

Joint Assessment of National Strategies Report back on preparatory mission to Rwanda, October 2009

Background and objectives

The MOH Rwanda expressed interest in joint assessment of its national health plan. It requested a mission at the time of its annual health sector review to discuss this. Rwanda's new Health Sector Strategic Plan has been developed through an extensive process of review and consultation. It was approved by Cabinet in July 2009. A mission of the Core Team (Finn Schleimann, World Bank; Phyllida Travis, WHO) took place in October. This had three objectives: understanding current planning and review mechanisms and timing; clarity on the joint assessment tool, principles and process; facilitate a decision in Rwanda on how to move ahead.

People met The Minister and staff in the MOH; MOF; most development partners. A presentation on IHP+ more generally was made at the health sector review.

Main issues raised

- *Objectives* For the MOH, there were several reasons for doing a joint assessment. First, to help strengthen the plan's implementation. There was also a view that this should not be seen as a one off exercise but as a first step in what could become the usual basis for sector plan assessments in Rwanda. Second, to gain credibility from partners. Third, that it would help Rwanda to meet its global responsibilities as an IHP+ signatory, and help shape further development of the tool.
- *Scope* The MOH felt strongly that the assessment should take the entire national health sector strategic plan as its unit of focus, not focus on specific topics. It also stressed that one of the strengths of the draft IHP+ tool is that it has multiple agency support. The integrity of the current tool should therefore be maintained. However, assessment of feasibility of implementation would be enhanced by including a district perspective.
- *Timing and transaction costs* A number of concerns were raised by government and development partners, given that the plan has been recently endorsed by Cabinet after a lengthy development process. The eventual decision was to do the assessment in early 2011, at the time of the mid-term review.

Proposed implementation arrangements

In line with well-accepted processes in Rwanda, and to balance the principles of being country-led but having an independent element, the following was proposed by the Director Planning in a meeting with the IHP+ Team, and subsequently accepted by the Minister.

- Create a small Joint Steering Committee with representatives from the MOH, development partners and other key stakeholders including civil society. This Committee will endorse the country specific TOR and the assessment framework; agree the scheduling of the assessment; and endorse the proposed joint assessment team.
- For the joint assessment team, a Technical Team should be led by an independent team-leader, with a mix of members selected on technical merit. Members will come from inside and outside Rwanda - from the MOH itself; local civil society and consultants; development and funding agencies. The Team should not exceed 10 members. The team submits its report to the Joint Steering Committee.
- The Team-Leader is responsible for preparing the final draft report, and the Joint Steering Committee co-chairs for the final Report. In the unlikely event of irreconcilable differences between the Joint Steering Committee and the Technical Team, the final draft would be submitted to the MoH, stakeholders and the IHP+ JA core team.
- 1 or 2 people responsible for team logistic support.

Lessons learned

- Preparatory mission essential
- Strong WHO / Bank collaboration on the ground helped enormously
- Timing of mission was good - able to reach large number of stakeholders through coinciding with the joint review
- Explaining IHP+: a continuing need for demystification
- Important to utilise established SWAp mechanisms