

International Health Partnership and Related Initiatives (IHP+)

Country Health Sector Teams:

Building on good practice and looking to the future

Terms of Reference: 07 August 2008

Rationale for work

The International Health Partnership and related initiatives (IHP+) has been developed to coordinate development assistance and increase investments in national health plans and health systems strengthening to accelerate the achievement of the health MDGs. Given that this work is country driven, the country health sector teams that work to develop and implement the agreements in the country compact are of central importance to the success of IHP+. Improved coordination would not only save time, but also improve the overall efficiency in achieving results. The *purpose* of this work is to understand better existing good practice in the work of country health sector teams, and to identify opportunities for disseminating this good practice, and improving the effectiveness country health sector teams in taking forward the work of the IHP+ as agreed in country compacts (or local equivalents).

Background

The term 'country health sector team' is still relatively new, and most countries currently have a variety of arrangements for international and national stakeholders to work together in support of the implementation of national plans and priorities. A considerable amount of work has gone into strengthening international engagement with national stakeholders in the health sector. Some examples are provided here:

- In countries with well developed sector wide approaches, donor partners and governments have often agreed Memoranda of Understandings and Codes of Conduct to guide their support to government.
- The UN Development Group has launch a number of reforms, in particular the Delivering as one pilots, to coordinate it work in country and to make its development efforts more effective¹, and work with OECD/DAC on 'Health as a tracer sector sector'.
- Following the recommendations of the Global Task Team, the agencies involved in taking forward national plans for HIV/AIDs and strategies have coordination groups for working with government and other national agencies.
- The Global Fund has mandated Country Coordination Mechanisms to oversee the development and implementation of country proposals to the Global Fund, bringing in civil society groups. Similarly, groups exist in many countries to over see the development of proposals submitted to the GAVI Alliance.
- In addition, the government in many countries will have a number of groups to over see a variety of functions linked to the implementation of national health policies and plans, some of which will involve international agencies, for

¹ <http://www.undg.org/?P=7>

example committees on monitoring and evaluation, health information systems, and procurement.

It is well recognized that central to the success of such coordination mechanisms involving international and national stakeholders is strong government leadership and the principles agreed in the Paris Declaration. The performance of country health sector teams will depend on this, but will also be dependant on how well the team works together, and the incentives for this to happen. It has been increasingly recognized that civil society engagement in these coordination mechanisms is critically important to ensure transparency, accountability and identification of gaps in the delivery of services for vulnerable groups².

There are now examples where international agencies work together to set up a representative group to work within a country, mandated to perform certain tasks. Such experience may be of some interest to those pursuing a more effective way for international and national agencies to work together to delivery on the common priorities in national health plans and strategies.

Specific objectives

- 1 **Summarize evidence:** Synthesize available evidence on what constitutes effective health sector coordination involving national and international stakeholders:
 - i Using available information (eg 'stick taking reports'), map out the current arrangements for country health sector teams in countries working in the IHP+ (ie who is on them, how they work, what sub-groups exist etc).
 - ii Use already available country case studies to illustrate different aspects of effective national coordination in health and HIV/AIDs, including the positive experiences of civil society engagement;
 - iii Provide an inventory of the different tools and mechanisms (with examples) that currently exist to promote more effective coordination, with indications on how these can overcome existing problems in country health sector teams;
 - iv Develop a consultation document for those involved in the IHP+ and country health sector teams, to consider the current evidence and different tools and mechanisms for more effective working amongst national and international stakeholders working in the health sector. This would summarize current thinking on:
 - The leadership role of government
 - The roles of WHO, World Bank and the wider UN country team;
 - The roles of bilateral development partners;
 - The role of civil society;
 - The role of private sector;
 - Engagement of development partners with no country presence

- 2 **Make recommendations:** Prepare a report for the SuRG that makes recommendations on:

² IHP+ paper is currently being finalized: Guidance on Civil Society Engagement in Country Health Sector Teams; July 16

- i The short term incentives or mechanisms³ governments, international agencies and development partners can put in place to encourage better working and wider engagement (eg CSO and private sector) in country health sector teams, and how to manage current disincentives.
 - ii What longer term options exist for more formal mandating of country health sector teams, based on the experience in different situations (eg peace-keeping, humanitarian responses, UN reform pilots), and in other sectors (eg Education).
 - iii The options for IHP+ to strengthen the work of in-country health sector teams, in the short, medium and long term, including how this links with agreed funding arrangements for the national health plan, and the roles of different players in country health sector team.
- 3 **Facilitate action in countries involved in the IHP+:** The work will proceed further in countries as opportunities arise. The work will:
- i Map out opportunities in countries for strengthening country health sector team working;
 - ii As requested by countries, facilitate the preparation of tools and training sessions to strengthen country health sector teams.

Specific tasks in taking forward the work: The work will be taken forward by a lead consultant working closely with the IHP+ core team (or a cross-agency group set up for this purpose by the SuRG), and will report on progress to the Scaling up Reference Group. Once the consultant has been identified they will:

- Prepare a short inception report on how they intend to take forward the work, including engagement with country teams, with milestones and a budget agreed with IHP+ core team.
- Undertake a stakeholder analysis to identify how different groups would need to be approached so as to successfully carry out the work.
- Gather the views on country health sector teams that have been gained from the group handling the first external review of the IHP+ (Responsible Action).
- Prepare a short communication for different stakeholder groups to clarify the objectives of the work, and how this will be achieved.
- Undertake the work, with regular communications to IHP+ core team/working group on progress and any problems encountered.
- Preparation and presentation of draft outputs:
 - o Consultation document for country health sector teams;
 - o Report on options for strengthening country health sector teams;
 - o Plan for taking forward country specific opportunities to strengthen country health sector teams;
- Completion of final outputs.

Timetable: 60 days between August and December 2008

³ The definition for incentives used here is very broad, but should become more specific as the work progresses.