

## **Accelerating results: intensified action on seven behaviours by all development partners**

Note for the IHP+ Steering Committee 15 January 2014

### **Progress**

One year ago, the key message from a meeting of all IHP+ partners and country teams was that while there is progress in putting the internationally agreed Paris, Accra and Busan principles about development cooperation into practice, it is slower than expected. Importantly, it was agreed that overall, countries have gone further than development agencies in doing so. By May, a response in the form of a twin-track approach was agreed. There would be intensified action to improve performance on seven behaviours that are recognised as key to effective development cooperation, in countries and in development agencies. This combined effort will lead to more rapid and sustained results. Progress, and the process of change, will be documented for the benefit of others.

Ministers from several countries were ready to actively champion this approach, as were leaders of global health agencies. This note summarizes what currently works well, and what works less well. It then outlines ways forward for the Steering Committee to consider.

Rapid reviews to identify priorities for action on the seven behaviours have taken place in three countries so far. The reviews have had a high profile. The seven behaviours have proved a good framework for strategic discussion of current problems in development co-operation. Priorities have been identified. Next steps have been discussed locally and shared with agency HQs. While there is follow-up on some priorities at country level, there is less evidence of *intensified* action, in part due to the absence of sufficiently explicit targets and timelines. On the second track - individual agency HQ review of performance on all seven behaviours - some agencies have held internal discussions but to date, this has been limited. There is progress to report on efforts to tackle one of the behaviours through massive collective action – improving measurement of results by harmonizing and aligning agency reporting requirements. However, this will not remove the need to simultaneously take a critical look at agency action regarding the other behaviours which impede overall progress.

Thus, the rationale for intensified action on the seven behaviours remains. The overall twin-track approach remains valid, and the original intent to support intensified action and carefully document its effect in 4-5 countries is appropriate and desirable. To maintain the impetus for accelerated change some modifications will be helpful.

The Steering Committee is invited to comment and advise on proposed next steps in two areas: follow-up on in-country action plans; and regaining momentum for comprehensive action within international development agencies.

## Issues for discussion

### **1. *Strengthening both follow-up within countries and links to HQ action where needed***

More attention needs to be paid to the implementation of agreed country-based actions, and to effecting changes in agency HQ behaviour in response to findings at country level.

In countries, the first step proposed is to review responsibilities for achieving targets and adhering to timelines for actions that were agreed initially by government and agencies, and make these more explicit. Where technical support is required, this can be mobilised through existing country mechanisms, with backstopping by the IHP+ Core Team.

For issues requiring HQ agency action, greater HQ staff engagement in follow-up is needed. It is proposed to make a start by creating informal teams consisting of members from the key agencies active in the country concerned, with the mandate of providing a link between follow-up action at country level and in HQs. The next country rapid reviews would be the natural opportunity to take this idea forward.

### **2. *International development partner review and action on the seven behaviours***

The second element of the agreed twin-track approach was intensified action by international development partners, so as to meet commitments to more harmonised and aligned ways of working. Action would involve a rapid but critical self-assessment in each of the seven areas, to diagnose causes of underperformance and to identify actions to be taken, with targets and timelines. These would be shared with other development partners and with country offices.

Given the limited progress by agencies in reviewing performance on all seven behaviours, and the emergence of collective agency action focused on one single area, the question is whether this aspect of the twin-track approach should be retained, or it should be dropped in favour of collective agency action on one behaviour at a time.

A time-limited focus on a single issue is attractive and lends itself well to high level political engagement. However, this approach also has significant limitations. Opportunities for responding to patterns of problems emerging across the country rapid reviews, that require change in a number of agency policies and procedures, could be neglected in favour of more visible big wins. For greater long-term impact at country level, a more comprehensive approach to changing ways of working within agencies is required. For this purpose, the case for a critical internal review to inform agencies' own reform processes remains strong. A combination of both approaches is most likely to achieve greater gains.