

Chapter 2 – Vision and Policy Objectives

7. Health is not merely the absence of disease and infirmity. Using the time-honoured definition of health by the World Health Organisation, health is “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being”. Health is a resource which enables individuals to fulfil human potentials and maximise capabilities, achieve successes at work, enable social participation, and enjoy a good quality of life. For the community, investment in health can bring the invaluable returns of a productive, vibrant and successful society.

8. The key determinants of the health of a population include not only the quality and effectiveness of the health care system, but also socio-economic and environmental factors, and individual health and illness behaviours, lifestyles and genetic differences. Health is integral to life and well-being; and the pursuit of health is of necessity a continuous lifelong process. The time, efforts, human capital and financial resources we invest in health need to be lifelong and multi-generational.

9. The pursuit of health requires investing in an effective and sustainable health care system which provides comprehensive and holistic lifelong care. The health care system protects and promotes health, prevents and cures illnesses, and minimises and eliminates disabilities. However, the promise of good health cannot be achieved without the individual’s personal actions and contributions through early planning for the individual’s long term health care needs and the adoption of health-promoting behaviours and lifestyles which enable healthy aging. Health is also an individual responsibility.

Our Vision

10. Our vision is to re-create a health care system which promotes health, provides lifelong holistic care, enhances quality of life and enables human development.

Objectives

11. Based on the values we believe that should guide the transformation, the objectives of our health care system should be:-

- (a) To protect the health of the population, prevent diseases and disabilities, promote lifelong wellness, and support continuous health sector development.
- (b) To provide comprehensive and lifelong holistic health care which is humane, where care and comfort to the individual is as valued as medicine and technology-based interventions.
- (c) To provide accessible, equitable and quality services to members of the community on the basis of health needs.
- (d) To remain cost-effective, sustainable and affordable both to the individual and the community.
- (e) To reinforce the notion that the pursuit for better health is a shared responsibility among the individual, the community and Government.

Principles

12. We believe that the following set of principles are fundamental to meeting the objectives of the health care system envisioned, and they should guide the formulation of our reform proposals :-

- (a) We believe that good health stems from health-sensitive, health-protecting and health-promoting public policies and infrastructure and an environment conducive for people to make health-enabling personal choices.
- (b) We believe that the best health care system is community-focused, patient-centred and knowledge-based, comprising an appropriate balance of promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative services, delivered in a seamless, humane manner in a collaborative network, over an individual's lifetime.
- (c) We believe that health is also a personal responsibility, and individuals should be enabled to take more responsibility for their own health, through better information and understanding and more active involvement in decisions about their health.
- (d) We believe that patients have the right to information and freedom to choose their providers if they so wish. The existing dual public and private systems, serving complementary roles, should be maintained, with better collaboration between them.

- (e) We believe that the community is entitled to consistent delivery of a high standard of health care services, ensured by a dual system of accountability, comprising regulatory, accreditation and monitoring mechanisms by Government and quality assurance by health care providers.
- (f) We believe that everyone should have equitable access to quality health care for comparable needs. Any reform measures should maintain our existing strengths of accessibility, equity and affordability, and enhance quality. There must be a safety net for the financially vulnerable.
- (g) We believe that the community is entitled to expect that public resources are used efficiently, and that public subsidies are targeted at areas of greatest needs. Those who have the means should bear an affordable share of the medical expenses they have incurred.
- (h) We believe that a commitment to long term financial sustainability of the health care system is crucial, which can best be achieved through risk-pooling and pre-funding. Care should be taken not to pass on an unnecessary burden to our future generations.
- (i) We believe that changes to the system should be evolutionary to allow time for acceptance and adoption by different stakeholders, but positive steps should be taken early to demonstrate our commitment to changes.