

IHP+ In Brief

A synthesis of *Better results through effective development cooperation: the heart of the work we do*.



Better results through effective development cooperation: the heart of the work we do

Background

In late 2012 in preparation for the bi-annual International Health Partnership (IHP+) Country Health Teams meeting, the IHP+ Core Team commissioned this paper about effective development cooperation. Catriona Waddington wrote the paper with inputs from the IHP+ Core team and in-country World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank staff. It draws on existing case studies of cooperative action in Pakistan, Mali, and Nepal to illustrate how working together and supporting government leadership can secure better results in the health sector; recommendations can be applied broadly.

Key points

Working together and supporting government leadership are two principles at the heart of effective development cooperation and can secure better results. Although putting them into practice may take additional effort, there are usually some simple ways to begin.

This paper finds that aid is most efficient when it supports governments to develop large-scale, sustainable services. Examples include the Lady Health Worker program in Pakistan; the development of a network of

health facilities focusing on high-impact maternal and child health interventions in Mali; and a scheme in Nepal in which maternal care was provided free of charge, complemented by cash incentives to mothers and service providers.

Effective development cooperation is not just about promoting government ownership and leadership or using government systems. Success of the interventions above also hinged on development partners and country governments collaborating to ensure alignment with government priorities and procedures. The case studies demonstrate that working with governments gives the best chance of sustainable success. The principles of aid effectiveness do not ignore the shortcomings of government systems and the complexities of political economies, but they encourage partners to seek opportunities to work together to address these issues in a collaborative way.

Putting in place strong accountability for results mechanisms also played an important role in the country successes outlined above. Everyone who accesses, provides, plans and pays for health services needs to know who is responsible for these services, and how to hold them to account. Accountability is important in fragile states. Examples from countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone demonstrate that aid can be used to improve governance even in difficult circumstances.

Recommendations

Based on experience to date in a number of countries, this paper finds that all development partners could maximize their effectiveness by taking action in the following ways:

1. Remember aid effectiveness is a mindset. Ask yourself: what opportunities are there to work with others?
2. Make full use of the variety of modalities which promote aid effectiveness: essentially, those which enhance cooperation between partners and minimize avoidable burdens on governments.
3. Empower and incentivize staff to promote and model aid effectiveness.
4. Agree appropriate methodologies to monitor contribution, not attribution.
5. Celebrate good news stories, and do not be afraid to include more complex stories of how change and progress happens and what role aid plays in this.
6. Where a government system passes a global fit-for-purpose test, use that system as much as possible.

Taking a long-term view and embracing the challenges posed by working together in order to support scaled up, sustainable, pro-poor programs with positive results is at the heart of aid effectiveness. This paper shows us why this is so important, and how to begin.

Reference

[Waddington, C \(2013\) Better results through effective development cooperation: the heart of the work we do](#)