

P4H Asia Network Newsletter - March 2022



The P4H Network is a global health network aimed at improving social health protection (SHP) and strengthening health financing (HF) systems to promote universal health coverage (UHC) in low- and middle-income countries. In 2017, P4H created the Asia Network for Health Financing and Protection (ANHFP).

Eighteen countries came together to discuss common policy issues and experiences, best practices and lessons learned in SHP and HF for UHC. Key principles - communication, joint advocacy, collaboration and inclusiveness - guide the P4H Network.

Experts Speak

Welcome to the second edition of the P4H Asia Network newsletter. The newsletter is an initiative of the ANHFP to bring together the latest news, events and ideas on SHP and HF in Asia. I am delighted to be a part of this regional network of national and international health systems, social protection and financing experts, economists and researchers who have come together to realize the dream of UHC.

In this edition, I talk about the latest SHP and HF reforms shaping the health systems in India. In recent years, the government of India has launched various health insurance schemes to improve access to health care and reduce catastrophic health expenditures. COVID-19 has been an unprecedented and unique public health crisis coupled with an economic crisis. The national and state governments of India mounted immediate policy responses to address the crisis – instigating domestic resource mobilization to reduce financial barriers and relaxing the public financial management rules to enable flexibility in reallocation and use of various provider payment mechanisms to engage the private sector.

Mounting an effective public health response requires dialogue and collective action. The P4H Network and the ANHFP both offer a space for safe dialogue, broker insight into the countries' processes, share up-to-date knowledge and design unique products and services for the community of HF experts. Last year, the P4H Network launched a four-webinar series on SHP and HF in India, bringing together a community of experts to discuss key issues and challenges and develop knowledge products that could guide the design of SHP and HF systems with stronger institutional mechanisms and better services.

As part of the ANHFP and the P4H Network, I urge you all to take an active role in the work we are doing. I am excited about the opportunity our work provides. We can all learn and grow and work together towards the common goal of UHC. I also invite everyone reading this newsletter to submit their suggestions and comments for future newsletters. I wish you all a year full of growth, learning, happiness and health.

Grace Achungura

Technical Officer (HF for UHC-HCF)

WHO Country Office for India

Highlights of the Month

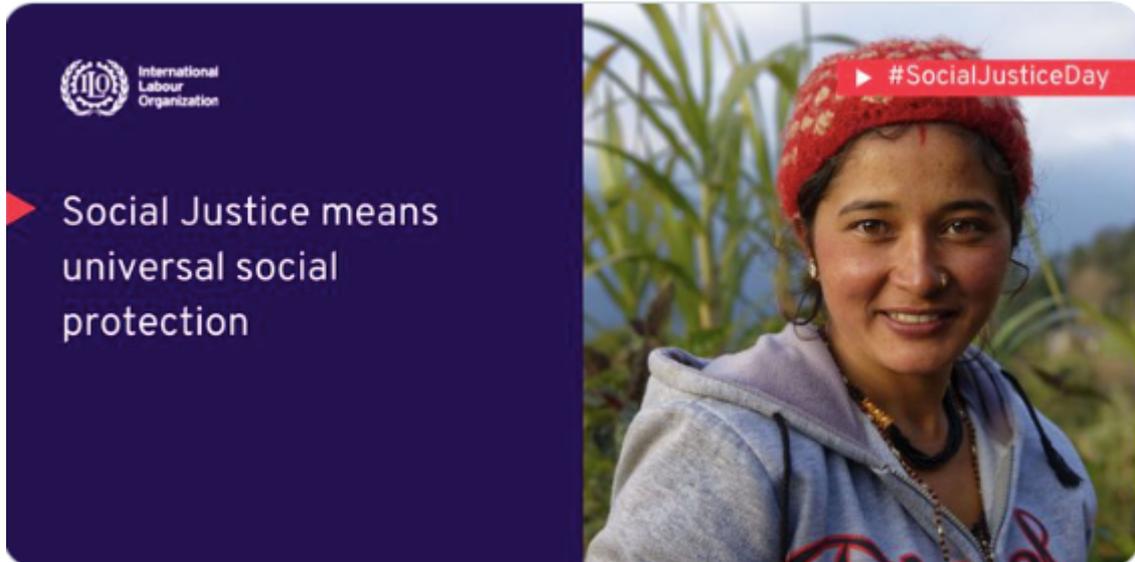
In February 2022, COVID-19 continued to challenge the health systems in Asia. Policies focusing on budget allocation, resources and other measures to curb COVID-19 persisted in the Republic of Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam. Kazakhstan began to implement strategies to diversify public health expenditures and curb cost containment for medical equipment procurement and hospital construction. Viet Nam started planning for health technology assessment (HTA) work.

The 5th Meeting of the Montreux Collaborative report released in February 2022 highlighted the challenges of HF in the wake of the pandemic such as programme budgeting in health. This is relevant to the Asia region since health coverage gaps present during the COVID-19 pandemic remain in many countries, such as Bangladesh, India and Nepal.

Articles from February highlight the importance of UHC for the financial risk protection of the population. The effects of payment mechanisms and benefits coverage for maternal health care with a focus on out-of-pocket (OOP) payments were addressed in the studies conducted in Nepal and Sri Lanka. OOP payments associated with the use of health services and treatment led to catastrophic health expenditures in Bangladesh and left parts of the population unable to pay for other needed services, a situation that needs fixing. However, progress made in both health systems development and the advancement towards UHC is contributing to a reduction in OOP payments and CHE in Thailand. Thus, the movement towards UHC with SHP and HF measures seen during the pandemic remains an important process in Asia today.

Trending News and Tweets for February 2022

Less than half of the global population are effectively covered by at least one social protection benefit. 4.1 billion people do not have access to #socialprotection.



"The two-tiered systems of haves and have nots means low-income countries are being left in a perpetual game of catch-up—two vaccines to be safe is now three...it is a game where the prize is life in an uneven playing field."

"The two-tiered systems of haves and have nots means low-income countries are being left in a perpetual game of catch-up—two vaccines to be safe is now three...it is a game where the prize is life in an uneven playing field." Profiled by the [@TheLancet](#), [@yodifiji](#) on [#VaccinEquity](#)

 **Dr. Ayoade Alakija** @yodifiji · Feb 4, 2022

Truly honoured to be the featured profile in this months print edition of @TheLancet - touched by the beautiful words from my senior colleague @JNkengasong It's been a journey! Ayoade Alakija: advancing equity in the COVID-19 response thelancet.com/journals/lance...

Accessible and affordable COVID-19 self-test kits (22 Feb 2022)



The Thai National Health Security Office board has decided to subsidize the purchase of self-test kits by public health units. [\(Read more\)](#)

Social distancing adjustment plans to Omicron variant in Korea (21 Feb 2022)



The government of the Republic of Korea decided to adopt a conservative stance on social distancing and contact tracing between 19 February and 13 March until the Omicron epidemic shows a downwards trend. [\(Read more\)](#)

Kazakhstan is centralizing procurement of medical equipment to save costs (18 Feb 2022)



Kazakhstan plans to centralize the purchase of medical equipment at the state-controlled agency "SK-Pharmacy" LLP in multiple stages after half of the medical equipment in Kazakhstan was found to be worn out. [\(Read more\)](#)

To contain costs, Kazakhstan's government is capping expenses for hospital construction (15 Feb 2022)



Under the National Project "Healthy Nation", Kazakhstan plans to build 20 large hospitals across the country - eight by 2025 and 12 after 2025. To optimize costs and space, a normative maximum area per bed, as well as an optimal financial model, is being developed. ([Read more](#))

Health insurance fund control through medical technology assessment (14 Feb 2022)



Viet Nam is planning to apply HTA to control the costs of health care. With the development of medical technology, the demand for high-tech medical services is rising, leading to an imbalance between revenue and expenditure within the health insurance fund. [\(Read more\)](#)

Korean government built COVID-19 response system in consideration of Omicron characteristics (9 Feb 2022)



The Republic of Korea reorganized its COVID-19 response system to achieve efficient use of limited resources and minimize severe and fatal cases. It includes epidemiologic investigation and isolation, distribution of at-home treatment kits and daily necessities, at-home treatment monitoring and a public-private collaboration for a medical response system. [\(Read more\)](#)

Viet Nam's COVID-19 fight costs over US\$ 3.2 billion (6 Feb 2022)



The Viet Nam government spent VND 74 trillion (or nearly US\$ 3.25 billion) on the fight against COVID-19. The government acted promptly and employed drastic measures to prevent the spread of the virus. ([Read more](#))

The Thai cabinet approved 209 billion baht for the Universal Coverage Scheme (UCS) budget in fiscal year 2023 (2 Feb 2022)



The 209 billion baht will cover the costs of the RT-PCR tests, antigen test kits and COVID-19 vaccination services. ([Read more](#))

Meet the P4H Asia Team



Somtanuek Chotchoungchatchai recently joined the P4H network as **P4H Country Focal Person (CFP), Thailand**. He is a researcher on HF and UHC at the International Health Policy Program, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand.



Juhyeon Moon recently joined the P4H network as **P4H CFP, Republic of Korea**. She is currently pursuing a PhD in health economics at Seoul National University, South Korea.



Yihan Lu recently joined the P4H network as **P4H CFP, People's Republic of China**. He is an associate professor and the vice-chair at the Department of Epidemiology, Shanghai Fudan University School of Public Health.

Reports & Papers

1. [Payment mechanism for institutional births in Nepal](#)
2. [How costly is the first prenatal clinic visit? Analysis of OOPs in rural Sri Lanka](#)
3. [5th Meeting of the Montreux Collaborative: Fiscal Space, Public Financial Management and Health Financing in a time of COVID-19 – Report](#)
4. [Direct facility financing: concept and role for UHC](#)
5. [Budget execution in health: concepts, trends and policy issues](#)
6. [Health systems development in Thailand: a solid platform for successful implementation of UHC](#)
7. [Forgone health care and financial burden due to OOP payments in Bangladesh: a multilevel analysis](#)

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P4H Asia Network Partners

