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## Supporting Public Health Institutes in eight low-income countries



The **Supporting Public Health Institutes Programme (SPHIP)** is a multi-country five year programme (2015-2020) consisting of projects implemented in eight countries.

Its **overall objective** is to contribute to the protection and promotion of population health via the provision of policy analysis and policy advice.

More specifically, the **programme's purpose** is to further enhance the expertise, knowledge and resources of selected Schools in Public Health as well as Public Health Research or Training Institutes (and in one case a County Health Office) in low-income countries.

The beneficiary institutes' capacities will be strengthened with view to provide national health authorities and stakeholders with evidence-based and locally adapted advice, training and other support as needed, which, in turn, will feed into strategic decisions and policy making in health at national and/or sub-national level and improve monitoring of progress towards Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

The **SPHIP** is implemented by different consortia made up of Southern-based and European institutes, NGOs and universities. The overall programme budget amounts to € 23,000,000. Four projects are implemented in Africa (Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda and Kenya), three in Asia (Lao PDR, Myanmar and Bangladesh), and one in the Americas (Haiti). Six of the beneficiary institutes were founded less than 10 years ago, or have recently received extended mandates to cover research and training. They lack the capacity and experience to play a major role in health sector development, which is why they are supported by the SPHIP.

All projects have a triangular form of collaboration. Stakeholders (institutes, universities, foundations and NGOs) from Belgium, France, the United Kingdom or the Netherlands collaborate with beneficiaries, providing technical support in research and education as well as institutional strengthening. Mutual learning through South-South co-operations is promoted by involving similar institutes in middle- or low-income countries (Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Vietnam, Morocco, India, Thailand, South Africa).

### HIGHLIGHTS 2015 – 2017

Over 30 institutes and NGOs in the field of public health participate worldwide

20 PhD studies implemented

Over 300 Master of Public Health degrees awarded

Over 200 people trained in paramedical or public health fields

Over 3,000 health workers trained in research methodology, epidemiology and public health topics

Six national public health policies under development

15 policy briefs produced to make recommendations for policies, strategies or implementation

Over 50 small studies in public health carried out and results disseminated to decision-makers in the country

## Myanmar – Research Advisory Committee Meeting held to discuss the prioritised research agenda on non-communicable diseases

A meeting by the Research Advisory Committee was organised to discuss the further development of the research agenda on NCDs in Myanmar as part of the project “Strengthening Public Health Capacity to Respond to Myanmar’s Disease Transition” at the University of Public Health, Yangon, on 11th July 2017.

During this meeting, the research findings of the

gap analysis on NCDs were disseminated. Overall, there is relatively little research on NCDs in Myanmar. The research available is mainly clinical or epidemiological. There is hardly any intervention research or public health research into the effects of preventive programmes. Participants discussed the proposed framework for a new research agenda including new areas of research on NCDs.

The four priority areas as suggested by the World Health Organization are:

- 1) Social and economic determinants
- 2) Behavioural risk factors
- 3) Prevention, detection and care of major NCDs
- 4) Health policy, health equity and health systems

The research advisory committee members provided their feedback on the overall structure and framework and gave their inputs for new priorities.

Government and research organisations will take these priorities as the starting point for research proposals. Government will ask international research funding agencies to join in facilitating further evidence building in these priority areas.



### ► The NCD transition project ...

... contributes to the process of health reform in Myanmar so that the goals of equitable and universal healthcare can be achieved. The project strengthens the University of Public Health and further health stakeholders to support evidence-based policy and improved health services, particularly in preparation of the transition towards increased NCD risk in Myanmar.

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## Bangladesh – SHARE project initiates national Think Tank in health sector

Think Tanks traditionally provide rigorous and robust analysis on Government and public policy matters and their role is critical in generating independent, high quality policy-focused evidence and providing advice to influence government and other stakeholders. The SHARE (Strengthening Health, Applying Research and Evidence) project, supported by the SPHIP, has taken the initiative to form a Think Tank for Health. This policy advocacy group involves eminent scientists, academics, and leading minds in the field of development and civil society members, with expertise and knowledge in the area of public health, human rights and development issues. The Think Tank’s focus is on health needs of the urban poor, Universal Health Coverage, health in hard-to-reach areas, and the new and emerging diseases that demand urgent policy attention.

In preparation of the Think Tank, the SHARE project has organised a series of events, policy breakfasts, public gatherings and other meetings to bring together interested stakeholders. These meetings were successful and showed that creative solutions can be developed when groups are brought together that normally have little contact on health policy issues. For example, community groups were mobilised to assist in the management of health clinics, youth groups were activated to promote health, and researchers were involved in the analysis and interpretation of urban health maps.

New information and communication technology in Bangladesh enables all citizens in the country to access performance information concerning health services via the website of the Directorate General of Health Services. This creates new transparency and new opportunities for non-governmental stakeholders to analyse the information and make suggestions for improvement during Think Tank meetings.

### ► SHARE ...

... supports evidence-based public health policy-making in Bangladesh, with a view to progressing towards Universal Health Coverage and improved health equity, particularly for urban poor and those suffering from non-communicable diseases (NCDs). It strengthens both the capacity of public health institutes as well as policy advocates and policy decision makers in Bangladesh to promote evidence-informed policy focusing on Urban Health and NCDs.

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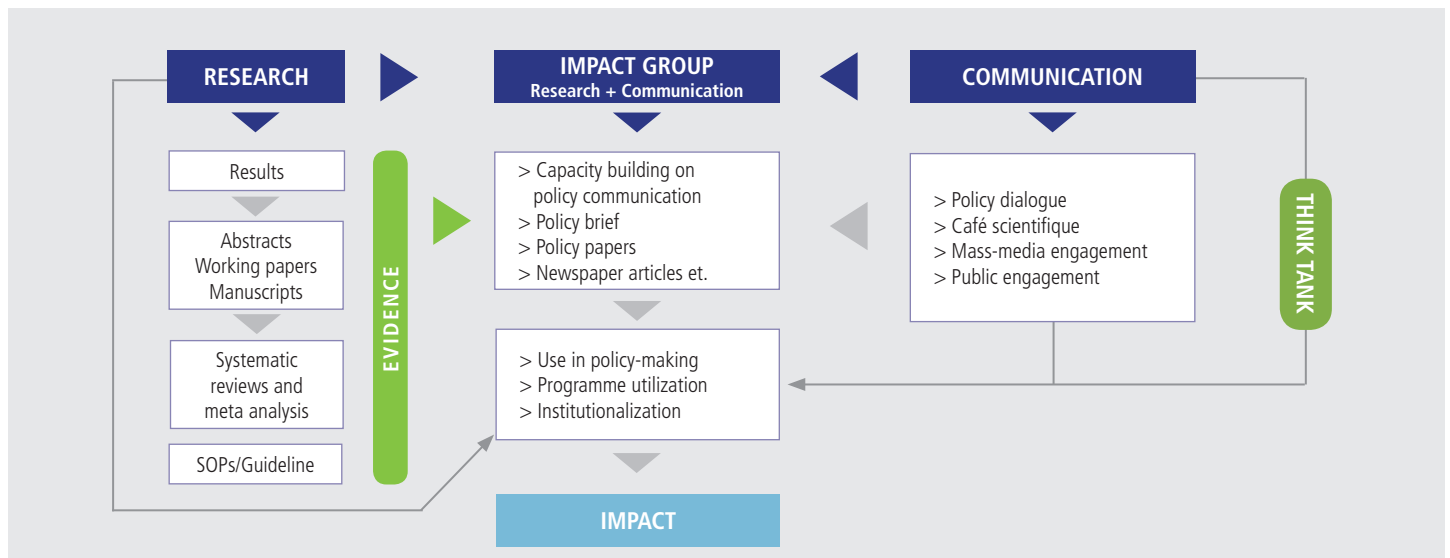
Project website: [www.share4health.com](http://www.share4health.com)

Bangladesh >>



>> Bangladesh

### ROLE OF THINK TANK IN EVIDENCE INFORMED POLICY-MAKING



American Health Organization / World Health Organization (WHO-PAHO), the Procurement and Supply Management Project (GHSC-PSM), and UNOPS. After this Forum, a smaller committee will integrate the suggestions made by the participants into the draft Strategic Plan.

The activities of the SPHaitiLab project will enable Haiti to revamp its health laboratory network and give the laboratories a voice in the Global Health Security Agenda.

#### ▶ SPHaitiLab ...

... contributes to population health protection and health promotion in Haiti through analysis and strategic advice in matters of public policy in the laboratory sector.

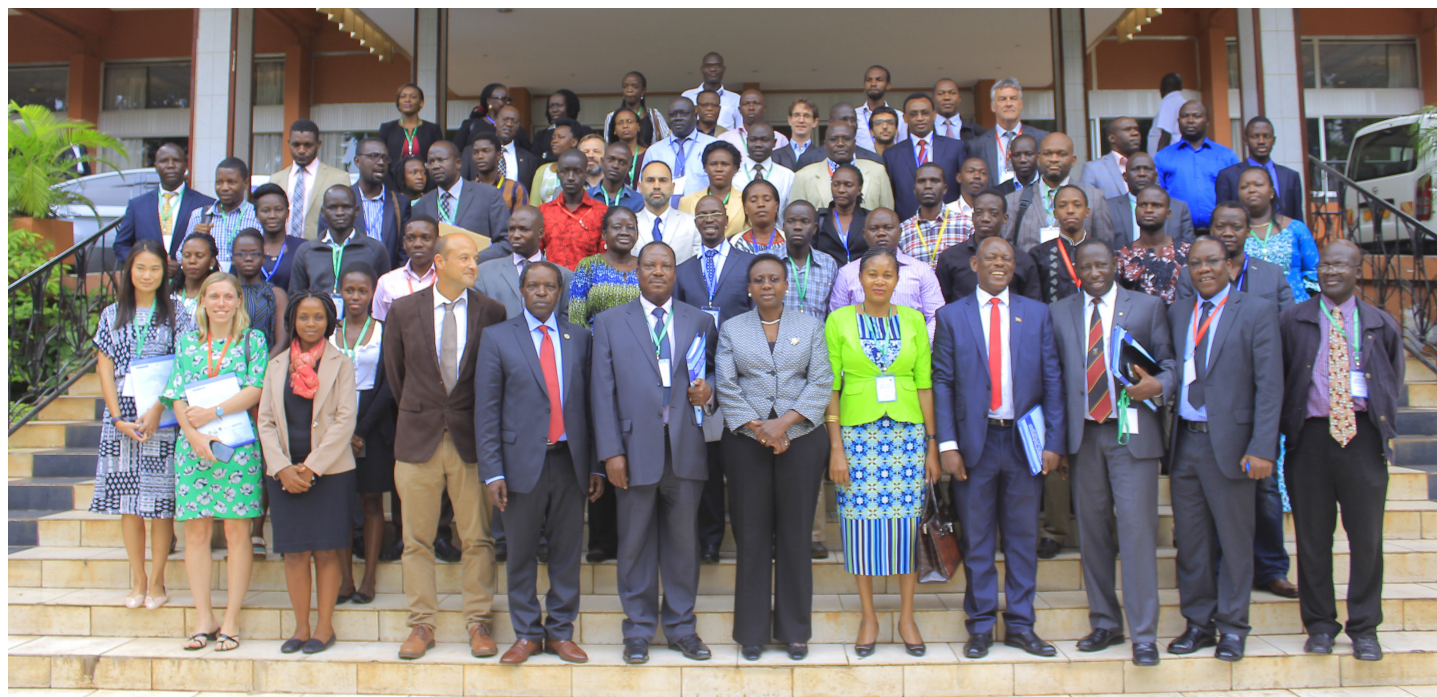
It provides knowledge towards the local situation on laboratory issues to the Ministry of Public Health and stakeholders. Strategic advice is based on evidence and local situation analyses. The project assists in the formulation of health laboratory policy and strengthens the expertise, capacity and resources of the National Public Health Laboratory in Haiti.

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### New National Strategic Plan for the Health Laboratory Network in Haiti

The SPHIP project “SPHaitiLab” organised a national Forum on 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> June 2017 to discuss and improve the draft National Strategic Plan for the Health Laboratory Network (2018-2022), which is on its way to be finalised. The Strategic Plan proposes concrete actions for implementing the National Health Laboratory Policy that was developed recently with support of the SPHaitiLab project. This new policy aims to improve the quality and accessibility of laboratory clinical services for the population by regulating and controlling this sector across the country.

Representatives from several entities involved in the health sector participated during the two day Forum and made their contributions. The representatives from the Ministry of Public Health and Population (MSPP), Department of Epidemiology, Laboratories and Research (DELRL), and the National Public Health Laboratory (LNSP) were key in the debate. Among the participants were owners of private laboratories, equipment and reagent providers, professional laboratory technicians associations, universities and District Health Departments as well as international partners, such as the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC-USA), the Pan



## The Kampala Symposium Statement on Health Financing for Universal Health Coverage

From 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> August 2017, Makerere University School of Public Health in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Uganda, hosted an International Symposium on Health Financing for Universal Health Coverage in low- and middle-income countries. This symposium was made possible by the programme “Supporting Policy Engagement for Evidence-Based Decision Making (SPEED)”, which is part of the SPHIP. The symposium theme was “Financing for Universal Health Coverage: More money for health AND more health for the money”. The overall aim of the symposium was to critically examine the existing health financing systems and policies for advancing UHC and health systems development in Uganda and other low- and middle-income countries. This could inform strategies that are geared towards achieving UHC in the region.

The symposium discussed the issue of ensuring financial risk protection using public funds as well as risk sharing and pooling of funds through insurance, leveraging health benefits from investments in other sectors, strategic purchasing and results benefits packages, global health initiatives and innovative financing.

After three days of deliberations, the symposium delegates proposed that:

1. Countries develop a clearly defined roadmap for achieving Universal Health Coverage that is appropriately benchmarked and contextually adapted. This roadmap should invariably have a clearly defined Monitoring and Evaluation framework to monitor progress and provide feedback for better implementation.

2. Countries identify and adopt strategic mechanisms to address the key drivers of high health care, costs and access to care including strategies to manage growing populations, regulate new and expensive health technologies, improve health sys-

tem efficiencies, and bolster adequate investments in preventive health.

### ► The SPEED project ...

... strengthens policy analysis at Makerere University School of Public Health (MakSPH) and contributes to accelerating progress towards Universal Health Coverage and health systems resilience in Uganda. Therefore, it engages with and influences policy makers with contextually adapted evidence for health policy and system changes to advance UHC. The project supports policymakers to monitor the implementation of vital programmes aimed at UHC. It enhances expertise, knowledge and resources at MakSPH.

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