

The World Bank Group's Approach to Private Healthcare

The World Bank Group has a plan to help countries deliver quality, affordable health services to 1.5 billion people by 2030, many of whom remain woefully underserved. Achieving Universal Health Coverage is a key goal for governments and the World Bank Group, and both the public and private sectors play crucial roles in reaching this goal. In addition to its direct work on public health systems, the World Bank Group works with governments to strengthen regulatory and legal frameworks and enhance quality assurance systems that apply to private healthcare. This directly helps the private health sector deliver quality care in support of public health strategies.

Health investments represent less than 5 percent of IFC's overall portfolio. IFC invests in healthcare clients that will have positive development impact in the countries where we work. Many countries have made significant progress in providing primary health care but are struggling to extend treatments for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cancer or meet needs for complex surgeries. In low-income countries, governments have not been able to keep up with funding needs. For example, in 2023, average spending by governments of low-income countries was [\\$8 per person](#), while the estimated costs of basic care are between [\\$60-\\$86 per person](#). In many parts of the world, a majority of health services are provided through the private sector, and IFC's investments in the sector are aimed at filling important gaps in access to quality care.

IFC's due diligence

IFC is deeply committed to sustainable development that benefits people. IFC sets out binding agreements to avoid harm to the environment and people, including in our work in the healthcare sector. All of IFC's clients agree to adhere to IFC's eight [Environmental and Social Performance Standards](#), which lay out the client's responsibilities for managing environmental and social risk. IFC's extensive due diligence [process](#) assesses the capacity of the client to meet IFC's standards.

While IFC's Environmental and Social Performance Standards do not explicitly cover patient rights or mention specific sectors, they do address safety risks and protection from harm. IFC engages with healthcare service partners to assess their levels of operational readiness and commitment to adhere to high-quality and ethical principles in the delivery of medical services. IFC clients are also expected to comply with the laws and regulations of the countries in which they operate. This includes compliance with national environmental, labor, health and safety, and anti-corruption laws, among others.

In addition, IFC is formally adding ethical principles and practices into our appraisal and supervision process for health services investments. Going forward, our clients' commitment and ability to adhere to these standards, principles and practices will be a critical factor in IFC's decision-making regarding our health services investments. IFC will not work with clients who do not commit to – and follow – our standards, and ethical principles and practices for patient care.

IFC's ongoing oversight

IFC's hospital clients often employ thousands of staff across multiple facilities and together they see millions of patients a year. While issues can arise in any organization, whether private or public, IFC tells clients to promptly inform us of allegations of misconduct or criminal behavior. We expect clients to rigorously adhere to established protocols for addressing such matters and, where applicable, collaborate with local authorities in investigating any incidents.

When IFC becomes aware of allegations of wrongdoing at any hospital, we proactively engage with our clients for their response. Similarly, if IFC's clients encounter such incidents, they should not only report them to the appropriate authorities and to us but also take swift corrective action by reinforcing internal procedures and controls to prevent recurrence.