

THE GOVERNANCE BEHAVIOURS:

*A socio-ecological
approach to governing the
private sector in health*



INTRODUCTION

In this brief, we introduce six governance behaviours, to foster effective public-private engagement, as part of more resilient and responsive health systems. The governance behaviours were conceptualised as part of the WHO strategy “Engaging the private health service delivery sector through governance in mixed health systems”. Launched in 2020, this strategy contributes a specific focus on the private sector as part of health systems governance and systems strengthening. Government sets the lead as steward of all health system entities, both public and private.

The governance behaviours are fundamentally a socio-ecological approach. They build from an understanding of health systems as “everybody’s business” and governance as a dynamic process through which governments engage public, private, and civic health actors to achieve public health policy and improve health system performance. They do not prescribe norms and values to behaviours, as these should be contextually determined. Furthermore, they recognise that behaviour change is not a quick fix but a series of connected actions that should be approached consistently.

Deliver strategy and **enable stakeholders** focus on broader institutional arrangements for health system performance; these include health priorities and strategic direction, articulation of the principles and values of the health system and the underlying policy and regulatory framework.

Align structures considers the organisation of the health system to deliver on health priorities, principles and values. This focuses on the mix of public-private entities, the division of roles and activities among entities, and the integration of entities within the health system.

Build understanding and **foster relations** considers system and interactive processes using information and engagement as levers for improving institutional and organisational (structural) performance.

Nurture trust considers how well this is done, in terms of the quality of integrative engagement, how power and responsibilities are exercised, and the centrality of people, principles and values to sectoral roles and interactions.

The governance behaviours use simple descriptors and statements to convey behavioural intent. Government is emphasized within statements as stewards of the health system.

Deliver Strategy: Government establishes the priorities, principles, and values for the health system, and works out how to translate this into practice

Align structure: Government takes the required actions to align public and private structures, processes and institutional architecture

Enable stakeholders: Government authorize and incentivize health system stakeholders to align their activities and further leverage their capacities, for national health goals

Build understanding: Government facilitates information-gathering and sharing about all elements of service provision in the health system

Foster relations: Government establishes mechanisms that allow all the relevant stakeholders to participate in policymaking and planning

Nurture trust: Government leads the establishment of transparent, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels to build trust

BEHAVIOURAL DIAGNOSTICS

The governance behaviours can be used as a tool to diagnose and guide sectoral inter-action to improve health system performance by focusing on where the private sector in health plays an important role (or could do so) and which roles can be mediated through governance interventions. Here we highlight guiding questions under each of the behaviours, accompanied by a rapid assessment tool which provides a practical demonstration of the approach.

Deliver Strategy

Government establishes the priorities, principles, and values for the health system, and works out how to translate this into practice

- Does national health policy/strategy include the private health sector?
- Is national health policy/strategy used to guide the private sector towards public health goals?
- Is there an inclusive process for national health policy review? (e.g. formal review as part of the policy cycle)
- Are there defined national health policy monitoring mechanisms in place that include the private sector?

Align Structures

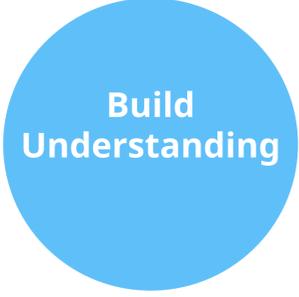
Government takes the required actions to align public and private structures, processes and institutional architecture

- Are private sector entities integrated into health system organizational arrangements? (e.g., formal, informal health actors, as well as digital and self-care models of care, etc.)
- Do private sector entities deliver a defined essential health care package?
- Are systems used to align public and private providers? (e.g., referral, quality assurance, supervision, etc.)

Enable Stakeholders

Government authorize and incentivize health system stakeholders to align their activities and further leverage their capacities, for national health goals

- What regulations are in place for the private sector? (e.g., licensure, accreditation, etc)
- Do public financing arrangements include the private sector? (e.g., grants, in-kind, contracting, social health insurance, etc)
- Is there adequate public sector capacity to ensure compliance with regulations and rules?



Build Understanding

Government facilitates information-gathering and sharing about all elements of service provision in the health system

- Are private sector entities included in national health information systems (HIS)?
- How confident are health actors in using private sector data from national HIS? (e.g., completeness, timeliness, quality, and consistency of information)
- Are other sources of private sector data/information available and used? (e.g. surveys, assessments, research)



Foster Relations

Government establishes mechanisms that allow all the relevant stakeholders to participate in policymaking and planning

- Is the private sector organised for public sector engagement? (e.g., associations, federations, networks etc.)
- Is the public sector organised for private sector engagement?
- Are there public-private coordination platforms?



Nurture Trust

Government leads the establishment of transparent, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels to build trust

- How central are patient/civic interests to private sector engagement?
- Do measures exist to manage competing and conflictive sectoral interests?
- What is the role of brokers/champions in sectoral engagement?
- Is there any sharing of resources, capacities, skills for establishing trust between sectors?

As a diagnostic tool, the governance behaviours are intended to be nimble, identifying pathways to align behaviours. A more comprehensive brief and tool are available, and a maturity model is under development to further support governments and other health system actors to match policy instruments with required capacities for better governance of the private sector in health.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This brief is based on the WHO strategy “Engaging the private health service delivery sector through governance in mixed health systems”, formulated by the WHO Advisory Group on the Governance of the Private Sector for Universal Health Coverage. This brief was developed as part of the Research and Learning activity of the Country Connector on Private Sector in Health, under the guidance and direction of the members of the Country Connector’s Steering Committee. Expert contributions were provided by Gabrielle Appleford, Aya Thabet and David Clarke of the Health Governance and Financing Department WHO HQ; design support was provided by Impact for Health International.



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