

## Session 6: Improving technical assistance: issues and opportunities

### Background note for the 3<sup>rd</sup> IHP+ Steering Committee

#### BACKGROUND

In December 2012, the IHP+ Country Health Teams Meeting identified a need to improve the management, coordination and effectiveness of technical assistance. Following an informal expert consultation in early 2014, five rapid analyses of current country practice were completed, based on a framework that examined TA demand and supply side issues. The paper summarising TA issues and challenges from these country reviews is attached. A consultation on 30 October 2014 brought together a mix of TA users, providers and academics to discuss emerging themes and consider possible action. Participants agreed that a small number of actionable messages should be communicated to development partners to ensure follow up. Suggestions are grouped under three main headings below. By the time of the Steering Committee they will have also been discussed at the IHP+ Country Health Team meeting in Siem Reap.

The Steering Committee is invited to discuss these messages, and what actions can be taken.

#### ACTIONABLE MESSAGES

##### Message 1

##### **about articulating demand - *and strengthening individual and institutional capacity of countries to do so***

- TA requirements and demand to be clearly articulated as part of overall sector development strategy
- Rationale for demand to be discussed and reviewed through transparent dialogue that takes on board the political economy context and serves to build trust
- Long-term vision of capacity development to be made explicit, clarifying assumptions about the path leading to improved national capacity and performance.
- Where national capacity requires strengthening, donors and/or agreed 'honest/arms-length brokers' to cooperate in supporting development of systems for articulating demand and for coordinating TA

##### Message 2

##### **about supply and procurement of TA – *and changing donor behaviour/inflexible rules and procedures, where needed***

- A clearer understanding to be reached by all actors of what TA is potentially available and how to access it
- Effective mechanisms for harmonization and for addressing issues of competition between donors to be established,
- Transparency about procedures/procurement systems and relevant rules of the game of individual donors to be improved
- Pragmatic approaches to be emphasised, avoiding overly ambitious mapping exercises and complex procurement systems that can hamper rather than enhance action

### **Message 3**

#### **about accountability and performance – *and supporting further analytic work unpacking capacity requirements and assessments***

- Issues around dual accountability to be clarified and acknowledged from the outset, including counterpart arrangements
- Capacity building objectives to be explicitly and clearly articulated with a view to legitimizing important ‘soft’ processes and achievements
- Push for speedy results and potentially perverse incentives for TA imposed by donor agencies to be reviewed and balanced with longer-term objectives for strengthened national capacity.