov also supported the development of a guide for LGUs on how to maximize the use of existing services and facilities for maternal, newborn, and child health and nutrition. Integrating family planning into relevant health programs also remains as a strategy for improving health outcomes.



Village health workers and traditional birth attendants from Albay province participate in an orientation session on the guidelines governing the implementation of the national maternal, newborn, and child health and nutrition strategy.

Supporting Broad-based Advocacy for Health

HealthGov assists local leaders to appreciate the importance of improving health outcomes and to translate this understanding into policy action and additional resources for health. Further, it fosters partnerships between local government officials and nongovernmental and civil society organizations (NGOs/CSOs) to enable active stakeholder participation in local health policy and decision making.

Sanggunian (local policy council) members, local health boards, and development councils are receiving assistance in analyzing and using data as the basis for evidence-based decision making. HealthGov also supports NGOs/CSOs in constituency building for health, developing common platforms to advocate for supportive health policies and programs, and mobilizing communities for collective action.



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