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Afar workshop participants

Afar endeavors to launch four woreda insurance schemes this year

The Afar regional health bureau (RHB), Ethiopian Health Insurance Agency, and USAID Health Financing Improvement Program organized a regional-level workshop on January 14, 2021, to kick off community mobilization in a bid to launch community-based health insurance (CBHI) in four woredas: Afambo, Berahle, Chifra, and Megale. Afar already launched CBHI in Asayita woreda. Woreda administrations and health offices conduct mobilization activities to raise community awareness and understanding of the CBHI program and encourage enrollment.

The workshop was co-chaired by the head of the Office of the President of the regional government, Gulbile Sule; the head of the Afar RHB, Engineer Mohammed Toyib; and the RHB deputy head, Nuru Mohammed. More than 200 participants from the Bureau of Finance and Economic Development, Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs, zonal administrations, woreda governments, woreda health offices, and implementing partners attended the workshop, which focused on sensitizing zonal administrators, woreda administrators, and heads of woreda health offices on the:

- Roles of woreda cabinets in CBHI mobilization.
- Mobilization plan and associated monitoring and reporting requirements.
- Importance of providing quality health services.

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Presenters also shared the implementation experiences from Asayita woreda where Afar launched its first CBHI scheme in July 2020. Mr. Gulbile said during the workshop, “As the commitment of government leaders at all levels is decisive, all members of woreda cabinets should work at the grass-roots level to drive the mobilization process forward. By implementing CBHI, we must ensure equitable and accessible health services.”

The USAID Health Financing Improvement Program provided technical assistance to the RHB in updating its organizational structure from the regional to the woreda level so that it includes staff positions responsible for planning and managing health care financing activities, including CBHI community mobilization and enrollment activities. As a result, the RHB and Afambo, Asayita, and Chifra woredas each have a CBHI coordinator position within their structure; the position has been filled in all three woredas and the RHB plans to do so pending budget availability.

Two of the four new woredas, Afambo and Chifra, started mobilization activities within a week after the workshop with technical support from the Program. Their CBHI schemes will be officially launched once 50% of eligible households are enrolled.

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