

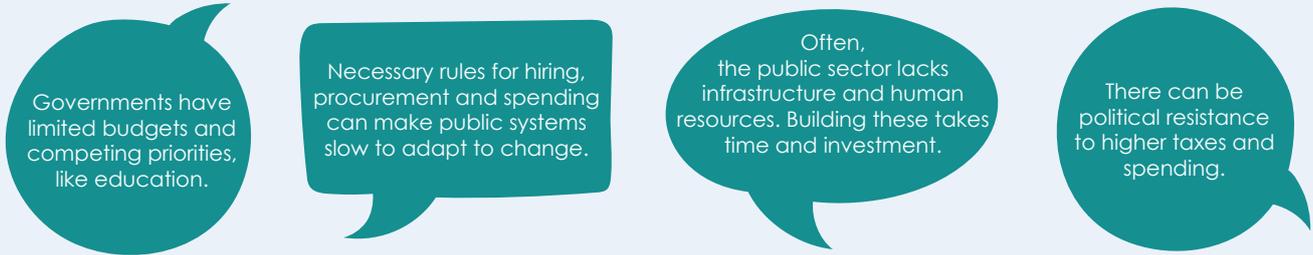


HOW DO CONTRACTING SYSTEMS AFFECT PRIMARY CARE & WHAT ROLE CAN COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION PLAY?



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Governments often struggle to provide good healthcare to everyone, because:



So, governments are increasingly bringing in non-state providers to deliver public health services on their behalf, like private hospitals, non-profit organisations, community health workers, and private GPs. Contracts are often used to structure the cooperation between these non-state providers and the government.

Contracts can contain a number of things, including:



What is a scoping review?

A scoping review is a research project that looks at what has been studied and published on a certain topic around the world to get a broad understanding of it.



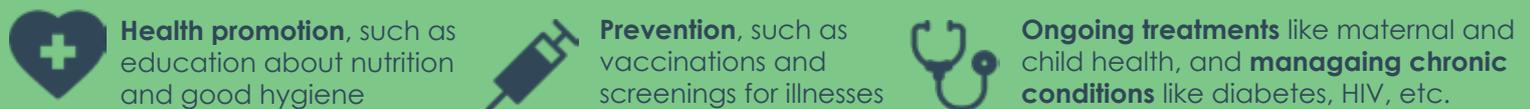
The aim of this review is to answer:

- How does contracting with private providers affect access, quality and equity in primary healthcare?
- Does community participation in the contracting environment have any additional benefits?

This document is a summary of a large, international scoping review about how contracting affects primary care, and how community participation in contracting has additional effects.

WHAT IS PRIMARY CARE?

Accessible primary care is often the first point of contact for individuals and families with the health system. It provides a wide range of essential health services, including:



By offering comprehensive, continuous, and preventive care, primary care helps to protect against future ill health and expensive treatments. It is therefore often seen as the foundation of successful health systems.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF CONTRACTING WITH PRIVATE PROVIDERS?



- Generally improves access
- Can improve equity in coverage of services
- Can also improve equity in health outcomes, if service quality is high



The effects of contracting on the quality of primary care services are more difficult to synthesise because experiences are very different.

FACTORS AFFECTING QUALITY OF CARE

Quality encompasses criteria like:



Affordability
for the public and for the government



Effectiveness
improvements in individual and population health



Transparency
ease in finding relevant information



Satisfaction
of the people who use the services

Quality improves with:

1 A balance between detailed requirements in contracts (what to achieve) and operational flexibility for healthcare workers (how to achieve it).

2 A balance between standardisation and local adaptation to ensure the same quality of care in different areas, and responsiveness to unique needs.

3 Clear performance standards, clear rules for rewards and sanctions, and willingness in government to enforce the rules.

4 A strong role for government in monitoring and managing contracts, assisted by community representatives.

5 Skills training for government officials and communities in contract management, and development of user-friendly data and monitoring systems.

6 Support for healthcare worker conditions to avoid high staff turnover and the loss of experienced staff, to maintain continuity of care.

FACTORS AFFECTING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN CONTRACTING

Community participation in contracting takes place at two levels: while designing the contracts, and then overseeing the performance of contracted providers. The review found that community participation is rare, and more common during oversight than designing. When it does happen, it can help to make services easier to access, to improve their quality, and make them more accountable. What makes both types of participation more effective?



When the right to participate is guaranteed by law such as in Brazil, Thailand and South Africa.



When the government provides remuneration and training for community participants..



When there's an open and cooperative relationship between communities, service providers and the government.



When providers, governments, and communities themselves see communities as essential contributors of local knowledge and as active partners in health system strengthening.



When IT and Monitoring and Evaluating mechanisms are streamlined providing clear information to support performance evaluation and decision making.



When communities have a say at both levels: not only in the oversight of contracts but in the design of contracts and service delivery models as well.

CONCLUSION

Contracts can be a useful tool to coordinate governments, private service providers, and community representatives, and to enhance the effectiveness of primary care in certain conditions. Community involvement in the governance of these contracts can boost these benefits.