

**CATASTROPHIC HEALTH EXPENDITURE IN URBAN SLUMS IN HLAINGTHAR YAR  
TOWNSHIP, YANGON REGION**

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**ABSTRACT**

Out-of-pocket (OOP) payments for health care caused some households to incur catastrophic health expenditure (CHE) which could prevent some households from seeking care and result in impoverishment.

Cross-sectional descriptive study was conducted in September, 2016 to estimate the extent of CHE in slum communities from Hlaing Thar Yar Township. Out of twenty wards in Hlaing Thar Yar Township, seven wards were randomly selected and 254 households in slum areas were interviewed. A unique dataset from respondent households was prepared and three approaches (WHO capacity to pay method, income method and nonfood method) corresponding to two common threshold levels (30% and 40%) were used to estimate the extent of catastrophic health expenditure (CHE).

Prevalence of illnesses in slum residents was 43%. Households with ill members who took treatment at public hospitals were 32.8%. Median household OOP health spending over one month period was 26,966 MMK. By 'WHO capacity to pay' method corresponding to 40% threshold level, 16.9% of households incurred catastrophic health expenditure. The proportionalities of CHE by WHO capacity to pay method and income method using the same threshold level (30%) were 25.6% and 20.5% respectively. The results indicate that the proportion of households facing CHE varied depending on method and threshold used. By the WHO capacity to pay method using threshold level (40%), mean positive overshoot (MPO) was 18.5%.

It is very important for every health system to protect households from the catastrophic health care expenditure and to improve equity in health care access and payments. Therefore, Myanmar health system needs to strengthen the strategic approach for achieving universal health coverage.