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## Asia Pacific Observatory on Health Systems and Policies

Newsletter, October 2014



### The APO welcomes its Newest Member

The Asia Pacific Observatory (APO) on Health Systems and Policies is pleased to welcome its newest member – the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Republic of Korea.

The APO officially welcomed Korea at its 6<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting held in Manila. Dr. Yoon Seok-jun, Executive Director, Health Insurance Review & Assessment Service (HIRA) Health Institute represented Korea at the APO Board Meeting.

Other members of the APO Executive Board are the Asian Development Bank, Bangladesh, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia (DFAT), Hong Kong SAR, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, World Bank and the World Health Organization (South East Asia and Western Pacific Regional Office).

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### Article Headline Two

The 6<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting of the APO held on 12 and 13 July 2014 at the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office in Manila concluded with Board Members agreeing on the way forward. Members deliberated on the findings of the external evaluation of the Observatory and agreed that more focus should be accorded to the emerging needs such as policy dialogue.

The Board Meeting also made some changes. The APO Steering Committee has been renamed the APO Board (the Board of Asia Pacific Observatory on Health

Systems and Policies), and the Research Advisory Group (RAG) has been merged into the Strategic Technical Advisory Committee (STAC).

In addition to welcoming its newest member – the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Republic of Korea, the meeting also welcomed Bangladesh as a co-opted APO member and endorsed the renewal of Myanmar’s co-opted membership.

Delivering his remarks, Dr. Shin Young-soo, WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific, said he expected more policy dialogue and synergy with WHO and other partners on the second stage of the APO development, particularly on health system development and the Universal Health Coverage.

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#### Four Awarded the APO Fellowships for 2014

The APO has chosen four outstanding young professionals for its 2 Fellowship programs launched in 2013 – Developing Asia Health Policy Fellowship and the APO Fellowship.

**Developing Asia Health Policy Fellowship** is a joint collaborative program between the Walter H. Shorenstein Asia Pacific Research Center (APARC), Stanford University, and the APO, under which the APARC will host a postdoctoral Fellow to participate in its Stanford Asia Health Policy Program. Pham Ngoc Minh, PhD, has been awarded the 2014 Fellowship.

**The APO Fellowship** program is a regional Fellowship managed by the APO and oriented towards supporting the work of the APO Research Hubs on activities that are within their annual work plans. Following are the APO Fellows for 2014:

- Aliya Naheed, PhD, to be hosted by Nossal Institute at the University of Melbourne, Australia and icddr,b (International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh)
- Divya Nair, PhD, to be hosted by Institute for Health Policy (IHP), Sri Lanka
- Vasoontara Yiengprugsawan, PhD, to be hosted by School of Population Health, University of Queensland, Australia and Nossal Institute at the University of Melbourne, Australia and to be based at Research School of Population Health, the Australian National University.

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#### Policy Brief on Conducive Factors to HTA Development in Asia

The APO in collaboration with the Health Intervention and Technology Assessment Program, Thailand, is undertaking a policy brief to explore ways to promote the use of Health Technology Assessment (HTA) information in policy decision and to eradicate barriers to its use. The policy brief, which will be produced in association with, and disseminated at, the Prince Mahidol Award Conference in

January 2016, will also provide practical recommendations on how to effectively develop HTA systems in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Although governments of many LMICs have pledged to increase health investments to provide Universal Health Coverage, many countries in Asia still do not fully employ HTA information, a crucial tool for setting priorities, in policy decision making. The Policy Brief, to be written in coordination with multiple country stakeholders, will review the need for HTA in setting health priorities, health systems context in study settings, historical development of HTA, and current practices.

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