

The Zuellig Family Foundation Accelerated Leadership Development Program: Advancing Universal Health Care in the Provinces

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Introduction

Universal Health Care (UHC) implementation was negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, halting initial health systems integration efforts and delaying operationalization of UHC in the provinces. We designed and implemented an accelerated leadership development program for Department of Health (DOH) regional UHC core teams to fast-track implementation by addressing leadership and technical competency gaps.

Methods

Applying the health change model, 29 participants from the Cordillera Administrative, Ilocos, and Cagayan Valley regions received a series of trainings, coaching sessions, peer learning, and technical assistance over a period of 10 months. These provided them with information and strategies that they applied immediately to collaborate with provincial and other UHC stakeholders.

Results

The functional regional UHC core teams formed in the three regions helped improve technical assistance strategies and engaged provincial medical center chiefs, PhilHealth officers and the private sector in the UHC implementation. This resulted to accelerated achievement of health system integration preparatory requirements and more governors committing to UHC implementation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Functional UHC core teams are critical in UHC implementation. They ensure a clear UHC technical assistance (TA) regional plan and adequate funding for interventions, which help accelerate UHC in the provinces. Our program provides insights into the importance of strengthening capacity through an active and participatory approach. Capacity building on essential UHC elements including the capacities needed of UHC core teams should be conducted as an initial step to improve the UHC implementation process in other regions and provinces.

Keywords: Universal Health Care, Health Governance, Health Change Model