

Promoting strategic purchasing for Universal Health Coverage in South Africa



HEALTH
ECONOMICS
UNIT

The Health Economics Unit, based in the School of Public Health and Family Medicine at the University of Cape Town,

has conducted research on strategic purchasing which is influencing reforms to make healthcare in South Africa more equitable and affordable.

The South African government has committed to pursuing national health insurance (NHI) in an attempt to make healthcare more equitable and affordable to all South Africans and achieve Universal Health Coverage. In December 2015, the Government issued a White Paper that outlines the path to implementing NHI over the next 14 years.

A key component of NHI reform is the establishment of a National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF), which will be responsible for pooling resources and purchasing health services.

The Health Economics Unit has recently completed research that assesses the performance of healthcare purchasers in South Africa as part of a multi-country RESYST project on strategic purchasing. This timely research has fed into the Government's White Paper and researchers continue to influence how it is being implemented.

About the research

RESYST has critically assessed how selected purchasing mechanisms performed in a range of low and middle-income countries: Kenya, India, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Thailand and Vietnam.

The research examined the relationships between purchasers and other groups of actors involved in purchasing mechanisms including the government, healthcare providers and citizens, so as to understand the various components of strategic purchasing and the organisational environment within which it operates.



Impact of the research

- The White paper on NHI draws on, and references, RESYST's table of key strategic purchasing actions that were originally published in a research brief, as well as citing several other publications by RESYST researchers.
- The table of key purchasing actions is used as a summary of key elements that need to be in place to ensure that the NHI Fund acts as a strategic purchaser.
- HEU staff are members of working groups set up to plan for implementation of NHI, providing future opportunities for research to feed directly into this important policy.
- One of these working groups will set out the capacities required by a strategic purchasing organisation, and this will draw on research from Thailand (currently being undertaken by RESYST partner International Health Policy Program in Thailand) about the development of capacities in the Thai National Health Security Office.

Publications and resources

- Research project [webpage](#)
- RESYST research brief and factsheet: [What is strategic purchasing for health?](#)
- Policy brief: [Strategic purchasing for Universal Health Coverage – the South African integrated public system](#)
- Policy brief: [Strategic purchasing for Universal Health Coverage – private medical schemes in South Africa](#)
- Blog: [South Africa's National health insurance policy – a new opportunity for strategic purchasing?](#)