DAKSHIN Workshop on Health

Outcome Report

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CONCEPT NOTE

The Prime Minister of India inaugurated DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence during the 2nd Voice of Global South Summit held virtually on 17th November 2023. Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) hosts DAKSHIN and has been engaging with several think tanks across the Global South countries and formalising DAKSHIN's relationship with them through signing of Letter of Association (LoA). The Prime Minister also announced that DAKSHIN will coordinate an annual international conference of research partners and think tanks.[1] It is proposed to have such a conference in February – March 2024. To initiate collective engagements of think tanks of the Global South in the run up to this conference, DAKSHIN is organising a virtual workshop on the health sector on 2nd February 2024.

The workshop aims to:

- Discuss innovative solutions, best practices, successful flagship schemes of India & other countries of the Global South in the health sector.

- Promote development solutions advocated by these countries for their possible replication and adoption among peer countries of the developing world.

- Involve think tanks/universities/research institutions in promoting mutual learning, exchange of experiences and good practices among Global South countries.

- Identify areas of common interests and institutional collaboration.

The workshop aims to brainstorm on enhancing the capability of the Global South countries in implementing and managing healths programs and enhance the provision of quality health care services. Digital health is now increasingly recognised as an essential means of achieving universal health coverage, given its ability to widen access to health services. The workshop will discuss the key health solutions that can contribute in bringing in well being transformation within the countries of Global South, and leverage the scope to design, assess, select, and deploy digital health systems and applications, data analytics, etc. as per their national priorities.

The COVID-19 pandemic engineered fundamental shifts in public health and forced nations to re-imagine the healthcare landscape. As emerging economies find innovative

ways of addressing their challenges and bolstering their systems, they are uniquely poised to work together and thus progress together. India, with its successful implementation of the world's largest vaccination drive and deployment of initiatives like Vaccine Maitri (Vaccine friendship) to help other countries in need, now has a repository of good practices that can be invaluable to any country seeking to strengthen its health systems. DAKSHIN Workshop on Health will showcase several Indian initiatives, and experiences of other countries of the Global South in the following potential areas of cooperation:

1. Digital Health Solutions

2. Health Systems Strengthening

3. Maternal and Child Health/Communicable and Non-communicable Diseases

Endnote

[1] The PM stated: From next year, we propose to start an Annual International Conference in India, which will focus on the development priorities of the Global South. The "Dakshin" Centre will coordinate this conference with the partner research centres and think tanks of the Global South, whose main goal will be to identify practical solutions for the development related challenges in the Global South that will strengthen our future.

AGENDA

5:00 pm – 5:05 pm: Welcome Remarks

- **Professor Sachin Chaturvedi –** Director General, RIS

5:05 pm – 5:10 pm: Introductory Remarks

Chair – Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Chairperson, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF)

5:10 pm – 5:20 pm: Keynote Address

Dr. Basant Garg, Addl. CEO, National Health Authority (NHA), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt of India
Overview of successful/innovative Indian Health programmes

5:20 pm – 5:30 pm: Discussants

- **Ms. Archna Vyas**, Director, Program Advocacy and Communications, Growth, Opportunity, and Empowerment, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), India
- **Dr. Preeti Kumar**, Vice President - Public Health System Support at Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), India

Discussants will discuss the place of the Indian and global initiatives on health in the context of immersive knowledge sharing among the countries of the Global South

5:30 pm – 5:50 pm: Special Remarks

Discussants from selected Think Tanks
Challenges in the health sector in the Global South countries; an overview of successful/innovative Health programmes of respective countries

5:50 pm – 6:25 pm: Open Discussion

6:25 pm – 6:30 pm: Vote of Thanks

Professor T. C. James, Visiting Fellow, RIS

On February 2nd, 2024, the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) conducted a virtual workshop on healthcare titled "DAKSHIN Workshop on Health." The workshop aimed to discuss India's healthcare schemes and programs, collaborations between agencies in the global South, and RIS's role in promoting development solutions for the region, with a focus on achieving universal health coverage and addressing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The workshop was chaired by Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Chairperson M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), who emphasized the importance of prioritizing healthcare and working together to achieve health for all, referencing a recent report from the WHO and World Bank that highlighted setbacks in progress due to the pandemic.

Mr. Atul Kaushik

GDC Fellow, RIS

Mr. Atul Kaushik, on behalf of Dr. Sachin Chaturvedi, Director General, RIS, welcomed participants, including representatives from various global think tanks. He welcomed all the panellist including Dr. Basant Garg, CEO National Health Authority of India, who delivered a keynote address on Indian healthcare schemes and programs. Additionally, Ms. Archana Vyas Director, Program Advocacy and Communications, Growth, Opportunity, and Empowerment, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Dr. Preeti Kumar Vice President - Public Health System Support at Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), India participated as other panellist in discussions, sharing insights on health sector challenges and potential collaborations. The workshop showcased RIS's newly established Global South Centre of Excellence, named "DAKSHIN," inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on November 17th, 2023, which aims to facilitate development and knowledge sharing among agencies from the Global South. Through virtual workshops and in-person meetings, DAKSHIN intends to identify and implement development solutions tailored to the needs of countries in the region. He informed the audience that the focus of this session was on the health sector, following a previous workshop on agriculture held in January 17th, 2024. He further mentioned that DAKSHIN builds upon the foundation of Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), a longstanding organization with a legacy of development cooperation spanning 40 years. He emphasized that the workshop

shall serve as a platform for exchanging ideas, fostering collaboration, and advancing efforts to improve healthcare access and outcomes in the Global South.

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan

Chairperson, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF)

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan expressed her delight at participating in the convening on health workshop organized by RIS. She emphasized the importance of prioritizing health and bringing together knowledge, wisdom, data, and research to address global challenges. Dr. Swaminathan highlighted universal health coverage (UHC) as a crucial goal and discussed setbacks experienced during the pandemic, particularly in low and middle-income countries where essential health services suffered disruptions. She stressed the need for resilient health systems that can withstand shocks such as pandemics, natural disasters, or conflicts. Digital health tools and technologies were highlighted as critical during the pandemic, with India's experience serving as a valuable learning resource for other countries. Dr. Swaminathan emphasized the importance of research, ethical considerations, and regulatory frameworks in advancing digital health technologies. Addressing challenges such as high out-of-pocket expenditures and catastrophic health expenditures, she underscored the importance of collaboration and cross-country learning. Dr. Swaminathan emphasized the role of research, data analytics, and learning health systems in continuously improving healthcare delivery. She looked forward to learn from India's experiences and innovative national health programs, citing the successful COVID-19 vaccination campaign as an example of effective coordination and organization in a country with a large population. Dr. Swaminathan expressed optimism about the opportunities for collaboration and learning presented by the convening.

Dr. Basant Garg

Addl. CEO, National Health Authority (NHA), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt of India

Dr. Basant Garg provided insights into India's experiences in implementing digital health solutions at scale, focusing on initiatives such as the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) and the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM). AB-PMJAY, launched in 2018, aims to provide health coverage for secondary and tertiary treatments up to Rs. 500,000 per family per year, benefiting 120 million Indian families. The scheme targets the poor and vulnerable, aiming to prevent catastrophic health expenditures and improve access to healthcare services. Dr. Garg highlighted AB-PMJAY's achievements, including over 60 million treatments over the last five years, resulting in substantial savings due to strategic purchasing by the government. The presentation also emphasized the role of digital infrastructure, such as Aadhaar, Unified Payment Interface (UPI), and CoWIN, in

facilitating access to healthcare services and vaccination during the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, Dr. Garg discussed ABDM, launched in 2021, which aims to create a digital health ecosystem in India. Key components of ABDM include the Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) registry, Health Professional Registry (HPR), Health Facility Registry (HFR), and drug registry. The initiative prioritizes privacy and security, employing a federated data architecture to ensure data stays where it is stored. Dr. Garg also highlighted the success of teleconsultations through the National Telemedicine Service (eSanjeevani), which has served over 200 million patients, demonstrating the widespread adoption of digital health services in India. In conclusion, Dr. Garg reiterated India's commitment to drive affordable, accessible, and quality healthcare through public-private partnerships and digital innovation, contributing to the global efforts towards health for all.

Ms. Archna Vyas

Director, Program Advocacy and Communications, Growth, Opportunity, and Empowerment, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), India

Dr. Archana Vyas, commended Dr. Garg's comprehensive presentation and highlighted four key takeaways from his presentation. Firstly, the significant coverage provided by AB-PMJAY, which insured 40% of India's population and serves as a lesson for managing massive health insurance schemes. Secondly, the success of India's digital health initiatives, including ABDM and teleconsultation services which underscored the importance of digital infrastructure in healthcare delivery. Thirdly, the effective implementation of public-private partnerships during the pandemic, particularly in vaccine distribution through CoWIN, which demonstrated the potential of collaborative efforts in healthcare. Fourthly, the widespread adoption of telemedicine in India highlighted the role of technology in increasing access to healthcare services, reducing the need for in-person visits to doctors. Overall, Dr. Vyas expressed appreciation for India's efforts in leveraging digital innovation to improve healthcare access and outcomes, emphasizing the relevance of these experiences for global health initiatives.

Further, Dr. Archana Vyas emphasized the importance of collaboration among LMICs (Low- and Middle-Income Countries) to address health and development challenges. She commended the establishment of DAKSHIN by RIS, which focuses on initiatives in health, agriculture, and digitization in the global South. Dr. Vyas highlighted the role of the Gates Foundation in partnering with governments, academia, and other stakeholders to solve complex challenges affecting the lives of the poor and vulnerable. She emphasized the need for Global South collaboration to leverage each other's strengths, avoid duplication, and accelerate solutions for common problems. Drawing on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Vyas stressed the importance

of health diplomacy and international collaboration in research and development (R&D). She cited examples such as the rapid development and distribution of vaccines and India's initiative to provide vaccines to other countries through initiatives like Vaccine Maitri. Dr. Vyas discussed the significance of vaccine manufacturing capacity, highlighting India's role as a major supplier of vaccines to the world. She emphasized the need to build similar capacities in other countries to ensure access to safe and affordable vaccines globally.

Furthermore, Dr. Vyas underscored the importance of vaccine coverage, cold chain management, and data systems in ensuring effective immunization programs. She highlighted the potential of digital platforms in tracking vaccine coverage and monitoring other health indicators. Dr. Vyas also mentioned initiatives such as the G20 Global Initiative on Digital Health, which focused on open and interoperable systems for data exchange. She emphasized the importance of learning from countries with similar contexts to accelerate progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Dr. Vyas reiterated the importance of collaboration and knowledge exchange among countries in the global South to address health challenges effectively. She emphasized the role of initiatives like DAKSHIN in facilitating such collaborations and driving progress towards shared goals.

Dr. Preeti Kumar

Vice President - Public Health System Support at Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI), India

Preeti Kumar highlighted the immense diversity of India across various spheres, including geographical, social, economic, political, and cultural aspects. She emphasized the significance of federalism in providing opportunities for learning within the country and stressed the importance of moving towards universal health coverage (UHC) through a primary healthcare approach. In discussing the evolution of India's public health education system, Kumar pointed out the paradigm shift from a focus on clinical medicine to a broader emphasis on public health. She highlighted the establishment of the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) in 2006 as a pivotal moment, marking the first public-private partnership aimed at expanding public health education in the country. The decision to set up five institutes across India was driven by the recognition of the diverse contexts and needs of different regions. Kumar proudly noted that over the past two decades, PHFI has contributed to the emergence of nearly a thousand public health professionals who are equipped to address the country's health challenges. She underscored the importance of contextually relevant education in training these professionals to effectively serve diverse communities.

Furthermore, Kumar emphasized the crucial role of primary healthcare centres, particularly the 160,000 health and wellness centers established under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme. She highlighted the need for adequately trained manpower to staff these centres and emphasized the importance of empowering and educating healthcare workers with the necessary knowledge and skills. In light of recent government initiatives, such as plans to open hospitals and medical colleges in every district of India, Kumar stressed the importance of strengthening both primary and tertiary healthcare sectors. She noted that while India currently has over 700 medical colleges, they are predominantly located in urban areas, highlighting the need for greater accessibility to healthcare services in rural areas.

In conclusion, Kumar emphasized the importance of active participation and collaboration in advancing public health education and healthcare delivery in India, with a focus on addressing the diverse needs of the population and ensuring equitable access to quality healthcare services across the country.

Mr. José Ramón Villalta

Director, Social Initiative for Democracy (ISD) El Salvador

The next phase of the workshop included voices from members of the Global South as Special Remarks. The first speaker Mr. José Ramón Villalta, Director, Social Initiative for Democracy (ISD) El Salvador highlighted several key points regarding the impact of the pandemic on rural communities and indigenous populations, as well as the challenges faced in addressing their needs. The speaker acknowledged that rural areas were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The majority of people living in rural areas faced significant challenges during this time, indicating a need for targeted interventions to support these communities. Despite efforts to implement concrete models during the pandemic, the speaker noted that certain practices have not yet been fully adopted or implemented effectively. This suggests ongoing challenges in addressing the needs of rural communities, even after the initial crisis period. The speaker specifically mentioned the struggles faced by indigenous communities in accessing healthcare and other essential services. Despite efforts to support these communities, there are still barriers preventing them from receiving adequate support and resources. Mr. Villalta emphasized the importance of ongoing dialogue and collaboration between government ministries and indigenous communities to address these challenges effectively. It was suggested that further action is needed to ensure that the practices and needs of indigenous populations are recognized and addressed appropriately.

In summary, the speaker highlighted the ongoing challenges faced by rural and indigenous communities in El Salvador, particularly in accessing healthcare and essential services

during the pandemic. Despite efforts to implement concrete models, there is a need for continued efforts to address these challenges and support vulnerable populations effectively.

Ms. Carolina Casullo

Researcher on the Social Protection programme, CIPPEC, Buenos Aires, Argentina

The next special remarks were from Ms. Carolina Casullo. She provided insights into the country's local health policies and initiative. She shared valuable information about Argentina's approach to healthcare. Ms. Casullo stated that CIPPEC, the center for the implementation of public policies for education and public health in Argentina, aims to strengthen state capabilities across different levels of government. Their focus includes balancing public finances and enhancing the efficiency of resource allocation for strategic development. She further said that Argentina identifies potential areas of cooperation for global collaboration, including digital health solutions, strengthening health systems, and addressing maternal and child health, as well as communicable and non-communicable diseases. Argentina has made significant efforts in digital health, including the development of an open-source electronic medical record system. The national Ministry of Health's membership in Snow Med International promotes the adoption of international standards.

She informed the audience that Argentina offers two residency programs in digital health at universities, providing training for professionals from various fields. Over 200 professionals have already undergone this training. Ms. Casullo highlighted the challenge of advancing digital health initiatives with an ethical and equitable approach, as well as implementing knowledge management policies. Further, she stated that Argentina has institutionalized vaccine policies supported by various sectors. The country has a national vaccine schedule that includes 20 vaccines, and initiatives like the "App VISITAR" facilitate primary health care by enabling digital data storage and processing. Furthemore, Argentina's "Remediar" medication policy and laws on healthy eating promote access to clear and truthful information about nutrient content in packaged food, aiming to improve public health outcomes. She mentioned that Argentina, has laws regarding first 1000 days of a babay's life and laws regarding support for mental illnesses.

In conclusion, Argentina is actively engaged in implementing a range of health policies and initiatives to improve healthcare delivery and public health outcomes. Ms. Casullo effectively communicated Argentina's efforts and contributions to the global health landscape.

Mr. T.C. James

Visiting Fellow, RIS

The workshop then progressed to the Q&A session and ended with a Vote of Thanks from Mr. T.C. James. He thanked the stellar panelists for explaining the audiences regarding the nuances of India's health initiatives and the way in which India can assist the other countries of the Global South. He also thanked the participants from other countries who shared their experiences and raised some pertinent issues that need further policies analysis in respective countries. He ended the vote of thanks with anticipation of continuity of workshops on engaging topics in future.

KEY OUTCOMES

1. **Strengthening South-South Collaboration in Health**

   - The workshop reaffirmed the importance of partnerships among countries of the Global South to share experiences, best practices, and innovations in healthcare delivery. The DAKSHIN initiative, launched under the aegis of RIS, was recognized as a vital platform to promote dialogue, joint research, and policy learning in areas such as digital health, primary healthcare, and pandemic preparedness.

2. **Recognition of India's Health Initiatives as Global Models**

   - India's flagship health programs Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) and the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) were acknowledged as transformative models demonstrating how digital technology, public-private partnerships, and strong governance can expand healthcare access. The success of eSanjeevani teleconsultation services and the CoWIN vaccination platform showcased India's capacity to deliver health innovation at scale and were cited as potential models for adaptation in other developing nations.

3. **Emphasis on Digital Health and Data Systems**

   - Delegates underscored the need to develop interoperable, secure, and ethical digital health ecosystems. Discussions emphasized the importance of adopting federated data architectures, ensuring privacy protections, and leveraging digital tools to enhance service delivery, disease surveillance, and health financing efficiency.

4. **Capacity Building and Public Health Education**

   - The workshop highlighted the role of institutions such as the Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) in strengthening the public health workforce. Participants called for scaling up context-specific public health training programs and integrating digital health competencies into curricula to build resilient systems responsive to diverse regional needs.

5. **Inclusive Health Systems and Primary Care Focus**

   - A recurring theme was the prioritization of primary healthcare and community-level service delivery as the foundation for achieving UHC. The establishment of Health and Wellness Centres under Ayushman Bharat was cited as a promising step towards decentralizing care and ensuring equitable access, especially in rural and underserved areas.

6. **Global South Experiences and Knowledge Exchange**

   - Insights from El Salvador and Argentina enriched the dialogue, showcasing diverse experiences in addressing rural health challenges, digital health adoption, and social protection mechanisms. These perspectives reinforced the value of mutual learning and the need to tailor solutions to local contexts.

7. **Commitment to Continued Engagement**

   - Participants collectively endorsed the continuation of DAKSHIN workshops on thematic areas such as health, agriculture, and digital cooperation. The event concluded with a shared commitment to deepen regional collaboration, co-develop innovative health solutions, and contribute to global efforts aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being).

RIS
Research and Information System for Developing Countries
विकासशील देशों की अनुसंधान एवं सूचना प्रणाली

RIS specialises in issues related to international economic development, trade, investment and technology. It is envisioned as a forum for fostering effective policy dialogue and capacity-building among developing countries on global and regional economic issues. The focus of the work programme of RIS is to promote South-South Cooperation and collaborate with developing countries in multilateral negotiations in various forums. Through its following centres/forums, RIS promotes policy dialogue and coherence on regional and international economic issues.

The word "DAKSHIN" (दक्षिण) is of Sanskrit origin, meaning "South." The Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, inaugurated DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence in November 2023. The initiative was inspired by the deliberations of Global South leaders during the Voice of the Global South Summits. DAKSHIN stands for Development and Knowledge Sharing Initiative. Hosted at the RIS, DAKSHIN has established linkages with leading think tanks and universities across the Global South and is building a dynamic network of scholars working on Global South issues.

AIC at RIS has been working to strengthen India's strategic partnership with ASEAN in its realisation of the ASEAN Community. AIC at RIS undertakes research, policy advocacy and regular networking activities with relevant organisations and think-tanks in India and ASEAN countries, with the aim of providing policy inputs, up-to-date information, data resources and sustained interaction, for strengthening ASEAN-India partnership.

CMEC has been established at RIS under the aegis of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPS&W), Government of India. CMEC is a collaboration between RIS and Indian Ports Association (IPA). It has been mandated to act as an advisory/technological arm of MoPSW to provide the analytical support on policies and their implementation.

FITM is a joint initiative by the Ministry of Ayush and RIS. It has been established with the objective of undertaking policy research on economy, intellectual property rights (IPRs) trade, sustainability and international cooperation in traditional medicines. FITM provides analytical support to the Ministry of Ayush on policy and strategy responses on emerging national and global developments.

BEF aims to serve as a dedicated platform for fostering dialogue on promoting the concept in the Indian Ocean and other regions. The forum focuses on conducting studies on the potential, prospects and challenges of blue economy; providing regular inputs to practitioners in the government and the private sectors; and promoting advocacy for its smooth adoption in national economic policies.

FIDC, has been engaged in exploring nuances of India's development cooperation programme, keeping in view the wider perspective of South-South Cooperation in the backdrop of international development cooperation scenario. It is a tripartite initiative of the Development Partnership Administration (DPA) of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, academia and civil society organisations.

FISD aims to harness the full potential and synergy between science and technology, diplomacy, foreign policy and development cooperation in order to meet India's development and security needs. It is also engaged in strengthening India's engagement with the international system and on key global issues involving science and technology.

As part of its work programme, RIS has been deeply involved in strengthening economic integration in the South Asia region. In this context, the role of the South Asia Centre for Policy Studies (SACEPS) is very important. SACEPS is a network organisation engaged in addressing regional issues of common concerns in South Asia.

Knowledge generated endogenously among the Southern partners can help in consolidation of stronger common issues at different global policy fora. The purpose of NeST is to provide a global platform for Southern Think-Tanks for collaboratively generating, systematising, consolidating and sharing knowledge on South South Cooperation approaches for international development.

DST-Satellite Centre for Policy Research on STI Diplomacy at RIS aims to advance policy research at the intersection of science, technology, innovation (STI) and diplomacy, in alignment with India's developmental priorities and foreign policy objectives.

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