salad
South African
Learning Alliance for the DHS

BRIEFING NOTE

The South African Learning Alliance for the District Health System

A learning network and community of practice, established in 2023, bringing together researchers and decision-makers across provinces to:

Enable knowledge generation, sharing and learning

Identify and disseminate innovations and priorities across provinces

Strengthen the district health system (DHS) for improved health outcomes

What is the DHS?

The DHS is South Africa's public governance structure for an equitable, primary healthcare system. It was established by the National Health Act of 2003. Today, districts and sub-districts are key units of governance and innovation—focusing on integrated service delivery, community and frontline co-creation, National Health Insurance reforms, and addressing intersecting crises from pandemics to climate change, all while facing tighter budgets.

The origins of SALAD

SALAD arose out of a strong national interest in strengthening the DHS and from provincial-level experience of system-strengthening partnerships between government and health policy and systems researchers.

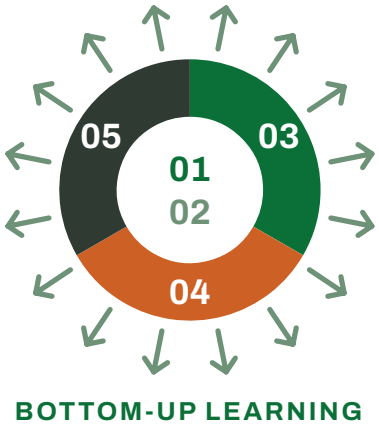
The network facilitates knowledge and experience exchange and bottom-up learning on the DHS, to identify future policy and strategy needs within and across settings. Ultimately it aims to strengthen the DHS, thereby contributing to improved health outcomes.

While challenges vary by district and province, requiring tailored responses, there is significant activity across settings from which all can learn.

Decision-makers, researchers and partners in one network

Senior and middle decision-makers from all nine provincial governments and the national department, researchers from higher education institutions and non-governmental partners supporting DHS development.

How SALAD is organised



01 Steering Group
Fifteen members coordinating activities and shaping SALAD's direction.

02 Secretariat
Based at the University of the Western Cape and the University of Cape Town; holds the shared space day to day.

03 Provincial Engagement Working Group
Links the nine provinces in monthly meetings focused on sharing best practices, strategies and innovations.

04 Thematic working groups and nodes
Evolve to meet current needs, currently focused on research, DHS hospitals, and advancing DHS leadership.

05 Knowledge mobilisation
Carry the learning outward through publications, webinars and other events.

What SALAD does

- **Cross-provincial networking** across the nine provinces, the National Department of Health, universities and partners
- **Webinars** highlighting challenges, strategies and innovative practices in the DHS
- **Documenting learning on the DHS** via a special South African Medical Journal series, policy and practice briefs, and a policy archive; with efforts collaboratively driven by decision-makers and academics
- **Policy engagement** at the national and provincial level
- **Annual retreats** to review activities, reflect on purpose and chart future directions

One place for everything the network learns

A Repository centralises knowledge generated and curated through SALAD including webinars, reports, news, journal articles, policy briefs and practice briefs. Content is organised by theme and publication type.

SIX THEMES

- The DHS in South Africa
- Community-oriented primary care
- Monitoring, evaluation and learning
- Health financing
- Leadership
- Quality health services

Scan the QR code to access the SALAD Repository

GET IN TOUCH

General enquiries and to join the network, contact: **SALADLearning@gmail.com**