



Alignment and Harmonisation of Research for Health

Welcome to the Alignment & Harmonisation (AHA) of the research for health area – a source of information on alignment and harmonisation of research for health in low-income countries.

There is inadequate funding for health research in low-income countries. The leadership and investments of countries in research for health relevant to their needs is limited. Support provided by funders for research for health often does not meet countries' health and research for health priorities.

Recent years have seen a number of debates on Donor Alignment and Harmonisation (AHA) of research for health for low-income countries. These are bringing a better understanding of how the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness applies to research for health. This is the goal of the "AHA" initiative.

This page provides a platform for the exchange of useful information and experiences to focus health research more sharply on countries' needs - particularly to allow voices from the South to enter the debate.

We encourage all partners in research for health for development to participate in the dialogue to improve support to research for health for low-income countries.

The AHA Initiative

A process to engage low-income countries and donors in dialogue on more effective funding of research for health.

The 'AHA' initiative – for alignment and harmonisation – looks at research for health funding from the perspective of low-income countries. It aims to provide analysis of research for health spending in countries, as a basis for donors and their partner countries to develop shared research for health agendas.

AHA and its studies are the first to address these questions:

- Is health research funding provided in a way that is most appropriate for countries' needs?
- Moving from 'donorship' to 'ownership' – how can low-income countries set the agenda for their health research funding?
- How does the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness apply to health research funding?
- What are the responsibilities of donor and partner countries in making health research funding more effective?



The AHA Study

New analysis of donor activities and country needs for health research

The starting point in this process is the AHA study, funded by Sweden's development cooperation agency, Sida/SAREC. A further study supported by The Netherlands and done in partnership with Tanzania's National Institute for Medical Research, looked at the situation in Tanzania.

The AHA study analysed funding for research for health in five African countries by eight donors, to determine the extent of alignment and harmonisation, or the lack of it.

It examined funding for research for health in countries for the perspective of:

- Who funds research for health in the country?
- Who benefits the most from funding for research for health – the northern or southern partner?
- Trends and evolution for funding of research for health, by country.

What is alignment and harmonisation and why is it important to research for health?

Harmonisation of research for health is the extent to which donors' research for health activities are coordinated with each other to be most effective for developing countries. Alignment measures how closely donors' programmes match the health and research for health priorities defined by countries.

Alignment and harmonisation are crucial to ensuring more effective funding for health research that meets developing countries' needs. From a perspective of research for health, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness gives partner countries a unique voice to call for research for health programmes to be focused on their populations' specific needs.

'AHA': Better evidence for decisions on donor support of research for health

There has been much discussion in global health circles of how research for health investments can be better focused on the needs of recipient countries, but little data is available on the strategies and impact in the research for health domain. The AHA initiative hopes to improve our understanding of the potentials and limitations of 'harmonising' and 'aligning' the external support by donors, development agencies and research sponsoring institutions. This is the first



attempt to quantify the alignment and harmonisation aspects of research for health in a number of low-income countries. It is also a first step toward having real evidence as a basis for donors and their partner countries to develop shared research for healthagendas.

To share the results of the AHA study and discuss possible implications, COHRED, jointly with Sida/SAREC, convened a special consultation with representatives from the eight donor countries, two research sponsoring organisations (National Institutes of Health and Wellcome Trust) and the five African countries (both from government, research institutions and NGOs).

Countries and donors discuss better coordination of funding for research for health

The AHA special consultation in Beijing in October 2007, convened by COHRED, included senior representatives of donor agencies and health research policy makers from five African countries, who discussed this topic for the first time:

- Ministry of Health and University of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso;
- Ministry of Health and University of Youndé, in Cameroon;
- National Institute of Health and University Eduardo Mondlane in Mozambique;
- Ministry of Health, National Council of Science and Technology and Medical School in Uganda;
- Ministry of Health in Zambia; Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
- International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research;
- Irish Aid, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, and Irish Forum for Global Health, University of Galway;
- Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Organisation for Health Research and Development (ZonMW);
- Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation – NORAD;
- Department for Research Cooperation – SAREC, of Sweden;
- Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, SDC; and the UK Department of Health.

Find all publications related to 'Alignment and Harmonisation of Research for Health' [here](#).