Learning Question 1: What are the contributions of systems thinking approaches and tools to changes in health system outcomes? How do systems thinking approaches affect health system outcomes?

Strategic Health Service Purchasing for Integrated Primary Care  
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USAID’s TB Innovations and Health Systems Strengthening Project | FHI360

Context
- TB remains a major public health threat in the Philippines, with more than 1 million Filipinos with active TB disease. Globally, the Philippines ranks fourth among high-burden countries.
- By and large, TB care remains inaccessible across the country as evidenced by people with TB who are “missed” by health systems. Many persons affected by TB suffer catastrophically high out-of-pocket costs which affects quality of life.
- The Philippines’ Universal Health Care Act of 2019 mandates strengthening primary care through the strategic purchasing of health services using a network-based approach to service delivery and so guarantee all Filipinos access to essential health services without the burden of direct or indirect out-of-pocket expenses. The health-related out-of-pocket expenditure (HPOPE) in the Philippines remains one of the highest in the region.
- The national health insurance program in the Philippines includes the TB-Directed Observed Treatment Short-course package, a stand-alone disease-based benefit package intended to cover segments of the population designated and treated with TB.

Activity Description
- KonSulTa Plus is an initiative jointly conceptualized and implemented by TB Innovations and Health Systems Strengthening (TBIS) and the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PhilHealth).
- It is a two-pronged initiative: (1) package development integrating TB, HIV, Malaria, and Animal bite services, (2) implementation of the package to enable/shape the standards for primary care providers’ network service delivery.
- A costing framework developed from the cross-analyses of different stand-alone packages (TB, HIV, Malaria, and Animal bite) to be integrated into the comprehensive outpatient (primary care) benefit package (COPB) as envisioned in the law.
- Furthermore, KonSulTa Plus is an initiative to support the health systems strengthening described in the Philippines’ Universal Health Care Act of 2019 and to identify health systems improvement and cost-effective package of quality essential health services.

Activity Impact
KonSulTa Plus costing exercise and the parallel work preparing the ‘network’ (PCPN) that will deliver the services helped improve coordination of national and subnational units to support and/or enable primary care delivery at different service points.

Evidence
- Approval of the KonSulTa plus package by DOH and PhilHealth.
- Interests of local government units to be included in the piloting.

Facilitators
- The UNC Law of 2019 and the strategic re-organization of DOH and PhilHealth towards primary care.
- Clearly articulated DOH-OFRS Strategic Plan
- COPD/KonSulTa Roadmap by PhilHealth
- Continuous and open communication with government counterparties (DOH, PhilHealth, LGU Development Partners and private service providers)
- The MNH Health Systems Performance Assessment (HSRAP) framework for UN in consultation with the formulation of the proposal and will continue to be used in aligning implementation guidelines during the limited pilot testing.

Challenges
- IT system issues on patient registration and generating transaction code which are integral in determining the ‘copayment cost’ and the subsequent payment mechanism to providers.
- Service capacity for other disease-based/programmatic services (e.g., HIV, Malaria, Animal bite) to be utilized in the limited pilot.
- Availability of funds for the piloting.
- Low demand due to government restrictions on PhilHealth’s pandemic-related remittances.
- Potential funding issues after initial piloting/implementation testing.

Mitigation
- Explored with PhilHealth the option for manual system at least in two or three pilot sites/providers
- Progressive implementation (developmental) starting with TB.
- Champions work with PhilHealth to secure approval of ‘need budget’ for limited pilot.
- Targeted demand generation for health care providers, patients, and the general public that introduces new tools for TB care in pilot sites.

Lessons Learned
- Health Financing may serve as a good starting platform to synchronize the adjustments in the health system (i.e., governance, resource generation, HRH, service delivery capacity, information systems).
- Leadership across health governance levels is instrumental in all change management initiatives.
- A shared vision anchored on a clearly articulated results framework is imperative in shaping collaborative and highly adaptive activities like KonSulTa Plus.
- Host government’s ownership of the initiative catalyzed this unique kind of leadership and collaboration in KonSulTa plus.
- Foresight-based planning approach (i.e., building strategic information against the long-term vision and incorporating content like KonSulTa Plus goals as a starting point), is very useful in designing packages of intervention as it requires a clear sense of what kind of health system will work best and in the long run can impact the drive towards a national transformation agenda.