

Partners for Evidence-driven Rapid Learning in Social Systems



Building on established approaches for supporting evidence-informed policymaking that have helped drive progress in many health systems around the world for more than a decade, Partners for Evidence-driven Rapid Learning in Social Systems (PERLSS) – which includes peers in 14 countries and is supported by the Hewlett Foundation and Canada’s International Development Research Centre – is a one-of-a-kind international effort that helps support the achievement of the non-health SDGs using best evidence, citizen values and stakeholder insights. Learn more about this [network](#).

Objectives

PERLSS draws on the extensive and diverse expertise of partners to:

1. pilot and iteratively refine mechanisms, adapted from ‘health systems,’ to support evidence-informed policymaking (EIP) about social systems generally and, where appropriate, the non-health Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in particular;
2. strengthen target organizations’ institutional capacities, ‘join up’ country-level ecosystems of policy-supporting organizations, and develop an international community of practice to support structured lesson-drawing about how to best support EIP about social systems; and
3. ensure that the network (EVIPNet) supporting these and other similar organizations in their work on health systems is building on the lessons learned from this project and better brokering requests from countries that don’t have such organizations.

A growing recognition of the diverse skills needed for evidence-informed action on the SDGs

PERLSS has adopted the following definition of evidence-informed policymaking:

Using the best available data and research evidence – systematically and transparently – in the time available in each of:

- prioritizing problems and understanding their causes (agenda setting)
- deciding which option to pursue (policy or program/service/product selection)
- ensuring that the chosen option makes an optimal impact at acceptable cost (implementation)
- monitoring implementation and evaluating impact

To effectively put this definition into practice, skills are needed in policy, political and systems analysis, as well as in evidence synthesis and stakeholder engagement. Through PERLSS, country teams will strive to ensure that these skills are developed and harnessed by individuals working within and across sectors to support evidence-informed social-systems strengthening efforts that can help to achieve the SDGs.

Partners

This project involves organizations in 11 countries (and synergy-support teams in four countries, one of which is also a participating organization).

African teams

- Africa Centre for Evidence, University of Johannesburg (South Africa)
- Centre for the Development of Best Practices in Health (Cameroon)
- Ebonyi State University (Nigeria)
- Ethiopian Public Health Institute (Ethiopia)
- Makerere University (Uganda)
- Ministry of Health (Burkina Faso)

Latin American teams

- Facultad de Medicina, Universidad de Antioquia (Colombia)
- Foundation for Scientific and Technological Development in Health and the Veredas Institute (Brazil)
- Subsecretaría de Salud Pública, Ministry of Health (Chile)

Other country teams

- Centre of Studies and Research, Ministry of Health (Oman)
- Lanzhou University (China)

Synergy-support teams

- Africa Centre for Evidence, University of Johannesburg (South Africa)
- EPPI Centre, UCL Institute of Education, University College London (United Kingdom)
- Knowledge to Policy Center, American University of Beirut (Lebanon)
- McMaster Health Forum (Canada)

Funding partners

- International Development Research Centre (IDRC)
- William and Flora Hewlett Foundation

Resources

One of the key resources that PERLSS will use to access research evidence is [Social Systems Evidence](#). This free online repository of pre-appraised, synthesized research evidence contains more than 2,500 systematic reviews. These documents feature synthesized research evidence about strengthening government sectors and program areas, and achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Through a partnership with the Monash Sustainable Development Institute, Social Systems Evidence will soon begin providing coverage for one more government sector and three SDGs.

Let's collaborate

If you're a health- or social-system leader and want to discuss working with us to make an impact, contact us at forum@mcmaster.ca.

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