

4th African Health Research and Innovation Funders Forum Cape Town, South Africa

Date: 02 – 05 September 2024

Venue: SunSquare Cape Town City Bowl

4th Africa Health Research and Innovation Funders Forum (AHRIFF) & MNCH Funders Convening – Report

We are excited to share the highlights and key takeaways from the recent events held at SunSquare Cape Town City Bowl, South Africa, from September 2 to 5, 2024. These gatherings included the **Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (MNCH) Funders Convening** and the **4th Africa Health Research and Innovation Funders Forum (AHRIFF)**.

MNCH Funders Convening (September 2, 2024)

The MNCH Funders Convening convened a diverse group of stakeholders to enhance maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) discussions across Africa. Opening remarks by **Moses Aloba** of the Science for Africa Foundation (SFA-Foundation) underscored the urgent need for increased investment and coordination in MNCH initiatives. Keynote speakers **Prof. Joy Lawn** and **Prof. Pius Okong** addressed progress, research gaps, and challenges in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), calling for a unified approach.

The day's sessions covered various MNCH aspects, with discussions on collaborations and successful case studies led by **Angela Dramowski** and **Lynette Kamau**. A panel moderated by **Ndeye Mbey Samb** focused on local production and regulatory challenges in MNCH manufacturing. Insights into funding mechanisms and strategies were shared, concluding with a synthesis by **Zoleka Ngcete** and **Moses Aloba**, who outlined next steps to tackle funding fragmentation, enhance research on stillbirths, and improve neonatal drug availability. The convening emphasized the importance of strengthening local research capacity, improving data collection, and developing scalable MNCH interventions.

4th Africa Health Research and Innovation Funders Forum (AHRIFF) (September 3-5, 2024)

The AHRIFF aimed to tackle critical health challenges and showcase successful initiatives.

- Day 1: September 3, 2024, The forum commenced with an outline of objectives presented by **Richard Gordon** from the South African Medical Research Council. **Jens Windahl Pedersen** of the African Centres for Disease Control and Prevention shared strategies for enhancing procurement processes. Following this, **Lindiwe Makubalo** (WHO AFRO) and **Moses Aloba** (Science for Africa Foundation) discussed the alignment of health research with national priorities, supplemented by insights from researchers in Ethiopia and Senegal. A pivotal session on TB and HIV, led by **Zoleka Ngcete** (SAMRC) and **Yogan Pillay** (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation), underscored the ongoing challenges and innovative solutions in addressing these diseases. Additionally, a capacity-building panel featuring **Susan Winks** (H3D Foundation) and **Thomas Nyirenda** (EDCTP) examined strategies to bolster research and health system capacities,

with contributions on sustainable manufacturing, market alignment, biopharmaceutical workforce successes, and genomic sequencing training.

- Day 2: September 4, 2024, The second day began with a session tailored for newcomers and those cultivating research and funding collaborations, showcasing insights from **Hoon Sang Lee** (Right Foundation), **Rex Hung** (The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust), **Rooney Fong** (Institute of Philanthropy), and **Hayato Urabe** (Global Health Innovative Technology Fund). **Erik Iversen** (Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation) discussed key considerations for US investors and Technology Transfer Officers. **Jodie Jones** (African Partners Collective) offered valuable perspectives on fostering partnerships, while **Val Snewin** (Department of Health and Social Care, National Institute for Health and Care Research) provided an overview of the UK global health research funding landscape. The day also included reports on local drug manufacturing challenges presented by **Pierre Hugo** (MMV) and **Faith Mangwanya** (UNITAID). A discussion on innovative financing mechanisms, led by **Ken Osei** (IFC), featured contributions from **Kgosi Motsoane** (European Union), **Marcson Baker** (DEG), **Arnaud Bonnet** (HDX), and **Jacob Flewelling** (USDFC). **Heather Sherwin** (ELMA Philanthropies) wrapped up the day with a session focused on program sustainability, addressing visionary funding, IP rights, market shaping, and sustainability approaches.
- Day 3: September 5, 2024, On the final day, the forum featured a report on Satellite meetings, chaired by **Doris Wangari** from the Science for Africa Foundation, which focused on Longitudinal Population Demographic Cohorts. Key presentations included **Christiane Hertz-Fowler** (Wellcome) discussing the value of cohorts, **Kobus Herbst** (SAMRC) announcing the upcoming African Population Cohorts meeting (APC), and **Moses Aloba** (SFA-Foundation) outlining APC priorities. The Climate and Health Satellite meeting was reported on by **Erika Loggin** (Wellcome) and **David O'Brien** (International Development Research Centre, pre-recorded). A session dedicated to "Low-Hanging Fruit" identified potential funding opportunities, with notable contributions from **Ntobeko Ntusi** (SAMRC) on a PREP pill for NCDs, **Kelly Chibale** (H3D Foundation) discussing malaria programs, and **Wayne Stocks** (University Technology Fund). The forum concluded with reflections from participants and a strong call for continued collaboration to propel health research across Africa.

Participation Highlights

The forum saw diverse representation from 11 African organisations, alongside participants from the UK, US, Canada, Switzerland, and other global entities, fostering a rich exchange of ideas and experiences.

Participant Feedback

A post-event questionnaire revealed overwhelmingly positive responses:

- **Meeting Worthwhile:** 9/10
- **New Connections Made:** All participants met someone new.
- **Willingness to Attend Again:** 100% affirmative response.
- **Satisfaction with Length:** 8.5/10
- **Satisfaction with Format:** 8/10

Participants underscored the importance of including more funders, particularly from organizations like the **Global Fund**, and regional players such as the **African Development Bank**.

Dr. Richard Gordon, stated, *"The enthusiasm and commitment displayed by participants reflect a strong desire for impactful partnerships and a realisation that we need to join forces where we can. We must harness this momentum to drive forward the health research agenda across the continent."*

Looking Ahead

As we move forward, participants expressed a strong call to action for blended finance discussions, tech transfer partnerships, and enhanced networking opportunities. Suggestions for future events included diverse locations beyond Cape Town, emphasizing the need for safe and accommodating venues.

In conclusion, the recent gatherings marked significant progress in health research and innovation across Africa, reinforcing our commitment to collaboration and impactful change. We look forward to building on these discussions and continuing our shared mission.

Thank you to all participants and supporters for making these events a success. Let's continue to work together to advance health research and innovation across Africa!

Image: Group Photo

