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Implementing the Health Systems Funding Platformⁱ

Country Progress Update - October 2010

The Health Systems Funding Platform's current partners - the GAVI Alliance, the Global Fund, the World Bank and the World Health Organization (WHO) - are working jointly in several countries to augment and streamline funding, to further harmonise their activities and to align them to country priorities and planning/budgeting cycles. The Platform is fully aligned with the principles of the International Health Partnership (IHP+) and is open to all countries, including IHP+ partner countries.ⁱⁱ It varies according to each country's priorities but is focusing on developing one common financial management framework, one monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework, and one joint review process in support of one national health strategy and plan.

The Platform is moving forward in a number of countries. This includes countries which are ready to **undertake a joint assessment of national strategy (JANS), developed through IHP+**. The JANS process involves all stakeholders (including the government, civil society and development partners) and is used both to strengthen national health plans and strategies and to bring Platform and other partners together in support of these. The JANS can also be used as a key input for grant and credits focused on supporting health systems.

Other countries where Platform work is taking place include those **currently receiving health systems strengthening support** through grants and credits. Consultations inform how best to align with country procedures and harmonise institutional processes. This entails understanding country specific health system strengthening programming, planning, budgeting and reporting cycles, program oversight, financial management and procurement arrangements, provision of technical support and contributions of other development partners (not only Platform partners).

In **Nepal**, the Ministry of Health together with development partners, applied the JANS tool to revise and strengthen the Nepal Health Sector Program, and merged the assessment with reviews of World Bank, and DFID funded programme. Two civil society organisations - Rotary Nepal and Resource Centre for Primary Health Care – also actively participated in the joint annual review and the development of the Nepal Health Sector Program 2010 – 2015. In August 2010, leading aid donors (DFID, World Bank, GAVI, USAID, UNFPA and UNICEF) signed a Joint Financing Agreement (JFA) indicating their commitment in support of the health sector program based on one financial management framework – with one reporting mechanism and one external audit – as opposed to the burden of multiple, agency-specific reports and audits. This JFA is one of the first steps to implementing the Platform in Nepal. It brings together donors which are able to 'pool' their development funds in support of the Government's health programs (World Bank, DFID, AusAID and GAVI) with those such as USAID, UNFPA and UNICEF that provide on-budget resources but do not pool their funds. By committing its health donors to this new simplified approach, the Government of Nepal hopes to further accelerate progress in improving access to essential health services.

Ethiopia is at the early stages of implementing the Platform, having carried out a JANS in summer 2010 culminating in a July 2010 workshop. The assessment, which took place over several months, was led by the Ministry of Health and brought together international and local development partners including civil society. Completing the JANS in Ethiopia was seen by the government as a key part of the process to develop and strengthen the Health Sector Development Plan and built on existing sector coordination and dialogue mechanisms. Following the JANS, discussions are ongoing regarding how to build on this process to better harmonise and align health sector support in Ethiopia. All Platform partners



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are involved in these discussions, especially around financial management, reporting and monitoring, and are exploring the possibility to support the jointly assessed and strengthened health sector strategy and plan with new funding. The overall focus is on extending an equitable and integrated service delivery model throughout the country.

Countries that have already had a JANS include Uganda. Other countries that have decided to undergo a JANS process include **Ghana, Mali, Vietnam, and Rwanda.**

In **Cambodia**, a first joint country mission (with Global Fund, GAVI, WB and WHO representatives) took place in early June 2010. As a result of these discussions, all three funding agencies agreed to align their performance indicators with those of the government, and work with the government's Department of Planning and Health Information to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation system, thus reducing transaction costs. Joint studies are also being planned to support the upcoming mid-term review of the national health strategic plan to see how the combined inputs of the four agencies can be harnessed. In addition, GAVI and the Global Fund will join in next year's mid-term review. Over the next several months, further talks with the Ministry of Health and in-country development partners will guide specific work and next steps. The Platform in Cambodia is contributing to existing donor coordination efforts; Cambodia is a member of IHP+ and many in country donors, both pooling and non-pooling, have signed on to a Joint Partnership Agreement, which includes a joint M&E framework.

Other countries where discussions are taking place on streamlining existing funding include Democratic Republic of Congo and Benin. Currently GAVI/ GFATM/ WB are exploring mechanisms for joint financial management assessments, performance framework and joint institutional arrangements in these countries. Furthermore, there are potentially eight additional countries approved for health systems strengthening support by the GAVI Executive Committee in July 2010, where different options for harmonisation and alignment of existing grants could be explored.

ⁱ <http://go.worldbank.org/0D4C6GPQU0>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.internationalhealthpartnership.net/en/home>