

2020 Annual Report

COMCAHPSS SECRETARIAT
PROJECT PI: IRENE AGYEPONG



COMCAHPSS

**Consortium for Mothers, Children, Adolescents,
and Health Policy and Systems Strengthening**

NAME OF PROJECT: WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICAN PARTNERSHIP FOR
MATERNAL, NEWBORN, CHILD AND ADOLESCENT HEALTH RESEARCH

LEAD RESEARCH INSTITUTION: DODOWA HEALTH RESEARCH CENTRE

COUNTRY OF LEAD INSTITUTION: GHANA

RESEARCH TEAM: SEE NEXT PAGE

TIME PERIOD COVERED: JAN 2020 – DEC 2020

Research Institutions and Countries in the Consortium

All active Consortium membership institutions and partners active in the current reporting period by country of location in alphabetical order (with lead individuals within the institution shown in brackets):

- Benin (Francophone)
 - Center for Research in Human Reproduction and Demography (CERRHUD) (Jean Paul Dossou)
- Burkina Faso (Francophone)
 - WAHO: (Issiaka Sombie, Virgil Lokossou)
 - Université Catholique de l'Afrique de l'ouest: (Maurice Yaogo)
- Cote d'Ivoire (Francophone)
 - Université de l'Alliance Chrétienne d'Abidjan (UACA) /Ivorian Public Health Association : (Auguste Blibolo)
- Ghana (Anglophone)
 - Ghana Health Service, Research and Development Division: (John Williams-Director Dodowa Health Research Center, Nana Efua Enyimayew – Senior Bilingual Project Administrative Assistant, Grace Aye – Bilingual Project Administrative Assistant, Linda Lucy Yevo – Doctoral trainee, Selina Defor-Doctoral trainee, Irene Akua Agyepong (Project PI)
 - Ghana Ministry of Health – Joseph Dodoo, Doctoral trainee
 - Ghana institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA) (Gina Teddy)
 - African Media and Malaria Research Network (AMMREM) / WOMEC: (Charity Binka)
- Niger (Francophone)
 - Laboratoire d'Etudes et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Local (LASDEL) (Ali Bako, Abdjoua El Haji Dagobi)
- Gambia
 - Ayo Palmer
- Partners in South Africa for capacity building young and middle level West African researchers in HPSR & MNCAH through Doctoral Level Training
 - University of Cape Town (Lucy Gilson & Maylene Shun-King)
 - University of the Western Cape (Uta Lehman)
- Partners in ITM Antwerp for capacity building young and middle level West African researchers in HPSR & MNCAH through doctoral level training
 - Wim van Damme

Advisory Committee Members (in alphabetical order)

- Stella Anyangwe, Professor Emeritus, Univ. of Pretoria South Africa /Cameroon
- Samba Cor, Ministry of Health /Senegal
- John Gyapong, Vice Chancellor University of Health and Allied Services/ Ghana
- Jean Pierre Olivier de Sardan, LASDEL/Niger
- Ayo Palmer, The Gambia
- Gloria Quansah-Asare, Deputy Director General Ghana Health Service /Ghana

Steering Committee Members

- Irene Akua Agyepong, Project PI
- Issiaka Sombie, West African Health Organization (WAHO)
- Abraham Hodgson, Director, Research and Development Directorate, Ghana Health Service
- Marie Glorioso Ngabire, IDRC Canada

Contents

Research Institutions and Countries in the Consortium.....	2
Advisory Committee Members (in alphabetical order).....	3
Steering Committee Members	3
Synthesis	5
The Research problem.....	5
Research Findings	9
COMCAHPSS Obj/WP 2 and Obj/WP 6 – Research.....	9
Project implementation and management	12

Synthesis

Health systems are the common-pool resource on which all programs in the health sector including Maternal, Newborn, Adolescent and Child Health (MNCAH) programs draw. Across sub-Saharan Africa, health systems continue to face multiple, complex and urgent challenges in ensuring that service delivery is efficient, effective and equitable. This weakness affects the ability to implement and scale up effective interventions to improve MNCAH outcomes.

The aim of this project is to conduct multi-level capacity strengthening and networking at individual-, institutional- and country-level in West and Central Africa for leadership in Health Policy and Systems (HPS) and Maternal Newborn Child and Adolescent health (MNCAH) research and practice. This is to support context-relevant and effective policy and program decision-making and implementation for MNCAH improvements in West and Central Africa, and to monitor and evaluate the processes and impact of the program and its lessons.

Specific objectives are to:

1. Strengthen **health leadership capacity** for research, innovation and change for decision-making and implementation of high quality, effective, efficient and equitable MNCAH programs and services which improve health outcomes in West and Central Africa.
2. Strengthen **HPS and MNCAH research capacities** in West and Central Africa in order to generate evidence to support context-relevant and effective policy and program decision-making and implementation of quality, effective and efficient MNCAH services and outcomes in West and Central Africa.
3. Strengthen researcher ability to work with decision-makers and implementers to identify relevant research agendas, and to generate, package and disseminate research information to support **policy development and implementation** in West and Central Africa.
4. Support and develop multi-disciplinary **multi-level leadership and research networks** for HPS and MNCAH in West and Central Africa.
5. Collaborate with the West African Health Organisation (WAHO) at the contextual level to promote the use of evidence for MNCAH programs and HPS strengthening for improved outcomes in West and Central Africa.
6. Monitor and evaluate the processes and impact of the program and lessons for MNCAH improvements.

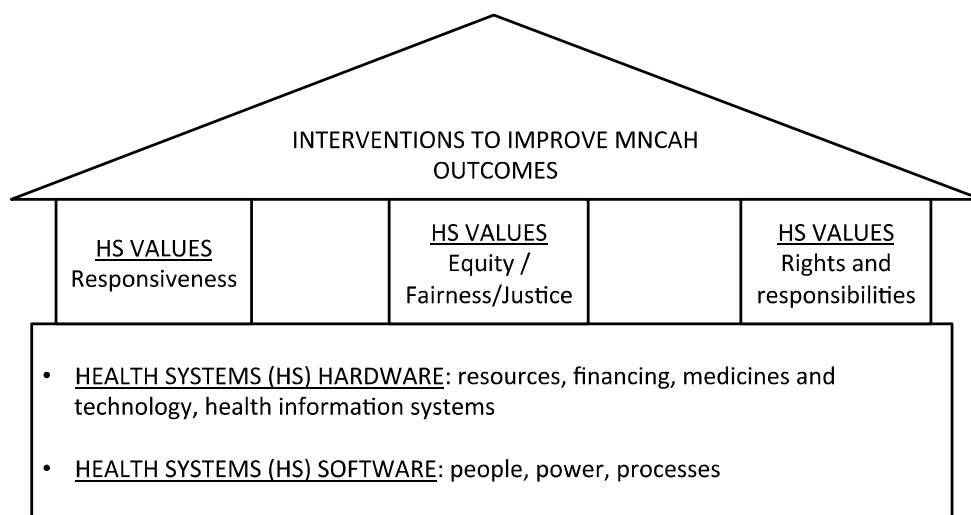
The Research problem

To achieve these objectives, the project adopts an implementation methodology that involves the development and implementation of three linked clusters of interventions related to **(i) leadership, research and practice capacity strengthening; (ii) networking; and (iii) collaboration with WAHO** in its role in the Innovating for Maternal and Child Health in Africa (IMCHA) program as a Health Policy Research Organization (HPRO) for evidence-informed policy advocacy to support MNCAH improvements. This initiative is founded on South-South collaboration, partnership and networking. The research component focuses on monitoring and evaluating how and why the project works (or does not work) to achieve what outcomes in the medium-term time frame (5 years) of the grant.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework guiding the design and implementation of the proposed interventions theorizes that health systems are the foundation on which interventions to improve MNCAH rest. MNCAH programs designed and implemented without attention to a strong health systems foundation may produce results in the short term but sustainability will be a problem and the programs will lack resilience: the resilience of MNCAH programs is bound to the resilience of the health system in which they operate. Health system ‘hardware’ are the resources (human as well as infrastructure, equipment, tools and supplies), financing arrangements, health information systems, medicines and technology. Also, key in the determinants of the resilience of health systems are people within health systems, their power and how they choose to exercise it, and the processes they set up and operate to run the health system. The values (both implicit and explicit) on which health systems are built – issues of responsiveness, equity, fairness or justice, rights and responsibilities – are key pillars that also determine the strength of health systems. These foundations and pillars support any interventions that are put in place in a health system to service the population and influence the outcome of these interventions. This includes interventions to improve the health of mothers, newborns, infants, children and adolescents. This is illustrated diagrammatically in the figure below:

Health Systems Hardware, software and values as supporting “infrastructure” of interventions



The interventions of the project target three levels of capacity strengthening: individual, institutional and contextual in order to support and enable strong and resilient interventions that improve MNCAH outcomes. These interventions have the specific intention of building and supporting: (a) research and practice leadership; (b) networking; and (c) advocacy within and between West African health systems to catalyze innovation for health systems development to support effective and sustainable scale-up of MNCAH interventions. These interventions are summarized in the table below:

	Individual & institutional level	Contextual level
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Themes	Capacity building (Objectives 1 – 3)	Networking (Objective 4)	Collaboration with WAHO as an HPRO (Objective 5)
Leadership (Objective 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West African bi-annual seminars: Leadership modules • leadership mentorship program • Support to Pan African DrPH program development and implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West African emerging HPS research and practice network (WANEL) • Communities of practice • Global conference e.g. HSG participation support grants for emerging leaders with accepted abstracts 	Promotion of the use of evidence for decision making Strengthened collaboration between researchers and decision makers
Research (Objective 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West African bi-annual seminars: HPS and MNCAH research modules • HPS and MNCAH research projects • Research supervisor/mentor program • Specialist Master’s program • Peer-reviewed journal publication support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual partnership meetings 	
Practice (Objective 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West African bi-annual seminars: Researchers “how to” work with decision makers and implementers modules • Research communication interventions • Researcher, media and civil society engagement program 		

Monitoring and Evaluation (Objective 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Qualitative process documentation• Quantitative output and impact documentation• Evaluation of the program ('how' and 'why' the program works to produce the documented impacts)
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Research Findings

COMCAHPSS Obj/WP 2 and Obj/WP 6 – Research

Coaching Mentoring and Support for Doctoral Level Capacity Building in HPS and MNCAH in West Africa

The status of the COMCAHPSS doctoral fellows and their research projects at the end of the current reporting period are as summarized in the table below.

Trainee	Nationality	PHD thesis topic	Scholarship status	University of enrolment	Institutional supervisor	CoMCAHPSS coach/mentor	Comments
Fatima Mouloum	Cameroon	How and Why of Researcher Capacity to work with policy makers and implementers in Cameroon	COMCAHPSS funding	Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) Antwerp	Wim van Damme & Sarah van Belle (ITM) Bruno Marchal	Pierre Ongolo Sylvie Kwedi Nolna	PhD status terminated
Ibrahim Nassirou	Niger	Technical and Allocative efficiency of provision of primary care adolescent reproductive services and utilization	Has obtained a tuition waiver from UoM so he pays Canadian rather than international fees.	Has obtained admission in the University of Montreal. Obtained his visa has been in Montreal for course work since September 2018	Roxane Borges Da Silva	Dr. Rahamane of LASDEL	COMCAHPSS is funding Working to defend research protocol later this year

Trainee	Nationality	PHD thesis topic	Scholarship status	University of enrolment	Institutional supervisor	CoMCAHPSS coach/mentor	Comments
Ben Verboom	Canada	Regional cooperation to strengthen evidence-to-policy processes in health: A realist evaluation of the work of the West African Health Organization (WAHO)	Trudeau Scholarship	Oxford, UK		Issiaka Sombie, WAHO	Disruptions in travel activities for PHD purposes due to Covid-19 pandemic but on track to submit PHD by the end of the year
Selina Defor	Ghana	WANEL evaluation	CoMCAHPSS funding. The funding for position of project coordinator has been converted into a PHD training grant	UWC	Uta Lehman	Irene Agyepong, GHS /RDD	Research Proposal has been submitted and is awaiting feedback. Exploring possibility of remote data collection due to Covid-19 disruption
Joe Dodoo	Ghana	How Central level policy actors sustain (or not) policy change	WAHO has provided a full scholarship for his training	UCT	Lucy Gilson /Maylene Shun-King	Irene Agyepong	Working on document analysis. Disruption in timelines due to Covid-19

Trainee	Nationality	PHD thesis topic	Scholarship status	University of enrolment	Institutional supervisor	CoMCAHPSS coach/mentor	Comments
							pandemic
Abigail Derkyi -Kwarteng	Ghana	Why are NHIS clients in Ghana paying OOP and implications for UHC policy and equity	Obtained AHPSR HPA fellows grant to support research	GCPS	Irene Agyepong /Lucy Gilson		
Andy Ayim	Ghana	How and Why district assemblies support health	Still searching for funding to support research	GCPS	Irene Agyepong /Nana K.A. Enyimayew		

Project implementation and management

The table below summarizes activities in relation to objectives and timelines in 2020.

Objective	Activity	Status	Comments
Obj 1. Strengthen <u>health leadership capacity</u>	Offering of leadership modules in West African seminar series New-Year school (Abidjan) 17 th – 21 st February 2020	The New-Year school successfully took place	
Obj. 2. Strengthen <u>HPS & MNCAH research capacity</u>	COMCAHPSS Training	Ongoing	
Obj. 3. Strengthen <u>researcher ability to work with decision makers</u>	Development of modules on HPS and MNCAH policies and programs advocacy design & management	Modules' draft completed. Edited and translated into French for use in New year school	
	Offering of modules in West African summer series	New-Year school (Abidjan) 17 th – 21 st February 2020	
Obj. 4 Networking	WANEL online Governance Committee to discuss the way forward for the network. WANEL Leaders meeting with the director of the Dodowa Health Research Centre	All meetings happened as planned	Meeting took place online (via zoom). Meeting was held successfully
	Incorporation of WANEL	Successful	On track
	Annual meeting of consortium partners		Meeting did not happen due to covid 19 pandemic
	Development of website	WANEL and COMCAHPSS websites established in first year. Maintenance on going	On track
	Maintenance of website	Ongoing	On track
	Collaboration with WAHO	Ongoing	On track
Obj 5 Evidence to Policy			

Objective	Activity	Status	Comments
Obj. 6. Monitor and evaluate the program	Project secretariat	Fully functional.	
Project Administration	Project steering committee and advisory committee	Functional	No meeting was held due to the covid 19 Pandemic