

## EDITORIAL

Everyone has the right to quality healthcare and should be able to access medical services without risking financial hardship. Therefore, GFA advocates and works towards the implementation of universal health coverage (UHC) based on a people-centered approach.

Enabling people to access solidarity-based and cost-efficient risk pools for health financing is key for moving towards UHC. It allows pooling health risks and expenditures across all income groups of a country's population, which strengthens equity and financial sustainability of national health insurance systems. GFA supports governments in their efforts to build and extend equitable and sustainable national health insurance systems for all citizens.

We contribute towards UHC by increasing the number of people who receive quality health services according to their individual needs while focusing on the most vulnerable social groups. We also improve health service delivery through human capacity development of health staff with a specific focus on continuous quality management. GFA supports health system decentralization and policy development to strengthen health governance.

GFA's health department, Medica, relies on cultural and technical diversity. Analytical and collaborative thinking allows us to approach challenges from a holistic perspective and to find successful solutions. We are confident that we can contribute to a significant increase in the number of people receiving better health services at lesser costs. This will reduce the poverty trap for many people.



Christoph Schaefer-Kehnert  
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## STEPPING IT UP – PEOPLE-CENTERED UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

**Many people around the globe are at risk to become impoverished or to be pushed further into poverty when they need to pay for health services themselves. Out-of-pocket payments can account for more than 50% of the total health expenditure in many lower income countries. At the same time, health services often remain of poor quality in many parts of the world and need to be improved so they serve the needs of the population. Increasing financial risk protection and improving the quality of health services are key factors in ensuring a functioning health system.**

The universal health coverage (UHC) concept is based on the idea that everyone should be able to access needed and quality health services in prevention, promotion, treatment and rehabilitation, without risking undue financial hardship. However this is not an easy commitment as around 1.3 billion people do not have access to effective and affordable healthcare. As a result of high out-of-pocket payments when accessing health services, millions of people become impoverished.

Striving towards UHC requires coherent and

comprehensive local, national, regional, and global action. Therefore, GFA steps up UHC in all key fields of health systems: governance, human resources, health service delivery, health financing, medicine and health products, and health information systems. The work of GFA is in line with global best practices and development trends. GFA strongly recognizes international health targets determined in the Alma-Ata Declaration on Health for All, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

SDG target 3.8 specifically aims at UHC, namely financial risk protection, access to quality essential healthcare and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable, essential medicines and vaccines for all. In addition to the SDGs, the UHC2030 movement ([www.uhc2030.org](http://www.uhc2030.org)) aims at building stronger health systems for UHC. It provides a multi-stakeholder platform for promoting national and global collaboration in health system support. As such, UHC can be considered the overall vision while strengthening health systems includes specific steps to achieve this vision.



GFA strengthens access to quality health services for all

## GFA AT WORK

At the national level, Germany promoted the UHC agenda during its G7 presidency and kept global health on the agenda during the G20 presidency. Germany's commitment in global health has great potential for the future. GFA welcomes the G20 communiqué which includes a full page on global health. Germany's contribution within the SDG process and its efforts regarding UHC advocacy are crucial for a more coherent approach to global health that highlights the need to focus on health systems strengthening.

Following up on this momentum, GFA focuses on a people-centered health system strengthening approach (see graphic below).

GFA has been providing technical assistance services in Africa, Asia, America, and Europe for more than 30 years. The following selected projects demonstrate how GFA contributes to foster health systems towards UHC in health service delivery, health financing and governance.

### STRENGTHENING HEALTH SERVICE DELIVERY

#### IMPROVING QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC HOSPITALS IN MOLDOVA

GFA has been providing international and national short-term advice to improve the quality in three public secondary care hospitals in the Republic of Moldova since 2016. This is part of the GIZ-funded Quality improvement of health services project in cooperation with the Moldovan Association of Private Health Care Providers (UIMSP).

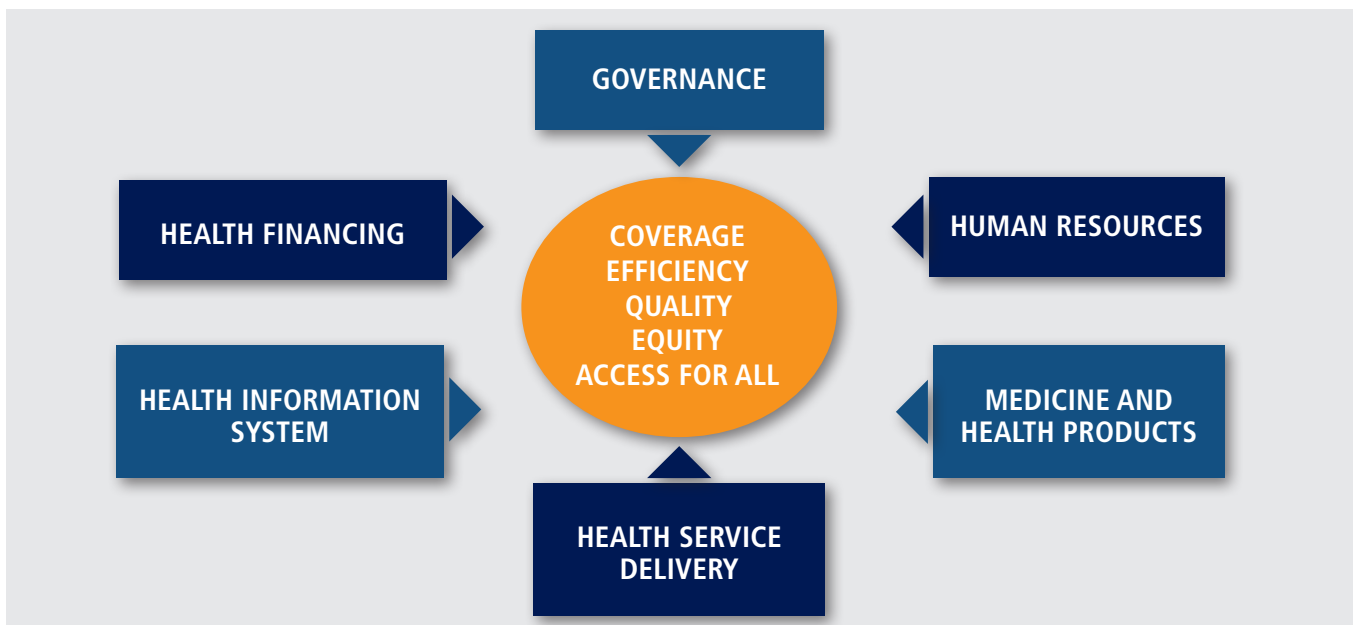


GFA follows a people-centered approach improving health literacy

The project seeks to establish effective quality management systems within the three hospitals. Specific activities are setting up and supporting quality circles for various hospital processes, an approach commonly used in German hospitals. These measures aim at reducing the level of hospital acquired infections by improving hygiene, establishing standard operating procedures for a range of surgical interventions related to heart surgery, appendix removal and gall bladder surgery, and improving recovery rates following a heart attack.

In addition, the project intends to reduce patients' length of hospital stay, to avoid patients returning with complications and to increase the satisfaction of those who have received medical

interventions. Working with highly skilled and well-trained managerial and clinical experts, who are employed in the private sector and can transfer their skills to the public sector, has been appreciated by the beneficiary hospitals and the Ministry of Health. One GFA approach is to redefine the role for a quality manager at each of the country's hospitals. This is a move towards an institutionalized hospital quality management skills transfer. To that effect, a new undergraduate course for medical doctors and nurses is developed in cooperation with the National Center for Health Management. These major changes within the Moldovan health system will ensure a sustainable quality management initiative after the project ends in 2018.





### IMPROVING ACCESS TO HIV SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN SOUTH AFRICA

On behalf of KfW, GFA has been advising the National Department of Health (DoH) since 2015. The objective is to improve access to and quality of HIV counseling and testing (HCT) services for vulnerable population groups in informal settlements and rural areas of the two target provinces of German development cooperation: Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga.

GFA provides advice on contracting out and monitoring these services to an NGO, and on conducting studies to monitor the risk behavior among young people. This partnership between government and civil society aims at encouraging high-risk population groups, who normally do not seek health services at government health facilities, to use HCT as well as other health services such as screening for tuberculosis, sexually transmitted infections and non-communicable diseases.

HCT is a critical and essential gateway to HIV prevention, treatment, care, and support services. Early awareness of a positive HIV status maximizes opportunities for people living with HIV to access treatment which reduces HIV-related morbidity and mortality substantially, and/or prevents mother-to-child transmission of HIV. Those who are HIV negative can continue with their efforts to protect themselves from acquiring HIV using evidence-based prevention methods: safer sex, use of condoms, voluntary medical male circumcision, safe injecting equipment, and reduced number of sexual partners. The program targets key population groups such as men who have sex with men, transgender, sex workers, people who inject drugs, and migrant populations. Its goal is to reach underserved people and to refer people who are living with HIV to public health facilities for further treatment.

### E-LEARNING ON SYSTEMIC PROCUREMENT OF HEALTH EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

Within the German Healthcare Partnership Framework, GFA developed a web-based self-learning course on systemic procurement of health equipment and supplies. The overall objective is to develop trainees' understanding of systemic procurement. Systemic procurement considers the economic, ecological and social dimensions of procurement – a strong point of GFA's sustainable management policy. Trainees learn how to incorporate cost considerations into



existing tenders, including life-cycle cost analysis and total cost of ownership as entry points. Another training component is to build competencies in contract preparation, bid evaluation and contract management. Ongoing discussions as part of the German Healthcare Partnership resulted in a half-day workshop organized by KfW with a focus on quality and sustainable procurement processes.

### E-LEARNING ON HOSPITAL MANAGEMENT

GFA developed a web-based self-learning course "Managing health facilities in low-resource settings" that targets health experts with management functions, particularly in hospitals, and seeks to sustainably enhance their skills. GFA developed story lines and contents, elaborated audio files, identified videos and extensive further reading materials. The course contains four modules:

1. Challenges of managing health facilities
2. Proficient staff-effective teams
3. Quality management and safe services
4. Applied financial management.

Users can access the course at:

<http://ghp-initiative.de/key-areas/e-learning/>

The course has been customized to health human resources development in Malawi.

### STRENGTHENING HEALTH FINANCING

In many low- and middle-income countries, health financing systems do not ensure that people are protected against financial risks when seeking healthcare. A sustainable health financing approach is lacking to meet the needs of the population. GFA improves health systems through continued support of sustainable health financing schemes, which protect people from ending up in poverty.

### IMPROVING HEALTH FINANCING AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN TANZANIA

KfW has commissioned GFA to implement a health insurance product in Tanzania. The project provides pregnant women with insurance coverage from the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) which contributes to improved access to neonatal and maternal care. At the same time, families of the beneficiaries receive coverage by the decentralized Community Health Funds. The project reduces financial barriers in accessing healthcare.

During the first phase of the project in 2012–2016, more than 450,000 beneficiaries were enrolled. This corresponds to about 50% of all pregnant women in the covered target regions Mbeya and Tanga. For the second phase, project operations were extended to the Lindi and Mtwara regions. The project puts great emphasis on information technology as technology should be used to make business processes more cost-effective for the insurer while providing more value to the insured. For example, NHIF's IT system is updated to facilitate an improved processing of claims. Moreover, the project collaborates with the mHealth Alliance Wazazi Nipendi, which provides pregnant women with useful mobile phone messages about pregnancy, nutrition and baby care.

### STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE

#### IMPROVING GOVERNANCE AND QUALITY OF CARE IN MONGOLIA

With funding from the Asian Development Bank, GFA has been supporting the government of Mongolia in its efforts to establish a legal framework for hospital autonomy and to



Preparing a communication campaign

build capacity of the government and hospital staff to manage hospitals within this new legal environment. Since 2015, the project has been concentrating on six pilot hospitals in the transition to autonomy. Increasing hospital autonomy is essentially a form of decentralization which shifts responsibility, accountability and decision-making power from the central government to the hospitals. The benefits of hospital autonomy are manifold, including government's responsiveness to local needs by reducing administrative complexity. This enhances effectiveness as well as efficiency of management by allowing greater discretion, and improves governance and the quality of care.

Currently, GFA supports the Ministry of Health in the process of adjusting the legal framework and introducing hospital boards that will later

govern the hospitals. In terms of capacity building, a training needs assessment has been conducted and, based on the results, government and hospital staff have been trained on hospital autonomy.

### MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE OF HEALTH FACILITIES IN KYRGYZSTAN

Since 2015, GFA has been assisting the Ministry of Health and the Mandatory Health Insurance Fund (MHIF) in its efforts to promote and facilitate the achievement of greater efficiency and quality in healthcare delivery. This is achieved through developing, piloting and rolling out a model for health facility autonomy. Supported by GFA, the project intends piloting the expansion of a greater decision-making space for selected health facilities in a pilot area with clearly defined managerial, contracting, financing and payment arrangements. Technical assistance also includes an assessment of the legal situation of national health management and governance, the establishment of decentralized district (rayon) supervisory boards and capacity development in health facility management.

### INTEGRATED HEALTHCARE DELIVERY IN TAJIKISTAN

On behalf of the European Commission, GFA has been assisting the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of the Population (MoHSPP) in Tajikistan in strengthening of an integrated healthcare delivery and social services system since 2015. The Tajik government aims at sustained poverty alleviation through the provision of an accessible, effective, efficient and quality national healthcare and social protection system.

The political commitment, however, is facing severe budget constraints. Therefore, reform pro-

cesses regarding integrated primary healthcare and comprehensive social service delivery advance just slowly as far as better access to quality health and social services and lower individual out-of-pocket payments are concerned.

GFA advises MoHSPP in governing the health sector and developing capacities in various fields. The policy, legal and regulatory basis for health reform is established at the national level. Experiences from pilot sites are translated into national laws and regulations. The process of health policy development is institutionalized through working groups that represent a broad spectrum of stakeholders inside and outside the health sector. Incentives for health providers are created to be more responsive to the needs and demands of the population.

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Training of health staff in mHealth

## IMPRINT

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