*Strengthening Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Systems for Universal Health Coverage in Africa: How can HTA improve equity, access and quality of healthcare services?*

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**Background**

Ensuring accessible, good quality health for all, while providing financial protection, especially to the most vulnerable of society, demands strong systems. Difficult decision-making and trade-offs are inevitable in resource-constrained settings, but it is crucial that these are facilitated within well-governed systems encouraging accountability, standardisation and transparency. Amongst the toughest of decisions are those around healthcare benefits. Although explicit rationing of services and entitlements is inherently difficult, the alternative is rationing that occurs passively often impacting access for example. Passive rationing can thus be a critical barrier to the goal of Universal Health Coverage (UHC), for which access is a critical element. A Health Technology Assessment (HTA) system can provide tools, structures and processes to facilitate decision-making for healthcare service provision and facilitate progress towards UHC.

**Aims and objectives**

This research will aim to provide insights for African countries developing or intending to develop HTA systems by presenting: 1) A general overview of HTA and priority-setting; 2) How HTA systems can improve progress towards intermediate objectives and goals for UHC; 3) An overview of the development of HTA systems in Africa; and 4) Key enabling and constraining factors to strengthening HTA systems within the context of UHC.

**Methodology**

A literature review of published and grey literature will be conducted to fulfil all four objectives. In particular, the World Health Organization’s healthcare financing description model outlining functions (funding, pooling, purchasing, benefits), intermediate objectives (equity in resource distribution, efficiency, accountability/transparency) and goals of UHC (access, quality and financial protection)[[1]](#footnote-1) will be utilised as a framework to guide the analysis of literature to fulfil the second objective.

**Conclusion**

It is of utmost importance that we protect and endeavour to enshrine health as a human right, UHC is one potential platform for enabling this. Strong integrated HTA systems could facilitate progress towards specific UHC intermediate objectives and goals for countries in Africa, helping to facilitate Health for All.

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1. Kutzin, J. 2013. Health financing for universal coverage and health system performance: concepts and implications for policy. Available: http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/91/8/12-113985/en/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)