

Managing risks: household illness costs, coping strategies and access to social protection

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The Journal of International Development has published a special issue on household experiences of ill-health and risk protection mechanisms. The edition is based on a collaborative research workshop that was hosted by the Consortium for Research on Equitable Health Systems to discuss research findings from several countries in Africa and Asia.

Illness-related impoverishment can result both from direct consequences of having to pay for health services, and from the indirect effects of illness and health expenditure on households' productive activities and livelihood resources. Household responses to such events can make them more vulnerable to future health shocks. Much of the contemporary discussion around issues of financial risk protection revolve around the need to develop mechanisms to protect households against the risks of large health expenditures, and to strengthen their resources for managing such shocks.

The papers presented in this special issue draw on different theoretical approaches to analyse the processes linking illness and impoverishment at the household level. They measure the costs of illness and the burdens these impose on household budgets, explore treatment actions and the strategies used to pay for the treatment, and assess households access to and uptake of policy measures designed to reduce health care expenditures and protect livelihoods.

The insights provided by this collection of papers from a variety of country contexts in Africa and Asia, help to cast light on the types of policy measures needed to effectively protect poor households from risks associated with health expenditure. They also draw attention to the various challenges of policy implementation including the perceptions of actors throughout the health system.

This special issue will be of particular relevance to researchers that work on financial risk protection and broader social protection issues, and for and policy makers and advisors concerned with health financing arrangements in low and middle-income countries.

Notes to editors:

- This special issue can be accessed at: <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/5102/home>
- The issue is available online and in print as of the 9 March 2009. A subscription is necessary to access the papers online.
- The Journal of International Development aims to publish the best research on international development issues in a form that is accessible to practitioners and policy-makers as well as to an academic audience. The main focus is on the social sciences - economics, politics, international relations, sociology and anthropology, as well as development studies.
- The Consortium for Research on Equitable Health Systems (CREHS) is a five year DFID funded international research programme that aims to generate knowledge about how to strengthen health systems, policies and interventions in ways that benefit the poorest. For more information go to: www.crehs.lshtm.ac.uk