



## Concept Note

### *Background*

The last 20 years has seen unprecedented progress in health with dramatic decreases in under-5 and maternal mortality rates worldwide. Still, a high burden of infectious, maternal, and child mortality remain in low (LIC) and lower middle income (LMIC) countries which continue to face major challenges in reaching universal health coverage (UHC) and, more broadly, achieving the health related sustainable development goals (SDGs). One of the most important is the availability of finance. The Lancet commission, estimated the additional resource requirements of scaling up a set of activities that address the unfinished agenda of the Millennium Development Goals, take on the growing epidemic of non-communicable diseases and injuries, and include health system strengthening needs at US\$ 70 to US\$ 90 billion per year. However, even in countries with high capacity to mobilize domestic resources, wide income distributions often mask drastic inequalities in health outcomes across population groups. While the Addis Ababa action agenda provides a helpful roadmap for financing for development, including highlighting the need to reach pockets of vulnerability within middle income countries, it needs tailoring to the health sector.

This raises the question of whether countries are able to equitably mobilize sufficient domestic revenue from government, the private sector, and development assistance for health (DAH). This is the focus of the first Health Financing Forum. In most LICs and LMICs, there is considerable scope for raising revenue through increased tax collection efforts. But many governments have yet to build the public finance systems that effectively capture growing wealth for investments in health and other social sectors. The Forum covers a number of contentious topics in raising additional resources for health – e.g. improving tax collection by clamping down on tax avoidance and evasion, prioritizing funds for health among competing sectors, earmarking, changing the role of development assistance as countries transition from externally-financed to domestically funded programs, and better exploiting private sector investments to benefit all segments of the population. The process is equally important as each component source of revenue will have different implications for efficiency and equity. Maximum impact can only occur if revenues are raised as efficiently and equitably as possible and then spent wisely. Fiscal crises in advanced economies and overextended governments in low- and middle-income economies make value for money a pressing concern globally.

In addition, the momentum surrounding UHC and the post-2015 development agenda has led to a growing demand for measuring and tracking progress in financing towards UHC. To date, monitoring for UHC has tended to focus on coverage of health care services and catastrophic and

impoverishing expenditures. However, access to health care and financial protection depend on the resources available to the health sector and the policies and institutions that govern the use of funds. Revenue and expenditure policies are often disconnected, with information on available resources and service utilization rarely feeding into the policy planning and budgeting process. A monitoring framework that collects data not only on the level of health care spending but on the source, composition, policies, and institutions that allow the efficient use of those resources will help identify what matters most for achieving UHC outcomes.

There are clearly other important questions for financing UHC: how should the funds that are raised be pooled to spread risk across the population, who should benefit from the pooled funds, and how these funds can be used most effectively. These topics will be the focus of subsequent forums and the last session in this forum seeks the input of participants into what are the most pressing areas from their perspectives.

### ***Objectives***

The proposed series of forums will bring together countries and partners to shape a joint agenda on sustainable financing for UHC. They will provide a platform to advance knowledge and its application in financing UHC. In particular, they will

1. Facilitate an exchange between host government, political leaders, donors and technical experts to build consensus on approaches to enhance strategies, policy and advocacy;
2. Review evidence to date and debate its implications to determine knowledge gaps, strengths and weaknesses of current approaches;
3. Brainstorm research priorities and approaches and opportunities for capacity building;
4. Monitor, report and benchmark country and global progress to promote learning and foster accountability.

### ***Target audience***

The forum will bring together approximately 250 experts on public and health finance, including representatives from Ministries of Finance and Health from low and middle income countries and staff from partner organizations, including bi- and multi-lateral institutions, civil society organizations, think tanks and academia.

***Date and Location:*** The forum will coincide with the WBG/IMF spring meetings in Washington DC to take advantage of the local presence of country delegations including representatives of Ministries of Finance and Health. The first forum is scheduled for April 14-15, 2016.

### ***Venue***

The first forum will take place at the Willard Intercontinental Hotel in Washington DC.

### ***Event format***

The first forum will be a two-day event that includes a mix of plenaries and break-out sessions. The plenaries will lay out a vision for financing UHC, set the stage on policies for resource

mobilization, and debate controversial issues. The break-out sessions will drill down on main plenary themes.

### ***Co-hosts***

The first forum will be co-hosted by USAID and the WBG.

### ***Event preparation***

A steering committee will guide the preparation of the event. The committee will help facilitate the coordination with other UHC events and plan for subsequent forums. It will consist of representatives from countries and development partners.

In preparation for the event, two technical working groups will be convened. The first will oversee the development of the forum sessions (e.g., scope of the plenary sessions and review and select proposals for break-out sessions) (objective 1). It will also guide the preparation of a background paper. Subsequent to the event, it will oversee the preparation of a paper distilling conclusions for policy making from the debates at the forum and the findings of the background paper.

The second working group will bring together technical experts to develop a proposal for a system (including objectives a set of core indicators, data sources, etc.) to monitor progress in financing UHC (objective 2).

The two technical working groups will bring together experts from within and outside the organizations/agencies represented in the steering committee.

A team of staff from the co-hosts WBG and USAID will lead the day-to-day planning and preparation of the forum, including support to the steering committee and the technical working groups and, on the days of the event, provide on-site support to ensure smooth delivery and keeping with the established agenda. This team will work closely with a small planning group including representatives from all organizations represented in the steering committee to coordinate key logistical activities (e.g., participant list and invitations).

### ***Communication and Dissemination***

The secretariat will develop a communication plan for the event, including the wide dissemination of all outputs of the event.

### ***Contact***

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