



Background Information Social Participation in Health Decision Making

For 2023 Thai UHC Journey Workshop: Social Participation in Health Decision-Making

November 27- December 1, 2023, 9.00-16.00 hrs, Bangkok, Thailand

Definition of Social Participation

Social participation is used in this technical background paper on social participation for universal health coverage to mean **empowering people, communities and civil society, through inclusive participation in decision-making processes that affect health, across the policy cycle and at all levels of the systems.**

This definition implies that:

- The people, communities and civil society involve lay people, community members, Persons with lived experience (i.e., people who have a health condition or those close to them, service users/patients), and organizations that represent their needs, with particular focus on those living in vulnerable settings and affected by marginalization;
- Decision-making processes involve two-way dialogues, where power imbalances among participants are mitigated as much as possible, empowering those with less voice and influence to inform the decisions made, promoting transparency and accountability and managing conflicts of interest; the policy and planning cycle involves all stages (i.e., situational analysis, priority-setting planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review), and all levels of the system including community, district, regional and national;
- This pertains to any decision-making process that affects people's health and well-being, both within and beyond the health sector, particularly given the impact of social, economic, commercial and cultural determinants on health

What is meant by a participatory mechanism?

A participatory mechanism is **the space or platform where the government comes together with people, communities and civil society to feed into decision-making processes for health.** These can be both in person and virtual, they can be mandatory (i.e., decreed by laws) or voluntary (i.e., at the discretion of the organizer), and there is a whole range of types of mechanisms, for example, national health commission, district health board, health assembly, policy dialogue, health council, citizen's jury, town hall meeting, public hearing, focus group meeting, that can be organized for social participation.

Source: WHO technical background paper on social participation for universal health coverage