

Improving health services through score card

Province AP in country X provides primary, secondary and tertiary health care services to its population of 5.5 million through a chain of hospitals and primary health centers. Primary health centers (PHCs) are often the only option available for the rural poor which comprises around 65% of the population.

Despite efforts by the provincial government to improve the local economy and its financial status, it has remained cash strapped for several years now. This has limited its allocation for public services like health care (currently, around 8% of total provincial budget). In view of this, the provincial government has set as its strategic objective for the next five years the strengthening of its primary health care system.

There are 1,570 PHCs in the province staffed by about 2,000 professionally qualified doctors and supported by a similar number of paramedical staff. Each PHC currently services about 35,000 people. In line with the objective mentioned above and the country's commitments under the Millenium Development Goals, the Provincial Health Office has recommended focusing on improving the PHCs' services aimed at reducing malnutrition (70% of children under 5), reducing child mortality (90 per 1,000 live births), improving maternal health (450 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births), and reducing incidence of major diseases (malaria mortality with ages 0-4 years is about 6, tuberculosis cases per 100,000 population is 250).

Most PHCs have a complaint box for getting citizens' comments. The Provincial Health Office also conducts a monthly target-based performance review of PHCs using indicators like the number of outpatients treated, number of deliveries, number of lab tests, and so forth. Despite such monitoring and evaluation efforts, citizen satisfaction of health services in most PHCs have remained low.

Score card exercise:

In this scenario, your organization received some funding under the AP Rural Poverty Reduction Project to pilot a score card to assess the performance of two (2) PHCs in the District Y, one of the five districts of Province AP where there is a large concentration of poor people. You have just come from a meeting with the donor agency, and they asked you to prepare a brief memo outlining your pilot project.

- Define the issues that the score card will explore in PHC service delivery;
- Identify the main objectives of the whole score card process;
- Define the key performance indicators that will be rated in the score card;
- Outline the key activities in implementing the score card.