1. WHO Strategy on Health Policy and Systems Research: progress towards implementation

Since the launch of the WHO Strategy on Health Policy and Systems Research (HPSR) at the Second Global Symposium on Health Systems Research in Beijing last year, the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research has actively engaged with key partners to determine practical steps to implement the six proposed options for action.

1. Embed research within decision-making processes.
2. Support demand-driven research.
3. Strengthen capacity for research and use of evidence.
4. Establish repositories of knowledge.
5. Improve the efficiency of investments in health.
6. Increase accountability for actions.

After the launch in Beijing, the strategy was presented at the 132nd Executive Board (EB) in January 2013. Following extensive discussions, the EB recommended a number of immediate actions to support the implementation of the strategy:

- A sub-committee of the 29-member Advisory Group, which steered the development of the strategy, has been established to support the WHO Secretariat and the Alliance in developing a plan for the implementation of the options for action. The first meeting of the sub-committee took place in April 2013.

- A two-day consultation, for experts from government, academia, funding agencies and civil society, was held on 8 and 9 May 2013 to develop operational strategies for governments and other stakeholders to embed research into decision-making processes, a key recommendation of the strategy.

The strategy and progress to date will be presented at the World Health Assembly in May 2013.

2. Alliance announces Implementation Research Platform research teams

The Alliance is delighted to announce 14 research teams selected following the call for implementation research in 2012.

The research aims to facilitate the implementation and scale-up of effective interventions for maternal, newborn and child health in three priority areas. These priority areas were identified in workshops conducted in 11 African and South Asian countries where maternal, newborn and child health is a major cause of concern.

1. Strategies to facilitate integration of services to improve health outcomes and efficiency.
2. Strategies to improve performance of health workers to deliver quality services.
3. Strategies for community engagement to expand coverage of health services.

The teams attended a protocol development workshop in Montreux, Switzerland from 21 to 25 January 2013, organized by the Implementation Research Platform (IRP). The workshop is an important part of the IRP’s strategy to support capacity development for implementation research and build a community of implementation researchers from around the world. Participants were able to discuss study objectives, research questions and the selection of appropriate study designs and methods to answer implementation research questions and measure implementation outcomes.

The workshop was facilitated by five leading experts in the field: Irene Agyepong (Ghana), Neal Brandes (USA), Asha George (India), Mary Ann Lansang (Philippines), and Sally Theobald (UK), supported by IRP Secretariat staff representing the various partner organizations.


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<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Principal Investigator</th>
<th>Organization/Country</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community led evidence-based action for newborns (CLEAN) at scale through participatory women’s groups and health workers in rural Bangladesh</td>
<td>Prof. Kishwar Azad</td>
<td>Perinatal care project, Diabetic Association of Bangladesh, Bangladesh</td>
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<td>Clan involved approaches to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV in a rural minority area, China</td>
<td>Wei Ma</td>
<td>Shandong University School of Public Health, China</td>
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<td>Scale-up of a provider participatory model to strengthen referral systems for maternal and newborn health in a public health system: evidence from Maharashtra, India</td>
<td>Sushma Shende</td>
<td>Society for Nutrition, Education and Health Action (SNEHA), India</td>
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<td>Strengthening village health committees for intensified community engagement at scale in two states of India (VOICES study)</td>
<td>Kabir Sheikh and Rajani Ved</td>
<td>Public Health Foundation of India, National Health Systems Resource Centre, India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community engagement in reducing maternal and child mortality through 2H2 System in East Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia</td>
<td>Dr Maria Silalahi and Dr Shanti Pantvaidya</td>
<td>East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) Health Provincial Office, Indonesia</td>
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Participants, Implementation Research Protocol development workshop, January 2013
Successful applicants from seven countries begin primary research on Access to Medicines

Research teams from seven countries - Brazil, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, India, Nepal and Uganda – are beginning to undertake important research in the area of Access to Medicines (ATM). The research teams were recently selected by a group of independent external advisors following an extensive review of more than one hundred submissions to a call for proposals issued in May 2012.

### Selected research teams

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Principal Investigator</th>
<th>Organization/Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Development and implementation of a labour companionship model for integration in public hospitals in three Arab middle-income countries</td>
<td>Tamar Kabakian</td>
<td>American University of Beirut, Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feasibility, effectiveness and efficiency of delivering Malawi’s Option B+ for Prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) of HIV through various service delivery methods</td>
<td>Ireen Namakhoma</td>
<td>Research for Equity and Community Health Trust, Malawi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District-wide implementation of maternal and neonatal near miss reviews in Nepal: An implementation research study to inform scale-up</td>
<td>Chandra Rai and Megha Raj Banjara</td>
<td>HealthRight and Public Health and Infectious Disease Research Center, Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowering district-level managers to improve health worker performance in Nepal</td>
<td>Dr. Sushil Baral</td>
<td>Health Research and Social Development Forum (HERD), Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT NIGRAAN: Addressing structural gaps in supervisory system of Pakistan’s lady health worker program to achieve MDG 4</td>
<td>Dr Faizullah Rabbani</td>
<td>Department of Community Health Sciences, Aga Khan University, Pakistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHW Attrition-Prevention in Sierra Leone (CAPSL): Identifying which strategy is most feasible for scale-up</td>
<td>Dr. Isaac Palmer</td>
<td>University Research and Development Service Bureau (URDS), Sierra Leone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why health worker non-compliance with focused antenatal care guidelines – A case study towards improving access to quality pregnancy care in Uganda</td>
<td>Jesca Nsungwa-Sabiti</td>
<td>Ministry of Health, Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of grafting social audits to criterion based clinical audits for improved implementation and scale-up of quality improvement activities in maternal and newborn health care in Uganda</td>
<td>Kidza Yvonne Mugerwa and Josaphat K. Byamugisha</td>
<td>Makerere University College of Health Sciences, Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health policy implementation in Zambia: the case of voluntary medical male circumcision for HIV prevention</td>
<td>Robert Tembo</td>
<td>University of Zambia, Department of Social Development Studies, Zambia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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3. Successful applicants from seven countries begin primary research on Access to Medicines
This new research effort follows an exercise in 2010 to identify top policy concerns and a priority HPSR agenda in ATM, which resulted in the identification of three priority research questions:

- In risk protection schemes, which innovations and policies improve equitable access to and appropriate use of quality medicines, sustainability of the scheme, and financial impact on beneficiaries?
- How do policies and other interventions into private markets impact on access to and appropriate use of quality medicines?
- How can stakeholders use information and data routinely collected and available in the system in a transparent way towards improving access to and use of quality medicines?

The research effort aims to explore the connections between medicines and three other functions of health systems: health financing, governance and health information.


4. Alliance supports new systematic review centres in 2013

The Alliance continues to broaden its support for building the capacity of systematic review centres in low- and middle-income countries. In 2013, it has selected two centres in new geographical regions:

- the American University of Beirut in Lebanon;
- the Health Systems Research Unit of the Medical Research Council in South Africa.

The Alliance has also extended support for another two years to two centres that have received support from the Alliance in past years:

- the China Centre for Health Development Studies, Peking University;
- the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile.

Over the next two years, the four centres will identify priority review questions in consultation with policy- and decision-makers, conduct systematic reviews, prepare summaries and policy briefs based on the findings of the reviews, and disseminate them to a wide audience. The centres have also committed to building the capacity of young researchers over the two-year period in order to foster a sustainable stream of expertise in this field in years to come.

Read more at: http://www.who.int/alliance-hpsr/projects/systematic_reviews/en/index.html

Save the dates!

Third Global Symposium on Health Systems Research, Cape Town, South Africa, 30 September – 3 October 2014.


Stay tuned on: http://www.who.int/alliance-hpsr/en/