

REPORT ON SUSTAINABILITY MANAGEMENT FOR

The British Virgin Islands National Health Insurance

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Abstract

The United Nations (UN) described its 17 Sustainable Development Goals as the blueprint for the attainment of a sustainable future for all of the residents of planet earth. Number three of the goals focuses on the provision of health and wellbeing of all. This sustainability measure was one of the core reasons the government of the British Virgin Islands established the National Health Insurance (NHI). *(United Nations, n.d.)*

However, it has been observed that at present the British Virgin Islands National Health Insurance management are so engulfed with the everyday functions of an organization that is burdened with actually surviving *(Penn, 2019)*; that matters such as sustainability standards are not embraced as it should.

This report expresses the current state of the BVINHI by communicating the matters of survival that currently overshadows the importance of full sustainability transformation.

In fact, such a transformation needs to commence urgently in order to have the organization comply with the Government's strategic plan which calls for the incorporation of SMART and Green initiatives into the various operations and functions of the public service *(Smith, 2017)*.

Since the BVINHI has not commence sustainability responsibilities this report would indicate factors and make suggestions on how to commence this critical component of building an enduring viable organization.

This Report At A Glance

The aim of this report is to commence a discussion with the management of NHI and the key stakeholders about the need to incorporate sustainable measures and practices in the organization.

Being optimistic, the document also outlines the measurement that would be used to calculate the sustainability changes undertaken; as well as identify actions that NHI can implement that would ensure its sustainability.

The Story of the BVINHI Past and Present

In 2005, at the request of the Government of the Virgin Islands, the University of the West Indies, Health Economic Unit (UWI HEU) conducted a study on the Economic Feasibility of a National Health Insurance System (NHIS) for the Territory. In August 2009, Cabinet accepted the HEU's proposal for the completion of the design, and implementation of NHI.

The Government of the Virgin Islands had embarked on the process of developing a National Health Insurance (NHI) system; for the benefit of all citizens and residents of the Territory. This was in keeping with principles of universal health care.

The system was established to be mandatory and from the consultation stages members of the public resented that they were forced to give up their private insurance providers.

On the other hand, the legislators were excited to see the NHI launched because it would take the financial burden from government. This burden comes from the fact that as small Territory ordinary citizens have access to their legislators and often take their personal medical bills to various politicians for contributions.

Issues Threaten NHI Sustainability

The much-needed British Virgin Islands National Health Insurance might not be sustained for long as it is currently at risk of being a story of the past told to the next generation of Virgin Islanders simply because of greed.

The National Health Insurance of the British Virgin Islands was the answer to the prayers of a large portion of the general population of less than 30,000] as prior to its establishment approximately 65 percent of the residents in the British Virgin Islands were without medical insurance. Therefore, it was opined that the institution will make it possible for all legal residents of the Territory to have equal access to quality healthcare at a cost that is not prohibitive.

Upon its establishment NHI was expected to go through some growing pains, tweaks and teething and finally adjust to present needed healthcare reform in the Territory.

Unfortunately, instead of sinking into compliance and adjusting the private health care providers floated their prices to an all -time high that inflated healthcare cost. This caused the new national health insurance to choke while it was still learning to breathe. To the point where the actual viability of the needed service is a real concern (GLATSKY], 2019).

The referenced private sector manipulation was a significant degrader to the system, as the high cost created financial risks for the organization. Areas of the NHI were pressured because of the high volume of claims. This occurred because persons who for years did not have health insurance began to take advantage of the service as soon as NHI was launched.

Issues of Sustainability

The National Health Insurance has found itself in a head above water situation at the moment. This leaves little wiggle room for added issues that may affect its sustainability. Chief of the issues that threaten the viability of the BVINHI is the matter of financial risk, weakened compensation structure, and untested capabilities.

Climate change is also a major sustainability issue for the organization, and the effects of two major category five hurricanes in 2017 serve as a reason to be concerned about this issue. The storms of 2017 included hurricane Irma which was recorded as “the strongest hurricane ever observed in the open Atlantic Ocean, and one of only five hurricanes with measured winds of 185 MPH or higher,” (Tallahassee Florida Weather Forecast Office, 2017).

Sustainability Initiative

One of the noted strongpoints of the NHI is its public relations undertakings. The organization utilizes the various promotional platforms to get the message out about its services and function. This same platform can be used to influence sustainability in

the British Virgin Islands – putting NHI at the forefront of encouraging sustainability focused changes in the Territory.

Actions to Enable Sustainability initiatives

Maintaining the British Virgin Islands National Health Insurance will call for a balanced approach to the rendering of services, its responsibilities to the Territory and stakeholders. There is a notion that because the system is a public centered initiative a more relaxed approach can be facilitated. Therefore, sustaining the organization will call for a concerted effort to curb financial risks, strengthen the mechanisms of management and disburse compensation.

Reinforcing Operational Weak Points

In order to ensure that the human resources are able to deliver on the sustainability goals of the organization in-house training would be a place to start. This form of training would be cost effective and see faster response to matters requiring improvement.

Building on various lessons that the employees received during company sponsored training programs will also be an effective way to commence focus on weak areas. These compounded refresher seminars will ensure that staff is capable of meeting the service goals, and demonstrate how sustainability functions and initiatives can be appended to the system.

Curbing Financial Risks

Central to the current issue and worry associated with NHI is the fact that private health care providers have not only drastically increased the cost of their service, but also use various tactics to maximize their billings to NHI.

Underhanded Tactic of Healthcare Providers

Resident would go to a doctor for ailment 'A' and said physician will run a gamut of tests unnecessary for the treatment of ailment 'A'. This would cause the patient to return multiple times to the facility causing a bill to be sent to NHI for payment for each visit and each unnecessary test.

As a means of dealing with that the NHI management decided on a three -visit cap per month for the same illness (National Health Insurance, 2019). The policy, which is aimed at stemming the situation allows for no more than three visits in a month in relations to the same diagnosis. Although some flexibility was added to facilitate certain unique situations where multiple visits are necessary. Such requests would be dealt with by NHI on a case-by-case basis. However, the policy grants NHI the right in such instances to “recommend a second opinion or referral to a specialist for the beneficiary if deemed necessary or if one was not previously sought by the practitioner providing service.”

Interrelated Issues / Conflicts Of Interests

When the National Health Insurance was conceptualized the government saw the facility as the key to the sustainability of the Territory's healthcare system. (Heu Center for Health Economics, 2012).

However, the social structure of the Territory enhances the perceived financial sustainability risks as matters such as aging adds another layer to the problem. The newness of the National Health Insurance and the fact that the system is still trying to find its footing has prevented management from fully examining certain social impacts that threatening the sustainability of NHI.

The situation of aging on an organization such as the National Health Insurance is best described in a World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe report (Sarah Thomson, 2010)

The report ably notes the interrelated situations pose; chief of them is the fact that “the concept of financial sustainability is essentially meaningless unless it is linked to the objectives of the health system.”

In order to drive the point home about this financial sustainability issue the report noted: “Trends in publicly generated health sector revenue and expenditure will diverge. The challenge this gap presents stems from two main factors. On the revenue side, heavy reliance on the labour market to finance health care and reluctance to transfer greater amounts from the central government budget mean that the public revenue base will shrink due to the impact of population ageing on employment. On the expenditure side, weaknesses in resource allocation, purchasing and provider payment lead to inefficiency now, and if unchecked will contribute to rapid spending growth.”

The same report also suggested a fix to these issues. It stated: “There are three potential responses to bridging the projected revenue–expenditure gap: cutting

public entitlements to health care, broadening the public revenue base and increasing health system efficiency.”

Incorporating Sustainability Practices And Processes

In the book “Green Business Process Management -- Towards the Sustainable Enterprise.” Jan vom Brocke, and Stefan Seidel of the University of Liechtenstein Institute of Information Systems; as well as Jan Recker of Queensland University (Jan vom Brocke, 2012) stated that technology is the panacea of a number of sustainability issues. The report said: “As contemporary organizations become increasingly aware of the need to become more sustainable, they look for information technology (IT) enabled business processes that are successful in terms of their economic, but also their ecological and perhaps also social impact.”

This sustainability mission will require that NHI conserve more, especially as it relates to energy.

In the case of NHI, digitization will be the core management process that will drive this sustainability agenda. This proposed digital agenda will be essential in creating resilient system where NHI will continue to function should a catastrophic disaster hit the Territory.

The pros of embarking on digitalization as a sustainable management process is underscored by AltexSoft, which is a world-renowned Technology Consulting Company that specializes in the implementation of digital transformation for mid-size companies.

They explained in a published whitepaper (Altexsoft): “Automation has become a fact of life in recent years. However, refocusing employee experience from repetitive tasks to strategic and ingenious operations is still a high barrier. It can be tackled by establishing internal experience-feedback loops and gathering data.”

A great return from a digitally focused NHI will be the ability to do more with the little resources it currently has.

Measuring Strategy Effectiveness Sustainability Reporting

Implementation of the various key features would be enhanced by sustainability reporting; which would enable management to have a better view of strides and need for action as it relates to the Territory and the organization's interest in sustainability.

Such reporting will equip NHI management with information that would inform key decisions. They will be able gauge from data response options to various anticipated risks. Additionally, they will be able to ease or withdraw from adverse environmental, social and other policy effects.

To start this sustainability transformation NHI would need to consider the global and territorial commitment to sustainability and commence an examination its own strategy. Additionally, the organization will have to incorporate systems that contributes and align with sustainability efforts.

Considering that risk is a daily and frequent matter of concern for management such report will serve as an in depth look at operations and functions. As was stated before sustainability reporting will be a necessary tool for the management risks.

Towards this goal it is suggested that the organization utilizes the tenants and principle disclosures stated in the G4 guidelines of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). As well as other, management determined implementations.

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