

Meeting Notes – 6th December 2025

The Path to Universal Health Coverage in Five African and Asian Countries

Introduction

Universal Health Coverage (**UHC**) is a central global health goal aimed at ensuring that all people have access to **essential health services** without suffering **financial hardship**. This paper examines the **pathways toward UHC** in five countries across **Africa and Asia**, highlighting how historical, political and economic contexts shape national health systems. The study emphasizes that progress toward UHC is not linear and depends on **policy choices, health financing arrangements** and **governance structures**.

Methodology

The study employs a **comparative case study design**, analyzing secondary data from **national health accounts, household surveys and policy documents**. Key indicators examined include **service coverage, financial risk protection** and **out-of-pocket expenditure**. The authors compare health system reforms across the five countries to identify **common patterns, country-specific strategies** and **system-level challenges** influencing progress toward UHC.

Key Findings

- Countries followed **different pathways** to UHC based on:
 - **Political will**
 - **Institutional capacity**
 - **Economic growth**
- Expansion of **public health financing** improved access to services.
- **Risk pooling mechanisms** reduced financial barriers for some populations.
- Persistent challenges included:
 - High **out-of-pocket payments**
 - **Inequities** in access
 - Exclusion of **informal sector populations**
- Strong **governance** and consistent policies supported better UHC progress.

Implications

- Achieving UHC requires **context-specific strategies**, not a one-size-fits-all model.
- Reducing **direct household payments** is critical for financial protection.
- Strengthening **primary health care** improves equity and service delivery.
- Integration of health financing with **social protection systems** enhances coverage.

Call to Action

- Governments should:
 - Increase **public investment in health**

- Expand **prepayment and pooling mechanisms**
- Prioritize **equity-focused policies**
- Strengthen **health system governance** and accountability.
- Invest in **monitoring and evaluation** to track UHC progress.

Future of Research

- Assess **long-term impacts** of UHC reforms on equity and quality of care.
- Study strategies to include **informal and vulnerable populations**.
- Explore the role of **political economy** in sustaining UHC reforms.
- Examine how **health system resilience** affects progress toward UHC.

Blessings,

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