

Engaging the Private Health Sector in Health Policy



A case study series from...

Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana,
South Sudan, Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen
and Zambia



Cabo Verde: Building awareness and momentum for private sector engagement in health



SITUATION

The Ministry of Health recognizes the strong role the private sector plays in health, namely through health professionals, laboratories, pharmacies, clinics with various specialties and complementary diagnostic exams, and most recently, the opening of the first private hospital in 2023. In fact, the private sector has a large presence in nine of ten islands. It is also evident that the private sector has a long history of contributing to the health sector, with a strong working relationship with the Ministry of Health spanning nearly a decade.

Key strategy and tools for private sector engagement

To better understand how the private sector has been engaged in health, a rapid assessment of governance and regulatory systems in the health sector was conducted in 2016. This assessment was designed to glean both how the public and private sectors are complementary and to formulate a regulatory framework for the private sector. Ultimately, this assessment led to a series of recommendations through a report published in 2017, which included options for shaping government policy and the suggestion to host various policy dialogues. Following this assessment, an analysis and review of the status of the private sector, a Study on the private health sector and its impact on access to health care in Cabo Verde, was conducted in 2022 to assist in the development of a policy framework for effective governance of the private sector in health and to address related governmental gaps. One action outlined through this assistance was to update the report focused on the health regulatory framework following the assessment in 2016 and developing an inter- and intra-sectoral working group.





PROCESS

The Ministry of Health has signaled the important role the private sector plays through the National Health Policy, the National Plan for Health Development 2022–2026, and the National Action Plan for Health Security 2022–2026. As such, various efforts have been taken to better engage the private sector in health. For instance, policy dialogues have been hosted to collect private sector actors' views, a Health Thematic Group – International Partners' Coordination Forum has been established, and a National Independent Regulatory Agency for Health has been created.

More broadly, the Government of Cabo Verde has also outlined the important role the private sector plays in the Strategic Plan for Sustainable Development 2022–2026, whereby the private sector is encouraged to be a driver of economic and social development. The government is also considering the construction of a new tertiary care hospital in Praia through a public-private partnership.

Aligned with this view, the government hosted an International Conference of Partners focused on actioning the Strategic Plan in 2023, that brought together various stakeholders from various policy domains and the private sector. A side event focused on health was also held, where the discussion focused on better understanding the various roles of those involved in the health sector, the importance of health in different sectors (both in terms of the Health in All Policies and One Health approaches), and to relay the message that health does not just fall under the responsibility of the health sector.

The efforts being taken by the health sector and the Government of Cabo Verde more broadly all align with the World Health Organization's Country Cooperation Strategy 2024–2028 for Cabo Verde, where one of the six priorities is to "improve health system governance to integrate the private health sector".



RESULTS

Following the assessment in 2016, the secondary analysis and review in 2022, and health dialogue with partners in 2023, the important role the private sector plays has been spontaneously raised by various partners across numerous meetings. For instance, the need to engage the private sector to improve health care regulations, finance health services, strive towards universal health coverage, and address the Sustainable Development Goals are only a handful of topics where the important role the private sector plays have been raised. Evidently, consistently engaging the private sector has led to increased familiarity of the role the private sector plays in health and acceptance of the need to work collaboratively in this space.

Next steps include establishing a multisectoral working group that brings together relevant stakeholders and developing a strategy to improve private sector engagement in health governance.

Learnings:

First, **leadership and organizational changes** can result in uncertainties that are difficult to weather, such as lost commitments. However, having a long history of a strong working relationship with the private sector can lead to intuitive engagement that carries forward from past efforts.

And second, there is a need for **both inter- and intra-sectoral work**. Establishing a multisectoral forum that can foster open communication and identify solutions is grossly advantageous. This practice is not just advantageous for engaging the private sector, but is helpful in identifying redundancies in efforts across partners, optimizing planning for more effective action, and for best using scarce resources available in a country such as Cabo Verde, which is a Small Island Developing State.





Cote d'Ivoire: Putting government commitment and leadership into practice for better engagement of the private sector



SITUATION

The government has long recognized the role the private sector plays in health, most notably in the provision of health services. In fact, the last figures from 2008 demonstrated that the private sector provided 40% of services nationally and 60% of services in Abidjan. With the Ministry of Health's desire for Cote d'Ivoire to become a health hub for the region, appropriate engagement with the private sector is required. One rationale for seeking to become a regional health hub is to reduce the need for medical evacuations to foreign countries and from rural areas, where the opportunity for the private sector to play a role in service delivery is evident.

Key strategy and tools for private sector engagement

The Ministry of Health laid the groundwork by working on policies for private sector engagement prior to the hospital reform policy in 2019 that also contributed to this vision. Most recently, the Ministry of Health developed both a 2021 national policy for private sector integration and development and a 2021–2025 strategy for the development of private sector integration and financing. The national policy is a commitment the government made to ensure the work of the private sector is highlighted. A concrete output of this commitment was the establishment of a department within the Ministry of Health in 2022 dedicated to engaging the private sector.



PROCESS

The Ministry of Health routinely engages with the private sector through the Commission Paritaire (joint commission) comprised of representatives from both professional organizations and establishments, such as the association of private clinics. The Ministry of Health has hosted several meetings with the joint commission, with the private sector providing its perspective on various policy processes such as in developing the strategy for private sector engagement, and topics for discussion can be posed by the private sector. In 2023, the Ministry of Health hosted four such meetings.



RESULTS

As a concrete example of how the private sector has been engaged for health, the Ministry of Health is currently undertaking a midterm review of the 2021–2025 National Health Strategic Plan. To facilitate this review, the Ministry established a technical working group including private sector representatives. The private sector has been actively involved in discussions to revise the 2021–2025 National Health Strategic Plan, demonstrating the commitment of the government to better embed the private sector in health.

Further putting this commitment into practice, the Minister of Health established the Pôles Régionaux d'Excellence de Santé in 2023, as part of the implementation of the 2019 hospital reform law. Under this initiative, the government divided the country into ten “poles”, where the public and private sectors are to work in a complementary manner. This collaboration is further formalized through contractual agreements between the public and private sectors.

Learnings:

Undertaking a concerted effort has resulted in various achievements. Most notably, due to various government efforts and the established platform to engage the private sector, more private sector providers are engaged, and more regularly. This is in stark contrast to the past, where many private facilities were not regularly engaged by government. Next steps include better capturing health data from the private sector.

Establishing dialogue with the private sector encourages informed and voluntary participation in the move towards universal health coverage. Some private health establishments have accepted an agreement with the government to participate in the implementation of national universal health insurance





Setting a national strategic direction to improve private sector engagement in Ethiopia



SITUATION

The private sector in Ethiopia continues to play a significant role in various aspects of the health system including complementing government efforts to improve the coverage, access and quality of health services. Ethiopia recognized the participation of the private sector and nongovernmental organizations in health care since the enactment of its health policy in 1993. Experience with private sector engagement has been wide-ranging, including several significant public–private initiatives in health-care delivery that have been expanded over the years including outsourcing, private wings, public–private mix initiatives, and public–private partnerships.

These initiatives were supported by the development of the Public Private Partnership in Health Strategic Framework (2013) and the Public–Private Partnerships in Health Implementation Guidelines (2017). In fact, Ethiopia’s Health Sector Medium Term Development and Investment Plan (2023) recognizes improving private sector engagement as one of nine strategic objectives to support the achievement of Universal Health Coverage. However, despite many siloed initiatives, a unified and coherent strategic direction to engage the private sector in health was lacking.

Key strategy and tools for private sector engagement

Although the relationship between the Ministry of Health and the private health sector is longstanding, a **National Strategy for Private Sector Engagement** was developed to better foster structured collaboration and dialogue. One goal of this strategy is to move away from project-based engagements and toward sustainable and institutionalized engagements. For example, the strategy seeks to integrate the private sector into the national health information system, streamline and institutionalize quality management and governance systems for the private sector, and support and uphold a standardized regulatory environment to ensure the delivery of high-quality services in the private health system.



PROCESS

This National Strategy has been developed with the support of a multidisciplinary technical working group under the leadership of the Ministry of Health and through a series of consultations with stakeholders from across the ministry at national and subnational levels, governmental health agencies, academia, development partners, and within the private health sector. In addition, policy dialogue involving other countries in the region was conducted to draw on their experiences.

The National Strategy will pave the way for sustained, meaningful dialogue between the public and private sectors and will enable the development of bold initiatives to further enhance the private sector's contribution towards national health goals. It is anticipated that the strategy will also lead to increased alignment between the public and private sectors. Next steps include building on these initial successes to achieve the actions outlined in the strategy

Learnings:

The following four lessons can be gained from Ethiopia's experience of setting a strategic direction for private sector engagement. **First**, understanding the current state of private sector engagement allows for understanding existing capacities, resources, stakeholders, interests and ongoing work. **Second**, the WHO guidance on the six governance behaviours – build understanding, enable stakeholders, nurture trust, foster relations, align structures, and deliver strategy – was instrumental in the process. **Third**, ongoing dialogue with different stakeholders from both sectors is critical to set the tone for effective implementation. And **lastly**, learning from other countries that have gone through the same or similar processes is invaluable.

Additional Resources:

1. Ethiopian Ministry of Health. 2013, Public Private Partnership in Health Strategic Framework for Ethiopia ([Public Private Partnership in Health.pdf \(ephi.gov.et\)](#))
2. Ethiopian Ministry of Health. 2017. Public-Private Partnerships in Health Implementation Guidelines ([ppph-implemenation-guideline.pdf \(abtmeetings.com\)](#))
3. [Ethiopia Ministry of Health 2023, Health Sector Medium Term Development and Investment Plan \(HSDIP\) \(2023/24-2025/26\)](#)
4. The governance behaviours: A socio-ecological approach to governing the private sector in health (<https://www.ccpsh.org/sites/default/files/tools/Governance%20Behaviours.pdf>)
5. Policy Dialogue Calls for Private Sector Engagement in Tertiary Healthcare Services in Ethiopia (<https://www.afro.who.int/countries/ethiopia/news/policy-dialogue-calls-private-sector-engagement-tertiary-healthcare-services-ethiopia>)



Ghana: Leveraging national policy development, leadership, and governance to improve private sector engagement in health

SITUATION

In Ghana, the private sector plays a crucial role in health. For instance, the private sector made significant contributions to the rollout of the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) established in 2003. Most notably, the Ministry of Health has recognized private sector providers within the framework of the NHIS, as private health service providers account for approximately half of the country's outpatient treatment. In addition, these service providers consistently supply routine health information to inform health system actions: private sector facilities comprise approximately 15% of the facilities providing routine health information to the district health information management system. Given the strong role the private sector plays in health in Ghana, the Ministry of Health sought to more strategically engage the private sector in its mandate for national policy development, leadership and governance.



Key strategy and tools for private sector engagement

The first national Private Health Sector Development Policy was drafted in 2013. In addition, a dedicated governance structure responsible for multisectoral coordination was set up within the Ministry of Health to serve as a liaison office and steward for private sector engagement.

PROCESS

The primary strategy has been to foster public–private collaboration, dialogue and win-win solutions to leverage the strengths of both sectors in improving health-care delivery, accessibility and efficiency.



Overall, engaging the private sector has led to: expansion of NHIS coverage to remote and underserved areas by accrediting private facilities; enhanced accessibility to specialized health services; lower claims processing times and administrative costs; a raised standard of care in private facilities, as both sectors are competing to retain patients and be the preferred facility for care; improved patient satisfaction and health outcomes; and improved financial planning and resource allocation.

Beyond service provision, the private sector was engaged to manufacture vaccines, with plans to expand this to pharmaceuticals. For example, a restricted List of Medicines (Executive Instrument 181) was established in collaboration with the private sector in a bid to boost local production and promote self-sufficiency, with 49 medicines barred from importation – meaning these medicines are reserved for local production only. Additionally, implementation of Ghana’s Pharmaceutical Pricing Strategy has led to a significant reduction in prices on the National Health Insurance Medicines List.





Learnings:

Successes in Ghana were attained through collaborative efforts that cultivated public–private synergies. Evidently, for enhanced service delivery, robust regulatory and governance systems were required to guide and moderate behaviours, compliance, quality assurance and policy alignment. Moving forward, efforts will be focused on further developing capacity, undertaking continuous training, using technology to streamline functions, and deliberately investing in digital solutions.

Additional Resources:

1. [Private Health Sector Development Policy](#)
2. [National Health Insurance Authority \(NHIA\) Ghana](#)
3. Suchman L. Accrediting private providers with National Health Insurance to better serve low-income populations in Kenya and Ghana: a qualitative study (<https://equityhealthj.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12939-018-0893-y>)
4. Dixon J, Tenkorang EY, Luginaah I. Ghana's National Health Insurance Scheme: a national level investigation of members' perceptions of service provision (<https://bmcinthealthhumrights.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1472-698X-13-35>)
5. [World Health Organization \(WHO\) - Ghana Health Profile](#)
6. [Ghana Ministry of Health](#)



Private sector participation in the implementation of Ghana's National Health Insurance



SITUATION

From 1985, geographic and financial access to health care was limited and the “cash-and-carry” user fee system deprived many of health care in Ghana. Government fiscal constraints led to a severe shortage of medical supplies in public health facilities. Issues of quality of care, administrative efficiency and the financial sustainability of the health system were of major concern to all stakeholders. The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) was established in 2003 to address these challenges. While the public sector plays a major role in financing, administration and service provision to the NHIS, the private sector made significant contributions to the NHIS rollout in Ghana.

Key strategy and tools for private sector engagement

The primary strategy has been to foster public-private collaboration, dialogue and adoption of win-win solutions to leverage the strengths of both sectors in improving health-care delivery, accessibility and efficiency. To encourage the private sector to participate for instance, different tariffs were set for public, private not-for-profit and private for-profit health facilities. Private for-profit health facilities receive the highest tariff. Other tools and approaches include accreditation of providers, technology integration and pharmaceutical supply chain management.



PROCESS

The processes involved broad-based consultations for the development of insurance policy documents and tools to guide both private and public sector players. These include accreditation tools, claims processing and management and tariff determination. The necessary engagement with the private sector was targeted at specific groupings such as the pharmaceutical sector, clinical service providers, diagnostics service providers and suppliers of commodities to NHIS service providers.

The results of engagement with the private sector and nationwide implementation of the NHIS included:

- ✓ expansion of NHIS coverage to more remote and underserved areas through accredited private facilities;
- ✓ enhanced access to specialized health-care services;
- ✓ reduction in claims processing times and administrative costs due to adoption of electronic systems;
- ✓ higher standards of care in private facilities, driven by competition and quality assurance mechanisms;
- ✓ improved patient satisfaction and health outcomes;
- ✓ improved revenue for private health facilities, leading to expansion of services;
- ✓ improved financial planning and resource allocation.





Learnings:

Key lessons learnt include:

- ✓ collaborative efforts and public–private synergies are crucial for private sector participation as service providers;
- ✓ robust regulatory and governance systems are required to guide behaviours, compliance, quality assurance and policy alignments that are vital in moderating the actions of various parties;
- ✓ the importance of focusing on capacity development, continuous training, use of technology to streamline some functions and deliberate efforts to invest in digital solutions.

Additional Resources:

1. [National Health Insurance Authority \(NHIA\) Ghana](#)
2. Accrediting private providers with National Health Insurance to better serve low-income populations in Kenya and Ghana: a qualitative study
<https://equityhealthj.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12939-018-0893-y>
3. Ghana's National Health Insurance Scheme: a national level investigation of members' perceptions of service provision
4. <https://bmcinthealthumrights.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1472-698X-13-35>
5. [World Health Organization \(WHO\) - Ghana Health Profile](#)
6. [Ghana Ministry of Health](#)



Private Sector Engagement for effective regulation of the health sector in Ghana

SITUATION

Ghana's health sector has seen significant growth and development over the past few decades, with both public and private sectors playing a crucial role. The private sector includes a wide range of entities such as private hospitals, clinics, pharmaceutical companies, and nongovernmental organizations. Despite the contributions of the private sector, there are key challenges related to:

- Fragmentation of services: many private health providers operate independently, leading to inconsistencies in service delivery and standards.
- Regulatory compliance: ensuring that private health facilities comply with national standards and regulations has been a persistent issue.
- Resource constraints: limited resources for regulatory bodies to monitor and enforce regulations across numerous private facilities.
- Integration with public health systems: difficulty in integrating private sector services with national health strategies and systems.
- Non-reporting: most private health facilities or providers have failed to adequately report their health service delivery data to the Ministry of Health. While some report irregularly or incompletely, some do not report at all.

Key strategy and tools for private sector engagement

The Ministry of Health conducted sector-wide engagement to review and harmonize all legislative and regulatory policies. This resulted in the passing of Act 829 (Health Institutions and Facilities Act, 2011), Act 851 (Public Health Act, 2012) and Act 859 (Health Professions Regulatory Bodies Act, 2013). These Acts of Parliament provide a comprehensive legal basis for effective regulation for public and private sector entities and professionals, and for protection of public health.

The Ministry of Health led the process to engage all stakeholders especially private health practitioners, the pharmaceutical industry players, private laboratories and health professionals to appreciate the need for effective regulation across both the public and private sectors. The Ministry ensured that all regulatory proposals were broad and not simply targeting private sector players.



PROCESS

The Ministry ensured active participation of the private sector in all policy and regulatory drafting. There were joint meetings, stakeholder workshops and the establishment of Technical Working Groups (including members from both public and private sectors).

- ✓ **Improved regulatory compliance:** an increased number of private health facilities registered, licensed and meeting national standards
- ✓ **Increased access to health services:** the regulatory reform has also opened up investment in the sector. The requirement to be a health practitioner to own a health facility was dropped, allowing private business owners to establish and run hospitals and clinics
- ✓ **Enhanced service delivery:** better quality of care and increased access to health services through public-private-partnerships
- ✓ **Strengthened health systems:** more robust health information systems integrating data from both public and private sectors
- ✓ **Capacity development:** improved skills and competencies among private health-care providers.
- ✓ **High regulatory coverage for key health professionals:** unlike previously where only doctors, nurses and pharmacists were regulated practitioners, more health care professional training and practice are being regulated in Ghana. There are more licensed practitioners than before with regulatory requirements for mandatory regular continuous professional development.

Learnings:

- ✓ **Collaboration is key:** effective regulation and quality assurance require strong partnerships between public and private sectors.
- ✓ **Continuous improvement:** regulatory frameworks must evolve with changing health-care landscapes and emerging challenges.

Additional Resources:

1. [World Health Organization \(WHO\) - Ghana Health Profile](#)
2. [Ghana Ministry of Health](#)



Coupling dedicated stewardship and strategic direction to drive improved private sector engagement in South Sudan



SITUATION

The private sector accounts for over 70% of health service provision in the capital, Juba. Across numerous programmatic areas, there has been some form of collaboration, or intention to collaborate, between the Ministry of Health and the private sector. However, a clear formalized strategic approach and stewardship to engage the private sector needed to be mapped out. In this regard, at the end of 2023, the Ministry of Health requested the WHO's support to establish a public-private partnership engagement framework.

Key strategy and tools for private sector engagement

WHO is working with the Ministry of Health to develop the framework. Its purpose is to clearly define the scope and means of engagement between the two sectors, areas of potential collaboration, and opportunities for mutual support and benefit. A Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Health and private sector entities will be put in place to guide respective sectors' scope of actions and mutual support. For instance, one area to be addressed would be private sector facilities routinely providing health data into the health information management system.



PROCESS

As part of ongoing efforts to institutionalize and strengthen private sector engagement in South Sudan, the Ministry of Health established the senior position of Director of Private Sector Engagement approximately two years ago, with the role of providing overall stewardship and liaising with the private sector. In addition, the Director is responsible for liaising with WHO and other international organizations. This directorate will help to shape the development of the engagement framework and ensure relevant stakeholders are also part of the co-development process.

RESULTS

Establishing a Director of Private Sector Engagement has led to successes including streamlined engagement with various parties and increased prioritization of private sector engagement. For instance, private sector engagement has now been included in actions carried out by mainstream multi-donor funding mechanisms. With the planned engagement framework, more success can be expected. The framework will better clarify the roles and responsibilities of each sector and help to strengthen collaboration within and beyond the Ministry of Health.



Learnings:

- *First*, the continuing growth of the private sector is inevitable and opportunities exist for better collaboration for the benefit of the population.
- *Second*, seeking win-win solutions can help better align the respective priorities of public and private sector actors. For example, incentives provided to the private sector can help to expand coverage of services to rural areas, which may lead to improvements in health equity.
- And *third*, it is important to ensure that any Memorandum of Understanding between the public and private sector does not centre on resources or is fragmented based on programmatic area, but rather focuses on more integrated approaches to health.



Engaging the private health sector in developing the national health policy for Universal Health Coverage

SITUATION

A diversified and growing private health sector: private medicine has always existed in Tunisia, essentially on an individual practice basis in outpatient care, while the significant development of private sector hospitals is relatively recent with the law relating to health organization adopted in 1991 and the investment incentive code in 1993 which granted the private health sector tax and financial advantages. Over the last 30 years, the number of clinics has quadrupled and capacity has increased more than eight-fold.

Private sector dominates advanced technologies: in 2021, private health providers accounted for more than half of heavy equipment and advanced technologies (72% of scanners, 74% of MRIs and 63% of cardiac catheterization rooms). The private sector partially fills the deficiencies in availability and responsiveness of the public system: in certain regions, private provision makes up for the shortcomings of public health care. This “complementarity” is not defined within the framework of a public–private partnership project or a health map considering the two sectors. However, some governorates do not have scanners and MRIs in either public or private health facilities.

Persistent regional disparities: the growth of private supply has been concentrated mainly in regions with higher incomes, which strengthens the existing services and disadvantages the western and southern regions of the country.



Key strategy and tools for private sector engagement

A national health policy for Universal Health Coverage: Tunisia officially adopted its National Health Policy on 7 April 2021, involving a national charter for the reform of the health system backed by the various stakeholders including the Board of Doctors, implying commitment and political will. Based on a vision of UHC by 2030 and inspired by the universal values of human rights, the National Health Policy frames a set of strategic choices and keys to success.

The **role of the private sector** is vital to family and local health and as an entry point to the health system, and it is organized as a combined public and private local network.

A **package of essential services** is delivered throughout the health system as a unified basic regime, both public and private.

The national health policy also aims for a health system that delivers **quality care for all** across Tunisia regardless of geography, as well as a **monitoring complementarity** and **collaboration** between the public and private sectors to achieve public health objectives.

PROCESS

- ✓ A participatory approach is being taken involving private providers in the development and implementation of the National Health Policy strategic and operational plan. In the area of family and local health, specifications are being developed with French Development Agency support, in collaboration with the main stakeholders (medical board, union, professionals, citizens).
- ✓ The digitalization of health services also enables more engagement of the private sector with public health objectives. Indeed, the EVAX national vaccination portal covers all categories of immunization (routine for children, anti-rabies, mobility, seasonal) in the public and private sector. The deployment of telemedicine is another opportunity to facilitate access to health services, particularly in areas suffering from a shortage of doctors.
- ✓ Finally, a project is underway to introduce national health identifiers to integrate the health information system.



RESULTS

- ✓ Family and local health, both public and private, has improved coordination of the care pathway
- ✓ The private sector, now better regulated, is more engaged with public health objectives.

Learnings:

Since August 2020, the private sector has played a role in screening for the COVID-19 virus, with more than 100 private analysis laboratories reinforcing the public laboratory network. A dedicated national platform brings together PCR tests and rapid tests via compulsory notification of results.

Private doctors and pharmacists also participated actively and free of charge in the national COVID-19 vaccination campaign. Finally, different initiatives have been developed involving the private and public sectors:

- COVIDAR, a free home care service with a toll-free number, deployed in ten regions by private-sector doctors in order to guarantee early care and avoid complications and hospitalizations;
- the Psychological Support Unit set up for COVID-19 patients and health professionals, reachable on a toll-free number, making psychiatrists and psychologists available from the public and private sectors;
- home care for patients by doctors and nurses from the private sector with coordination from the public sector, particularly in the distribution of oxygen concentrators.

However, excess fees and hospitalization costs were noted in the course of inspections carried out by the Ministry of Health.



Strengthening the governance of the private health sector in Tunisia



SITUATION

Over the last 20 years, the private health sector in Tunisia has come to provide a third of hospital capacity, and this is forecast to reach more than 50%. Private facilities possess 75% of heavy medical equipment and advanced technologies in the country, essential to provide quality modern health services. Demonstrating commitment to providing affordable and accessible care, medical procedures in the private sector are insured at the same price as the public sector for patients benefiting from health insurance, with a co-payment.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, private clinics played a role in treating heavy cases in intensive care. Private laboratories also provided COVID-19 testing for rapid and efficient detection of positive cases. Tele-advice platforms were also set up free of charge with private volunteer doctors online to relieve the public emergency call centre, thus reducing pressure on public infrastructure. Online prescription renewal was also introduced.

Key strategy and tools for private sector engagement

1. Strengthening **participatory governance**.
2. **Participation in decision-making processes:** increased presence of the private sector in national/scientific committees.
3. The development or revision of regulations to ensure that decisions take into account the **interests and capabilities** of the private sector.
4. **Public–private partnerships** to help bridge the gap between demand and supply of health services, particularly in “medical deserts” where the public sector cannot reach due to a lack of resources.
5. Direct or indirect **tax incentives** offered to private structures that invest in the health sector, particularly in priority areas.
6. **Training and capacity building**, working with the private sector to develop facilities and training programmes for health personnel.
7. **Promoting innovation:** digitalization of the health sector.

PROCESS

- ✓ A participatory, inclusive and broad approach to national policies, strategies and plans was initiated in 2012, the “Societal Dialogue for National Health Policies, Strategies, and Plans”, which showed that there was a lack of coordination with the private sector. An institutional framework to strengthen public-private collaboration was established. The Ministry of Health established an official list of private health providers, including private clinics, assisted reproduction centers, medical imaging and radiotherapy centers, haemodialysis centers and medical transportation services.

PROCESS

- ✓ A private sector care pathway scheme in CNAM (the National Health Insurance Fund) was set out. To be reimbursed, policy-holders must follow a care path of first consulting a referring doctor, regardless of whether the care is provided in the public or private sector. This regime ensures coordination and efficiency in patient care.

These modalities aim to maximize the positive impact of the private sector on the Tunisian health system.

RESULTS

The results of the implementation of the strategy to engage the private sector in health in Tunisia show a notable improvement in infrastructure, accessibility and quality of care. The digitalization of administrative processes underway with the CNAM and the promotion of Tunisia as a health destination have also contributed to these successes. These concerted efforts between the public and private sectors strengthen Tunisia's position as a regional leader in health services and medical tourism.



Learnings:

- **Public–private complementarity:** collaboration between the public and private sector through the CNAM maximizes resources and improves the efficiency of health services.
- **Modernization and advanced technologies:** partnerships for the acquisition and sharing of the latest advanced medical technologies need to be encouraged.
- **Accessibility and pricing:** offering private services at the same prices as the public sector for socially insured people has improved access to services and equity.
- **Simplification of administrative procedures:** digitalization needs to be extended to administrative and electronic medical records procedures to improve efficiency and transparency.





Engaging the private health sector in policy making in Jordan



SITUATION

Jordan is a lower-middle income country that is committed to achieving UHC and health security by 2030. It is moving steadfastly toward this goal through a whole-of-society approach engaging all relevant stakeholders. Whether for-profit or not-for-profit, the private sector is a key player in the Jordanian health system. For instance, 52% of the human resources for health work in the private sector, according to the Health Labor Market Analysis in 2023. According to the latest National Health Accounts report using data from 2019, Jordan's total health-care expenditure reached JOD 2.337 billion (US\$3.3 billion) with the private sector accounting for 53.6% of that.

However, Jordan still faces some major challenges that impede the effective engagement of the private sector, namely:

- Lack of a coordination platform to bring together all health subsectors
- Weak accountability mechanism
- Suboptimal role of the Ministry of Health in governance and leadership of the health sector
- Weak and ambiguous regulatory arrangements
- The current contractual agreements between the Ministry of Health and the private sector and the accumulated debts that disincentivize the private sector from joining efforts towards UHC.

Key strategy and tools for private sector engagement

- Jordan has long recognized the role of the private sector in health and thus when the first sector coordination platform, the High Health Council was established in 1999, the private sector was represented by different members including professional associations and the private hospitals association.
- Jordan ratified the SDGs in 2015 and has since embarked on implementing a series of health reform interventions based on the participation and contribution of all stakeholders including the private sector.
- In 2016, led by the High Health Council, the first national health sector strategy was developed covering 2016–2020 based on a participatory approach. Though the strategy did not fully materialize, it was the first endeavour to bring all stakeholders together. Consequently, there were different attempts to develop health reform strategies and plans accompanied by several national policy dialogue initiatives and governance assessments. In 2022, led by Ministry of Health, a political economy analysis was conducted to unpack the challenges and assess the positions and power of key decision-makers for UHC in Jordan.
- The analysis supported policy-makers and key decision-makers in efforts to overcome the challenges and develop effective strategies to manage the political hurdles to UHC. The analysis took into account the position of the private sector in relation to achieving UHC and health security for Jordan's population given its indispensable role in service and product provision.
- The process entailed high-level policy dialogue and resulted in the development of a UHC/health security roadmap which was endorsed in 2023. The roadmap sets out the role of the private sector and is aligned with Jordan's Economic Modernization Vision.
- The Ministry of Health has also developed its 2023–2025 strategy based on a participatory approach, including the private sector as part of the development process and an important stakeholder and beneficiary. The private sector has also been represented in the Health Development Partner Platform since its establishment in 2016.
- In addition to the role of the private sector in policy-making, the private sector has an immense role in health-care provision and pharmaceutical production.
- The government also facilitates private sector investment in health, especially in medical tourism and pharmaceuticals.

PROCESS

There are different modalities of engaging the private sector in Jordan, particularly through contracts for service provision.

RESULTS

- ✓ The engagement of the for-profit and not-for-private sector in health was highly evident in the era of COVID-19. The response of Jordan to the crisis was to adopt a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach, which leveraged the resources the private sector could offer including infrastructure, human resources and medical supplies.
- ✓ According to an assessment of the role of the private sector in the pandemic response, Jordan's private sector involvement was moderate in policy-making, supply chains, provision of essential services, and risk communication and community engagement. Private providers were also active in surveillance, contact tracing and diagnosis as well as case management.

Learnings:

There is room for building sound public–private partnerships in health and there is a real willingness to engage the private sector in health, which would pave the way to achieving UHC and health security in Jordan. However, this will not materialize without pragmatic changes toward more coherent governance arrangements in Jordan's health sector.

Additional Resources:

- Jordan Health Labour Market Analysis 2023
- Jordan National Health Accounts 2019
- High-level Mission on Strengthening Jordan Health Sector Governance towards Universal Health Coverage, 21–25 Nov 2021
- Jordan Political Economy Analysis 2022
- The role of the private health sector in COVID response. https://vlibrary.emro.who.int/idr_records/the-role-of-the-private-health-sector-in-covid-19-response/



Inclusive health policy-making in Lebanon



SITUATION

The health system in Lebanon is dominated by a technology-driven private sector, which provides more than 80% of health services. The private health sector is able to attract and retain highly qualified staff, can cope faster with innovation and has proven to be more resilient in times of crisis, with capacity for financial viability due to its flexibility in raising funds and cost containment measures.

Nongovernmental organizations play a significant role in managing the primary health care network and providing services for the most vulnerable communities.

The public health sector, severely weakened by repeated shocks over the past 50 years, including the current complex and multifaceted crisis, is providing around **20% of health services**.

Key strategy and tools for private sector engagement

- Thorough discussion of all policies related to the health sector with relevant stakeholders in the private sector such as health professionals, orders and syndicates, insurance companies, health education institutions and academies, and NGOs
- An evidence-based approach

PROCESS

The private sector is:

- represented in all health-related committees;
- engaged early on in all health sector-related main programmes and initiatives
- regulated through contractual agreements with the Ministry of Public Health (purchasing of services from hospitals, MOUs with NGOs for PHC services, acting as a reference lab, etc.)
- non-private health sector parties such as media and large corporate institutions are engaged in national health dialogue.



RESULTS

The private sector:

- ✓ offers **12,000 hospital beds**
- ✓ handles **two thirds of all hospital admissions** every year (around 700,000)
- ✓ offers quality care based on advanced technology.

The national health sector strategy, built on consensus, mandates an important role for the private sector in four main pillars of UHC, digitalization, health security and health promotion, including:

- ✓ a voluntary national accreditation system ensuring quality standards
- ✓ evidence-based national health guidelines more easily accepted and applied.

Major recent successes:

- ✓ GIS database.
- ✓ Cancer programme.
- ✓ Integration of NCD care at PHC level.
- ✓ Surveillance support.
- ✓ COVID-19 response and access to advanced care.
- ✓ Local pharmaceutical sector development (market share rising from **10% to 33%**).
- ✓ Medications traceability system.
- ✓ Emergency pre-hospital transport system.
- ✓ Cholera outbreak response 2022-23.
- ✓ Very active media engagement in risk communication and community engagement.

Learnings:

- ✓ Keeping the private sector readily engaged in all national health dialogue is vital;
- ✓ The flexibility of the private sector is an important factor in health system resilience to major shocks;
- ✓ Good governance of public authorities is critical for regulation of the private sector



Engaging the private health sector for health system strengthening in Yemen



SITUATION

The private sector was restricted to service provision, with little or no involvement in planning, logistics, surveillance or other health system functions.

PROCESS

- The private health sector was involved in a national health situation analysis which then informed the development of the National Health Strategy and Strategic Plan.
- The Strategy aims to increase private investment in the health sector and ensure the provision of quality services.

- ✓ The role of the private sector in phase 1 (2019–2020) of the Strategic Plan included:
 - the provision of health services alongside the public health sector;
 - the generation of increased tax revenues; and
 - donations to health and charitable projects and programmes.
- ✓ The role of the private sector in phase 2 (2021–2025) of the Strategic Plan includes:
 - active participation in providing health services and investment;
 - the creation of job opportunities across the health sector, and a concomitant reduction in government expenditure on public sector salaries;
 - reducing the need to send complicated cases abroad by establishing hospitals where operations can be performed by foreign cadres; and
 - helping to address shortfalls in medical specialties at public facilities.

Learnings:

Private sector contributions will be facilitated by:

- legislation that is flexible, and transparent;
- developing a comprehensive vision for partnership between the private and public health sectors;
- implementing a health insurance system for all citizens; and
- providing banking facilities and soft loans to health project investors.



Engagement of private health service providers alongside public health facilities in policy or programmatic initiatives in Zambia



SITUATION

The private sector plays a large role in health in Zambia, particularly in the pharmaceutical industry (manufacturing as well as wholesale and retail pharmacies) and in health-care service provision. There are more than 300 private health facilities and they are as engaged in health service provision as public facilities, since they are registered with the National Health Insurance scheme. The private sector is also engaged through a private sector association in health sector governance, which is led and supported by the Ministry of Health.

Key strategy and tools for private sector engagement

The Ministry of Health hosted a large consultative forum in 2022, facilitated by the European Union (EU), to engage private sector actors to discuss local manufacturing of pharmaceuticals. This was in direct response to the National Development Plan that emphasizes this work as a key direction for the country. This forum brought together over 500 government partners, private providers and health cooperating partners and led to a myriad of outcomes, such as strengthened partnerships between the EU and the Ministry of Health. In addition, following the identification of public–private partnerships in the National Health Strategic Plan, a roadmap for action was developed and investments in private sector pharmaceutical manufacturing followed.

PROCESS

- ✓ In line with the national framework for monitoring the National Health Strategic Plan, a harmonized health facility assessment was conducted in 2021–2022. The goal was to map all health facilities, including private facilities, and to determine the readiness and availability of health services.
- ✓ A total of 230 private health facilities responded nationwide. This was a strong positive step as it allows private health facilities to get involved alongside public health facilities in policy or programmatic initiatives, ultimately strengthening the health system. For instance, WHO provides support for the health sector – which includes both the public and private sector – and the latter can now be more easily considered.

This harmonized health facility assessment was immensely thorough and resulted in a report of nearly 1500 pages. Some key findings were that: (i) the readiness of surgical services is higher in private facilities; (ii) private sector facilities are primarily located where population density is greatest, leading to two out of ten provinces hosting most of the private health facilities, and (iii) the private sector significantly contributes to specialized health-care services in the country.

Learnings:

- ✓ **First**, hosting the forum signaled that the Ministry of Health was ready to engage with the private sector and instilled a sense of the value that the government is placing on the private sector. Private sector partners were advised that the government is there to engage them, collaborate with them, and learn with them. The private sector was also advised that a strong private sector industry association would facilitate strengthened engagement with the government.
- ✓ **Second**, in line with this advice, the private sector association that is supported by the Ministry of Health needs to ensure there is consistent representation to promote more robust coordination. To promote coordinated and sustained engagement, the association could host forums, review meetings, and follow strict deadlines to provide recommendations to the health sector as needed.
- ✓ **Third**, following actions taken in the private sector, the government also needs to engage and support the private sector including signaling its readiness to do so, such as in the development of national policies and strategies.

Country Conversations

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