
Report on hosted partnerships

Report by the Director-General

1. In accordance with decision EB132(10) (2013), the Executive Board is regularly updated on major developments and issues arising in connection with WHO-hosted partnerships.¹ WHO currently serves as the host for four formal hosted partnerships: the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies, the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, and Unitaid. The hosted partnerships are managed according to the policy on WHO engagement with global health partnerships and hosting arrangements,² endorsed by World Health Assembly resolution WHA63.10 (2010), which sets out a framework to guide WHO's assessment of and decision to host formal partnerships and provides specific parameters for hosting partnerships.

2. This report provides updates on the main findings and recommendations of the periodic review of hosted partnerships and major developments in partnerships hosted by WHO.

3. In decision EB132(10), the Board requested its Programme, Budget and Administration Committee: to ensure that the arrangements for hosted health partnerships are regularly reviewed on a case-by-case and timely basis in respect of their contributions to improved health outcomes, WHO's interaction with individual hosted partnerships, and the harmonization of their work with the work of WHO; and to make recommendations for the consideration of the Board, as appropriate, through a standing item on the subject on the Board's agenda. In 2023, the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies was reviewed.³ In 2024, the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health is proposed for review.⁴

4. The Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023, which was approved by the Health Assembly in 2018,⁵ highlights the importance of partnership, noting that WHO can only accomplish its ambitious goals with the support of partners. The extension of the Thirteenth General Programme of Work by the Health Assembly until 2025⁶ further emphasized the importance of working with partners.

As implementation of the General Programme of Work continues, the work of the hosted partnerships should contribute to its outcomes and impacts and will be reflected in future reports to the Executive Board.

¹ See document EB132/2013/REC/1.

² See resolution WHA63.10.

³ See document EB153/8.

⁴ See document EB155/6 for the outcome of the review.

⁵ See resolution WHA71.1 (2018).

⁶ See resolution WHA75.6 (2022).

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN WHO-HOSTED PARTNERSHIPS

Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research

5. The Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research marked its 25th anniversary in 2023 with a series of public events held across five continents. Reflecting on its achievements – building the field, strengthening the capacities of researchers and policy-makers and establishing and supporting a network of key partners to advocate for greater use of health policy and systems research – the Alliance looked to the future by developing a new strategy for 2024–2028, which shifts the Alliance to a greater focus on impact on health outcomes and service delivery, engaging more comprehensively with country priorities and contexts and building new partnerships. The strategy also identifies five priority areas, namely: universal health coverage through primary health care; digital health; noncommunicable disease prevention; climate change; and emergency preparedness and response, maintaining alignment with the strategic priorities of WHO and collaboration with its three levels.

6. With a view to contributing towards progress on universal health coverage, the Alliance published a number of country case studies on primary health care in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Implementation research in four countries began on the integration of noncommunicable disease management into primary care. The Alliance launched a special journal issue with *Health Systems Global*, mentoring and supporting first-time publication by women authors on health equity and access to services and caring for underserved populations. This year was also the culmination of a multicountry research programme on managing donor transitions to facilitate sustained coverage of essential interventions. Findings from this programme were shared during a side event at the Seventy-sixth World Health Assembly and in a special issue of *Health Policy and Planning*.

7. On health emergencies, the Alliance launched a new collaboration focused on understanding the health systems factors – particularly those around financing, governance and human resources – that have enabled national public health agencies to function effectively in response to COVID-19 and other public health emergencies.

8. With regard to healthier populations, the Alliance worked with the Inter-Agency Working Group on Health Taxes to release a special issue of *BMJ Global Health* on health taxes. Studies examined how to frame, expand and implement a range of health taxes, on tobacco, alcohol and sugar-sweetened beverages. The Alliance also expanded its work on climate change to include six new countries.

9. Lastly, in 2023 the Alliance concluded a four-year initiative to strengthen capacity for health policy and systems research involving institutions from seven countries. This effort led to policy change and institutional strengthening in each of the countries involved, covering all WHO regions.

EUROPEAN OBSERVATORY ON HEALTH SYSTEMS AND POLICIES

10. The European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies celebrated its silver jubilee in 2023, marking 25 years of generating and sharing evidence to support policy-makers. The year was marked by technical achievements that demonstrate the value of partnership, and by renewal of the partnership itself.

11. Technical highlights in analysis and health systems performance assessment include:

- completion of Implementing the Primary Health Care approach: a Primer, a global study with a strong focus on action, that was launched at the primary health care conference in Astana.

The study was produced for and with the WHO Special Programme on Primary Health Care and the WHO European Centre for Primary Health Care (Almaty, Kazakhstan) and pulls together information for policy-makers about how primary care can transform health systems;

- publication of three policy briefs on strategies for investing in the workforce and protecting that investment through effective recruitment, retention, reskilling and support, for the Fifth Global Forum on Human Resources for Health and the Working for Health Programme. In addition to these briefs addressing the challenges that countries face, the Observatory shared key messages both at the Forum and through a series of webinars;
- the Tallinn Charter 15th Anniversary Health Systems Conference, at which the Observatory generated a strong evidence base and delivered policy briefs on trust, on how policy-makers can drive change and transform service delivery and on financing transformation; and
- renewal of the global framework for health systems performance assessment to reflect lessons of the pandemic, also under the Tallinn umbrella. The framework is now a more practical tool for decision-making and is supported by an innovative approach to tracer indicators, which WHO and the Observatory are taking forward in collaboration with the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

A range of other analyses supported policy-makers, including on antimicrobial resistance, intersectoral action and integrated care.

12. The major achievement in country monitoring was the publication of the fourth edition of *State of Health in the EU* country health profiles. The profiles of all European Union Member States, prepared with the OECD and for the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety of the European Commission, assess how well health systems perform and, this year, shone a spotlight on mental health. The profiles are in addition to the rolling programme of country reviews and comparative analysis.

13. Knowledge brokering was also central to success with the *Eurohealth* journal, including a special issue to mark the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union; a webinar series; policy dialogues; major public health and health system events; and rapid responses.

14. Partnership highlights include that:

- all partners (11 Member States and seven other organizations) renewed membership for the next five years;
- the new development plan 2024–2028 was agreed and chimes with partners' policy priorities; and
- plans for the transition to a new Director are going well, with strong commitment to continuity, evolution and sustainability.

PARTNERSHIP FOR MATERNAL, NEWBORN AND CHILD HEALTH¹

15. During 2023, the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health actively supported WHO in delivering its Thirteenth General Programme of Work, 2019–2023 through supporting its nearly

¹ See paragraph 3 above and document EB155/6.

1500 member organizations across 10 constituencies. Work focused on advocating for better evidence-based policies, improved financing and greater and more equitable access to health services for women, children and adolescents. Now nearly 20 years old, the Partnership is the world's largest alliance for these issues, supporting partners to advocate more powerfully together in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.

16. In 2023, the Partnership oversaw the development of more than 50 evidence-based advocacy products to equip its wide range of partners at local, regional and global levels to advocate for greater commitment and accountability for the health and well-being of women, children and adolescents. A leading example of such work was the publication of *Born too soon: decade of action on preterm birth*,¹ which united more than 60 partners, including WHO, UNICEF and UNFPA, in alignment with the Every Newborn Action Plan – Ending Preventable Maternal Mortality initiative. By the end of 2023, this work had an estimated cumulative potential media reach of nearly 3.5 billion people and an outstanding estimated social media reach of 10.5 million.

17. A highlight in 2023 was the Partnership-led establishment of the Global Leaders Network, chaired by Cyril Ramaphosa, President of the Republic of South Africa. Current members include the Heads of State and Heads of Government of Bangladesh, Denmark and Senegal. The Network, announced at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2023, held its first public event on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York in September 2023.

18. A recent major thematic focus of the Partnership has been adolescent health and well-being. The Partnership has led efforts among development sectors and constituencies in response to the 2019 call for action for meaningful adolescent and youth engagement. These have included the launch of the framework for adolescent well-being; papers and commentaries in *The BMJ* and the development in 2022–2023 of a highly visible global advocacy campaign entitled “1.8 Billion Young People for Change”. This campaign reached a major milestone in October 2023 with the successful convening of the Global Forum for Adolescents, the world's largest online gathering for adolescent well-being, bringing together some 10 000 individuals over two days, supported by 125 national events with nearly 8000 participants. The Forum launched the Agenda for Action for Adolescents, informed by crowd-sourcing the opinions of more than 1.5 million young people through a digital and community based survey entitled “What Young People Want”. To date, the campaign has resulted in policy and financing commitments from 18 governments and two regional bodies, as well as nongovernmental stakeholders.

UNITAID

19. Unitaid aims to increase the effectiveness of the global health response, including by identifying ways to prevent, treat and diagnose more affordably, effectively and quickly across a range of areas including HIV/AIDS and coinfections, tuberculosis, malaria, women's and children's health and global health emergencies. It transforms game-changing ideas into practical solutions, enabling countries and major funders to deliver universal health coverage across the three critical dimensions of population, services and cost.

20. Climate and health is a key priority of the Unitaid Strategy 2023–2027. The Unitaid Climate and Health Strategy is focused on mitigation, adaptation and the reduction of its own carbon footprint.

¹ World Health Organization, *Born too soon: decade of action on preterm birth*, Geneva, 2023.

21. More broadly, Unitaid investments delivered tangible progress in various areas, including the following.

- HIV and its coinfections: The impact of optimal HIV regimens, including paediatric and adult dolutegravir-based regimens, which work faster, have fewer side-effects, are more durable to drug resistance and are projected to generate economic savings of more than 8 billion US dollars (US\$) by 2030, has increased. This progress has been accelerated thanks to recent price reductions that have made adult HIV treatment available for less than US\$ 45 per person, per year.
- Tuberculosis: Access to more affordable and accessible preventive tuberculosis treatment in almost 80 countries has been widened through a diverse supplier base.
- Malaria: Evidence generated by the “New Nets Project”, a Unitaid–Global Fund investment partnership, demonstrated the significant public health benefit of the new type of bed net. Consequently, dual ingredient treated bed nets received a strong WHO policy recommendation in March 2023. In its next funding round, some 60% of the Global Fund’s bed net procurement will be invested in such nets. It is estimated that access to dual ingredient treated nets will avert more than 100 000 additional deaths by 2027.
- Cross-cutting investments: To date, Unitaid has provided close to US\$ 200 million to the WHO prequalification programme, leading to the prequalification of more than 200 medicines and over 60 diagnostics for HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, tuberculosis and malaria and enabling access to quality-assured products to approximately 400 million more people and a large donor-funded market of some US\$ 3.5 billion of quality, safe and efficacious products.

PERIODIC REVIEW OF WHO-HOSTED PARTNERSHIPS

22. The review of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health was undertaken in accordance with the framework for a periodic review of hosted partnerships,¹ with inputs from both the hosted partnership and the Secretariat providing relevant perspectives. The review report summarizes the Partnership’s contribution to improved health outcomes, the harmonization of its work with the relevant work of WHO and the Secretariat’s interaction with the Partnership.²

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

23. The Board is invited to note the report and to provide any comments or recommendations it deems pertinent, particularly in respect of the following question:

- Are the Member States satisfied with the hosting arrangements and reporting as described in the report?

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¹ See document EBPBAC19/8.

² See document EB155/6.