

Speaker Brief

Maternity Matters: How the private sector can advance equitable access to care

On the sidelines of [Devex @ WHA 76](#)

Thursday May 25, 2023



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Logistics & protocol

Speaker arrival time: 30 min before session start time or by 7.15 a.m. CET

Session: 8:00 - 9:00 a.m. CET

Networking breakfast: 7:15 - 8:00 a.m. CET

Location: [Intercontinental Hotel](#) 7, Chem. du Petit-Saconnex 9, 1211 Geneva, Switzerland

Event space: Ballroom B

Day-of protocol

- Speaker arrival - at least 30 minutes before segment
- No need for speakers to register upon arrival (they will be welcomed by Devex)
- Front-row audience seats are reserved for speakers
- Speakers will use handheld mics

Day-of contacts:

Ruby Ruggles Partnerships Project Manager
ruby.ruggles@devex.com | +34 671775636

Haroon Awan Partnerships Project Manager
haroon.awan@devex.com | +34 644 670 914

Jessica Rubi Rodriguez Balderas Events Manager jessica.balderas@devex.com |

About the event & panel

This event, on the sidelines of WHA 76 and in partnership with MSD for Mothers, the WHO Country Connector on Private Sector in Health and Devex will explore how more collaborative engagement with local private sector providers can advance equitable access to quality maternal health care for mothers in LMICs. Conversations will build on lessons learned from WHO's [Country Connector](#) to uncover opportunities and challenges around partnering with private sector providers.

Global maternal and newborn health [worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), which saw an increase in maternal deaths, stillbirth, and maternal depression. The COVID-19 crisis has shone a spotlight on the lack of capacity, resilience and fragility of many health systems. A major gap was the inability of many countries to steward their whole system towards the response. It is also apparent that many governments are financially stretched to bridge the gaps to meet the health care investment necessary. The capacity of local private actors was seldom integrated, despite the opportunity to contribute in helping countries achieve Universal Health Coverage and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals.

Expanding access to digital health innovations can play an important role in improving equitable access to care for mothers and babies, especially in low-resource settings. Digital solutions can help address critical service delivery gaps in maternal health care and improve efficiencies in service delivery by connecting all stakeholders and service providers ahead of each delivery. Yet, these solutions are often underfunded and lack the necessary government and financial support needed to scale.

When it comes to maternal health, there is an urgent need to prioritize safe, accessible, and equitable maternity care across health systems. In 2020 the WHO's Advisory Group on the governance of the private sector for UHC published a strategy report on "[Engaging the private health service delivery sector through governance in mixed health systems](#)" to redress a critical health system governance gap for the effective engagement of the private sector in health in the context of UHC. In 2020, WHO launched [The Country Connector on Private Sector in Health](#) to serve as a platform for sharing learnings, connecting countries to resources and tools needed for stronger health system governance, and better public policy toward the private sector in health.

Panelists



David Clarke

**Acting Unit Head, Health Systems Governance and Policy,
WHO - [Twitter](#)/[LinkedIn](#)**

David currently works at WHO HQ as the head of the Health Systems Governance Unit and as the global technical lead on health systems governance. David started WHO's work program on private sector engagement and was also responsible for establishing the Country Connector on the Private Sector in Health, a multi stakeholder platform that aims to help countries to align the efforts of the public and private sectors to improve the health of all. David is from Wellington in New Zealand and is a lawyer by training. Before joining WHO he worked as a partner in a consultancy firm and as a senior official in the New Zealand Ministry of Health.



Hassan Belkhaty

Co-founder, Southbridge A&I - [LinkedIn](#)

Hassan Belkhaty Zougari is a founding partner of Southbridge A&I. Former McKinsey Partner in charge of the social sector in Africa and the public sector in Morocco, Hassan is an expert in public policy, in the transformation of public enterprises and social programs, particularly in public health. Very active in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, he has initiated several programs to support SMEs and start-ups on a national and continental scale. Hassan also designed and developed the I3 program, a pan-African initiative funded by Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation that supports the commercialization and potential impact on African health systems of 60 promising start-up and/or growth companies. Father of two daughters, Hassan is also a writer in his spare time, author of several publications. He graduated from HEC in 2006 as valedictorian.



Aminatou Sar

West Africa Hub and Senegal country Director, PATH -

[Twitter](#)/[LinkedIn](#)

Aminatou Sar is PATH's West Africa Regional Hub and Senegal country director, overseeing work in four main areas: reducing the burden of infectious diseases, health system strengthening, family planning, and community empowerment. Preceding her transition to hub and country director in 2017, she worked with the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition as senior regional advisor for the Forum on Contraceptive Security in Francophone Africa. A journalist by profession, Aminatou Sar worked many years with Senegalese newspapers and radio stations before joining the world of international nongovernmental organizations. Prior to joining PATH in 2016, she worked ten years at the Plan International Regional Office for West and Central Africa as child media programs coordinator, promoting child rights through radio in 10 countries. She also served for six years as the head of Amnesty International's office in West Africa and Director of their Human Rights Education program in Africa, covering 13 countries in western, eastern, central and southern Africa.



Vivianne Ihekweazu

Managing Director, Nigeria Health Watch - [Twitter](#)

Vivianne Ihekweazu is the Managing Director of Nigeria Health and leads the strategic direction of the organisation and is responsible for designing and implementing health communication and advocacy strategies. Vivianne has over 20 years' experience as a communication professional and played a leading role in the COVID-19 crisis & emergency risk communications team, supporting the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control. She has an MBA from the Gordon Institute of Business Science (University of Pretoria) and is an African Public Health Leaders Fellow at the Centre for Universal Health at Chatham House.

Interviewed by



Rumbi Chakamba

Associate Editor at Devex - [Twitter](#)/[LinkedIn](#)

Rumbi Chakamba is an Associate Editor at Devex based in Botswana, who has worked with regional and international publications including News Deeply, The Zambezi, Outriders Network, and Global Sisters Report. She holds a bachelor's degree in international relations from the University of South Africa.

Event run of show - you will be speaking in the segment highlighted below

Time	Session
7:15 a.m. CET	Networking breakfast and registration
8 a.m. CET	Opening remarks Rumbi Chakamba , Associate Editor at Devex
8:03 a.m. CET	Fireside chat - Women health workers and leadership in maternal health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Roopa Dhatt, Executive Director and Co-founder, Women in Global Health • Isata Dumbuya, Director of Reproductive Maternal Neonatal Child Adolescent Health and Maternal Centre of Excellence for Partners In Health Sierra Leone <p>Interviewed by: Alexandre Cabaret, Senior Director, Partnerships at Devex</p>
8:15 a.m. CET	Panel - How the private sector can advance equitable access to care <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Clarke, Acting Unit Head, Health Systems Governance and Policy, WHO • Hassan Belkhatat, Co-founder, Southbridge A&I • Aminatou Sar, West Africa Hub and Senegal country Director, PATH • Vivianne Ihekweazu, Managing Director, Nigeria Health Watch <p>Interviewed by: Rumbi Chakamba, Associate Editor at Devex</p>
8:45 a.m. CET	Audience Q&A Firestarter: Temitayo Erogbogbo , Director of multilateral organizations engagement, MSD and advocacy lead, MSD for Mothers
8:55 a.m. CET	Closing remarks Suraya Dalil , Director of the WHO Special Programme on Primary Health Care, Former Senior UNICEF official and Minister of Health of Afghanistan

Guiding questions

Please find below the guiding questions from the interviewer, although note that the exact question and order might change depending on the flow of the conversation. In addition, we advise you not to prepare written answers to the questions and to not read out the answers during the session to ensure the conversation is as dynamic as possible. We'll aim to highlight on-the-ground examples to these questions to make space for plain language answers, to avoid jargon where possible and allow for better understanding from the audience.

For David Clarke:

- ❖ In 2020, the WHO's Advisory Group on the governance of the private sector for UHC published a strategy report titled *"Engaging the private health service delivery sector through governance in mixed health systems"* – three years down the line, are you seeing better private sector integration and more mixed health systems?
- ❖ The WHO has also launched the *Country Connector on Private Sector in Health* to serve as a platform for sharing learnings and connecting countries to resources. Can you share some of the lessons learned from the initiative so far? And perhaps a specific example of where the Country Connector has resulted in stronger health system governance?

For Hassan Belkhatat:

- ❖ Southbridge A&I is an investment consulting firm specializing in economic and social development in Africa, and you recently received a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to create a working capital mechanism dedicated to healthcare distributors on the continent. Can you tell us more about the gaps in the health systems that SMEs can help fill? And how is Southbridge A&I supporting their integration into the wider health system?
- ❖ Southbridge is also supporting startups in the health tech space through I3 or Investing In Innovation. What does the funding landscape look like for health startups and what needs to change?

For Aminatou Sar:

- ❖ Digital Health is a big part of PATH's portfolio and you work with countries to develop and scale digital technologies. How do SMEs working on digital health fit into health systems in a country like Senegal? How are they supporting access to maternal health care services?
- ❖ Looking at Senegal, what can be done to improve the integration of these SMEs and social entrepreneurs into the country's health systems? And how is PATH working to support stronger health systems and improve access to care by integrating these local private sector providers?

For Vivianne Ihekweazu:

- ❖ Part of your portfolio at Nigeria Health Watch includes maternal, newborn, and child health and you have highlighted the various ways that the government can leverage Public-Private Partnerships to Improve Access to Quality Maternal Care. Can you take us through some success stories from Nigeria?
 - ❖ It's often assumed that private sector providers are prohibitively expensive. What's the situation in Nigeria and are there cases where they are actually helping to expand access?
- ❖ You played a crucial role in the COVID-19 response in Nigeria and worked closely with the country's Center for Disease Control in public health communications. In what ways can better integration of private sector providers help improve access to maternal health services during an emergency or crisis, and help make health systems more resilient?

For all:

- ❖ What's your one call to action for everyone gathered here in Geneva this week – how can they help support more collaboration with the private sector to ultimately deliver better outcomes for patients?