

7 lessons learned from the Colombian health system during the COVID-19 emergency



Prioritize strengthening public health capacity after the current crisis is over when resource constraints are likely to be particularly tight

- Continue the policy of investing in primary and community care, especially the primary and community-level health workers who provide the foundations for both personal and public health.
- Ensure that coverage of public health interventions is universal, not tied to insurance or a benefits package. It must reach everyone in the country, including the uninsured.

Maintain the openness and transparency of communication with all involved

- Invest in good two-way communication with the public about the rationale for the choices made to counter public objection.
- Continue to strengthen the use of Information and Communications Technology for two-way communication between the authorities and the public.



Make transparent, explicit, and accountable choices between different levels of care and communicate clearly about them

- Don't make large irreversible investments in hospital capacity if extra capacity wasn't a priority before the outbreak and is unlikely to be the highest priority afterwards. The mere existence of a hospital creates rigidities in the health budget for decades.
- Ensure additional investments in hospital care are sustainable and have maximum benefit for other conditions in the long term.

Expand insurance coverage

- Continue the work to integrate migrants into the insurance system.



Continue to expand access to digital services and use of digital platforms

- Ensure that clear regulations on digital banking, mobile money, and insurance are in place to protect customers and create opportunities for new product development.
- Continue to expand telemedicine, not only for more remote areas but also for routine management of chronic conditions. Make changes in regulations, budgets, and payment models to facilitate this.

Use infectious disease outbreaks as an opportunity to build MOH's capacity as a learning organization

- Continue to build national capacity for policy-relevant scientific research and development.
- Implement nationally appropriate data governance policies to allow more use of big data for health.
- Learn from and build on the experience of intersectoral collaboration during COVID-19 to improve routine health services.
- Learn from and build on the experience gained during COVID-19 to make more private sector capacity available when needed to meet future public and other health needs.



Take advantage of the crisis to introduce new flexibilities where required

- Relax public financial management rules temporarily if required to allow money to move more quickly to where it's needed or to allow more rapid procurement of commodities during a crisis.
- Reassess the new flexibilities after the crisis to determine which should be retained and which should be revised or reversed to maintain accountability.