An international collaborative network working on religious health assets and systems

Seeking to strengthen evidence and collaboration between practitioners and researchers working on religious assets (actors / institutions), that function within health- and community systems, especially in low-and-middle income settings.

Our work includes:

- Facilitating interdisciplinary research on religion, public health and development
- A special focus on health systems and policy
- Building capacity in research-practitioners, especially in development contexts
- Multisectoral networking
- Intentional South-South and South-North partnerships
- Identification and understanding of religious health assets
- Development and dissemination of research materials and tools
- Research and evaluation of key projects and initiatives

IRHAP functions as an open and non-partisan international collaborative – seeking to link and assist any colleagues who are working to build evidence or knowledge about the interface of religion and health systems research and practice.

In addition, IRHAP directly coordinates specific health policy and systems research projects out of the Health Policy and Systems Division within the School of Public Health and Family Medicine at the University of Cape Town.

BACKGROUND

Established initially as the African Religious Health Assets Programme (ARHAP) in 2002, when a working group of academics, policy-makers and practitioners recognized the general paucity of studies on faith-inspired actors and institutions in public health - both in respect of knowing what is there, and in intelligently assessing what faith-inspired initiatives do best, and how they do this, in the face of growing public health crises. The first regional focus of the group was on Africa, but the network quickly spread over the years to include diverse international settings.

This work has included primary and empirical research studies; the development of interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks and research tools; ongoing literature review and documentary support; network building and collaborative support; and the focus on the development of a shared ‘language’ for transdisciplinary engagement.

CONTACT

IRHAP’s administrative hub is hosted by the Health Policy and Systems Division at the School of Public Health and Family Medicine, at the University of Cape Town.

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