

IHP+ in brief

A synthesis of Review of Civil Society Engagement in National Health Policy Processes supported through the Health Policy Action Fund Small Grants Program



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Background

IHP+ established the Health Policy Action Fund (HPAF) small grants programme to strengthen civil society engagement in national health policy and monitoring and accountability processes at the country level. In late 2009, following a competitive bidding process, Oxfam won the contract to manage the fund and administered 23 grants through two rounds of funding in 2010 and 2012. In October 2013, IHP+ contracted Dalberg Global Development Advisors to review the HPAF and examine how the grants supported civil society engagement in national health processes. Dalberg carried out a documentation review, a survey of the grantees and interviews with a selection of different stakeholders.

Key points

The review found that HPAF has a unique role to play and does so well. It stimulates CSOs to engage in national health policy and monitoring and accountability processes, allowing them to bring bottom-up insights to the national level.

CSOs working in IHP+ countries operate in a diversity of contexts which vary according to the following: the level of CSO engagement, a government's willingness to work with CSOs, the stage and success of aid and development effectiveness processes and civil society cohesion and capacity within the health sector. The CSOs contexts, needs and accomplishments were varied and it is not possible to draw universal conclusions. However, there were some clear positive outcomes of the HPAF. The grants contributed to some CSOs' abilities to:

- engage in specific aid effectiveness and development cooperation processes
- hold dialogue with national policy makers about health policy
- participate in the joint assessment of national health sector strategies and operational plans
- monitor and hold government and aid donors accountable.

CSOs generally made less progress in the areas of monitoring government and development partner progress against county compact commitments and participating in joint health sector reviews. The second round of funding was more successful than the first round in relation to meeting the overall objectives of HPAF.

Some key points from the review included:

- IHP+ should continue financing support to CSOs through a grants-based programme.
- To achieve greater civil society engagement in national policy, planning and accountability processes, a greater focus of IHP+ support should be on strengthening national health CSO coalitions and networks where they exist.
- Nearly all the CSOs shared lessons about their experiences with other CSOs but this needs to go much further to be effective. More support for capacity building would be an important element of any future CSO support programme
- Very few CSOs approach their activities in the health sector with an aid effectiveness lens; development cooperation effectiveness processes must be packaged and communicated in a way that is relevant to CSOs.
- All IHP+ partners have a role to promote CSO engagement and should actively support CSOs to connect more with in-country health coordination bodies such as health sector steering committees and health partners groups.

Follow Up

The report provides four possible models for any future IHP+ support, which have since been discussed by the IHP+ Steering Committee. In the near term, IHP+ will support one more round of CSO small grants in which the existing approach will be adjusted to reflect this report's findings. For the longer-term, the feasibility of a more ambitious scale-up, that could support more grantees in more countries for longer periods of time, and involving new institutional arrangements, is being explored.

Reference

Dalberg Global Development Advisors (2013), Review of Civil Society Engagement in National Health Policy Processes supported through the Health Policy Action Fund Small Grants Program