



POLICY RESEARCH AND NETWORKING

THINK_SDGs: IMPLEMENTING THE HEALTH-RELATED SDGs

The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015 has ushered in an ambitious, inclusive, and transformative agenda for global development over the next fifteen years. The Global Health Centre at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, in partnership with the International Development Research Centre, has embarked on a project to highlight and explore the role of think tanks and academic institutions in accelerating the achievement of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals through the creation, sharing, and brokering of knowledge. With a focus on knowledge as a global public good, the project seeks to establish a community of think tanks and academic institutions to facilitate this knowledge exchange to overcome the “North-South” divide by providing opportunities for mutual learning among institutions within and across countries and regions.

This project builds on the results of the first-ever **Meeting of Global Health Policy Think Tanks and Academic Institutions** organised by the Global Health Centre in November 2015 in Geneva, which were published in a recent BMJ article (Jha, Kickbusch and Taylor 2016). Think tanks and academic institutions have an enormous potential to help accelerate the SDG implementation process by providing an accountability mechanism to policy-makers through research and advocacy around health policy outcomes and SDG progress. They are best placed to provide analysis on national progress, which feeds into global policy processes, and to simultaneously adapt global policy approaches to the national level. Think tanks and academic institutions therefore can be – and many are already – leaders in formulating alternative solutions to health policy problems and in influencing policies in their own contexts.

THE PROJECT GOALS

The universality of the SDGs and their spirit that “no-one should be left behind” is at the heart of this project. This necessitates:

- **Global knowledge sharing:** ensuring that knowledge is treated as a global public good and disseminated quickly, effectively, and widely;
- **Capacity building:** entering into partnerships with other key actors to develop and implement policy and track progress along the way; and
- **Innovation:** fostering innovation and adapting implementation strategies to country-specific needs.

Global knowledge sharing, capacity building, and innovation are therefore overall aims of this project. Under the name **THINK _SDGs**, the project seeks to first and foremost build a **Network of Global Health Policy Think Tanks and Academic Institutions** that will not only enhance the role of Southern think tanks, but also enable new partnerships to emerge. This goes hand-in-hand with the aim to strengthen the capacity of research institutions to produce quality research, generate evidence-based policy options, and provide critical analysis to inform public health policy processes. Through collective engagement in timely policy dialogues on the health-related SDGs, think tanks and academic institutions can connect based on their experiences and catalyse innovation in this field.

THE PROJECT APPROACH

The **Network of Global Health Policy Think Tanks and Academic Institutions** will bring together members from around the globe and will encourage them to:

- engage with national governments to provide policy options, and track in-country progress towards the health-related SDGs, whilst acting as a platform for a broader group of stakeholders;
- feed evidence, data and analysis up to the national and international levels, and help shape and support the efforts of global institutions working in the broad area of health;
- translate what emerges from global dialogues on SDGs and frameworks on global health back to the national and regional levels to support implementation; and
- collaborate as part of a global community of think tanks and academic institutions, in the spirit of learning from each other and sharing knowledge as a global public good.

Policy dialogues: the project will consider a series of events and policy dialogues to accelerate the implementation of the health-related SDGs and to ensure the policy relevance of the project. Smaller roundtable meetings with international organisations and health attachés will help to identify areas in which an international network of global health think tanks and academic institutions can support their work, and vice versa. Regional events, such as the 2nd Meeting of Global Health Policy Think Tanks and Academic Institutions in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, will convene key actors worldwide to share regional experiences with SDG implementation and lessons learned, with a particular focus on governance, indicators, and the measurement of strong institutions. Other public events and thematic meetings will be held in the project cycle which will contribute to creating a platform to both share experiences of the members and also gather feedback to continuously develop the project's network.

Publications and research: a series of analysis pieces will be published online and open-access through the BMJ, in addition to in-house publications, which will enable the results of policy dialogues to be shared. A collection of regional framework papers will also be developed to explore the role of think tanks and academic institutions in accelerating health-related SDG implementation across and within diverse regional contexts. As the project fosters partnerships, research projects will be facilitated and are welcomed within the membership of the Network.

Creation of a network: the project is service-oriented and wants to establish an international network of engaged actors from strong institutions. It will help members in their work around implementation through sharing knowledge and best practices, advancing ideas, mapping the members and linking partners together, as well as collaborating on joint projects, and discussing solutions to pressing issues from their respective and various national experiences with the SDGs. This network also seeks to strengthen the capacities of organisations, with special focus on those from the South, to engage more fully in translating evidence and policy through national and global processes while collaborating within this global community of think tanks and academic institutions.

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