



Panel session at UN General Assembly side event co-hosted by Aspen Global Innovators Group and the UN Health4Life Fund, September 2022¹.

© Aspen Institute

WHO's efforts

Harnessing inter-agency UN collaboration

As part of its commitment to system reform, the United Nations has been promoting Pooled Funding mechanisms for several years through Multi Partner Trust Funds and Joint Programs. Essentially, this means UN sister agencies working together, aligning programs, budgets, resources, and prioritizing country led initiatives.

**SUSANA MARTINEZ SCHMICKRATH
AND GRAHAM MCNEILL, WHO**

Pooled funds empower countries to prioritize and align their programs. They allow low and middle-income countries to have a voice at the table, with the full support of the UN system, and promote whole of government and whole of society solutions.

At WHO, we see this, not simply as an opportunity to deliver on our global mandate as the lead

agency on health, but to promote a UN wide systemic response to key issues – a requirement if the world is to get back on track to achieve the potential of the SDGs. As the Covid 19 response has made clear, the greatest impact comes from coordinated action rather than working in silos.

With this in mind, WHO's leadership has promoted the establishment and utilization of MPTF modalities to strategically deliver

joint responses the world needs to effectively address inter sectoral global threats. It has been the transformative funding mechanisms chosen by UN principals the past few years when signing UN inter agency Memorandum of Understanding, as it brings to life political leadership combined with predictable, transparent multi-year funding harmonizing and amplifying ongoing national, regional and global initiatives.

To “walk the talk” WHO is proud to host three Global MPTFs Secretariats and in December 2022 we held the first “WHO hosted MPTF Secretariat Retreat” in Geneva.

The Working for Health MPTF, established in 2018 in partnership with OECD and ILO, assists countries to accelerate multisectoral actions and commitments to optimize, build and strengthen their health and care workforce, and close the projected



In 2020, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) ministers of health endorsed a ten-year Health Workforce Strategic Plan (2020-2030) developed with the support of the joint WHO-ILO-OECD Working for Health programme. Representatives from fourteen Member States convened in Johannesburg in June 2022.

10 million workforce shortfall by 2030, through investments in workforce education, skills, and jobs. It has supported 41 countries to tackle their unique workforce policy issues and priorities, which has helped to secure the domestic and donor financing and investments needed to sustainably implement these and deliver health for all.

AMr. MPFTF launched in 2019 together with FAO, WOA, and recently joined by UNEP to address the health risks of AMR, funding transformative and innovative practices that support national governments in implementing the “One Health” approach.

Health4Life Fund (H4LF) is a bold new United Nations multi-partner trust fund working with low- and middle-income countries to scale up domestic action on non-communicable diseases and mental health that will reduce associated premature loss of life, undue suffering, and detrimental socio-economic impacts. H4LF was established in 2021 by WHO, UNDP and UNICEF with Kenya, Thailand, and Uruguay as initial Founding Strategic Partners. It promotes Global South-led collaboration and partnership to support countries

realize health-related SDG targets through multisectoral, participatory and inclusive approaches.

At country level, these innovative pooled funds mechanisms act as “the muscle” of the UN Reform, help increase coherence and reduce the fragmentation created by a plethora of separate projects. Further, they reduce transaction costs by promoting harmonized reporting.

In 2019 the Funding Compact was signed between MS and all UN Agencies. Through this Compact, MS commit to bring core resources to a level of at least 30% in the next 5 years, increase the share of multi-year contributions and double the levels of resources channeled through development related inter agency pooled funds.

In terms of accountability, Pooled funds help our WHO Representatives (WRs) to work with Ministries of Health to implement cross government approaches beyond health and facilitate a greater awareness increasing WHO’s collaborative work within UN Country Teams. In 2022, we rolled out a capacity building exercise in collaboration with our New York office to build capacity among our WRs on matters related to pooled funding.

In early 2020, at the point where the COVID-19 was about to make it mark in everybody’s world, WHO created a small unit in its External Relations function dedicated to the promoting, increasing engagement and developing understanding of Pooled funding within the Organization and the development of key external relationships.

To date, the unit has worked breaking silos, from HQ to regions and countries within WHO and bringing in a range of support services including legal, finance, country support, diverse technical units, and other resource mobilization teams. This has also involved working closely with our New York Office which holds the responsibility of the UN reform and has been at the center of pushing this agenda forward.

With this additional capacity, WHO has strengthened its relationship with the Multi Partner Trust Office based at UNDP in New York. This Office is the central resource of expertise on pooled funding in the UN system and since 2004 has managed over 200 trust funds. In recent years, there has been a substantial growth in resources, reaching \$1.74 billion provided to UN agencies and Implementing partners in the pooled fund portfolio.

Ultimately, joining forces with other UN agencies and aligning our work with those Governments we support makes us proud, and promoting this vision makes WHO stronger and ensures contribution from UN reform Member States go much further. Increasing countries capacity is a key focus for WHO and enhancing our relations and engagements with pooled funds represents a positive contribution in this regard. Timing is working in our favor as the New guidelines for Joint Programs have recently been updated and joint UN efforts to facilitate the creation, funding and delivery through them is a top priority for WHO’s Funds, Banks and Multilateral team. ■

¹ Panelists (left-to-right): Tlaleng Mofokeng, UN rapporteur for the right to health/Vivian Nabeta, Executive Director/Sonia Nabeta Foundation and Type 1 Diabetes patient advocate/Allison Goldberg, President, Merck Foundation/Raji, Acting Director, Africa CDC/Loyce Pace, Director for Global Health, Health and Human Services, USA/Raji Tajudeen, Head, Division of Public Health Institutes and Research, Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention