



Quality, Equity, Dignity

A Network for Improving Quality of Care  
for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health

# QUALITY OF CARE IN THE CONTEXT OF UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE (UHC)

*“What good does it do to offer free maternal care and have a high proportion of babies delivered in health facilities if the quality of care is sub-standard or even dangerous?”*

*Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General, at the World Health Assembly, May 2012*

The quality of health services is critical to achieving effective universal health coverage (UHC) and meeting the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The success and value of UHC depends on its ability to provide quality services to all people, everywhere. Further, resilient health services require quality as a foundation. There is an urgent need to place quality care at the centre of country, regional and global action,

in order to progress towards effective UHC. Driven by the WHO Framework on integrated people-centred health services, and working closely with colleagues across the World Health Organization (WHO) and in Member States, the WHO Universal Health Coverage and Quality Unit in the WHO Service Delivery and Safety Department (SDS) is supporting countries to institutionalize quality and catalyse global learning and action.

## **National policy and strategy on quality of health services**

Efforts to improve quality of care and institutionalize a culture of quality across a health system can be supported by strong national quality policy and strategy. To support this, the WHO SDS Department has a small team providing technical support to a number of countries, in turn using this opportunity to co-develop approaches and tools that are grounded in country-level experience.

Photo: Pregnant women attending an antenatal clinic at a Reproductive and Child Health facility in Savelugu, Ghana, in May 2015. ©UNICEF/Quarmyne

A handbook is being developed that will outline the rationale for developing national policy and strategy on quality of health services, propose an approach to achieve this, and present some key tools that can be used in the process.

Broadly, this handbook will present an approach to developing national quality policy and strategy that includes the following eight key elements:

- National health goals and priorities
- Local definition of quality
- Stakeholder engagement
- Situational analysis
- Quality improvement methods and interventions
- Governance and organizational structure for institutionalizing quality
- Health management information systems (HMIS) and data systems
- Quality indicators and core measures.

Tools under development include those for situational analysis, stakeholder mapping, development of indicators, and mapping targeted interventions.

## The Global Learning Laboratory for Quality Universal Health Coverage



Share



Challenge



Spark

The Global Learning Laboratory for Quality UHC (1) has been designed as a safe space to share experience and knowledge, challenge and analyse existing and proposed approaches, and spark ideas related to improving and institutionalizing quality in the context of UHC. It links the experiences, expertise, passion and wisdom of people from across the globe, representing multiple disciplines. The Global Learning Laboratory is open to individuals worldwide from a variety of backgrounds, which may include, but are not limited to: front-line health-care providers, administrators, policy-makers, advocates, civil society representatives, experts and academics, as well as colleagues from national, regional and global levels of WHO.

The Global Learning Laboratory:

- Works largely virtually using an online platform
- Hosts a shared library of technical resources
- Provides a general forum to discuss cross-cutting aspects of quality in the context of UHC
- Will use “learning pods” for discussions on specific technical areas, such as the linkage between quality, UHC, and maternal and child health.

## WHO Framework on integrated people-centred health services (IPCHS)

Driving this work on quality in the context of UHC is the Framework on IPCHS. This Framework calls for a fundamental shift in the way health services are funded, managed and delivered.

Integrated people-centred health services means putting the needs of people and communities, not diseases, at the centre of health systems, and empowering people to take charge of their own health.

## Five strategies for moving towards IPCHS:

- Empower and engage people and communities
- Strengthen governance and accountability
- Reorient the model of care
- Coordinate services within and across sectors
- Create an enabling environment.

## Quality of care in maternal, newborn and child health services

Within the context of quality of care and universal health coverage, the Network for Improving Quality of Care for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health is a most welcome development as it can act as a pathfinder for building and strengthening systems to support quality of care in the health sector at large. By creating its own learning platform, the Network will have the potential to accelerate knowledge generation and sharing, and act as a resource for the Global Learning Laboratory for Quality Universal Health Coverage.

### Note

1. Interested in joining the Global Learning Laboratory for Quality UHC? Please visit: <http://www.integratedcare4people.org/communities/global-learning-laboratory-for-quality-universal-health-coverage/>