

Student project: Setting up a Social Health Insurance scheme in Sierra Leone

Coordinator: Prof. Dr. Dr. Jens Holst

Target and expected result

The project aims to develop a conceptual framework and strategy for implementing a national social health protection scheme in Sierra Leone. Participants will take on the role of health financing and health policy experts working in an international consulting firm. A donor has commissioned your company to advise the Government of Sierra Leone on setting up a social health insurance scheme.

The course work will consist in a presentation backed by a policy brief, which will describe a realistic proposal for implementing a social health insurance scheme. The final presentation is expected to contain the following parts: a. situation analysis (socio-economic and demographic situation, burden of disease, provider network, financing of health services); b. a brief assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of SHI compared to other forms of social health protection; c. an implementation concept for a national health insurance, d. and a SWOT analysis of SHI in Sierra Leone.

Background

Sierra Leone, a small country in Western Africa that was heavily affected by the Ebola outbreak in 2014, belongs to the world's poorest nations. It has recently opted for introducing a Social Health Insurance (SHI) as a way to achieve Universal Health Coverage (UHC), making the elimination of financial risks in health seeking a top priority for the country. However, with a large majority of people working in the informal sector and over 60 percent of Sierra Leoneans living under the poverty line, setting up a SHI scheme is certainly a major challenge and requires huge efforts and investments as well as strong political commitment.

As early as in 2010, Sierra Leone had implemented a Free Health Care (FHC) Initiative for providing the most vulnerable groups of Sierra Leoneans with access to basic health services free of charge. And in 2017, the Government had adopted the Sierra Leone Social Health Insurance (SLeSHI) Act to provide financial risk protection to the population. In accordance with the country's development priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the government has accelerated the implementation of SLeSHI as a mandatory national scheme. The SHI scheme is intended to provide universal coverage and ensure quality service provision.

Scientific methods to be applied

Priority will lie on the following scientific methodological approaches:

1. literature research (both on health systems and indicators in Sierra Leone and on SHI),
2. quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis,
3. expert interviews,
4. selective and goal-oriented application of empirical social research methods in the recording of effects by the introduction of social health insurance in Sierra Leone.

In addition, it is about developing the overall concept through systematic analysis and strategic thinking, presenting the operational implementation in sufficient detail, and analysing opportunities and risks of social health insurance in Sierra Leone.