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# The Essential Package of Health Services and Health Benefit Plans in South Sudan



## About the health benefit plan crosswalk analysis

An Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS) is a broad policy statement that identifies the services that a government has prioritized. The government seeks to ensure that these essential services reach the population equitably. A health benefit plan (HBP) specifies an explicit set of services and the cost-sharing requirements for beneficiaries to access those services.

In 2015, the USAID-funded Health Finance and Governance (HFG) project completed a landscape analysis of the EPHS in the 24 USAID priority countries for Ending Preventable Child and Maternal Deaths (EPCMD).<sup>1</sup> The analysis found that the government in most of the countries intends for the public and/or private not-for-profit facilities in the country to deliver the services in the EPHS. It also showed that several governments were implementing major HBPs (such as social health insurance schemes) as a primary strategy for moving toward universal health coverage. Yet it remained unclear how the EPHSs and HBPs are formulated, how they are modified, and the extent to which they overlap.

HFG conducted a second landscape analysis in 2016 to identify existing HBPs in the countries, and the services they cover. It then did a crosswalk analysis – a mapping of items on one list to equivalent items on another list – of the services specified in the country’s EPHS and those identified in an HBP. This companion analysis to the EPHS country snapshot documented the degree of alignment between the EPHS and HBP.

This brief presents HFG’s findings and observations for policymakers and program managers seeking to promote alignment of services in the EPHS with services covered in the HBP and move toward universal health coverage.

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Photo: Juba, South Sudan. Juba Primary Health Unit. Clinic in Juba that has trained clinicians.  
Credit: Jessica Scranton

<sup>1</sup> See HFG’s series of country snapshots on EPHS here: <https://www.hfgproject.org/ephs-epcmd-country-snapshots-series/>

## Health benefit plans in South Sudan

### National Health Insurance Fund

The National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF) was established in 1995 to provide health insurance to civil servants.<sup>2</sup> In 2003, the Health Insurance Act was amended to make health insurance a priority, though not compulsory. In 2013, the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare (MGCSW) along with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MOHSW) proposed to cover 10 states through the NHIF. Operationalizing the NHIF is a strategic area in the MGCSW Strategic Plan 2013–2018.

The NHIF will be funded by the government and by member contributions. A 2013 amendment aimed to ensure all private employers provide insurance for their employees, with premiums paid jointly by the employer and the employee. The scheme is in its nascent stage and the NHIF is researching costing of health services and provider payment mechanisms (Ahmed 2016). It is also partnering with other countries like Ghana to take advantage of the lessons they have learned. The MOHSW refers to quality standards for provider empanelment in the policy document but it is unclear what the detailed criteria are.

The proposed benefit plan is below (MGCSW, 2013):

- ▶ Medical consultations from: Clinical officers, general practitioners, specialists, and consultants
- ▶ Routine and chemical laboratory investigations
- ▶ Maternal and child health care
- ▶ Diagnostic and radiographic investigations
- ▶ Dental care: Root canal treatment, tooth extraction, tooth filling, dental X-ray

The scheme will cover three-quarters of prescription drug costs.

Initial exempted services:

- ▶ Open heart surgery
- ▶ Plastic surgery (non-therapeutic)
- ▶ Prosthesis
- ▶ Artificial reproductive technology
- ▶ Some dental procedures, e.g., dentures
- ▶ Cosmetics
- ▶ Organ transplantation

The HFG team did not identify a detailed list of services covered by the NHIF and therefore could not perform a corresponding crosswalk analysis. However, although the list of covered services is quite high level, it is noteworthy that maternal and child health care services are included, and are also represented in South Sudan's EPHS as Emergency Obstetric and Neonatal Care, Integrated Reproductive Health Care and Integrated Essential Child Health Care.

<sup>2</sup> South Sudan was not independent during this time.

## Sources

Ahmed. M., and A. Panda. 2016. *Could a new law revolutionize Sudan's health care system?* Joint Learning Network.

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#### About HFG:

A flagship project of USAID's Office of Health Systems, the Health Finance and Governance (HFG) project supports its partners in low- and middle-income countries to strengthen the health finance and governance functions of their health systems, expanding access to life-saving health services. The HFG project is a six-year (2012-2018), \$209 million global health project. The project builds on the achievements of the Health Systems 20/20 project. To learn more, please visit [www.hfgproject.org](http://www.hfgproject.org).

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