

**NEAPACOH's Contributions to
Tackling Health Issues in Africa:
*Achievements, Challenges & Opportunities***

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Overview

- Background
- Study Objective
- Methods
- Results
- Recommendations

NEAPACOH in Brief

An open network of African parliamentary committees on health

Launched in 2005

- As the Southern & East Africa Parliamentary Alliance of Committees on Health (SEAPACOH)
- Expanded to a continental network in 2012 (NEAPACOH)

Overarching Goal:

Strengthen parliamentary committees of health in Africa to more effectively tackle health challenges in their countries

Governance

- Governed by an Executive Committee comprising representatives from countries actively involved in Network's activities
- Chair – Hon. Blessing Chebundo from Zimbabwe Parliament
 - Champion behind the formation of the network

2009-2013 Strategic Plan

Vision: Health for all as a fundamental human right

Mission

To provide consistent collaboration of the Parliamentary Committees on Health in the ESA Region in their representational, legislative, budgetary processes including appropriation and oversight roles to achieve health for all.

2009-2013 Strategic Plan

Mandate:

- Nurture a **culture of health as a basic human right** as well as establish consistent **collaboration among Parliamentary Committees** on Health in ESA Region as a means of achieving individual and regional objectives of health for all
- Promote **community participation and involvement** in public health issues affecting the population
- **Strengthen linkages with key stakeholders** including civil society organisations and state and non-state professionals in health at regional level in order to increase health promotion, strengthen public participation, provide leadership and enhance responses to health challenges including HIV and AIDS

Partner Organisations Supporting NEAPACOH's Activities

- EQUINET & others before 2008
- EQUINET, PPD-ARO & others after 2008
- PPD-ARO & others from 2010 onwards

AFIDEP has been one of the 'others' since 2011

Study Objectives

Understand the contributions of the regional NEAPACOH network in tackling health & population challenges

Identify ways in which the network can become more effective in the delivery of its mandate

Interest to understand how NEAPACOH strengthens evidence use by parliamentary committees of health

Methods

Qualitative design design

Data collection Apr-Dec 2016:

- Document review
- In-depth interviews – 34 interviews conducted
 - MPs, parliament staff, development partners
- Questionnaire at NEAPACOH 2016 forum (23 MPs)

Methods

Positionality

- AFIDEP supports NEAPACOH
- Did not interview AFIDEP staff, instead staff held critical reflective discussions on the network

Limitations

- Study did not explore politics, power & interests

Results



NEAPACOH's Strategies

- Annual forums – 8 forums as at 2016
- Country-level support
- Capacity building workshops

Annual NEAPACOH Forums

Objectives

- Information sharing
- Generate commitment from MPs
- Provide an accountability platform
- Provide platform for connecting MPs with development partners



Annual Forums

- Themes informed by regional & global narratives
 - MDGs, Implementation of ICPD, SDGs, FP2020
 - Shaped by focus of development partners supporting the meetings
- Meetings organised with technical & financial support from development partners

Annual Forums

- 2008 & 2009 meetings had a relatively wider focus on issues
- 2010 & onwards meetings have focused on issues relating to SRHR & FP

Participation of Parliaments in Annual Forums

- Forums open to all countries in Africa
- Participation determined by resources available
- Country parliamentary committees make commitments which they report against in the subsequent year

Achievements

1. Focused parliaments on tackling health & population issues

- Produced parliament actions that address health & development issues in Africa
 - Budget increases or introduction of budget lines (FP); Legislative reforms; Increased advocacy by MPs for neglected health issues
 - Examples from Uganda; Malawi; Ethiopia

Achievements

2. Nurtured champions for health & population issues in African parliaments

“NEAPACOH has empowered MPs as champions for improved health programming in Uganda. We have advocated for increased health budgets, essential RH commodities and human resources for health. We have also represented Uganda at international meetings and attracted attention of development partners to support Uganda’s health interventions, especially for family planning.” Ugandan MP

Achievements

3. Linked parliaments with development partners
4. Increased MPs' access to evidence on health & population issues in Africa
5. Increased the capacity of MPs & staff in delivering their function

Has NEAPACOH Achieved 2009-2013 Priorities?

- Ensuring needs-based resourcing – to some extent, but issues still receive inadequate funding
- Domestication, implementation & compliance to regional agreements – not in most countries (e.g. Abuja declaration)
- Ensuring sustainability of the network – not yet, but efforts initiated

Number of MPs rating the level of NEAPACOH's support in improving their delivery of various functions

| | Rating | | | | | Total |
|--|--------|---|----|----|---|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
| Overall understanding of health issues | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 8 | 23 |
| General debate in parliament | 1 | 2 | 9 | 7 | 4 | 23 |
| Oversight to executive | 1 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 23 |
| Debating budget issues | 1 | 2 | 10 | 5 | 5 | 23 |
| Conducting legislation | 4 | 0 | 7 | 8 | 3 | 22 |
| Others (please specify) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 5 |

Challenges

- Inadequate resources
- Low levels of autonomy
- Nature & context of parliaments
- Weak accountability mechanism

Recommendations

- Institutionalise NEAPACOH in African parliaments
- Strengthen funding mechanisms for implementation of NEAPACOH strategy
- Institute feasible mechanisms for sustained country-level support to committees
- Design & deliver a sustained capacity-building programme for NEAPACOH members
- Expand opportunities for increasing evidence use by MPs involved in NEAPACOH