# Progression Pathway for Governance of Mixed Health Systems

Improving health system performance for better health outcomes

Improving health system performance requires governments to implement health policies designed to deliver equitable access to healthcare, improve or maintain health, and provide health services valued and trusted by a country's population.

World Health Organization
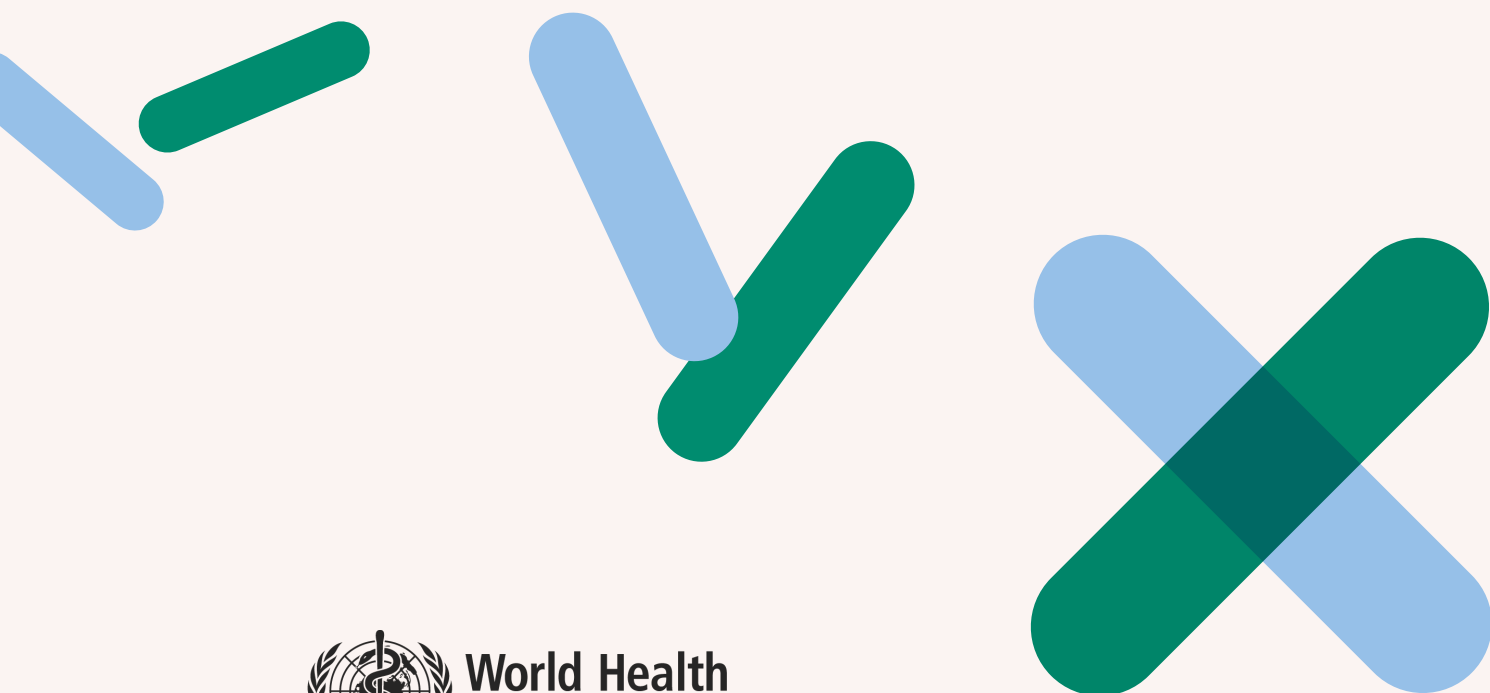
Health system governance is the pathway for implementing these goals

A government's capacity to govern health systems is directly related to how effectively it can make and implement its health policies and steer the whole system towards desired goals such as Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and health security

The Progression Pathway for the Governance of Mixed Health Systems (the Progression Pathway) is a practical tool developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) to help countries strengthen their capacity to govern and provide better health, focusing on the governance of private health sector. The Progression Pathway is based on the recommendations and approach introduced by the WHO Strategy Report "Engaging the Private Health Service Delivery Sector through Governance in Mixed Health Systems".

Why did the WHO develop the Progression Pathway?

The Progression Pathway responds to two significant and prevalent trends:

1

First, efforts to achieve UHC and the other SDG goals and targets are failing. Health service coverage has stagnated, and the proportion of the population facing catastrophic out-of-pocket health spending has dramatically increased.

Second, private sector involvement in health care delivery and financing is significant and growing. However, the private sector is often under-governed, with flow-on consequences for health equity, access, quality, and efficiency.

2

A complete change of approach to health systems strengthening is required to get the world back on track to meet the SDG health goals and targets.

This change necessitates rebuilding and strengthening existing domestic governance arrangements and developing innovative ways of working, interacting, and sharing information between all health actors, both public and private.

How can the Progression Pathway help?

The Progression Pathway was developed to facilitate this change by supporting governments and national health authorities in three ways:

Identifying a destination
The governance arrangements and capacities needed to deliver better health outcomes **that will work in their context.**

Taking stock
Examining existing governance arrangements and capacities, their strengths and weaknesses and **identifying the priority areas for improvement.**

Defining a way forward
Help define strategies and specific actions for improving governance effectiveness focused on building the capacity to make and implement health policies **to improve healthcare access, quality, and cost-effectiveness.**

Examples of real–world policy challenges where the Progression Pathway could help

Closing the women's health gap

Women, on average, spend 25% more time in poor health than men. Closing the gender health gap could reduce women's time in poor health, promoting direct health and economic benefits. This potential is unlocked by working with all health actors, including the private sector, to invest in women-centric research, gather and analyse sex-disaggregated data, provide gender-specific care, and implement supportive policies. This can unlock the potential to reduce women's time in poor health. **The Progression Pathway can support these efforts to help countries promote direct health benefits for women and improve women's economic outcomes.**
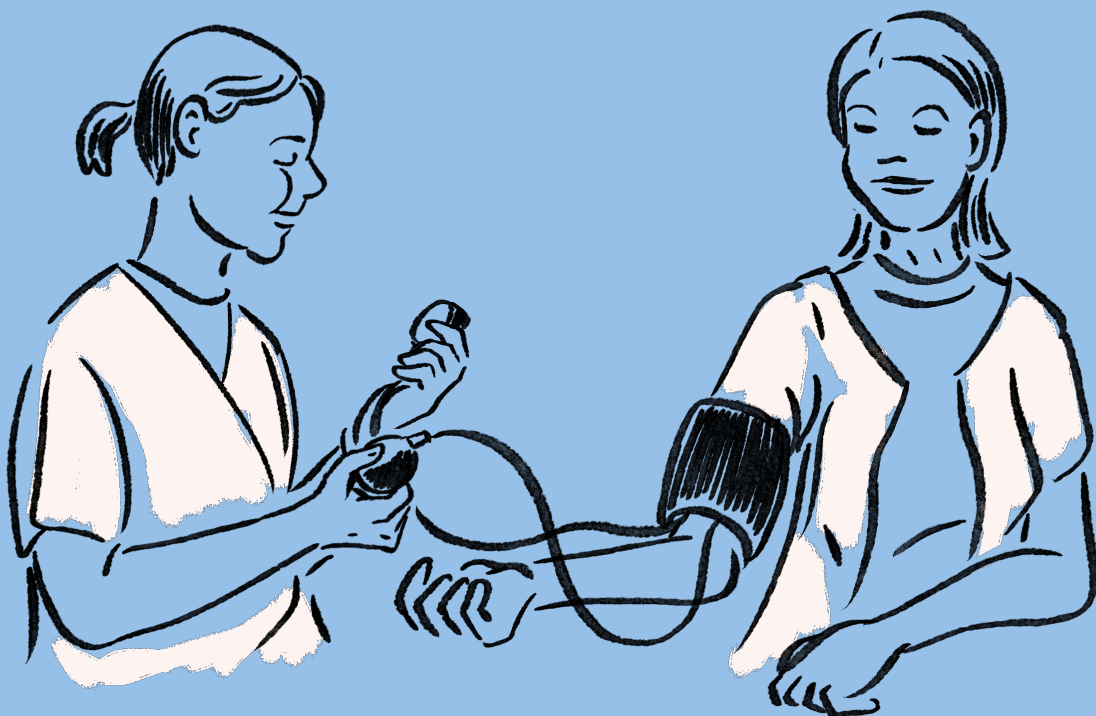
Health supply chains

Many governments and their development partners recognise the private sector's critical role in expanding access to essential care, procuring and distributing health commodities and medical equipment, and collaborating with existing health systems to ensure essential service delivery. Central to this is the need for robust governance frameworks that facilitate public and private sector partnerships. **The Progression Pathway can be used to design and implement the necessary enabling environment for these partnerships.**

Maternal and child health

The private sector is crucial in delivering maternal and newborn health services, with one in five births in low- and middle-income countries receiving care delivered by the private sector. However, whilst the private sector's role is expanding in many countries, the quality of services varies. Little is known about how to sustain and ensure quality of care in the private sector in low- and middle-income countries and what the government should do to ensure quality. **The Progression Pathway can be used to diagnose the problem and design solutions to nurture and encourage a vibrant private sector fully engaged in improving and sustaining equitable access to quality care for all mothers and newborns.**

Regulating self-care

Regulation challenges around self-care tools and platforms are evolving to respond to consumer needs, allowing unprecedented access to information and improving options for their lives and health. Critical products are becoming less provider-mediated through self-care and task-sharing. HIV patient care is being decentralised and powered by technology, enabling patients to actively take control of their health and bypass health professionals and the systems designed to ensure quality, safety, and efficacy. **A new approach is required to facilitate these developments while ensuring equitable access, quality safety, and cost-effectiveness. The Progression Pathway can help countries decide how to implement this new approach.**

Regulating digital healthcare

The combination of a rapid increase in access to the internet, low-cost diagnostic technologies and evidence-based treatment guidelines is creating opportunities for improving health care. As global organisations make substantial investments in digital health, new partnerships will emerge between the health and communications sectors, governments, and the private sector. If these partnerships are to deliver better health for all, **they will require effective governance arrangements that can be identified and developed using the Progression Pathway.**

Re-orienting health systems towards primary healthcare

Experience shows that a reorientation of health systems towards PHC requires governments to understand their role in direct service delivery through the public sector and in overseeing and guiding the private sector's activities. **The Progression Pathway can help governments navigate the necessary reforms.**

Pandemic preparedness

The private sector contributed to the COVID-19 response through engagement in COVID-19 surveillance and testing, management of COVID-19 cases, health promotion and vaccine delivery. It also proved to be an effective means to maintain essential health services when public health services were focused on surveillance, prevention, and treatment of COVID-19 cases.

To prepare for future disease outbreaks and pandemics, there is a need to develop regulatory frameworks for effective public–private engagement, including regulation of pricing and quality assurance and ensure all health actors follow national plans and priorities during public health emergencies. **Governments can use the Progression Pathway to design the necessary frameworks**.

The structure of the Progression Pathway

The Progression Pathway is structured according to the six governance behaviours described in the WHO Strategy Report. The six governance behaviours are:

1

Deliver Strategy

The government has articulated clear strategic goals for the health system as a whole and the role(s) of the private sector in achieving these. Such role(s) are clearly stated in up-to-date strategy documents and supported with the required resource allocation policies to allow the strategy to materialise.

2

Enable Stakeholders

Government acts to influence the operation and performance of the private health sector through regulation and financing. This should be done to promote patient safety, advance the quality of care, and protect patients' health interests and broader welfare.

3

Foster Relations

The government has established inclusive policy processes in which many stakeholders (including the private health sector and other actors) play an active role. Those processes aim to ensure that the policy formulation and implementation are open, inclusive and transparent.

4

Build Understanding

The government has taken action to ensure access to comprehensive, up-to-date and high-quality data on the operation and performance of the private sector. This information is used for strategic and operational decision-making, and relevant data is shared with the public.

5

Align Structures

The government has established the organisational structures required to achieve its identified strategic goals and objectives for the private health sector. Those structures support the coordination between the private and public sectors at the service delivery level and ensure the operational alignment with the national strategy for private sector engagement across all relevant actors, including donors and development actors.

6

Nurture Trust

The government protects patients' rights and financial welfare concerning their interaction with the private health sector and provides structures to ensure public accountability / patient redress. Such structures build trust between the population and the health system by holding the public and private sectors to the same accountability standards.

In turn, these six behaviours connect to a set of related governance mechanisms for influencing the operation and performance of the private health sector. For each mechanism, **the Progression Pathway** sets out a series of four progress levels relating to the existing state of governance effectiveness.

NASCENT   DEVELOPING   PROGRESSING   ESTABLISHED

Governance behaviour	What does progress look like?	Progression			
Deliver Strategy	Up-to-date **documents** to **influence the operation and performance** of the private sector in line with health objectives.	○	○	○	○
Align Structures	The private sector is **included in and aligned with public health** programmes and initiatives.	○	○	○	○
Build Understanding	**Organised** data to enable and encourage evidence-based strategic and operational decision-making.	○	○	○	○
Enable Stakeholders	**Regulatory and financing** interventions to enable private providers to contribute to health policy goals.	○	○	○	○
Nurture Trust	**Making sure** that the **rights of patients** receiving care in the private sector are enforced.	○	○	○	○
Foster Relations	Established platforms for **policy dialogue** and encourage the private sector to establish **representative bodies**.	○	○	○	○