



# Strategic Purchasing and COVID-19

Exploring the impacts of adjustments to purchasing arrangements during the pandemic

## Background<sup>1</sup>

Collectivity is an online platform that facilitates virtual collaborative projects with the objective to support collective learning. It is open to anyone curious, eager to share his/her own experience, interested to learn and ready to get involved in a virtual exchange around public health topics.

Strategic purchasing has been dealt with in depth through the Collectivity platform. In 2018, Collectivity hosted a series of webinars that explored elements of a governance framework for strategic purchasing, which led to the development and publication of a [rapid assessment guide](#) on strategic purchasing by this group. In 2019, a [webinar series](#) on governance for strategic purchasing highlighted a set of ongoing country efforts and developments in this area, and allowed for discussion and cross-country comparison between practitioners.

The current pandemic has forced us to further think about critical questions during reconfiguration of purchasing agreements to provide COVID-19 related health services, as well as to continue provision of non-COVID-19 health services, survive future health shocks, and function in times of fiscal austerity. A [WHO blog](#) proposed five critical key actions in purchasing during a pandemic.

Based on this, a recent [WHO survey](#) provided an overview of adjustments and developments in purchasing, to which many of the Collectivity members also responded and contributed. Key messages were also collected via the COVID-19 focused twitter chat series organized by SPARC.

Further exploration is now needed to help deepen understanding of these purchasing developments and draw the lessons.

## Overall objectives of this new project

The overall objective of this new project is to contribute to collectively exploring the impacts of adjustments in purchasing arrangements as part of the COVID-19 health response, with a potential focus on the following aspects:

- How effective have adjustments to purchasing arrangements been in supporting the COVID-19 health response?
- Do these modifications make purchasing more strategic?
- What have been the implementation challenges of these adjustments in purchasing?
- Which of these modifications and innovations should be sustained to build back health systems better?

More detailed topic-specific questions may include:

- How were budget flows to providers or provider payment methods and rates modified in detail for COVID-19 related and other health services and what effect did this have?
- Did any adjustments in contracting procedures for both public and private healthcare providers make purchasing more strategic?

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<sup>1</sup> Photo by United Nations COVID-19 Response, accessed via Unsplash on Jan 21 2021

- Were governance arrangements adjusted to support the pandemic response? How could health insurance agencies that act as purchasing agencies better coordinate in government and/or Ministry of Health led decision making related to the COVID-19 health response?
- How were purchasing arrangements adjusted to deal with changes in demand?
- How were adjustments in payment methods aligned with public financial management rules and vice versa?

## Expected outputs

Three main outputs are expected from this project.

**Sharing of country experience:** Closed facilitated discussions, sharing of insights and mutual learning between the country teams who sign up for the project. Country teams will have the opportunity to present their experience and to ask for feedback from other participants and the project facilitation team.

**Blog(s):** Lessons learnt will also be packaged and shared in a blog or blogs as they are gleaned and in order to facilitate quick sharing of information, and via social media channels as appropriate.

**Journal article:** The final output is to jointly co-author a journal article that summarizes the learnings. All members of the country teams will be co-authors.

## Ways of collaboration

- Participating teams will be asked to share **two key questions** that they would like to work on (from the lists above or other related questions to their country specific contexts), and in 200 words or less, describe their motivation for including these questions with the ultimate goal of examining the effect/impact of modifications in purchasing arrangements and whether these made purchasing more strategic.
- Based on the proposed country-specific topics, a closed exchange will be nurtured to focus on practical experience and learning that can occur between practitioners, looking critically at policy responses to purchasing during COVID-19. Each country team will be supported by a peer facilitator.
- A set of virtual exchanges (via Zoom, Feb-May 2021) will be organized to allow project teams to exchange and discuss directly on their experience, focusing in on the existing context and operating environment, identified implementation challenges, impacts of purchasing adjustments that were undertaken, lessons learnt, as well as what is needed moving forward in order to make purchasing more strategic at the country level. Participants will decide as they go which aspects of their exchanges they want to share through informal channels.
- A final exchange will serve to identify key lessons learnt to be included in a joint article and how to organize the drafting (TBD May-June 2021).

## How to participate

This note will be circulated to members of Collectivity as well as through other channels. The goal will be to solicit participation of approximately 15-25 people from 6-10 countries, in order to have a manageable group to produce tangible outputs.

Participants may sign up as individuals or small teams of 2-3 to participate in this effort. Participants will need to have a good understanding of how their health system has handled purchasing decisions during COVID-19 and be prepared to spend 3-4 hours per month through May 2021 on this effort.

Participants can sign up through the [Collectivity Project](#) by submitting their questions and 200 word or less statement of motivation. The sign up period will close on February 15. If participants sign up as a

team, they should indicate the names and affiliations of team members and who will be the team lead.

## Timeline

February 15 2021	Deadline for signing up through the Collectivity project page
Mid-February 2021	First Zoom meeting to reflect on submissions and zero in on topic
March-May 2021	Zoom based exchange among teams to discuss findings, lessons learnt on impacts, implementation issues, and further needs (3-4 exchanges); blog publication(s) interspersed
May-July 2021	Final meeting and drafting of the joint article/product

*This project is co-hosted by The World Health Organization, Results for Development, and SPARC.*

To sign up please visit [Collectivity Project](#).

## Further reading

Mathauer, Inke, Dkhimi, Fahdi, Townsend, Matthew (2020). ***Adjustments in Health purchasing as part of the COVID-19 health response: results of a short survey and lessons for the future.***

WHO. ***How to purchase health services during a pandemic? Purchasing Priorities to Support the COVID-19 Response.*** P4H Blog, published 24 april 2020: <https://p4h.world/en/who-purchasing-health-services-during-pandemic>

World Health Organization. (2019). **Governance for strategic purchasing: an analytical framework to guide a country assessment.** World Health Organization. <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/330247>. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 I

*Key messages synthesized by SPARC from the COVID-19 Twitter chat series can be found here: [https://twitter.com/SPARC\\_Africa/timelines/1295227388104716288](https://twitter.com/SPARC_Africa/timelines/1295227388104716288) and curated tweets here [https://twitter.com/SPARC\\_Africa/timelines/1293172891484336130](https://twitter.com/SPARC_Africa/timelines/1293172891484336130)*

