

The Transformation Tracker: December 2023

By Debamitra Bhattacharya Jan 10, 2024

Season's Greetings from the Health Systems Transformation Platform!

The year 2023 has been transformative. Meeting our commitment to deepen and broaden our work in strengthening state health systems and building capacity for health policy and systems research, I am pleased to share that HSTP widened its portfolio in Odisha and Meghalaya with complementary thematic interventions and initiated work in Chhattisgarh. Projects in Mysuru and Bhopal moved to their next phase of implementing and validating our design solutions. New thematic interventions like Digital Health and One Health paved the way for policy papers and fresh concepts on integrated solutions. The policy discussions were advanced by consultations on important issues such as home-based care, decentralization, and health financing reforms.

In Odisha, HSTP continued to focus on reducing out-of-pocket expenses. The state assurance programme was intensified to improve the efficiency in scheme implementation; necessary improvements recommended for access to essential medicines were adopted by the state. Competency-based assessments, training modules, and leadership development training bolstered primary healthcare services. The crafting of the Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana (BSKY) Claim Adjudication Manual in collaboration with state bodies marked a critical step forward towards achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in the state. Our learnings over the years guided an academic paper on the impact of increased coverage for women and girls.

The Meghalaya intervention evolved beyond health budgeting. HSTP was invited to collaborate on financial and human resources planning for health. In November 2023, two key milestones were achieved - the state-specific draft policy for Specialist and Public Health Cadres developed based on a comprehensive assessment by HSTP was opened for public input, and the Internal Performance Agreements (IPAs) wherein HSTP provides technical assistance to the Department of Health for accountability of services, were rolled out.

Foraying into Chhattisgarh, HSTP focused on a comprehensive health system strengthening approach. Our engagement with the state has emerged to be multifaceted, collaborating on the development of policy-sensitive decision-making, capacity building of health staff, aligning secondary care services to national guidelines, strengthening the Emergency Care System, including comprehensive trauma planning for the state, and enhancing the supply chain management system for access to essential medicines. Aligning with our promise to create robust digital health ecosystems, our collaborations with all three focus states witnessed notable progress. From fortifying Hospital Information Systems to streamlining health worker applications and developing integrated systems for primary health services, our digital health initiatives have aimed to make healthcare delivery more efficient.

Certain things did not change – our passion for actionable research and involvement in building the capacity of, and a community for public health researchers in the country. In pursuing impactful research, we contributed to studies exploring critical healthcare domains like home healthcare delivery, diagnostic services, and ambulance services. HSTP has also led discussions on financing for primary healthcare, procedural fairness in health financing reforms, and examining the role of decentralization in local health decision-making.

Our flagship initiative, the India HPSR Fellowship program continued to shape the landscape for mid-career public health researchers going into its third cohort, and it gives me great pleasure to share that the fellowship has been acknowledged with a Teaching Excellence Award at the 2023 Annual Melbourne School of Population and Global Health's Excellence Awards Competition under the Engagement and Partnership Impact Award category. Our commitment to capacity building for health systems strengthening saw HSTP's Health Journalism Fellowship's inaugural cohort graduate and another training program for young development professionals working with PRADAN (Professional Assistance for Development Action) to empower them with a comprehensive understanding of India's health systems being initiated.

For the HSTP, 2024 will be a year of novel concepts to address the enduring problems that India's health system faces; by applying new research and experiences gained to create solutions. Solutions that guide intervention models, with a focus on strengthening the services that the community uses to achieve health outcomes.

As we near the end of the year, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our distinguished Board, advisors, funders, partners, our devoted team, and their families. Your unwavering support has been crucial to realizing our shared goal. With an eye toward 2024, we continue to be focused on advancing healthcare equity for everyone and transforming India's health systems.

Wishing you a Happy and Healthy 2024!

Warm regards,

Rajeev Sadanandan

Chief Executive Officer

Health Systems Transformation Platform