

Contents

1. Scoping Assessment: Overview 2

2. Scoping Assessment: Purpose and Methodology..... 3

3. Scoping Assessment: Findings..... 5

4. Next steps..... 6

1. Scoping Assessment: Overview

In April 2023 THET was awarded the Global Capacity Building Programme (GCB) by NHS England (NHSE). As part of this programme THET will act as the grant manager for Health Partnership (HP) projects in South Africa, Uganda and Zambia. The aim of GCB is to facilitate global learning opportunities with NHS partners in/with Low- and Middle- Income Country partners by providing specialist international development expertise, complementing NHS technical knowledge and expediting the positive impact of NHS global programmes. The GCB will support the development of stronger health systems by promoting HPs that are aligned to the national health priorities and strategies.

The project will support blended volunteer placements and run for 18 months. The project aims will be achieved through the following outcomes, mapping onto NHSE's Global Strategy:

1. NHS staff contribute to strengthening health workforces in England
2. NHS staff contribute to strengthening global partner health workforces
3. NHS staff benefit from personal and professional development opportunities

During the inception phase of the programme, May 2023 to July 2023, THET undertook a rapid scoping assessment in South Africa to gain a better understanding of the current status of the health system, and to identify the most pressing health priorities.

THET Country Directors met with high level National Department of Health (NDoH) officials and Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) Health Advisors to provide information on the GCB programme, discuss the level of engagement the Ministries could provide, and explore the countries' health system challenges and priorities, including gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) issues. Discussions focussed on how the GCB can contribute to help governments progress towards achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Key priorities identified in South Africa are:

Country	Priority Global Capacity Strengthening themes
South Africa	<p>Improved Oversight, Governance, and Quality of Care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hospital Governance: hospitals are more autonomous and efficient, drawing on best practice in both countries and through building critical skills for effective hospital management. Leadership training and capacity strengthening for local government health managers. <p>Enhanced Primary Healthcare Capacity: by training and building the skills of general practitioners</p>

2. Scoping Assessment: Purpose and Methodology

2.1 Purpose of the scoping assessments

The scoping assessments explored health systems issues, challenges and priorities. They furthermore identified and validated health system priorities that HPs can address and/or contribute to in health system strengthening (HSS), whilst ensuring a GESI perspective. The assessment process also aimed to build relationships with key stakeholders. Assessment findings informed the grant call design and overall GCB programme monitoring processes, promoting HPs that are aligned with and supportive of national priorities and capacities, and ensuring a good fit with the supply of partners in England.

2.2 Approach and methodology

Key stakeholder involvement to discuss the proposed HP interventions is critical, as is alignment with key stakeholders affected by the implementation of each intervention. NDoH participation in the scoping process was essential to ensure full commitment throughout the programme, increasing the likelihood of HP interventions being implemented, achieving the expected results, and these results being sustained beyond the lifetime of the project.

The THET team drew on the WHO Health System Framework and the 6 Building Blocks/core functions¹ to develop a flexible approach and tools for the scoping assessment that could be adapted to each country context. Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with representatives from the NDoH and in-country FCDO teams. Other professional bodies and associations were consulted if encouraged by the NDoH. The team also conducted a rapid desk review comprising mainly of country-specific health sector policies and strategies.

The objectives of such stakeholder engagement were to:

- Share information on the GCB and the HP model
- Seek stakeholders' inputs, views and agree on the most pressing health priorities.
- Collaboratively assess the potential of the HP model to address the identified priorities.
- Obtain consensus on the interventions that could be implemented through HPs.

A final meeting with the Ministry was held to provide an overview of the scoping assessment findings and validate the priorities for the GCB programme. Additionally, as part of this meeting, THET explained the function of the national oversight mechanism (NOM). This group of key national stakeholders will provide country-level oversight of the programme, advising on grants selection and meeting quarterly to ensure the programme continues to align with national priorities.

¹ World Health Organization (2007) Everybody's Business: Strengthening health systems to improve health outcomes—WHO's Framework for Action. Geneva: WHO, 2007, p.3.

3. Scoping Assessment: Findings

The South African NDoH has a clear vision “to improve health status through the prevention of illness, disease and the promotion of healthy lifestyles, and to consistently improve the health care delivery system by focusing on access, equity, efficiency, quality and sustainability.”² Currently South Africa has a two-tier health system with an overburdened public sector serving the majority of the population (84%) and a well-resourced private sector serving the rest. South Africa suffers from a quadruple burden of disease, including high levels of HIV/AIDS, maternal and child mortality, noncommunicable diseases (NCD) and injuries due to violence.³

In conducting the scoping assessment in South Africa, THET held stakeholder meetings with the FCDO South Africa Health Advisor, the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), and the NDoH to identify and agree on the priorities for the GCB. The key priorities identified through the scoping assessment are outlined below.

PRIORITY 1: Improved Oversight, Governance, and Quality of Care

South Africa has long been challenged with high inequality in healthcare exacerbated by a quadruple burden of disease, including high levels of HIV/AIDS, maternal and child mortality, noncommunicable diseases (NCD) and injuries due to violence.⁴

Since 2010 there has been a programme of health reform in which the South African Government (SAG) has committed to providing quality health services for all citizens, free at the point of use through a National Health Insurance (NHI): a financing system intended to pool funds across the private and public sector, closely modelled to UK’s NHS. The Office of Health Standards Compliance found that many of the health clinics assessed did not meet the required standard. Factors cited include absenteeism, variable leadership, lack of accountability, corruption, poor disciplinary procedures, and poor staff attitudes. South Africa is moving ahead with establishing NHI or another form of improved UHC mechanism, hence support to strengthen the public health system in oversight, governance and quality of care is essential and welcomed by the national department of health. The Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) is already working to improve hospital management through capacity strengthening.

Based on discussions with FCDO and NDoH in South Africa, a primary focus area of the GCB programme is **Improved Oversight, Governance, and Quality of Care** and should prioritise:

² <https://nationalgovernment.co.za/units/view/16/department-of-health-doh>

³ <https://www.health.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/some-key-messages-on-nhi.pdf>

⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08abc40f0b64974000740/overview_of_health_sector_reforms_in_south_af rica.pdf

- Hospital Governance: hospitals are more autonomous and efficient, drawing on best practice in both countries and through building critical skills for effective hospital management. Leadership training and capacity strengthening for local government health managers.

PRIORITY 2: Enhanced Primary Healthcare Capacity

South Africa suffers from a critical shortage of health workers at all levels and unequal distribution of health workers between urban and rural area. WHO data from 2021 shows 8.09 medical doctors per 10,000 population.⁵ According to Netcare, the largest private healthcare network provide in South Africa, there is additionally a shortage of 26,000-62,000 nurses, which outstrips training capacity.⁶

The Primary Health Care Performance Initiative (PHCPI) confirms that “achieving quality universal health coverage in a sustainable way will require moving beyond vertical programming, toward integrated health systems, in large part by prioritizing primary health care.”⁷ FCDO South Africa has identified that building capacity in primary care system/general practice is critical, with programmes focused on learning and skills development being planned in collaboration with the Royal College of General Practitioners.

Specifically for South Africa, this is a timely topic as the 4th edition of South African Family Practice Manual was recently published, and the Annual National Family Practitioners Congress which focused on ‘Integrating Primary Care – creating a more connected health and care system’, was held in August 2023. Increasingly, family doctors with relevant skills training in South Africa are positioned as leaders to primary health teams (including clinical associates/physician assistants, nurses and community healthcare workers) caring for communities of around 10,000 people.⁸

Based on discussions and prioritised outcomes from FCDO, a primary focus area of the GCB programme is therefore the **Enhanced Primary Healthcare Capacity: by training and building the skills of general practitioners.**

4. Next steps

THET will launch the call for applications on **Thursday 14th September 2023**, with applications due by Friday 10th November 2023.

For full details of how to apply along with the application form, please visit www.thet.org.

⁵ [https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/medical-doctors-\(per-10-000-population\)](https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/indicators/indicator-details/GHO/medical-doctors-(per-10-000-population))

⁶ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-05-22/south-africa-s-nursing-shortage-becoming-critical-netcare-says?leadSource=uverify%20wall>

⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5400754/>

⁸ https://gh.bmj.com/content/3/Suppl_3/e000736