Multistakeholder Governance for Health Systems in Transition: The Role of Policy Dialogues

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My main messages

1. Health systems need to be reformed / transformed to achieve UHC and address challenges of climate change
2. Health systems are complex and reforms require involvement of multiple stakeholders
3. Evidence can inform health policy-making → and policy dialogues can support the use of evidence in health policy-making
4. Policy-dialogues can strengthen (multi-stakeholder) governance
5. Assuring sustainability of the Ghana Health Policy Dialogue will require sustained and reliable funding

Health Systems world-wide face major challenges: Improving health, while dealing with climate change
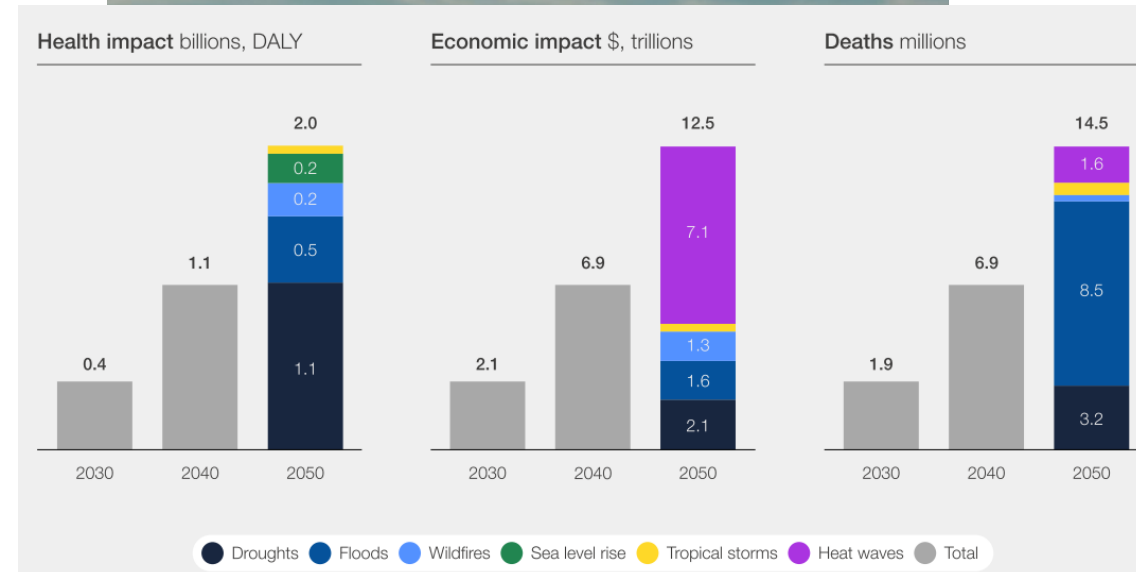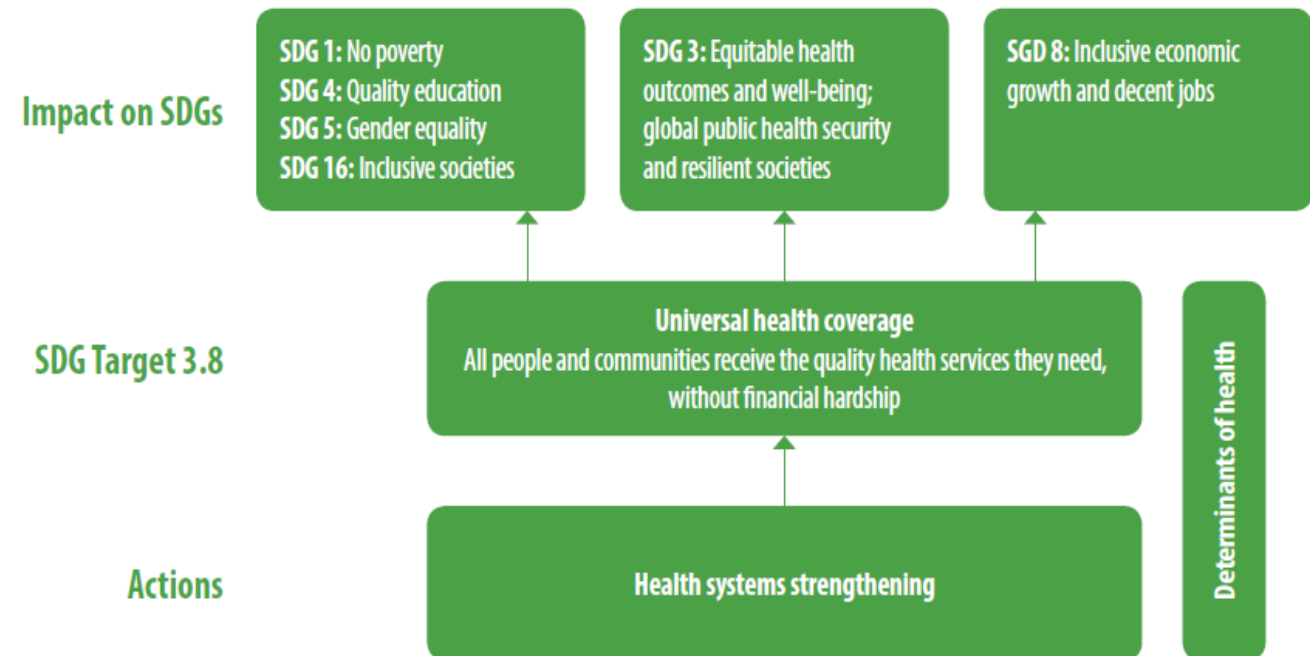
Universal Health Coverage as the most important health-related SDG requires Health systems strengthening

Fig. 2. Investing in health systems to reach UHC and the SDGs

Impact on SDGs

SDG 1: No poverty
SDG 4: Quality education
SDG 5: Gender equality
SDG 16: Inclusive societies

SDG 3: Equitable health outcomes and well-being; global public health security and resilient societies

SGD 8: Inclusive economic growth and decent jobs

SDG Target 3.8

Universal health coverage
All people and communities receive the quality health services they need, without financial hardship

Determinants of health

Actions

Health systems strengthening

Source: adapted from Kieny et al., 2017 WHO Bulletin (13).

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Ghana has made progress towards UHC but more reforms are needed

This map showcases progress countries have made on the Service coverage index (SDG indicator 3.8.1) over time.
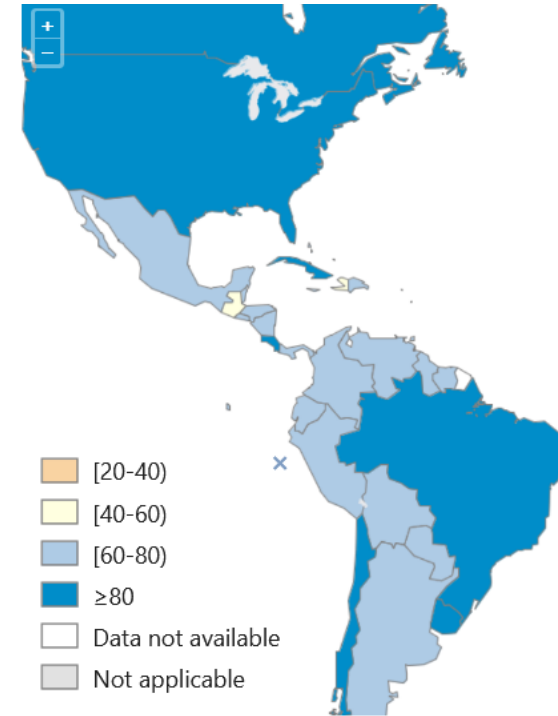
Progress from 2000 to 2021

Less | More

uhc2030
Taking action for universal health coverage
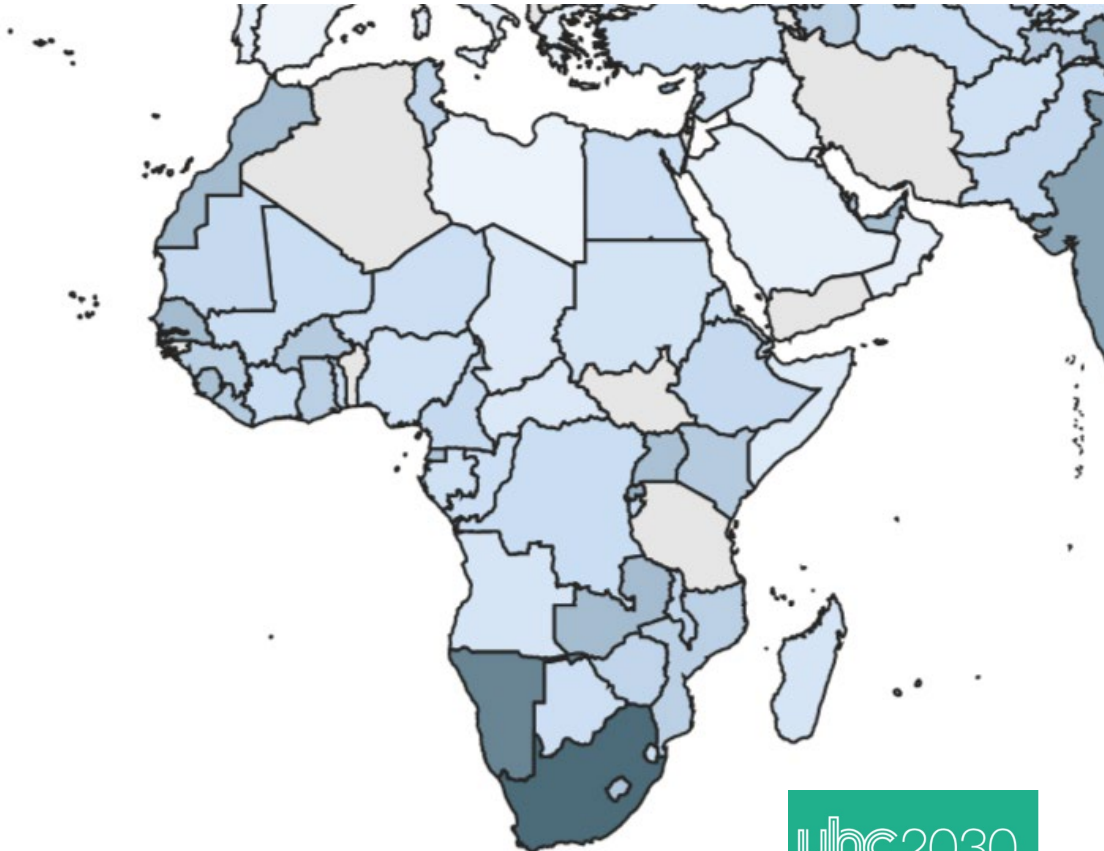
UHC Service Coverage Index (SDG 3.8.1)

FILTERS

Year
2021

[20-40)
[40-60)
[60-80)
≥80
Data not available
Not applicable

2000 km

World Health Organization

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Health systems are reformed across the world: here an overview from Europe

Analysis

See a detailed list of reforms that match the filter. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit. Quasi deserunt neque molestiae nesciunt sunt dolorem nam, ipsam aliquam illo vitae nisi consectetur aut suscipit voluptates deleniti libero sed voluptate ut.
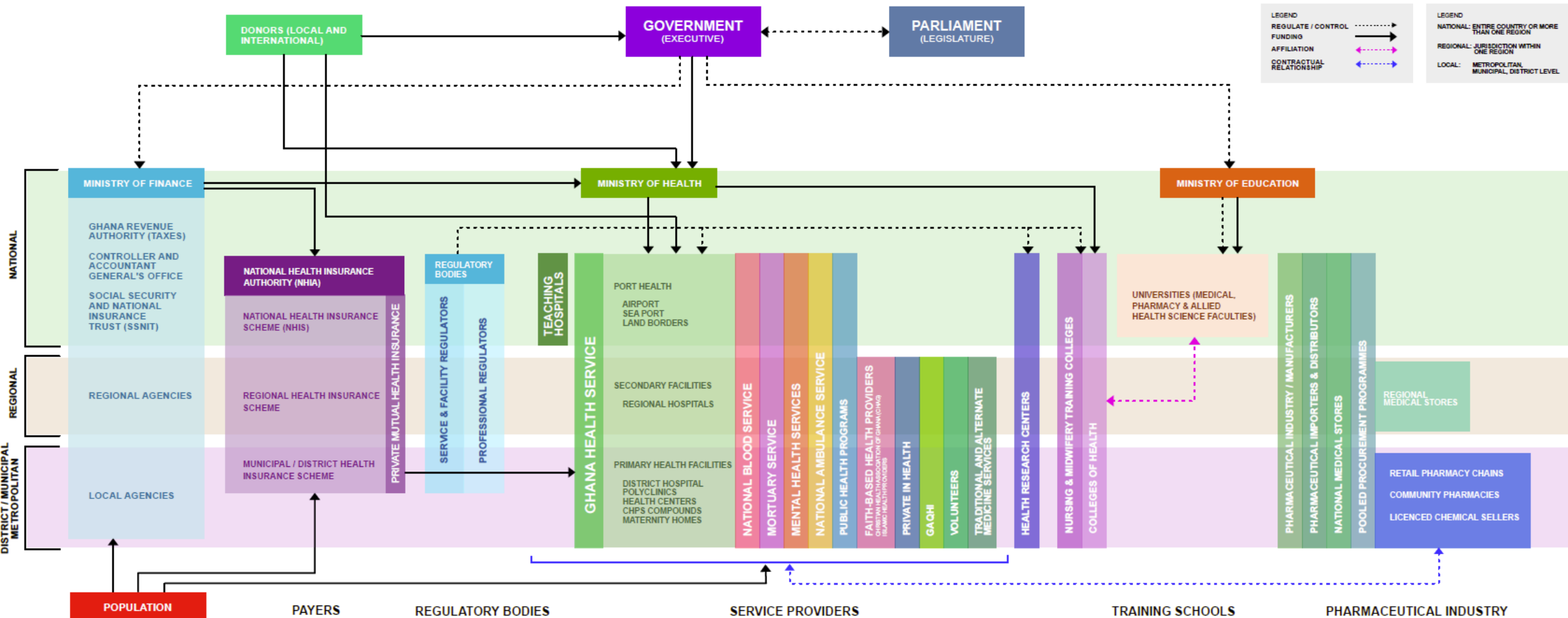
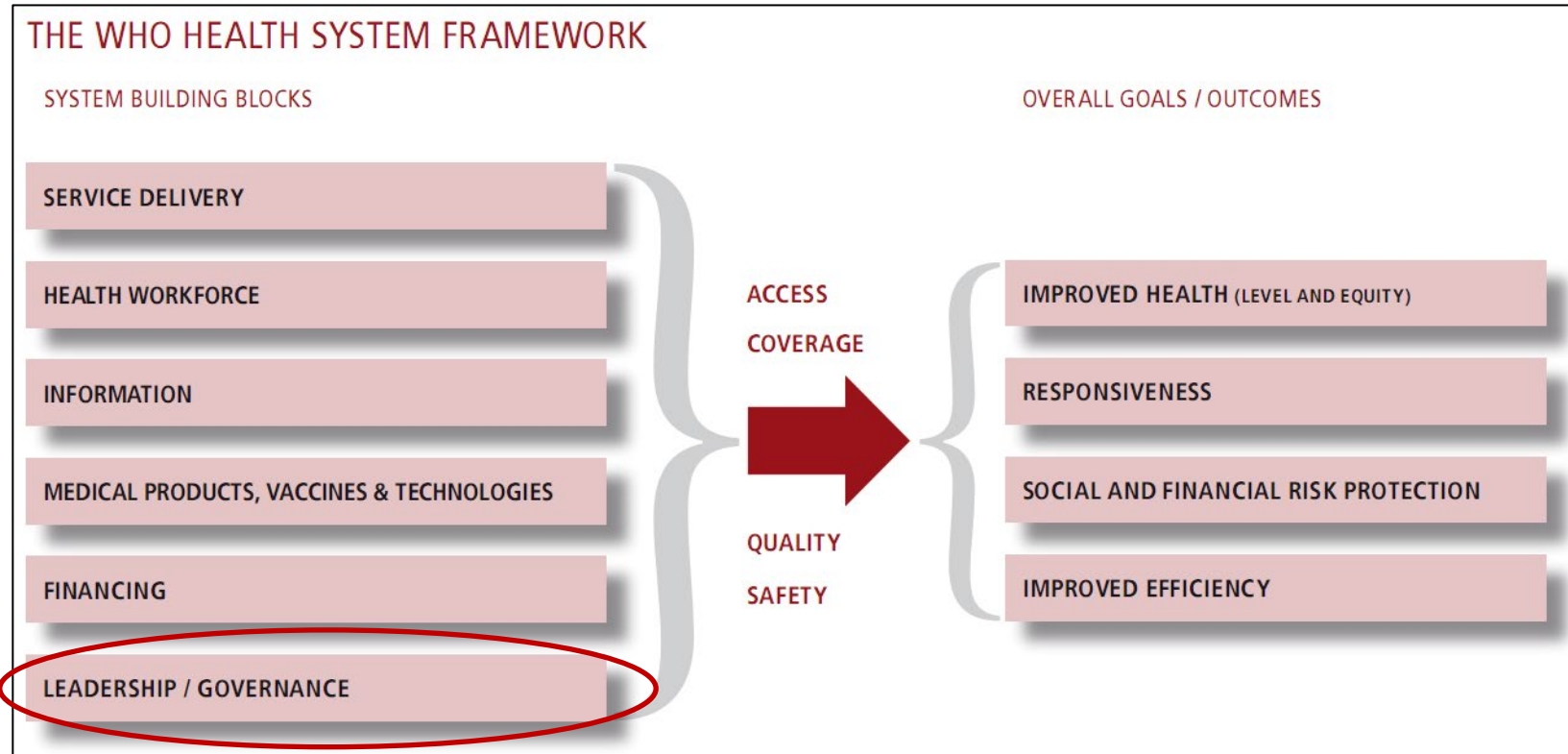DISTRIBUTION OF REFORMS BY CLUSTER

TOTAL NUMBER OF REFORMS BY YEAR
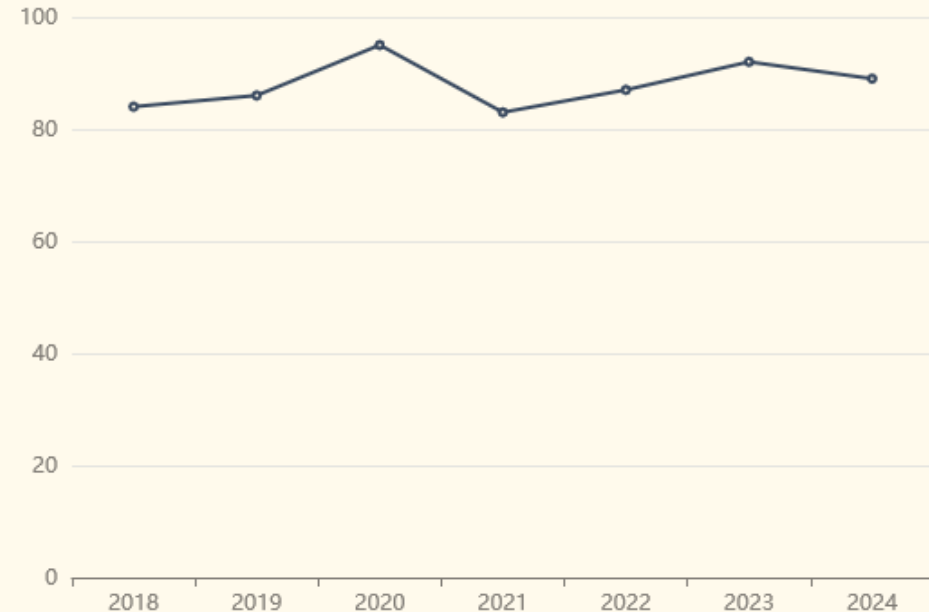
The Ghana health system is complex and reforms require involvement of multiple stakeholders

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General definitions of governance

Governance is how societies make and implement collective decisions.

Greer et al. 2016

Governance describes the process through which state and non-state actors interact to design and implement policies within a given set of formal and informal rules through which authority in a country is exercised.

World Bank, 2017

Governance is the foundational building block of health systems

THE WHO HEALTH SYSTEM FRAMEWORK

SYSTEM BUILDING BLOCKS

- SERVICE DELIVERY
- HEALTH WORKFORCE
- INFORMATION
- MEDICAL PRODUCTS, VACCINES & TECHNOLOGIES
- FINANCING
- LEADERSHIP / GOVERNANCE

ACCESS
COVERAGE

QUALITY
SAFETY

OVERALL GOALS / OUTCOMES

- IMPROVED HEALTH (LEVEL AND EQUITY)
- RESPONSIVENESS
- SOCIAL AND FINANCIAL RISK PROTECTION
- IMPROVED EFFICIENCY

"ensuring that strategic policy frameworks exist and are combined with effective oversight, coalition building, regulation and attention to system design and accountability."

Source: World Health Organization (WHO). (2007) *Everybody's business: Strengthening health systems to improve health outcomes. WHO's framework for action.* Geneva: WHO Document Production Services.

WHO systems thinking

"Building blocks do not constitute a system …. It is the multiple relationships and interactions among the blocks …. that convert these blocks into a system."

De Savigny and Adam 2009: Systems thinking for health systems strengthening

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Including stakeholders can contribute to better governance

Dimensions in definition	Sub-function	Similar concepts in literature
Strategic policy frameworks	Policy and vision	Ensuring strategic vision and policy-making
Coalition building	Stakeholder voice	Ensuring participation/ partnerships/collaboration
Accountability	Information and intelligence	Ensuring transparent, data-driven, and evidence-based decisions
Effective oversight, regulation	Legislation and regulation	Ensuring legislation and regulation towards public health goals

Health system performance assessment

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Health Policy Series

A framework for policy analysis

Edited by:
Irene Papanicolas
Dheepa Rajan
Marina Karanikolos
Agnes Soucat
Josep Figueras

European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies

World Health Organization
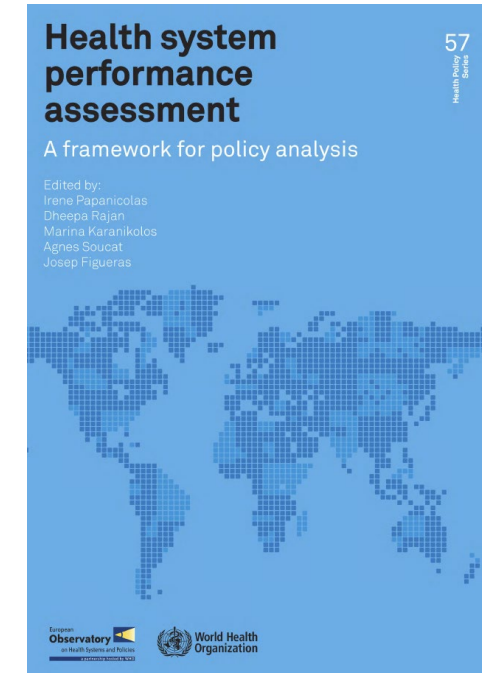
Evidence can play a role in each step of the policy cycle

Evidence-informed policy-making

Evidence-based policy-making?

Problem definition and agenda setting

Which problem is important? What exactly is the problem?

Policy formulation

Which options exist to address the problem? Which effects have these options had in other contexts?

Policy implementation

How can this option best be implemented (formative Evaluation)?

Which challenges arise during implementation?

Policy evaluation

Which positive, negative, intended and unintended consequences does a policy have? (summative Evaluation)

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Some people perceive a gap between researchers and policy-makers

BOX 2.1 THE 'TWO COMMUNITIES' MODEL OF RESEARCHERS AND POLICY-MAKERS		
	University researchers	Government officials
Work	Discrete, planned research projects using explicit, scientific methods designed to produce unambiguous, generalizable results	Continuous flow of many different tasks involving compromise between interests and goals
Attitudes to research	Research justified by its contribution to knowledge base	Research only one of many inputs; justified by its relevance
Accountability	To scientific peers primarily, but also to research sponsors	To politicians primarily, but also the public, indirectly
Priorities	Expansion of research opportunities and influence of experts in the world	Maintaining a system of 'good governance'
Rewards	Built largely on publication in peer reviewed journals	Built on successful management of complex political processes
Training and knowledge base	High level of training, usually specialized within a single discipline	Often, though not always, generalists; expected to be flexible
Organizational constraints	Relatively few (except resources); high level of discretion e.g. in choice of research focus	Embedded in large, inter-dependent bureaucracies and working within political limits
Values	Independence of thought and action highly valued; belief in unbiased search for generalizable knowledge	Oriented to providing high quality advice, but attuned to a particular context

Source: Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, & WHO (2007).

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Facilitators and Barriers for use of evidence in policy-making

Table 1 Most frequently reported barriers and facilitators of the use of evidence (n = # studies in which factor reported)

Top 5 barriers to use of evidence	Top 5 facilitators of evidence use
• Availability and access to research/improved dissemination (n = 63)	• Availability and access to research/improved dissemination (n = 65)
• Clarity/relevance/reliability of research findings (n = 54)	• Collaboration (n = 49)
• Timing/opportunity (n = 42)	• Clarity/relevance/reliability of research findings (n = 46)
• Policymaker research skills (n = 26)	• Relationship with policymakers (n = 39)
• Costs (n = 25)	• Relationship with researchers/info staff (n = 37)

Source: Oliver et al. 2014

Policy dialogues may contribute to evidence informed policy-making

- Better relationships: (informal) interaction during Policy Dialogue strengthens relationships between researchers and policy-makers
- Greater timeliness: Policy Dialogues intend to provide timely answers to urgent problems, responding to demands of policy-makers
- Alignment with values/beliefs: Policy Dialogues enable identification/discussion about alignment of research findings with values, interests, political goals and strategies

Policy dialogues may contribute to evidence informed policy-making under certain conditions

Figure 3   Initial subtheory of policy dialogue (subtheory 2). MoH, Ministries of Health.

Health Policy Dialogues

- Introducing a new annual event in Ghana
- First dialogue in Oct 2017
- Aims:
  - Facilitate knowledge translation from research to practice
  - Link health systems researchers and policy-makers
  - Build networks between researchers, policy-makers – and alumni of German universities

Policy dialogues (an idea which we have copied from the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies)

- Demand-driven
- Neutral (non-prescriptive)
- Informal (Chatham House rules)

- Focused – tailored - targeted
- Implementation-oriented
- Shared ownership

Key characteristics of Policy Dialogues

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- Demand-driven: Policy-dialogues should address a high-priority issue for the health system
- Focused: should address a particular policy-problem, breaking down the problem into its main components and discussing options to address the problem
- Evidence informed: Policy dialogues should be informed by evidence e.g. policy-briefs, systematic review(s), presentations, knowledge
- Tailored-targeted: evidence has to be tailored to the specific context and to the participants of the dialogue
- Action/implementation-oriented: should consider actions that need to be taken to address the problem

Key characteristics of Policy Dialogues

- Neutral (non-prescriptive): Aim should be to discuss options and their implications → not to prescribe solutions or to develop consensus
- Participatory: should ensure all relevant stakeholders (involved in or affected by the issue) are represented/invited to the dialogue → but not too many to enable deliberations
- Informal (Chatham house rules): participants can use information – but should not reveal identity or affiliation of speakers/participants → to ensure that people can speak freely
- Shared ownership: should be owned/planned/chaired together by researchers and policy-makers → as is the case in Ghana

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Governance sub-functions

Dimensions in definition	Sub-function	Similar concepts in literature	Role of policy dialogue
Strategic policy frameworks	Policy and vision	Ensuring strategic vision and policy-making	Defining problems, exploring solutions
Coalition building	Stakeholder voice	Ensuring participation/ partnerships/collaboration	Including views, experiences, tacit knowledge of those involved/affected by policies
Accountability	Information and intelligence	Ensuring transparent, data-driven, and evidence-based decisions	Strengthening knowledge exchange, informing policy decisions and future research
Effective oversight, regulation	Legislation and regulation	Ensuring legislation and regulation towards public health goals	Reflecting on and refining of actionable solutions that are implementable given context-specific constraings

African Health Observatory Platform on Health Systems and Policies (AHOP) Policy Dialogues

Policy Dialogues are highly focused events with a small group of policymakers and key stakeholders that provide a platform for knowledge exchange and mutual learning. Each dialogue provides a safe place to discuss and is intended to feed into a decision-making process. The event is highly customized with evidence tailored to meet policy needs and deliberate use of cross-country evidence and experience to illuminate national discussions.

2023 Annual Ghana Health Policy Dialogue
24th – 27th Sept. 2023

Elements contributing to sustainable implementation of policy dialogues

1. Clear definition of objectives
2. Chatham house rules
3. Steady and predictable funding – but not substantial
4. Reliable evidence as the basis
5. Convener with organisational capacity
6. Facilitator – neutral and impartial
7. Participation of relevant stakeholders

Elements contributing to sustainability of Health Policy Dialogues in Ghana

1. Clear definition of objectives ☑
2. Chatham house rules ☑
3. Steady and predictable funding – but not substantial ❓
4. Reliable evidence as the basis ☑
5. Convener with organisational capacity ☑
6. Facilitator – neutral and impartial ☑
7. Participation of relevant stakeholders ☑

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Thank you!

G-WAC
German-West African Centre for
Global Health and Pandemic Prevention

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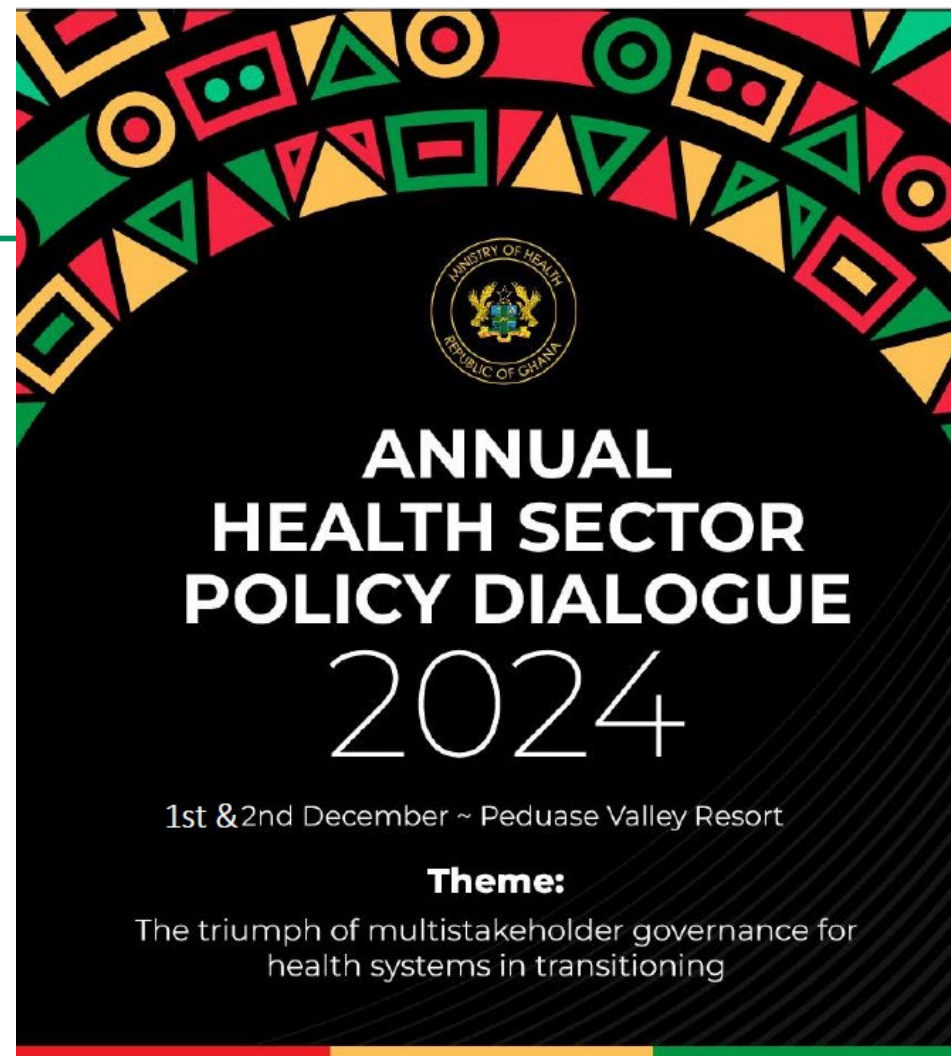Chair of Planetary & Public Health
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www.pph.uni-bayreuth.de; www.g-wac.org

MINISTRY OF HEALTH
REPUBLIC OF GHANA

ANNUAL
HEALTH SECTOR
POLICY DIALOGUE
2024

1st & 2nd December ~ Peduase Valley Resort

Theme:

The triumph of multistakeholder governance for
health systems in transitioning

Key Partners: KNUST-SPH   TU berlin   MiG Health Care Management   HSRM

Funding support is provided by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) from the budget of the Federal Ministry for
Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) as part of the DAAD-PAGEL programme. Project ID: 57564005. 2021 – 2024

Planning Committee Members   Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development