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Bridging the Healthcare Financing Gap: The Role of Multilateral Collaborations

The world faces an immense funding gap of 341 billion Euros annually to make meaningful progress toward health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Despite increasing global health expenditure, the pace remains inadequate, and universal health coverage (UHC) expansion is stalling. Financial protection is worsening globally, and multilateral partnerships, as recognised by SDG 17, are critical to driving sustainable change in healthcare. This article explores how established best practices and current global momentum can help build effective and sustainable healthcare funding and financing models.

The Ripple Effect: Small Initiatives, Big Impacts

Addressing the global healthcare financing gap can seem daunting, with over half of the world's population lacking full access to essential health services. Out-of-pocket payments pushed more than 1.3 billion people into poverty in 2021. Despite these challenges, small-scale initiatives can have significant ripple effects. For instance, Roche's collaboration with Swiss Re and local insurers in China started as a pilot program to provide affordable cancer insurance. This initiative successfully expanded, offering comprehensive coverage to millions and inspiring similar projects in other countries. Such collaborations illustrate that even small, initial successes can lead to broader, long-term impacts, driving meaningful change in healthcare financing.

Win-Win Partnerships: Clear Goals and Measurable Impact

Successful partnerships in healthcare financing require a well-defined value proposition and clear goals for all parties involved. Shared ambitions, such as reducing the out-of-pocket burden for a target population, are commendable but must be supported by quantifiable benefits for each partner. Too often, mutual benefits are not explicitly outlined, leading to inefficiencies and deprioritised initiatives. Partnerships with clear targets and measurable impacts on populations, as well as return on investment for each party, are more likely to scale up and succeed. These metrics demonstrate that investing in health leads to socio-economic growth, reinforcing the importance of mutual benefits in healthcare collaborations.

Local Ownership and Adaptability: Meeting the Needs of Communities

Local ownership and adaptability are crucial for innovative funding and financing models to succeed. Understanding how local customers, patients, and stakeholders may respond to programs is essential. For example, the APA SHEild initiative in Kenya increased access to affordable financial products for women, including an innovative cancer insurance policy. Despite its clear need and potential to address gender inequality, some corporate customers questioned its relevance for male employees. This highlights the importance of adapting solutions to local contexts and ensuring they meet the diverse needs of communities. Global initiatives should support local organisations with viable models tailored to local needs, using global funds and new financing mechanisms to drive success.

Addressing the healthcare financing gap requires innovative, multilateral collaborations that leverage diverse capabilities and harness data and technology. Established best practices, such as the ripple effect of small initiatives, clear goals and measurable impacts in partnerships, and local ownership and adaptability, are crucial to building sustainable healthcare funding models. Stakeholders can develop new, impactful financing solutions by vocalising their roles and contributions. Standing on the trials and successes of the past decades, there is a significant momentum for cross-sectoral collaborations to create sustainable healthcare financing solutions. Harmonising public-private sector goals and measuring the socio-economic return on investing in health can lead to real breakthroughs in financing healthcare for the global population.

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