



# Asia Pacific Observatory on Health Systems and Policies

## Terms of Reference for The Asia Pacific Observatory on Health Systems and Policies

Updated and approved by the Board on June 2019

### I. Introduction

1. The purpose of this note is to set out how the Asia Pacific Observatory on Health Systems and Policies (hereafter 'the Observatory') will function.
2. The Observatory is a collaborative partnership of interested governments, international agencies, foundations, civil society and the research community. It has a Board with a Strategic Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) and a Secretariat based in WHO. In addition, independent research institutions will be contracted to serve as 'research hubs' or 'research consortia'. The Board, through the STAC is advised on technical matters by the Internal Review Panel (IRP). IRP members are appointed by the Board. The working procedures for each component are outlined in the following sections and presented schematically in figure 1.

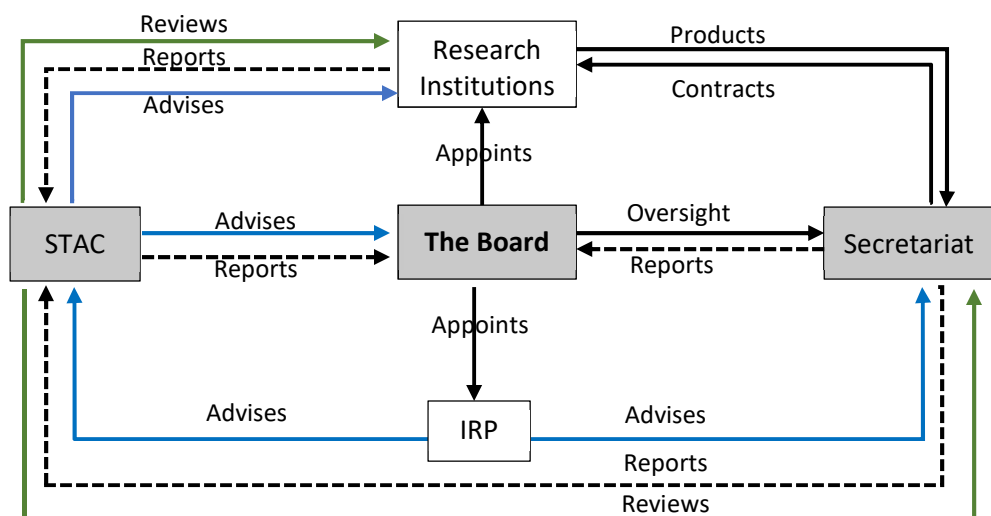


Figure 1: Relational Schematic of different components of APO

3. The Observatory is a WHO programme and thus an integral part of WHO, and as such all activities carried out by the Observatory will be in accordance with the constitution, rules and regulations and policies of WHO. WHO will have a dual role: as managing agent (including all legal and administrative responsibilities) and as a member of the Board where, alongside other partners, it helps to shape the Observatory's strategy and overall agenda.
4. WHO, as the leading international agency for health, with a mandate for coordination and evidence-generation, provides a unique institutional home for the work of the Observatory.

## II. The Board

### II-A *Board roles and responsibilities:*

5. The Board will guide the strategic direction of the Observatory, monitoring the implementation of its work plan and the quality of its products.
6. The tasks and responsibilities of the Board will be to:
  - A. agree on the overall objectives, guiding principles and functions of the Observatory (as outlined in the Statement of Intent), amending these over time as necessary;
  - B. appoints members of the Internal Review Panel;
  - C. appoints research hubs/institutions/consortia of institutions that APO will collaborate with for developing majority of its publications;
  - D. endorse the Observatory's annual work plan and budget;
  - E. endorse the medium-term (5-year) strategic and financing plans for the Observatory;
  - F. review the activities and outputs of the Observatory, at least annually;
  - G. review annual technical reports on the Observatory activities; and
  - H. review other reports and recommendations submitted to it by the STAC.
7. The Board will operate on the basis of consensus. Its recommendations will be compatible with the statutes, rules and policies of WHO; the Secretariat will provide advice to the Board in this respect.
8. The Board will convene at least twice a year (at least once in person). One meeting will take place at least one month before the end of the operational year and will be devoted to discussion of the proposed work plan and budget for the following operational year. Additional meetings may be called by any member of the Board and shall be held if a majority of its members agree to do so. Board members are expected to attend meetings and make an active contribution to the Observatory.
9. The Board will appoint a Chair who will serve for an initial period of three years. This appointment is renewable once, for a further three years, at the discretion of the Board. The Chair will be the senior representative of a funding country member. Between meetings of the Board the Chair will maintain regular contact with the Secretariat with a view to providing strategic guidance on the implementation of the Observatory work plan. To this end, the Chair may request periodic information/updates from the Secretariat and STAC Chair as he/she feels is warranted.

### II-B, *Board membership*

10. Membership of the Board will be open to the following organizations and institutions: governments; universities and research institutes; foundations and civil society organizations; and multi-lateral agencies. Given the Observatory's status within WHO, WHO is a permanent member of the Board.
11. The Board consists of funding members and co-opted members.

## Funding members

12. Any participating country, geographic entity (such as a province or region), or organization making an annual financial or in-kind contribution of at least USD 100 000 in support of the Observatory (via WHO) will be eligible to nominate a member of the Board. The Board may recommend that this level of contribution be amended or adjusted.
13. Funding Board members will sign the Statement of Intent and can become Chair of the Board and STAC.
14. Funding members can vote on all APO related issues and decisions.
15. Each organization or institution represented on the Board will cover the cost of their representative's participation. If required and possible, the Observatory secretariat may assist members to mobilize resources for their travel.
16. If a funding member does not pay their contribution to APO for 2 consecutive years, they will lose their voting rights and will be invited to become an observer.

## Co-opted members

17. Co-opted members are those representatives of countries who are not otherwise eligible via the usual route of direct cash contribution equivalent to not less than USD 100 000 p.a.
18. The number of co-opted seats is capped at a maximum of 20 percent of paying member seats, rounded to the nearest integer.
19. Any and all such co-opted seats may or may not be filled at the sole discretion of the Board.
20. Co-opted members will have the same rights and responsibilities as funding Board members.
21. A co-opted member may be a country which meets the following criteria
  - A. Expresses a strong interest in joining the Observatory and is committed to be an active member of the Board.
  - B. Experiences genuine financial constraints, and is therefore unable to contribute the USD 100 000 annual dues; thus eligibility is restricted to low income countries (LICs), and lower middle-income countries (LMCs) within the Asia Pacific region.
  - C. Can provide insights and inputs that are under-represented on the Board, for example from a particular sub-region
  - D. Countries and entities which, because of their size and influence, may be strategically important to include on the Board.
  - E. Is willing to be responsible for their own travel, accommodation and miscellaneous expenses to join in-person meetings of the Board. Funding for the co-opted member's travel to the Board meetings could be offered on a case by case basis.
22. Co-opted members are selected by consensus or if failing that, by majority vote.
23. Co-opted members will serve for 2 years, renewable for an extra year with a maximum term limit of 3 years.
24. Failure to participate in two consecutive Board meetings may be considered grounds for non-renewal.

## Observers

25. In lieu of their close, continuing collaboration with APO in both generation and reviewing of evidence as well as supporting the APO in developing its strategic directions, directors of research hubs or consortia, IRP members and lapsed funding members have a standing observer status during the Board meetings.
26. In addition, the Board can invite other individuals and organizations as observers on ad hoc basis. These include but are not limited to other donors who choose not to become a funding member and co-opted members that have finished their term.
27. Observers have no voting rights and apart from the IRP members, will have to self-fund their attendance.

## III. Interactions with the research community

28. APO interacts with the research community by using individual experts who are members of the Internal Review Panel (IRP) and research institutions that deliver APO products. The two are brought together through the Strategic Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) mechanism.

### III-A *Roles and functions of Internal Review Panel*

29. An Internal Review Panel (IRP) of 6 people will be established by the Board. The IRP will be a core team of experts and researchers, working in their personal capacity, who will have the dual function of advising on the process of quality control for Observatory research products and providing input on the strategic direction of the Observatory's research agenda.
30. Full Terms of Reference of IRP is at the end of this document.

### III B *Roles and functions of the research hubs / consortia and other research institutions*

31. It is envisioned that a number of researchers and research institutes from the Asia Pacific region will engage in and support the work of the Observatory. Three levels of engagement are envisaged, with:
  - A. national, country-based institutions;
  - B. regional institutions that serve as 'research hubs' or 'consortia of institutions'; these groups of institutions which will provide technical support and leadership to and help build capacity in country-based research teams, carry out studies directly, and engage with existing networks active in health systems research;
  - C. other institutions within or outside the region that have expertise in specific areas of health systems; these could be engaged on an ad hoc basis for particular studies.
32. The Secretariat will issue a call for expression of interest in serving as a 'research hub' or 'consortium of institutions' subject to and consistent with WHO procurement rules. Applications will be reviewed by the Board, with advice from IRP members with no conflict of interest.
33. Hubs/consortia will be expected to provide an annual in-kind contribution of staff time, in particular at director or senior researcher level.
34. To maintain their partnership relationship with the Observatory, hubs must continue to produce high-quality and credible products, and to this end their work will be regularly reviewed by the Secretariat, the STAC and the Board.
35. Full Terms of Reference of research hubs is at the end of this document

### **III-C Roles and functions of the Strategic Technical Advisory Committee (STAC)**

36. STAC is a subcommittee of the APO Board and reports to the Board. Its function is to identify countries' and regional needs for Health Policy System Research and use those to inform the APO's strategic and annual plan, to monitor and evaluate the technical aspects of APO's products and to provide technical oversight to ensure APO is adding technical value.
37. Full Terms of Reference of STAC and criteria for its membership are at end of this document.

### **IV Roles and functions of the Secretariat**

38. The Secretariat is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Observatory and its programme of research. It will be run in a spirit of co-operation and partnership, with the Board guiding its work.
39. The Secretariat will prepare the following documents for review and endorsement by the Board:
  - A. annual work plan and budget;
  - B. annual financial and technical reports on the Observatory activities; and
  - C. a medium-term financial plan for the Observatory and a fund-raising strategy.
40. In addition, the Secretariat will undertake the following tasks, with guidance and strategic input from the Board as appropriate:
  - A. prepare and disseminate financial and technical reports for donors as required by respective donor agreements;
  - B. establish a process to liaise with countries in the region to determine their information needs on health systems and policies;
  - C. contract (following WHO rules) and coordinate research institutions and networks to implement the approved Observatory workplan;
  - D. organize policy dialogue workshops;
  - E. actively communicate the Observatory's role, disseminate its products and manage its website (hosted by WHO);
  - F. in consultation with the IRP, coordinate peer review of Observatory products;
  - G. provide administrative support to the Board and STAC and carry out other technical, logistical and administrative work as required;
  - H. liaise with the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies and the network of health system observatories; and
  - I. liaise with relevant programmes and country offices in WHO and other partner organizations as appropriate, to maximize synergy with existing technical support.
41. The Board will appoint a performance review panel for the APO director to strengthen its governance processes for the appointment of and support for and performance evaluation of the APO Director.
42. The terms of reference of the performance review panel of the APO Director are at the end of this document.

### **IV-A Personnel and location**

43. The role of the Director is to manage the Observatory secretariat and its programme of work, taking into account the advice and recommendations of the Board.
44. The Observatory Director will be appointed in compliance with the staff regulations, rules,

policies and selection procedures of WHO and in consultation with the Board. The number and nature of posts assigned to the work of the Observatory will be included in its work plan and budget. Secretariat staff will be subject to WHO staff regulations, rules, policies and selection procedures. Furthermore, any secondments will be subject to WHO's applicable secondment procedures.

45. The Observatory's Director and other Secretariat staff will be based in WHO. The two WHO regional directors will periodically consider location and rotation of secretariat between the two regions, possibly every 6 years. Specific activities in support of the Observatory may also take place in research institutes and other external entities collaborating with the Observatory.

## V Use of products

46. Use of the name and any visual identity associated with the Observatory shall be determined by the Secretariat, in line with WHO regulations. This requirement applies to all Observatory-related activities, including meetings, initiatives and publications.
47. Observatory products will be open-access, and an agreed number of printed copies will be available free-of-charge to governments and institutions in the region.
48. Written outputs of the Observatory shall be subject to an external peer review process for technical and scientific quality and policy relevance, overseen by the Internal Review Panel<sup>27</sup> members. In addition, each publication will be subject to internal WHO clearance procedures to ensure compliance with WHO editorial guidelines.
49. Each publication shall include the standard WHO disclaimers and a wording to the effect that the views and opinions expressed in the Observatory publications do not necessarily represent the official policy of any members of the Board.
50. WHO will retain copyright of all the Observatory publications. The logos of the funding organizations represented at the Board may be included on the back cover of the Observatory publications, should these organizations so wish.
51. Translation arrangements will be handled in accordance with usual WHO practice.

## VI Financial provisions

52. Contributions to the Observatory may take the form of direct financial contributions to WHO (earmarked for the Observatory), funding of specific budget elements (e.g. staff posts) or funding in kind (e.g. administrative support, technical secondments). Each contribution will be the subject of a separate agreement between WHO and the relevant donor and will include reference to applicable WHO Programme Support Costs. The nature and value of each contribution will be specified in the work plan. WHO will administer the funds of the Observatory in accordance with the work plan and budget reviewed by Board, and WHO's financial regulations, rules and administrative practices.

## VII Review

53. The Board, through STAC reviews technical aspects of the APO work during its routine meeting. The Board may commission periodic internal or external review of strategies and performance of APO as partnership or of management, governance structure and the logistical, legal and financial aspects. The terms of reference for this review will be developed by the Secretariat in consultation with the Board.

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