



A regional partnership to promote evidence-informed policy-making

WHAT IS IT?

Overview

The African Health Observatory Platform on Health Systems and Policies (AHOP) is a collaborative partnership to support and promote the transfer of evidence and experience between countries to foster better policies and action for improved health and wellbeing. The Platform leverages existing national and regional collaborations to form a network of National Centres focused on the generation and exchange of knowledge and evidence for health systems and policy development in the African region. The Platform's National Centres currently include institutions in Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and Senegal.

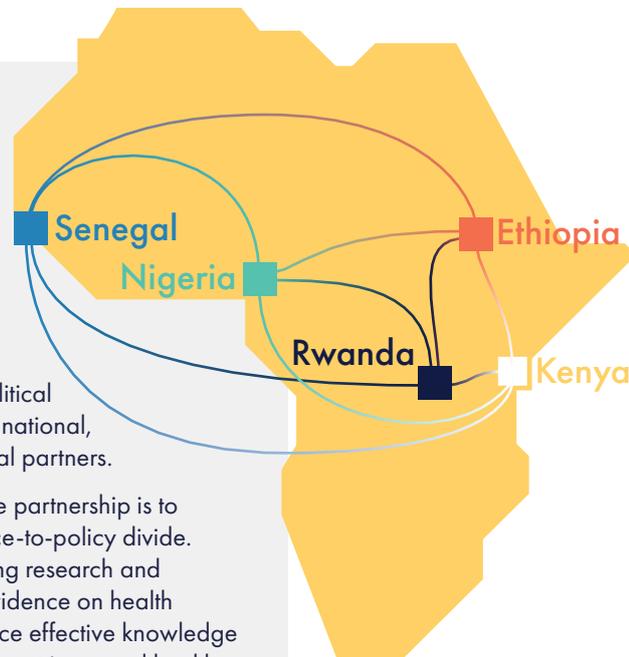
The Platform is hosted by the WHO Regional Office for Africa (WHO AFRO) which serves as the Regional Secretariat. Research is generated by the Platform's National Centres who galvanise regional expertise, to work with policy-makers on the continent, and turn research into action. The network of National Centres will be expanded gradually across the region. The Platform draws on support from WHO AFRO as hosts and from a technical consortium including

the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and national, regional and global partners.

The objective of the partnership is to bridge the evidence-to-policy divide. Synthesising existing research and generating new evidence on health systems will enhance effective knowledge exchange and support improved health policy-making at country, regional and global level. The Platform's research and engagement activities are country-led and focused on Primary Health Care (PHC), with the overarching theme 'Re-engineering Health Systems' for its initial phase.

AHOP is financed initially by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, supporting African-based institutions and expertise.

Interested partners are welcome to join and contribute to the collaboration.



AHOP National Centres:

- KEMRI Wellcome Trust
- University of Rwanda – School of Public Health
- University of Addis Ababa – College of Health Sciences
- University of Nigeria – Health Policy Research Group
- Institut Pasteur de Dakar – Epidemiology, Clinical Research and Data Science



WHY DOES IT EXIST?

Health system challenges

Knowledge generation and effective translation are universal challenges which demand local, contextualised solutions. Poorly designed, funded and managed public health systems limit equitable access to high-quality, affordable care. Global, regional and national expertise and experience in health systems strengthening exists but is not currently being leveraged to its full potential.



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Regional challenges

Today more than ever before, the use of global experience is an invaluable instrument in policy design. When countries search for answers on how to redesign, reform, and improve their healthcare systems, they turn their eyes to their neighbours, peers, and other countries that offer examples of best practice. The African region faces two major challenges to effective use of local and global knowledge and experience in health systems development and implementation:

- Varied institutional capacity to effectively engage with the wealth of health systems knowledge and experience that exists;
- Limited platforms – that are harmonised across national, regional, and global levels – to facilitate the effective and efficient communication and translation of existing regional and global knowledge into local contexts.

Addressing the gaps - supply and demand

The Platform seeks to address these gaps by mobilising existing collaborations to form a regional network for the African region. The focus is on effective learning for action which translates evidence into policy and action. Activities will serve to enhance supply and demand of health systems evidence, consolidating local and regional ownership and awareness of the Platform.

Ultimately, the project aims to strengthen health systems and PHC implementation in the region through:

- Increased national and regional scope to produce, share and promote health systems analysis informed by national, regional and global expertise
- Increased awareness and uptake of available evidence and expertise by policy-makers, recognising the value of looking comparatively, to strengthen health systems



HOW DOES THE PLATFORM WORK?

Regional Observatory model

The Observatory approach supports and promotes evidence-based policy-making through: the comprehensive and rigorous analysis of health systems; the production of timely and reliable evidence in response to real policy needs; and the communication of evidence in ways that are useful to, and usable by, policy-makers. AHOP joins the cohort of regional health systems Observatories including the Asia-Pacific Observatory (APO) and the European Observatory on Health Systems & Policies, which has shared lessons learned and approaches to inform the development of AHOP. This evolving global model creates opportunities to compare and contrast health system characteristics between countries and regions worldwide.



The Platform's operating structure

Regional Secretariat

The Platform is hosted by WHO AFRO who serve as the regional secretariat and coordinate the Platform's activities.

National Centres

National Centres are the focal points for analysis and knowledge brokering within each country and are institutions of high-quality academic work and evidence for action. They lead the technical work of the Platform, supported by and working with technical partners to access primary research, academic networks and expertise.

Governance

The Platform is governed by an advisory group—comprising Platform partners, senior representatives from national and international organisations, national ministries, policy-makers and academia—which will review the annual workplan and monitor progress to ensure Platform outputs respond to changing regional policy needs.

Technical Partners

Technical Partners are central to supporting the research and dissemination activity of the Platform. They ensure National Centres are best placed to tap into existing research and evidence, maintain the rigour and policy relevance of research, and deliver the highest quality outputs. Through institutional partnerships with the Platform, Technical Partners bring expertise from organisations working on health systems at national, regional or global levels.

Knowledge transfer and evidence generation

Platform partners will produce a range of health systems analysis at the national and regional level, focusing on evidence for action:

Country Health System & Services Profiles

Detailed reviews of a country's health system, performance and policy initiatives

Policy briefs

Small reports tailored to the needs of health policy-makers for informing them about available evidence on specific questions and issues, presented in an accessible and user-friendly format

Comparative and thematic studies

Longer reports providing in-depth analysis of a specific health system function or issue based on secondary research

Policy dialogues

A particular brand of bringing evidence to policy: highly focused, targeting senior policy-makers and advisers, and marshalling support for key decision points. Policy dialogues serve as a mechanism drawing in expertise and health decision-makers to foster mutual learning.



HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

Opportunities for engagement

As a collaborative partnership fostering knowledge exchange, the Platform is open to all expressions of interest to engage with its work, from both institutions and individuals. There are a number of ways to get involved, depending on your interests and expertise.

Researchers & Experts

Contribute to our research generation by joining our network of individual experts able to provide additional expertise and research capacity to facilitate the production of specific reports or outputs. Experts are engaged on a case-by-case basis to contribute to specific research or events depending on their expertise and capacity.

National Centres

Join our rapidly expanding network of National Centres. National Centres are institutions with a long history of rigorous high-quality research, based in-country, with strong links to policy and stakeholder groups. They apply via regular calls for Expressions of Interest.

Technical partners

Become a Technical Partner contributing your expertise to our consortium of organisations working at national, regional and global levels to inform health systems improvement. Contact us at any time to discuss opportunities to collaborate.

Regional networks

Bring your regional network connections and expertise to the project. The Platform is hosted by WHO AFRO who serve as the Regional Secretariat, coordinating and hosting activities. But we welcome additional partners able to connect with key regional stakeholders, to host events or foster networking activities to complement our existing capacity.

Donors

Join the donors supporting the Platform's work. Funding partners are an integral part of the Platform. Their engagement not only enables the expansion of Platform activity to new National Centres, but also creates opportunities for integrating evidence into the planning of initiatives across the region to improve coordination and delivery. Funders support the Platform financially with a view to securing its longer-term sustainability. Funding can be directed to specific aspects of the Platform's work or to support specific countries, but all support is centrally managed and distributed. Funders sit on the Platform's Steering Committee which guides its activities. Contact us at any time if you are interested in becoming a donor.

Get in touch

The Platform recognises the range of high-quality health systems and policy research already being conducted across the continent and will actively seek to work with these groups to enhance opportunities for knowledge and skill sharing. It is expected that the initial consultation phase will bring a range of additional national, regional and international donors, partners and networks on board.

For further information, contact either the Regional Secretariat at afroahop@who.int or the Technical Partners at ahop@lse.ac.uk

 ahop.aho.afro.who.int

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Health Policy Research Group [HPRG]



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