Integrating Ethnographic Data to Illuminate the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)

Organization: Academia
Data Type: Cross cutting
Region: Global
Timeline: The timeline for implementing this commitment is the two-year period between the 2024 and 2026 UN World Data Forums. The commitment is specifically designed to ensure progress from the outcomes of the 2024 forum is translated into tangible, data-driven actions by the time of the 2026 forum. This timeframe provides the window for all the key activities and strategies outlined in the commitment to be carried out and for their outcomes to be realized.
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Sponsoring Organization:

Afro Asia Institute of Strategic Studies

Supporting Organization(s):

Academic Council of the United Nations Systems (ACUNS)

Objective:

The objective of the commitment is to **bridge the gap between conventional health data and the human realities of health**. It aims to ensure that the progress from the UN World Data Forum leads to tangible, data-driven actions informed by a deeper understanding of people's lives.

Specifically, the commitment's objective is to:

- **Integrate rich qualitative data**—such as personal narratives and ethnographic observations—into formal data systems.
- **Provide a holistic understanding** of how social, cultural, and economic factors shape health outcomes.
- **Translate this nuanced data into actionable insights** that lead to more effective, equitable, and culturally sensitive public health policies and interventions, ultimately improving well-being for all.

Description:

Based on the commitment, the problem it aims to solve is the **incomplete and often misleading nature of traditional health data**.

Standard quantitative data can show *what* health disparities exist, but it often fails to explain the complex **social, cultural, and behavioral reasons behind them**. This lack of nuanced, human-centered information leads to ineffective and culturally insensitive public health interventions and policies.

The commitment seeks to solve this by **bridging the gap between quantitative data and qualitative, ethnographic insights**. By integrating personal narratives and community-level observations, it aims to provide a more holistic understanding of the root causes of health issues. This allows for the development of targeted, respectful, and ultimately more impactful solutions that truly address the social determinants of health.

This commitment, titled "Unveiling and Addressing the Social Determinants of Health," aims to solve the problem of incomplete health data by integrating rich qualitative information into formal systems.

The **key activities** involve developing new frameworks to collect ethnographic data, such as "illness narratives" and community-level observations, and advocating for ethical data practices. The core **strategy** is to bridge the gap between academic research and real-world policy, translating nuanced cultural insights into actionable recommendations. The **intended outcomes** are a more holistic, human-centered understanding of health disparities, leading to the creation of more effective and culturally sensitive public health interventions that address the root causes of disease and social inequities.

I will monitor and evaluate the success of this commitment through a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures, focusing on both the process and the ultimate impact.

Monitoring Progress

Progress will be monitored continuously throughout the 2024–2026 timeline by tracking specific activities:

- **Partnership and Collaboration:** I will track the number of new partnerships established with relevant organizations, such as UNICEF and the World Bank, and the extent of my participation in UNWDF events and related working groups.
- **Methodology Development:** I will monitor the creation of new frameworks and tools for collecting and integrating qualitative data into formal health systems.
- **Dissemination of Research:** I will track the number of reports, policy briefs, and academic publications that translate research on social determinants of health into actionable insights for policymakers.

Evaluating Success

The success of the commitment will be evaluated by its ability to achieve its core objectives and create tangible change.

- **Policy Impact:** Success will be measured by documenting instances where our integrated data approach—blending qualitative and quantitative information—has led to a change in public health policy or the design of a more culturally sensitive intervention. This could be demonstrated through case studies or policy-level acknowledgements.

- **Ethical Practice:** I will evaluate the commitment’s adherence to the principle of "data dignity" by gathering feedback from the communities involved, ensuring their narratives are represented respectfully and empower them.
- **Recognition and Influence:** Success will be demonstrated by an increased recognition of the value of medical anthropology in the global data community and its inclusion in future UN World Data Forum discussions and campaigns.