

Reimagining Primary Care During the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond

Access Accelerated and World Bank Webinar Recap

Launched in 2017, the World Bank Group and Access Accelerated partnership advocates for stronger health systems, helps more people access non-communicable disease (NCD) care and makes the economic and human capital case to prioritize addressing NCDs. Together, we advance transparent dialogue and accelerate sustainable and scalable NCD solutions.

On 28 October, Access Accelerated and the World Bank hosted a webinar focused on the role of public-private partnerships in strengthening primary care systems against the backdrop of a global pandemic. The webinar explored how to accelerate the adoption of an integrated service delivery model in low- and middle-income countries. Our speakers shared insights on how on-the-ground programs have pivoted to address the realities of the pandemic and embrace both digital tools and community-led solutions to deliver NCD care to patients.



Dr. James Headen Pfitzer, the Director of Access Accelerated, introduced our dialogue and welcomed more than 65 attendees, including representatives from the World Bank, Bristol Myers Squibb, Roche and Access Accelerated member companies and partners. Sarbani Chakraborty, Senior Health Systems Strategy Leader and Lead for Health Systems Capacity at Roche, laid the foundation for the conversation to come.



“When COVID-19 happened...suddenly the topic of strong primary health care systems was catapulted to the forefront,” Sarbani explained after highlighting the pivotal history of the Alma-Ata Declaration. “People realized with hospitals filling up, a strong primary health care system connected to the community was super important.”

With this context, our speakers kicked off a discussion on “Reimagining Primary Care During the Era of COVID-19 and Beyond.”

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Integrated Approaches for Resilient Health Systems

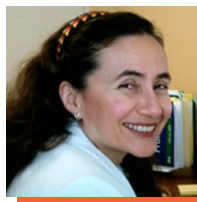


Andreas Seiter, Global Lead for Private Sector in the World Bank's Health, Nutrition and Population Global Practice, shared perspectives from the World Bank's new strategy to "reimagine primary care." As an international institution that offers financing and technical engagement to support a country's long-term development initiatives, including primary care, the World Bank has a unique vantage point to understand the interconnected factors that impact health systems.

"Health care should be looked at holistically across different disciplines," Andreas said. "From city planning, to environmental health, to nutrition, to mental health challenges, the World Bank's One Health agenda is working to strengthen a collaborative primary care model that puts person-centered care at the core."

In addition, Andreas previewed an upcoming flagship report on reimagining primary care, to be released later this year. The report will share learnings from COVID-19 and will advocate for a fit-for-purpose model in primary health care systems. A fit-for-purpose model puts a strong emphasis on multi-disciplinary teams and a multi-professional workforce that can provide integrated care across different specialties, always with the person at the center. Andreas also noted the importance of health financing and a commitment to fairness and accountability in making this model a reality.

Promising Models and Solutions: Insights from El Salvador



Amparo Elena Gordillo-Tobar, Senior Health Economist and Coordinator at the World Bank, provided an on-the-ground perspective and data from El Salvador. In partnership with Access Accelerated, she leads a pilot program that looks to integrate cervical cancer services into primary care in El Salvador. As the government of El Salvador turns its attention to creating a national plan to address the growing burden of chronic disease, this pilot provides support in raising awareness of cervical cancer, conducting community outreach and producing health promotion materials.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the pilot activities. To pivot, the pilot team developed seven strategies to help navigate social distancing and other health and safety measures. These strategies include: community-oriented health education through social networks, guidelines for delivery of drugs for repetitive prescriptions (e.g. increasing time between doctor visits and lengthening prescription terms), home delivery of medicines, training health workers to use digital platforms, home dialysis therapy, transportation for cancer patients receiving radiotherapy and electronic information-sharing.

In addition to implementing these strategies, this pilot hosted 62 workshops to date to strengthen technical capacity for 1,977 health workers and nurses. "For us, nurses are a very important element in the provision of care at the primary care level," Amparo explained.

"The important work on the introduction of the early identification of chronic diseases in the primary care level, for us, represents not only a change in attitude about savings in the long run," said Amparo. "The main focus for us is to avoid the identification of the disease when it's too late and to prevent many years of the person carrying the disease."

Advancing Patient-Centered Care: Insights from Kenya



Miriam Schneidmam, Lead Health Specialist at the World Bank – Eastern and Southern Africa, Health, Nutrition and Population Global Practice, works with stakeholders in Kenya to generate information on the economic and social consequences of cancer. During the webinar, she shared the results of a recently published [qualitative study on cancer](#) supported by the World Bank and Access Accelerated.

“The cancer study really aims to capture the patient perspective, the family perspective, to understand better what a cancer patient goes through and what the cancer journey looks like,” Miriam explained. “The ultimate goal of this study was to galvanize more political support...and to really advance the cancer agenda through a primary health lens.”

Miriam shared key themes that emerged from the study, including the importance of raising awareness and encouraging health-seeking behavior, since most individuals have a poor understanding of cancer and receive a late stage diagnosis that will have a lower chance of responding to treatment. She also explained how patients incur unnecessary spending as they move from one health facility to another due to ill-equipped, unintegrated health systems. The study also addresses the impoverishing effect of a cancer diagnosis, as patients make huge financial sacrifices and even forego paying school fees for treatment. This makes it especially important to create social protection mechanisms for supporting these patients in an integrated manner.



Following these insights from our speakers, Titta Rosvall-Puplett, the Senior Director of Head Global Policy Partnerships & Alliance Development at Bristol Myers Squibb, summarized the key learnings from the webinar and reinforced shared priorities for Access Accelerated, the World Bank and other partners going forward. “We met today to understand the important work the World Bank is leading to drive better primary care in response to NCDs in low- and middle-income countries, and how the World Bank and the Access Accelerated partnership can together scale concrete care practice solutions for greater impact,” she said. “I hope this conversation has helped us to illuminate that collective work.”

The unprecedented nature of the global COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the attention of the global health community on a strong primary health care system. We have an important common purpose to ensure NCDs continue to be cared for. During this webinar, speakers highlighted the opportunities and challenges around making primary health care a reality in low-resource settings. They demonstrated the importance of convening key stakeholders and experts across sectors to share experiences and learnings. For future conversations, our webinar attendees expressed interest in digital health and health data sharing, and common ways of measuring and achieving impact to patients and society worldwide.

“I see our priority moving forward to continue to break new ground in the fight against NCDs by informing local and global health policies, accelerating investment and advancing strong partnerships,” said Titta in closing. “This is more important than ever today.”

Access Accelerated and the World Bank look forward to hosting a series of webinars that will continue the conversation and collaboration.

Learn more about [Access Accelerated](#) and our partnership with [The World Bank](#).