

Are Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia prepared to meet the Sustainable Development Goals' Health Targets? A Policy Analysis

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According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), national health policies “define a country's vision, priorities, budgetary decisions and course of action (Who.int, 2016).” Policies act as a legitimate, recorded consensus of a nation’s policy makers on how to move forward in a particular area. It can serve as a point of reference when there are many changes outside of the health sector such as economic crises, coups d’état, natural disasters and armed conflicts. For low-income countries, it helps donors and other stakeholders understand not only the state’s priorities, but previous accomplishments, and unfulfilled needs of various constituencies. Published and accessible policies can also be used as a road map for nations with similar dynamics and demographics looking for guidance on how to proceed in executing health programs.

Objective: The primary aim is to evaluate and compare how prepared Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia are policy wise to achieve the thirteen health targets under Goal 3 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This project evaluates how congruent national policies and strategies are with addressing the SDG health targets.

Methods: This body of work requires secondary research and literary review of national policy documents and United Nations policy language. Knowledge management databases on ministerial websites are heavily utilized. Additionally, some informational requests are made to ministerial staff.

Results: Analysis of Specific Targets

The countries score similarly on sexual reproductive health integration, universal health coverage, and human resources policy language.

Policy Preparedness Rankings

Rwanda ranks best on the matrices. All countries are strongest in knowledge management, with the notable exception of Malawi. The countries collectively struggled most with cross-sectoral and/or intersectional policy language.

Conclusion: Rwanda is the most prepared policy wise to achieve the SDG health targets. All policy recommendations will require capacity, resources and above all, political will.