

P4H Asia Network Newsletter - May 2022



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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.

Expert Speaks



For this edition of the newsletter, we invited Professor Soonman Kwon to share his insights on the development of SHP and HF to advance UHC in Asia. Soonman is a professor and former dean of the School of Public Health, Seoul National University, Republic of Korea. He has held visiting positions at the Harvard School of Public Health, London School of Economics, University of Toronto, Peking University and the University of Bremen.

Speaking on the development of health financing and social health protection in Asia during the pandemic, Soonman states, “Many countries in Asia rapidly expanded SHP and HF in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic helped governments (especially the ministries of finance) better appreciate the importance of health system resilience, the necessity of investment in the health system and pandemic preparedness, and the interconnectedness of health and economy. Investment in strengthening health systems and UHC is a fundamental prerequisite for pandemic preparedness and response.”

“Flexibility and accountability of government budgets (or public financial management) are key to allocating more financial resources to the health sector during a pandemic.”

“UHC ensures access not only to individual services but also to public health services, e.g. prevention, preparedness and treatment of infectious diseases and pandemics. Governance is also important for the effective response to COVID-19, including the cooperation of public

and private sectors, central and local governments, and ministries across and within sectors.”

Speaking on P4H’s role in regional development, he says, “P4H Network is an effective way for countries to learn from each other. The [P4H platform](#) can provide knowledge and policy experience more rapidly than conventional methods. Based on experiences shared by other countries, each country can craft its own policies, taking into account its local contexts.

Highlights of the Month

In April 2022, P4H Network tweets highlighted the importance of investment in primary health care (PHC) with adequate financing to enable effective primary care functions during the pandemic.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) presented and discussed its Country Brief series on the SHP landscape and progress in Asia and the Pacific at the P4H Technical Exchange Group meeting. It focused on selected countries like Mongolia and their partnerships with the CONNECT Network. At the P4H webinar focused on CIS communities, Central Asian countries Tajikistan and Uzbekistan shared their mandatory health insurance reforms and experiences.

In Japan, COVID-19 financing remained robust, providing budget support for global vaccine initiatives and releasing an emergency relief package for those who fell under the poverty level in recent years. In Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam, exhaustion from the long fight against COVID-19, along with low pay, resulted in the turnover of more than a thousand health workers.

Several publications and events this past month documented social protection gaps in Asia. Bangladesh’s high out-of-pocket payments remained persistent. Benefit incidence analysis of hospital unit costs in Indonesia revealed regional variations, reflecting inequality of access. India’s webinar and panel discussion highlighted the challenges to reach health insurance coverage for the non-poor or ‘missing middle’ population.

As COVID-19 widens social protection gaps among countries in Asia, policy dialogues and partnership collaboration on SHP and HF to advance UHC remain important in Asia and the Pacific.

Tweets of the Month

2022 Financing for Sustainable Development Report
#BridgingFinanceDivide is out! Report calls stakeholders – 1. Address financial gaps and rising debt; 2. Align all financial flows w/ sustainable development; and 3. Enable better quality data.



[Read More](#)

On World Health Day 2022 - Our Planet, Our Health - should we measure material and energy resources used to provide social health protection? Should we moderate our use? Can we do so during a pandemic like COVID-19? #WorldHealthDay2022

[Check here](#)

R4D's Agnes Munyua and Cheryl Cashin share a primer for @HSRJournal's release of 16 original papers and commentaries by more than 40 authors from across Africa, showcasing health financing expertise on the continent.



[Check here](#)

OUT NOW: ILO Country Brief series on #socialhealthprotection landscape and progress in Asia and the Pacific. They were developed by the ILO in collaboration with the @P4HNetwork and @CONNECT4Shp



[Check here](#)

Countries that have invested in primary health care have responded more effectively to COVID-19 as they have a foundation (for) public health and health security functions' says P4H focal person, Côte d'Ivoire @SergeMayaka, author of this article.



[Check here](#)

@TheLancet tweets: Primary health care (PHC) should be Effective Efficient Equitable. Discover how the right financing arrangements can support well functioning PHC and, in turn, #HealthforAll



[Check here](#)

A perfect example of the high level of expertise to be found with our friends from Decide. Enjoy!



[Check here](#)

Emergency relief package for low-income households in Japan (20 Apr 2022)



The Japanese government has decided to provide ¥100,000 (USD 774) to newly cash-strapped households as part of an emergency relief package. This package will be funded from the last fiscal year's extra budget and reserve funds.

[Read more](#)

Impending health workers' crisis in Ho Chi Minh City due to low pay (8 Apr 2022)



Around 1400 health workers at public health facilities in Ho Chi Minh City have quit their jobs since last year. The city's department of health cites **exhaustion following months of fighting COVID-19 and low income** as the main reasons for the resignations.

[Read more](#)

Japan pledges \$500 million for global vaccine sharing efforts (8 Apr 2022)



As one of the major contributors to funding initiatives for vaccines, Japan will contribute up to US\$500 million to ensure equal access to COVID-19 vaccines, especially among lower-income countries. The collaboration co-hosted by Gavi aims to raise more than US\$5.7 billion to fund increased vaccination coverage globally.

[Read more](#)

Expanding Social Health Protection Coverage to the 'Missing Middle' Populations in India

The graphic features a central map of India with a network of blue dots and lines. To the left, a red box contains the text: "Join us on Zoom", "29 April 2022", and "2.30 pm – 4.00 pm IST". Below this is a circular portrait of Mariko Ouchi, labeled "MODERATOR" and "Senior Technical Specialist on Social Protection, ILO". To the right, under the heading "PANELLISTS", are three circular portraits: K Madan Gopal (Senior Consultant, NITI Aayog), Ajay Shah (Professor, Jindal Global Business School), and S Ravichandran (Insurance Commissioner, Employees' State Insurance Corporation). Logos for P4H (Public Health Protection Network), ACCESS (Health Protection International), and IMSC are also present.

A webinar titled [Expanding Social Health Protection Coverage to the 'Missing Middle' Populations in India](#) was held on 29 April 2022. This was the third of the four-webinar series on HF in India and was developed by experts from ILO; the World Health Organization, India; ICE Health Services Corps and ACCESS Health International. The panelists – **K Madan Gopal**, Senior Consultant (Health), NITI Aayog; **S Ravichandran**, Insurance Commissioner, Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) and **Ajay Shah**, Professor, Jindal Global Business School – discussed the strategies for expanding coverage, the challenges in implementing them and suggestions/recommendations for offsetting the challenges. The session was moderated by **Mariko Ouchi**, Senior Specialist on Social Protection, ILO.

Webinar series for awareness-building on Diagnosis-related Group (DRG) tools for UHC



A [webinar series for awareness-building on diagnosis-related group \(DRG\) tools for UHC](#) has been launched and runs from **18 April 2022 – 15 June 2022**. This e-learning course aims to build knowledge and learning experiences for participants from countries that want to pursue the UHC policy with payments for acute inpatient care using DRG. [Click here](#) to register!

Report Launch and Panel Discussion: Accessing health benefits under ESI Scheme: A demand-side perspective



[Report Launch and Panel Discussion: Accessing health benefits under ESI Scheme: A demand-side perspective, 18 April 2022](#). The panel discussed the direct stakeholders' views of the ESI Scheme, the incentives and the obstacles to the scheme's effective reach.

Reports and Papers

1. [Out-of-pocket payment for healthcare among urban citizens in Dhaka, Bangladesh](#)
2. [Does geographic spending variation exacerbate healthcare benefit inequality? A benefit incidence analysis for Indonesia](#)
3. [Accessing medical benefits under ESI Scheme: A demand-side perspective](#)

Meet the P4H Asia Team

Htet Nay Lin Oo is the P4H Country Focal Person for Myanmar



Htet has more than 16 years of public health experience in low- and middle-income countries including Myanmar, Afghanistan, Uganda, Madagascar and Kenya on health systems, HF, large scale evaluations, international health, PHC, quality of care, data systems, program management and implementation research. He is also supporting the Leadership for Universal Health Coverage programme in Myanmar.

Vivek Panwar is a Health Financing Specialist with the P4H Coordination Desk



Vivek is a Health Financing and economics researcher with demonstrated expertise in HF, health accounts, strategic purchasing and public health expenditure analysis. With more than seven years of experience working with government, non-governmental organizations, development agencies, donors and international consultancies, Vivek brings a systems perspective for developing effective UHC.

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P4H Asia Network Partners

