HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING ACCELERATOR

Strengthening the Health Policy and Systems Research Ecosystem in Asia: Catalytic Pilots

Background

The Health System Strengthening Accelerator (Accelerator) is catalyzing four rapid demand-driven and locally led pilots to strengthen the health policy and systems research (HPSR) ecosystem in Asia.

As Asian countries implement health sector reforms to advance towards universal health coverage (UHC), demand is growing for country and regional learning on HSS, and for domestic health policy and systems research institutions (HPSRIs) to efficiently engage in the formulation and implementation of HSS.

Responding to this demand and to a co-created vision for a stronger HPSR ecosystem in Asia that is highly responsive to countries' needs, the HPSRI-led pilots will map and strengthen HPSRI capacity, coordinate and enhance training, and increase understanding of domestic HPSR funding streams. Collectively, these activities move towards more sustainable policy engagement models and HPSRIs that can better respond to country demand and needs.

Pilot overview

Pilot activities are led by HPSRIs based in India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines, South Korea, and Sri Lanka, alongside regional training programs and learning platforms. Financial support ranging from $25,000 - $150,000 is being provided by the USAID Asia Bureau, with additional co-funding and in-kind support by the pilot organizations, the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research (the Alliance), the Asia-Pacific Network for Health Systems Strengthening (ANHSS), the Leadership for Universal Health Coverage (L4UHC), the Philippines Department of Health - Health Policy Development and Planning Bureau, and Providing for Health (P4H). Pilots will operate from Fall 2022 through early Summer 2023. A convening to highlight lessons learned and next steps will follow in mid-2023.

Learning Partners

The Accelerator and the Alliance will accompany these activities and serve as a learning partner to facilitate coordination and collaboration, as well as capture and amplify lessons for the benefit of the global health systems community. The Accelerator, the Alliance, and implementing partners will regularly communicate updates and engagement opportunities via blogs and meetings shared though the Asia HPSR co-creation community.

Activity Information

With support from the USAID Asia Bureau, the Accelerator undertook several foundational activities in collaboration with the Alliance that led to the ecosystem strengthening pilots, including:

- Regional landscaping analysis documenting ~100 HPSRIs across 27 countries in Asia, the role they play in the HPSR ecosystem, and opportunities for enhanced collaboration and action (2019 - 2020).

- Virtual six-part co-creation workshop series (2021) co-led with the Alliance, engaging HPSRIs, training programs and learning platforms, and regional actors to build a shared vision of a strengthened ecosystem and priority strengthening pathways.

- Six co-led (HPSRI and training program) action groups (2021-2022) further developing the priority pathways, fostering dialogue around research agenda-setting, and creating tools. Several ideas presented at the March 2022 Marketplace became the basis of pilot proposals.

- Two-phase request for proposals for ~9 months of catalytic pilot funding and to explore partnership models (2022), reviewed by a committee of academics, former policymakers, HSPRIs, funders, and USAID representatives.

Interested in learning more?
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AsiaHPSRStrengthening.googlegroups.com

HPSR Ecosystem Strengthening Pilot Overview

Forum for Advancing Better Health Policy and Systems Research Institutions (FAB HPSRIs)

A stronger HPSR ecosystem starts with well-capacitated HPSRIs. This is the premise for FAB HPSRIs, an international collaboration of HPSRIs that aims to contribute to shaping a robust ecosystem in Asia by strengthening the "robustness" of HPSRIs through organizational development. Implementing organizations will:

- Co-create a framework to assess the robustness of HPSRIs in the Asian context
- Host capacity strengthening sessions ("Summer Schools") with HPSRIs in Nepal and the Philippines based on HPSRI-identified priority areas emerging from application of the assessment framework

Implementing organizations:

- Alliance for Improving Health Outcomes (AIHO, Philippines) is a research and consultancy firm which aims to promote the public health profession by mentoring young public health professionals to address pressing health inequities in the Philippines.
- HERD International (Nepal) is a research and development agency, promoting evidence informed policies and practices for sustainable development and contributing to improved quality of life of people. It is legally registered as a service company under the Office of the Company Registrar, Ministry of Industry, Nepal.

Collaborating partners: Harvy Liwanag, University of Bern; Philippines Department of Health, Health Policy Development and Planning Bureau

Strengthening collaboration between two training and leadership development programs to improve HPSRI stakeholder capacity and connections

This initiative will twin two existing programs: (1) the Flagship program run by the Asia-Pacific Network for Health Systems Strengthening (ANHSS), an Asia-Pacific network of HPSRIs, and (2) the P4H Leadership for Universal Health Coverage (L4UHC) program. It supports HPSRIs within the ANHSS network to provide complementary training in health systems knowledge to participants in up to seven countries in the L4UHC program 2022/23 cycle. These participants will include policymakers from the following countries: Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Cambodia, Nepal, and Pakistan (to be confirmed).

Implementing organizations:

- Institute for Health Policy (IHP) (Sri Lanka, *representing ANHSS)* is an independent research institution and a regional center of excellence for health policy research, working on its own, in partnerships, and with sponsors, to improve health and social systems in Sri Lanka and the wider region, by supporting, encouraging and informing policy change, through quality research, analysis and training.
- Leadership for Universal Health Coverage (L4UHC), a one-year program of Providing for Health (P4H), enables senior decision-makers to develop the leadership skills and collective actions needed to bring UHC to life in their countries.

Supporting partners: Additional HPSRIs within the ANHSS

Strengthening HPSR Networks in Asia: Developing a regional database

This pilot is designed to reduce duplication of efforts and fragmentation across the HPSR ecosystem through a database of HPSRIs in the Asia region. This database will catalogue HPSRIs' structure, geography of work, strengths, area of interests, capacities, capacity strengthening needs, and other relevant information. The database may be supplemented by case studies on HPSRIs who have used promising approaches to engage policymakers, set research agendas, and/or operate sustainably within the HPSR ecosystem.

Implementing organizations:

- Center for Health Policy and Management (CPHM), University of Gadjah Mada (Indonesia) CPHM is committed to developing practical evidence-based policy and management solutions to Indonesia's most pressing health system challenges.
- ACCESS Health (India) ACCESS Health International's mission is to improve access to high quality and affordable healthcare for people everywhere. The organization works to improve health financing systems and the quality of healthcare services through long term in country programs, documentation of best practices and knowledge, and coordination of joint learning programs.

Framework to assess HPSR domestic funding sources and opportunities: Domestic Financing for HPSRIs

This pilot will use a mixed methods research and participatory approach to develop a framework to assess domestic financing pathways for HPSR in Southeast Asia. Seoul National University will conduct interviews with HPSRIs that have received domestic funding in recent years to understand funding relative to stated needs, and the opportunities and challenges encountered, which will contribute to the development of the framework. Thailand and Vietnam are likely to be focus countries as the governments have supported HPSR but through differing health policy approaches.

Implementing organizations:

- Seoul National University (South Korea) is a national public research university located in Seoul, South Korea. It aims to create a community of knowledge through education and by building innovative knowledge ecosystems which are sustainable and socially aware.

Supporting partners: P4H; and the WHO Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research