Anticorruption in the Health Sector
Strategies for Transparency and Accountability

Edited by Taryn Vian, William D. Savedoff and Harald Mathisen

Corruption is a serious problem for both rich and poor countries, threatening international development and eroding confidence in governments. In the health sector, corruption is literally a matter of life and death: facilities crumble when repair funds are embezzled; fake drugs flood the market with corrupt regulators managing supply, and doctors extorting under-the-table payments from patients fail to provide needed care. Most major development organizations have rewritten their anticorruption strategies in the last five years, hinting that reform is within reach. But these strategies pay little attention to incentives and capacity at the sector level. Those preparing to fight corruption in the health sector have very few resources to guide them until now.

"Stamping out corruption in health care is a matter of life and death. This timely research shows the need for transparency and accountability in health care and offers sensitive, practical suggestions to address the problem. Governments and providers should take note: the price of corruption in healthcare is paid for in human suffering."

- Huguette Labelle, Chair, Transparency International, the global civil society organisation leading the fight against corruption

"Provides a breadth of interesting and informative essays on the role of corruption in health care delivery in developing countries, and the strategies that have been tested to reverse corruption and thereby increase overall funding for publicly provided health care. It is an invaluable book for anyone who wants to understand the nature of corruption in health care delivery systems."

- Maureen Lewis, Economic Advisor, Research Department, World Bank


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A brief, readable field guide, Anticorruption in the Health Sector brings practical experience to bear on anticorruption approaches tailored specifically to health. The contributors, all skilled practitioners, address the consequences of different types of corruption and show how agencies can more effectively address these challenges as an integral part of their development work. Both practitioner and classroom-friendly, this book finally addresses a neglected issue that has so much bearing on global health and governance. Contents. Taking funds from public coffers. Introduction: Closing Oppor In the health sector, corruption is literally a matter of life and death: facilities crumble when repair funds are embezzled; fake drugs flood the market with corrupt regulators managing supply, and doctors extorting under-the-table payments from patients fail to provide needed care. Most major development organizations have rewritten their anticorruption strategies in the last five years, hinting that reform is within reach. But these strategies pay little attention to incentives and capacity at the sector level. Those preparing to fight corruption in the health sector have very few resources Evidence suggests that corruption in the health sector has a disproportionate effect on disadvantaged populations, and hence is driver of health inequities and an obstacle that must be contended with if truly "no one is to be left behind" on the path towards UHC. In light of the above, WHO, Global Fund and UNDP have joined forces in convening the "Consultation for a proposed Global Network on Anti-Corruption, Transparency and Accountability in Health Systems," which will be held 26-28 February 2019 in Geneva. This is one of multiple activities supported by the WHO Anti-corruption, Transparency and Accountability workstream, which is co-led by the Gender, Equity, and Human Rights Team and the Department of Health Governance and Financing in 2018-2019. Related links.
Health policy goals should include anti-corruption considerations. There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to combating corruption in the health sector. More than one anti-corruption intervention should be employed to deal with one risk. Prioritization is essential: based on evidence, governments and others involved in health.


There is increasing interest among health policymakers, planners and donors in how corruption affects health care access and outcomes, and what can be done to combat corruption in the health sector. Efforts to explain the risk of abuse of entrusted power for private gain have examined the links between corruption and various aspects of management, financing and governance. Behavioural scientists and anthropologists also point to individual and social characteristics which influence the behaviour of government agents and clients.