

Experience of Health Policy Networks in East Asia & Pacific region

Lessons and possibilities

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Regional Health Policy Networks

- **Dragon-net**
 - Semi-annual discussion forum of health policy experts
- **APHEN - Asia-Pacific Health Economics Network**
 - Putative regional association of health economists
- **APNHAN - Asia-Pacific NHA Network**
 - Network of groups responsible for NHA development in regional countries
- **Equitap**
 - Research network of institutions looking at equity in health systems
- **AAAH - Asia-Pacific Action Alliance on Human Resources on Health**
- **RCHSP Health Accounts/Social Protection Expenditures Expert networks**
 - Emerging networks of experts working with RCHSP
- **RCHSP/SNU Health Systems Network**
- Others?

Network functions

- Discussion forums and mechanisms for sharing ideas
- Collaborative platforms to conduct joint research or data collection
- Contact points for accessing regional expertise or undertaking a regional inquiry
- Representing collective interests

Critical Factors & Challenges

- Common goals and focused agendas
- Dynamics
 - Ownership, partnership and leadership
- Funding
 - Seed funding, expansion, infrastructure, meetings
- Researcher-policy maker linkages
- Motivation and commitment
- Managing North-South/South-South relations
- Managing differences in capacity/interest/agendas
- Personal relationships and collaborative/networking orientation

Apnhan experience

- Expert network covering 21+ countries, ranging from OECD Japan to Nepal and Bangladesh
 - Supported development of expertise and standards in region
 - Platform to coordinate data collection and reporting
 - Intermediary for dialogue with WHO, OECD, etc
- Started as voluntary grouping motivated by common interests, without funding
- Moving to joint products required funding
- Recognizes different levels of capacity, interests and agendas with opt-in approach to activities
- Evolving approach to forums mimicked OECD expert meetings
- Technical competency more important than level of economic development
- Importance of partnering with interested allies

Equitap experience

- Research network covering 15+ countries focused on equity of health systems
 - Has systematically profiled equity in financing, delivery, risk protection, progressivity of taxation for many regional countries
 - Includes both developing and developed countries
- Initiated as project of Apnhan
 - Importance of focused agenda for coherence and effectiveness of a research partnership
- Benefits of partnering out to build technical skills
- Importance of lead partners to provide direction and capacity
- Needed commitment to prioritize capacity building and policy impact over pressure to focus on academic research
- Benefits of cross-country collaboration and comparative country analysis

Current Needs

To learn from region

- Inform national development by learning from experience and evidence within the region
 - Health policy in developed countries has substantially benefited from cross-country learning
 - Economic development in regional countries has similarly learnt from regional experience
- Health policy in region has traditionally been guided by experience of developed countries, but regional countries increasingly offer their own rich experience
 - E.g., Social Health Insurance - Germany & Europe have informed SHI design in region, but not Thailand or Mongolia
 - Need for a mechanism to allow region to learn its own experience, and to share that experience with rest of world
 - Need to confront ideology with experience

Current Needs

Mechanism to enable learning

- Mechanism to enable region to jointly assess and evaluate diverse problems
 - Despite disparities, most policy challenges are faced by wide range of countries, e.g., expanding insurance coverage, improving hospital service delivery, decentralization, etc.
 - Needs to facilitate assessment of experience in specific and diverse problem areas
 - Needs to be responsive and flexible to policy needs
- Coverage
 - Able to draw on full diversity of experience in region, without restriction to sub-regions or income levels
 - Able to draw on emerging technical capacities in countries

Current Needs

Statistical data to underpin sharing

- Policy comparison and learning in OECD & Europe driven by substantial efforts to create comparable data
 - E.g., ALOS and mortality rates in hospitals, national health expenditures, levels of technology diffusion
- Learning from each other requires a basic level of comparable statistics that permits comparison of different systems
 - E.g., Financing, provision structure, etc
 - Region lacks adequate statistical infrastructure to support comparison and learning

Filling the Gaps

- No systematic mechanism to gather regional knowledge or evaluate evidence health policy experience
 - No OECD, EU, etc
- Existing networks can help on single issues, e.g., Equitap, AAAH, but cannot address diverse issues
- Underlying health system statistics often lacking



Regional networks to document and evaluate evidence on policy experiences

Challenges

- Successful networks depend on motivated institutions - cannot be driven just by money:
 - How to choose?
 - Is it realistic to expect equal motivation, capacity? Does it matter?
- Managing institutional competition
 - How should this be managed?
- Need good links with policy sphere to ensure responsiveness and relevance, but without sacrificing technical competency
- Need to exploit full richness of regional experience
 - Don't restrict only to sub-regions or particular income levels
- Role of external partners/donors
 - Links needed for funding, legitimacy, relevance - how formal?
 - Should avoid linkage to only one

Recent discussions

- Regional Observatory on Health Systems and Policies?
 - Eliciting increasing interest in region, inspired by European experience, with draft proposal from regional institutions
- Regional issues
 - Euro Observatory led by core group of hub institutions, who provide leadership in research and fund raising, with formal link to WHO
 - How should WHO link to work in region?
 - How to link to policy makers, governance structures?
 - Which institutions? which countries?
- Funding
 - No obvious sponsor
 - Need to distinguish seed funding, core funding and project funding