Building Blocks of the Health system

Identifying the important entities, role-players, and actors in six different areas of the health system

An analytical framework to describe health systems

1 - Service Delivery 🩺

Within the service delivery sector, the identified role-players and actors are:

- *Primary care providers* can be identified as; doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals who are often the patient's first point of contact.

- *Healthcare specialists* who can be identified as cardiologists, endocrinologists, neurologists and oncologists.

- *Hospitals and clinics.* This can be characterised as facilities where patients are cared for.

- *Pharmacies.* Dispensing medication prescribed to a patient.

- *Laboratories* where tests can be performed on patient samples to gather information.

2 - Health Workforce 🗄️

- *Medical and nursing school.* Accredited medical and nursing schools that provide education and training to future healthcare professionals.

- *Professional Associations.* Within South Africa the HPCSA established to provide for control over the education, training and registration for practicing of health professions registered under the Health Professions Act.

- *HR departments.* Responsible for administrating the workforce within healthcare facilities by hiring and training qualified medical staff

6 - Leadership and Governance 🏛️

The National Department of Health (NDoH)
District Health Councils
Healthcare Facility Boards and Committees
South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA)
Office of Health Standards Compliance (OHSC)
South African Nursing Council (SANC)
Council for Medical Schemes

Six different areas

- Service Delivery
- Health Workforce
- Health Information systems
- Access to essential medication
- Financing
- Leadership and Governance

5 - Financing 💸

- *National Department of Health (NDoH)* receives funds from the National Treasury and is responsible for using these funds to improve health outcomes across the country.

- Majority of the government's health spending is managed at the provincial level

3 - Health Information Systems 💡

Several Health Information Systems are employed to streamline healthcare service delivery and enable data-driven decision-making. These systems vary from hospital management systems, patient data management, to health surveys and disease tracking.

1. District Health Information System (DHIS2)
2. Health Patient Registration System (HPRS)
3. Web-DHIS
4. Pharmaceutical and Information Management System (PHIMS)
5. National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS)

4 - Access to Essential Medicines 🩺

- *Regulator of medicines* in South Africa is the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA). SAHPRA is responsible for overseeing the pre- and post-market phases of health products, including medicines, medical devices, and in-vitro diagnostics

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Power-Dynamics 🔋

The healthcare system in South Africa is governed by a top-down power dynamic and resource allocation model.

The National Department of Health (NDoH) sets the country's health policy and distributes funding to Provincial Health Departments. These Provincial Departments then delegate implementation to District Health Councils, which oversee healthcare facilities within their jurisdictions.

Despite the authority of healthcare professionals stemming from their expertise, there is a focus on patient-centered care to balance power by involving patients in decision-making.

Furthermore, regulatory bodies like SAHPRA, OHSC, HPCSA, and the Council for Medical Schemes play an important role in maintaining the system's quality and compliance, having the authority to set standards and rules and enforce penalties for non-compliance.
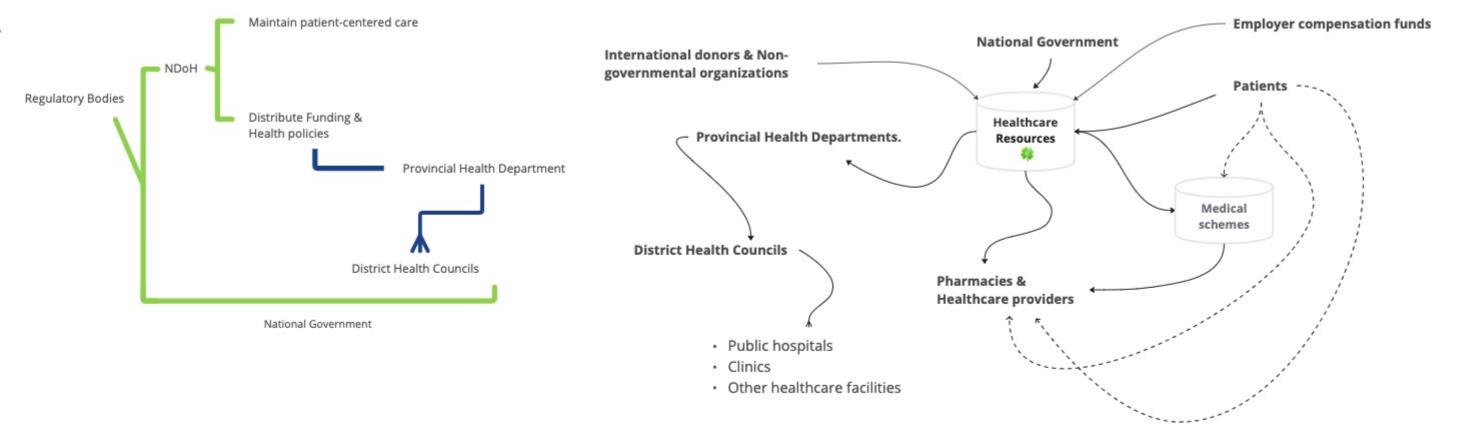
Flow of Resources ⏳

South Africa's healthcare system sees resources flow from the government, insurance companies, and patients to healthcare providers and pharmacies.

The National Department of Health sets health policies and provides funding to Provincial Health Departments, which in turn allocate resources to local health services.

Private health insurance, overseen by the Council for Medical Schemes, funds healthcare providers for insured patients' treatments. Patients also contribute directly through insurance premiums, out-of-pocket payments for uncovered services, and payments for medications at pharmacies.

Flow of resources can be characterised as:

- Government to Healthcare Providers
- Insurance Companies to Healthcare Providers
- Patients to Healthcare Providers & Pharmacies

Internal/External Factors 🍊

The healthcare ecosystem is also influenced by various external factors, such as the state of the economy, social determinants of health, technological advancements such as machine learning and AI, and global health trends.

Flow of Information 📊

Information flows in multiple directions within the system.

The NDoH collects data from lower levels to monitor health outcomes and inform policy.

Healthcare providers share information with patients to inform them of their status of care

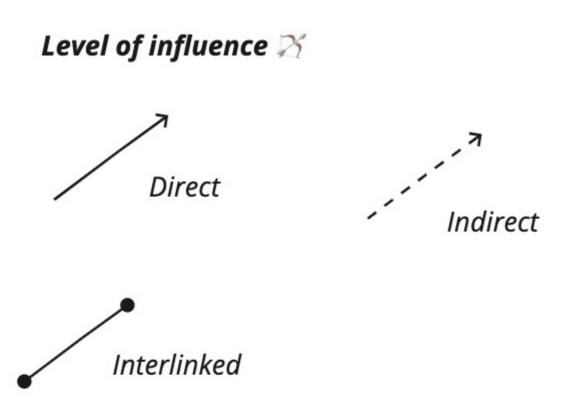Regulatory bodies collect information to monitor compliance

Regulatory Bodies

NDoH
- Maintain patient-centered care
- Distribute Funding & Health policies

Provincial Health Department

District Health Councils

National Government

International donors & Non-governmental organizations

National Government

Employer compensation funds

Patients

Provincial Health Departments.

Healthcare Resources 🍀

District Health Councils

Medical schemes

Pharmacies & Healthcare providers

- Public hospitals
- Clinics
- Other healthcare facilities

Central Element is described as the patient or healthcare delivery as a whole

Placing key entities and role-players around the central element of the healthcare ecosystem.

These include governmental departments like the NDoH, Provincial Health Departments, and District Health Councils, regulatory authorities such as SAHPRA, OHSC, HPCSA, SANC, and the Council for Medical Schemes, as well as healthcare facility boards and committees.

Level of influence 🏹

Direct

Indirect

Interlinked

Information Flow Challenges

Data Compartmentalization: Various participants within the healthcare system could use individual data management systems, resulting in disjointed, replicated, or unreachable patient data.

Data Accuracy and Consistency: Potential errors in data input or disparities in data norms among diverse healthcare providers could affect the standard of patient care and health results

Decision-Making Challenges

Concentrated Decision Authority: Due to the system's hierarchical structure, decisions are often made at the top level of management (NDoH, Provincial Health Departments), possibly leading to slow reactions or resolutions that may not sufficiently address local requirements.

Service Delivery Challenges

Inequitable Accessibility: Differences in location and socio-economic status can result in uneven access to healthcare services.

Staffing Deficits: A lack of healthcare professionals, especially in remote areas, can put a strain on the delivery of health services.

Financing Challenges

Challenges in allocating resources efficiently and equitably across diverse regions and populations can be challenging.

Sustainability in health financing. Challenges with the rising cost of healthcare, coupled with economic constraints pose a strain on the sustainability of health financing
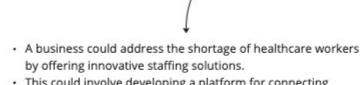
- Given the data silos and issues with data quality and integrity, there's a significant opportunity to develop comprehensive and standardized health information systems.
- A business could offer solutions that facilitate data sharing between entities and improve data quality

These potential ventures aim to fill crucial voids in the existing system. With the appropriate strategies, they could evolve into prosperous enterprises that also positively impact health results in South Africa.

- A business could address the shortage of healthcare workers by offering innovative staffing solutions.
- This could involve developing a platform for connecting healthcare professionals with healthcare facilities in need, or providing training and development programs to enhance the local healthcare workforce.

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