

UHC2030 Technical Working Group on Health Systems Assessments HSA Terms of Reference

Rationale

Panel discussion on HSA – June 2016

In June 2016, during a multi-stakeholder launch of UHC2030 entitled ‘Building a Partnership to Strengthen Health Systems’, a session was dedicated to health systems assessments (HSA). This session’s panel included WHO, USAID, World Bank, Global Fund, and Ministry of Health representatives from Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and examined country health sector diagnostics (health systems assessments) and whether it would make sense to harmonize and align existing methodologies. It was fully recognized that major challenges in countries were due to the varying HSA approaches used, each with its own specific objectives; this leads to a lack of comparability of results across time as each approach comes with a different set of assumptions and weighting of issues. The June 2016 panel gave broad support to founding a UHC2030 working group to examine the pros and cons of the various options for harmonization, and eventually further work out operational guidance on the preferred options.

Round table discussion – December 2016

In December 2016, UHC2030 convened a further meeting¹ to follow up on the June conclusions. A round table discussion provided a good forum for stakeholders to ponder how exactly to harmonize and align better, think through which kind of working group bodies to put together, and propose stakeholders to involve as members. In addition, the main objectives of such a working group were elaborated on. On this occasion, several UHC2030 members expressed the need to examine and develop common benchmarks for health system performance assessment.

Online meeting with stakeholders – August 2017

Based on the two meetings mentioned above and the strong interest expressed to form a UHC2030 technical working group, a draft version of the working group concept note was shared with interested parties and discussed in an initial online meeting on 2 August 2017. Broad consensus was achieved to elaborate an action-oriented agenda to ensure that HSA results would actually feed into health sector reforms and policies. It was repeatedly mentioned that one way to ensure this would be by emphasizing a more demand-driven HSA approach rather than one which may be more triggered by the needs of those who are conducting the assessments. Furthermore, participants stressed that this technical working group could truly add value to analyses of health systems performance by defining common principles and criteria of performance measurement. It was agreed that there was no need for a separate sub-group to examine performance-related issues given the close links between performance assessments and the overarching HSAs.

¹ The Round Table on Health Systems Assessments was part of a 3-part series of round table discussions in December 2016, under the UHC2030 network ‘Health Systems Governance Collaborative’.

In summary, a clear call was made:

(a) to formally constitute a UHC 2030 technical working group (TWG) on Health Systems Assessments

(b) to have the TWG on HSA focus principally on:

- (1) concrete modalities of HSA harmonization & alignment amongst the main HSA tools used in different country settings
- (2) a common understanding of definitions, principles, and criteria for measuring health systems performance towards UHC

TWG objectives

The twin aims of the TWG are:

- (1) to recommend options for conducting a more harmonized and aligned HSA, with practical guidance on the optimal country-led and demand-driven process
- (2) to recommend a common, adaptable annotated framework for health systems performance assessment

It is hoped that by fulfilling the above-mentioned aims, HSAs will serve countries' health systems progress and truly contribute to improved health systems performance while reducing the often heavy administrative burden.

TWG deliverables

The first face-to-face meeting of the TWG on Health Systems Assessments was held on 17-18 October 2017 in Geneva, with the objective to scope the engagement of working group. The following deliverables are agreed upon:

Deliverable 1: Development of a recommended UHC2030 annotated template to conduct health systems (performance) assessments, including taxonomy, working definitions, a set of core indicators.

Deliverable 2: Development of UHC2030 process guidance on HS(P)A, integrating performance assessment and based on the principles of country ownership and leadership.

Deliverable 3: Development of a UHC2030 knowledge platform around HS(P)A and support to cross-country learning.

Deliverable 4: Advocacy to gain stakeholder buy-in on UHC2030 TWG deliverables to promote a more accountable HS(P)A environment.

Synergies and cross-linkages will be actively sought with other UHC2030 Technical Working Groups. For example, the UHC2030 TWG on Fragile States seeks to develop guidance for coordination and health system strengthening in countries faced with a fragile or challenging operating environment. Dialogue

between the 2 groups will be organized to flesh out, for example, implications of fragility for health systems assessment to ensure complementarity and avoid duplication.

The HSA TWG will also liaise closely with the UHC2030 Accountability TWG, particularly in view of health system (performance) assessments being a key component of the cycle of monitoring, review and remedial action.

Composition of TWG

The following suggestions for the composition of the TWG were made based on the UHC2030 December 2016 Round Table discussions, the first online meeting in August 2017 and first face to face meeting in October 2017:

- Two-tier groups, with co-chairs who steer the work with the TWG:
 - (a) **a core group**: responsible for coordinating HSA TWG activities, guiding consultations and producing deliverables. The core group will include participants from the UHC2030 Core team, WHO, WB and selected experts. All participants shall be actively involved during HSA TWG meetings, regular calls and email exchange,
 - (b) **a technical group**: a larger group who will provide technical comments and inputs on the TWG deliverables, including country-level users of health assessments. All the participants of the HSA TWG are invited to be part of this tier group. The participants shall play an active role in providing feedback on the deliverables and engage regularly during the TWG meetings including in person meeting and periodic calls.
- Various constituencies who should be involved (in one or the other tier):
 - Country representatives (Government, MoH & MoF; Private Sector; CSOs; possibly elected officials), notably policy makers and users of HSA tools
 - Agencies / programmes that have an assessment tool in active use and/or apply them frequently;
 - Implementing partners, multi and bilateral donors
 - Academia (those who conduct assessments for research purposes)

Timeline of TWG

The Technical Working Group's time of operation will be limited to a maximum of 24 months with the specific aim of producing the four above-mentioned deliverables.

More information on the timeline can be found in the chart below. It is foreseen to conduct regularly online meetings, as well as occasionally face-to-face meetings to discuss progress made and agree on final deliverables.