

What are the Main Challenges that a Health Services Manager is Facing Regarding the Impact of an Economic Crisis to a Local Society

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Introduction

Economic crisis is usually seen as a situation in which the economy of a country experiences a sudden downturn in its aggregate output or real gross domestic product (GDP) resulting in decline in real income per capita, increase in unemployment, poverty, etc. (IGI Global). It can be caused by natural disasters, wars/conflicts, poor governance, pandemics such as Covid-19, etc. The modern societies require five basic needs namely education, neighborhood and built environment, social and community stability, economic stability and healthcare in order to age, work and live harmoniously. A breach in each societal needs has a bearing on another especially economic instability. Poor economy has daring effects on education, social stability and most especially healthcare. Over the years, economic instability in many nations in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Greece, etc. hit harder on the health of their citizens especially those who lived in poor communities.

The current global economic crisis especially in Sub-Sahara Africa and some parts of Asia is alarming with its implications on healthcare and the ability of health systems to meet the needs of the populace. According to UN News Global perspective Human stories on 20th January, 2022, poverty levels increased in a sub-Saharan Africa with people living on less than \$1.90 a day jumping from 2.3 per cent last year to 2.9 per cent in 2021, while the debt burden of countries increased amid slow economic recovery, shrinking fiscal space and weak resource mobilization. Over 25 million people are unable to meet their basic food needs, a nearly 35 per cent increase compared to 2020. In Latin America, the experience of Argentina in the 2001 economic crisis exacerbated the problems of the health system with provincial inequities in terms of health status, access to services and financing widened, and the health system became more fragmented and inefficient. This also threatened the effectiveness of priority public health programs and services, and worsened the economic and financial situation of many insurers and service providers, thus increasing the debt prevailing in the health sector [1].

Health service managers in localities experiencing economic crises such as the northern part of Burkina Faso faces a herculean task dealing with poor financing from central government, stigma, food insecurity and malnutrition, poor environmental conditions, poverty, social inequalities, etc. with its negative impacts on healthcare. Health managers need a clear understanding of the impacts of economic crisis on their quest to maintain and promote quality and adequate healthcare for their localities.

Aims

This paper discusses the main challenges a health services manager faces regarding the impact of an economic crisis to a local society.

Objectives

What are the impacts of economic crisis on a local society's health? What challenges does health service managers face during economic crisis to a local society?

Methodology

Secondary research methodology was employed with data from journals, scientific papers digital libraries and books. Websites of national ministries of health, surveys and analysis of other researchers were beneficial in writing this essay.

Chapter One

Impact of Economic Crisis on the Health of the Local Society

Societies/Nations experiencing economic crisis invariably are suffering from health crisis. Sadly, most of the nations currently in economic crisis found in Asia, Africa (mainly eastern Africa) and few Caribbeans are also hit hardly with higher prevalence of infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, Covid-19, maternal and neonatal mortalities, etc. In Africa, it is most severe in conflict prone areas, such as Niger, Somalia, the Liptako-Gourma region, which borders Burkina Faso, the Lake Chad Basin region,

etc. Individuals are forced to sell their assets in order to get enough to eat with significant number of malnourished people especially children. Many also lack other social needs like shelter, clothing and live in poor hygienic conditions which has negative on their health. Though the direct connection of health effects of economic crisis is difficult to link, due to the lack of systematized studies to clearly monitor the situation there are many ways in which economic crisis affects health [2].

Loss of Employment/Reduced Remuneration

“Chief Shaka “Mugabe” Sandi, chairman of the Sierra Leone Indigenous Miners’ Movement, said: “We’ve laid off all of our day laborers. I used to employ 20 men. Overall employment is down by more than 80%. [3]. The Greek economy crisis in 2010 spread across all sectors of activity with negative effects on employment causing many workers to be laid off with unemployment rate climbing to 27.5% in 2013 [4]. Loss of employment, slashing of already lower salaries increases psychological, physical, emotional and mental stresses since people needed to work extra hours in order to make more money to care for their families at the detriment of their health. This stress can lead mental health issues including depression, substance abuse, suicides, anxiety, etc.

Poverty

Economic crisis is making poor countries with poverty background, poorer making it very difficult for citizens to access good healthcare. Poor societies/nations have higher prevalence of malnutrition, waterborne diseases and infectious diseases with lower life expectancy. The 2015 economic crisis and the fall in oil prices in Chad which has still crippled the nation, saw the number of children affected by severe malnutrition has increase, from 100,000 children in 2010 to 260,000 in 2018 [5]. Indigens share drinking water with farm animals, eat unwholesome meals and are exposed to extreme environmental conditions putting them at risk of infections illnesses which they have to use their meagre finances to seek for healthcare or die. This stresses the already stressed health systems with poor amenities with sick poor citizens who are unable to pay for services rendered.

Public Health Campaigns

Again, consequences of economic crisis have bearing on public health programs and campaigns. Countries such as D.R. Congo who depends more on direct financial supports from taxes in the community from which most important sanitary structures are funded with fewer financial in-flow from central government (DRC Public Health Ministry), financial crisis deepens their woes. Higher poverty rates with less public health funding makes local health system almost less active since there is fewer resources at their disposal to embark on health promotion, education and preventive campaigns as well as to put measures in place to reduce the prevalence of certain health issues.

Chapter Two

Challenges Health Service Managers Faces In Economic Crisis in the Locality

Health managers have the task of achieving a set health goal through others. Local health service managers are responsible for the general wellbeing of their staff and also making sure measures are put in place to meet the health needs of the locality. It is challenging for health managers to carry out managerial duties during economic crisis especially in an already poor or developing locality. To successfully manage healthcare organization and that of the locality during crisis is challenging and requires managers who understand the nature and consequences of negative external influences on health. Such a leader must have the ability to set adaptive measures through the development of effective strategies [6]. Local managers must employ their expertise, experience and efficiency together with their team of health personnel to detect all available channels through which an economic crisis can affect health and strike ways of addressing them.

Financial Challenges

The first challenge a local health manager faces during economic crisis is financing. During economic crisis fundings and the spending on healthcare reduces significantly leading to lower financial resources available for public health programs. Public health campaigns are either brought to a halt or becomes non-existent since there is less resource’s available for such. Local managers are faced with the myriad of which aspect of the locality to inject the meagre financial resources. Again, since there is poor funding from government, health insurance may be non-existing thereby increasing out-of-pocket payments in some countries and a decreasing the number of people accessing healthcare services [7].

Poor Working Conditions of Staffs

Managers are challenged managing staff during economic crisis as staff may have their salaries slashed and others laid off. In 2020 during the peak of Covid-19, many workers lost their jobs with health workers in many private health facilities were either laid off or had the salaries slashed with some being owed months of salaries in Ghana. Managers sadly has less control over these issues and so feel challenged dealing with such agitated and stressed staff who have the tasked of serving the community. Healthcare is a delicate area so inadequate funding and reduction of staff wages create frustrations which can reduce their devotion to meeting the needs of the populace. This leads to failure of the managerial aims as management is the process of getting work done through others and makes the managerial processes difficult [8, 9].

Increase in Morbidity and Mortality

Local health service managers also face the challenge of reducing the prevalence of diseases with its added morbidities and mortalities. Many poor nations who are currently in economic crisis such as South Sudan and Chad have alarming maternal mortalities incidents (1150 and 1140 per 100,000 life-births respectively in 2017) according to www.macrotrends.net. This debt burdened countries

suffer more from under 5 deaths especially from infectious disease and malnutrition. Health service managers in these nations have their hands tied as they could do less to curb such menace as they have to try their best to use the fewer available resources to achieve their mandate of providing quality healthcare to the citizens.

Conclusion

This essay discussed the main challenges health service managers face regarding the impact of an economic crisis to a local society. The essay found out that Economic crisis can be caused by natural disasters, wars/conflicts, poor governance and has effects on all the basic human needs including health. It established that poor economies have negative effects on education, social stability, most especially healthcare. Economic instability over the years in many nations in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Greece, etc. hit harder on the health of their citizens especially those who lived in poor communities [10, 11].

Again, it discussed the devastating effects of economic crisis on the local economy and healthcare. Although difficult to directly link economic crisis to negatives health effects, the essay proved that there was a myriad of problems created by economic crisis which invariably leads to poor healthcare delivery to a local community. It established that economic crisis is making many poor nations poorer as many peoples in poor and economically harsh localities in Chad, South Sudan, etc. have to sell their basic belongings so as to be able to feed while others are homeless, drink from polluted water with domestic and farm animals with its accompanying health issues such as increase prevalence of malnutrition, infectious diseases, maternal and neonatal mortality, etc. Also, the paper established the link between economic instability and unemployment which in turns reduces household income leading to many young people overworking in harsh environmental conditions just to support their families. The difficulty of these financially stricken citizens to afford quality healthcare was also discussed.

Furthermore, it discussed how health service managers are challenged with the impact of economic crisis to their localities. Financing was a key challenge as many public health interventions are lacking during economic crisis with poor remuneration of staffs leading to negative work attitude and mental stress. Also, managers are facing challenges dealing with increasing infectious disease, maternal and neonatal mortality rate as their economies are in crisis. It established that health service managers need to show their expertise, and experience during these times in order to identify these challenges and work hard with his staff to curb it.

Lastly research needs to be conducted in the countries currently facing economic crisis to determine the current state of health access and disease burdens of citizens. Health managers in such areas should be adequately equipped with the needed resources to promote health and increase health coverage to the citizens.

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