# Taking forward health system governance in the African Region – a model for action

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## Background:

There is increasing understanding that addressing the challenges of governance in national health systems is essential for efforts towards universal health coverage and improving health outcomes. There are many governance frameworks already existing in literature. However, many of these do not provide the actionable advice that policymakers need to make decisions, guide use of resources and drive improved health system performance.

## Methods

Frameworks on governance that had been published in the last five years were reviewed and distilled to the common attributes used to describe the concept of governance. The product of this review was further refined through two rounds of technical consultations with health policy makers and health governance and policy experts in the Region. These provided the inputs and context to keep the approach grounded and actionable for policymakers. The outputs of the technical consultations allowed us to conceptualize the model being presented in this paper.

## Results

This process led to the definition of a set of “drivers” of governance that provide a lens to assess the stewardship of the health system and identify actions to strengthen it. These governance drivers are authority and mandate; organizational structure and culture; policy, regulatory and legal systems; accountability; corruption mitigation and public confidence; leadership skills; stakeholder engagement and partnerships; and intelligence use and knowledge management.

The drivers are interlinked and are bound together by the stewardship capacity for implementation. These interlinked drivers are also viewed in terms of their effect at different levels of the health system, national and subnational, as well as how they are influenced by the overall historical, political and macroeconomic context of each country.

## Conclusion

This model builds on existing frameworks but offers a new approach of viewing health governance by explicitly taking account of the linkages between the drivers and exploring how these shape action at national, district and community levels. It proposes a practical approach for strengthening health sector stewardship and governance towards improved health system performance.

Keywords: health governance, stewardship, universal health coverage, health system