

Foreword

Further significant efforts towards ensuring universal access to quality care have been made in Asia-Pacific countries and territories. This is witnessed by the significant decline in infant and maternal mortality, in particular in the lower-middle and low-income countries. *Health at a Glance: Asia/Pacific 2018* documents the progress made, but also sheds light on remaining gaps to improve the health of populations and, in particular, to reduce inequalities in access and improve quality of care. While access to care for the most marginalised groups has improved, women in low-income households living in rural areas constantly report significant problems in accessing needed care, due to distance and financial reasons. Addressing these gaps is necessary to achieve more inclusive economic growth and to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 3 to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

This report presents the latest comparable data and trends on key aspects of health and health care systems in selected Asia-Pacific countries. The indicators provide a snapshot of health status, determinants of health, health care resources and utilisation, health expenditure and financing, and quality of care in the region. As countries strive to achieve universal health coverage, these indicators help measure their progress towards the SDGs.

For example, the report points to an increase in household out-of-pocket expenditure for health goods and services in lower-middle and low-income countries. It also signals that policies to improve affordability of medicines can enhance coverage and improve access in the region.

More than ever, clear, relevant and well-targeted data and indicators of health outcomes and health care are essential to assist policy makers in formulating evidence-based policies targeting health system improvements. Comparing health system performance across countries is important to identify good practices, foster dialogue on progress, encourage knowledge sharing and mutual learning between countries. It will also help policy makers identify priority areas for action to strive for health systems committed to people-centred care.

We hope that the data reported in this publication will help policy makers make further progress towards improving coverage, access and financial protection of populations across the Asia-Pacific region.



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