

B. WHAT ARE NATIONAL (OR DOMESTIC) HEALTH ACCOUNTS?

National or domestic health accounts (NHA/DHA) are descriptive accounts that describe systematically and accurately the totality of health care expenditure flows in both the government and non-government sectors.

- NHA/DHA show the amount of funds provided by major sources (e.g. government, firms, households), and how these funds are used in the provision of final services, organised according to the institutional entities providing the services (e.g. hospitals, outpatient clinics, pharmacies, traditional medicine providers) and type of service (e.g. inpatient and outpatient care, dental services, medical research, etc.). NHA/DHA may even disaggregate spending according to the identity of service users (e.g. gender, geographical region, income level).
- In technical terms, NHA/DHA are a set of tables in which various aspects of an economy's health expenditure are arrayed. Rigorous and standardised classifications of the types and purposes of all expenditures and of all the actors in the health system are adopted in NHA/DHA. NHA/DHA complement other reporting systems to provide a more complete picture of the performance of the health system. A notable recent example of how NHA/DHA has been deployed in practice is the World Health Report 2000 on the international comparisons of health systems. A principal goal for developing health accounts is to support health system governance and decision-making as the World Health Report argues and shows.
- On the whole, NHA/DHA provide essential data for health sector planning and management, in the same way the national income accounts and vital statistics provide essential data for macroeconomic planning, and population and social service planning respectively.