The third function of the observatory is to serve as a platform for networking and communities of practice by offering IT-based networking facilities, and as a ‘one-stop shop’ for information and evidence. Members of communities learn and work together and strive to use the best available evidence for policy and decision making.

With WHO support, several countries have started work towards establishing their own national health observatories (NHOs) to strengthen their national health information system, while a number of others have expressed interest in doing so. NHOs have similar functions and structure to that of the AHO and serve as multi-stakeholder and collaborative structures and platforms allowing national and sub-national stakeholders to come together voluntarily to address issues of common concern.

The Observatory has a strong mandate from Member States of the African Region. The Ouagadougou ministerial declaration on primary health care and health systems (2008) and the Algiers declaration on research for health (2008), both endorsed by the 58th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa (Yaoundé, 2008), requested the creation of a health observatory in the Region. Furthermore, at the Sixty-second session of the WHO Regional Committee for Africa, the ministers of health of the African Region passed a resolution to establish national health observatories in their respective countries and requested WHO’s technical support for the purpose.

AHO is a product of the World Health Organization’s Regional Office for Africa. The Observatory is coordinated by a Unit in the Health Systems and Services Cluster.

Further information can be obtained from the Observatory website at www.aho.afro.who.int
The African Health Observatory

The African Health Observatory (AHO) is a web-based portal developed to improve the availability and use of information and evidence for policy and decision-making. It serves four core functions:

- monitoring health situation and trends, including progress on the health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other internationally agreed targets
- production and sharing of evidence through the analysis and synthesis of information
- improving the translation and use of evidence for policy and decision-making by providing platforms for networking and communities of practice
- supporting countries establish national or sub-national health observatories to strengthen their national health information systems

As a repository of extensive information and evidence on national health systems, AHO strives to play a key role in the policy dialogue, monitoring the implementation and evaluation of national strategies and plans. The AHO consists of a number of platforms.

**Collect and share data to inform decisions**

**Thematic as well as country profiles are also prepared and shared through the various publications of the observatory.**

A major publication is the African Health Monitor – a serial publication that comes out four times a year. A comprehensive report on the health situation in the African Region is also published once every 5 or 6 years.

Another AHO platform offers comprehensive and analytical country health profiles to inform policy and decision making on wide range of areas:

- health status and trends – life expectancies, mortality and disabilities
- health systems – governance, partnerships, finance, human resources, products and infrastructure, community participation, information and evidence
- specific programmes and services – family and reproductive health, vaccination – and communicable and non-communicable diseases and disorders
- social and environmental determinants, risk factors for health
- sections that describe progress on internationally agreed goals and targets such as the health-related MDGs

The AHO data and statistics platform offers access to the best available health-related data and statistics on the African Region, including comprehensive statistical health profiles for the Region as a whole and for each of its 47 member countries. This information is also shared with the Atlas of African Health Statistics, a yearly publication that contains maps and graphs on wide range indicators on health status, systems, key determinants and progress on the health-related MDGs.