

# Health Systems Assessment Approach: A How-To Manual

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The *Health Systems Assessment Approach: A How-To Manual* is accompanied by a CD. The manual and contents of the CD can also be accessed and downloaded at <http://healthsystems2020.org>. For more information, please contact [info@healthsystems2020.org](mailto:info@healthsystems2020.org).

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## ACRONYMS

AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
AIHA	American International Health Alliance
ANC	antenatal care
CBHF	community-based health financing
CBHI	community-based health insurance
CBOH	Central Board of Health
CD	compact disc
CIESIN	Center for International Earth Science Information Network
CMS	Central Medical Stores
CSR	corporate social responsibility
DALY	disability adjusted life years
DHB	District Health Board
DHMT	District Health Management Team
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DOH	Department of Health
DTC	Drug and Therapeutics Committee
EML	essential medicines list
EPI	Expanded Programme on Immunization [WHO]
ESHE	Essential Services for Health in Ethiopia
EU	European Union
GBD	global burden of disease
GDP	gross domestic product
GFATM	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
HALE	healthy life expectancy
HIDN	Health, Infectious Diseases and Nutrition [USAID]
HIS	health information system <i>or</i> systems
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HQ	headquarters
HR	human resources
HSS	health systems strengthening
IMAI	Integrated Management of Adult and Adolescent Illness
IMCI	Integrated Management of Childhood Illness
IMPC	Integrated Management of Pregnancy and Childbirth
IMR	infant mortality rate
INN	international nonproprietary name
IRC	International Rescue Committee
km	kilometer
LOE	level of effort
MCH	maternal and child health
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
mg	milligram
ml	milliliter

MMR	maternal mortality rate
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOH	Ministry of Health
NDRA	National Drug Regulatory Authority
NEML	national essential medicines list
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NHA	National Health Accounts
NMP	national medicines policy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OOP	out-of-pocket
ORS	oral rehydration solution
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PHC	primary health care
PHN	Population, Health, and Nutrition [USAID]
PHR <sub>plus</sub>	Partners for Health Reform <sub>plus</sub> Project
PPP	purchasing power parity
PTC	pharmacy and therapeutics committee
PVO	private voluntary organization
QAP	Quality Assurance Project
RDF	revolving drug fund
RPM Plus	Rational Pharmaceutical Management Plus Program
SHI	social health insurance
SO	Strategic Objective [USAID]
SOP	standard operating procedure
SOW	scope of work
STG	standard treatment guideline
SWAp	sector-wide approach
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
TB	tuberculosis
TB-DOTS	internationally recommended strategy for TB control [WHO]
TEHIP	Tanzania Essential Health Interventions Program
THE	total health expenditure
TOR	terms of reference
UMCOR	United Methodist Committee on Relief
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USD	U.S. dollar
WDI	World Development Indicators [World Bank]
WHO	World Health Organization
YLD	years lost due to disability
YLL	years of life lost

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## INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Health, Infectious Diseases and Nutrition (HIDN) requested the development of a Health Systems Assessment Approach as part of its global Mainstreaming Health Systems Strengthening Initiative. The approach is meant to serve the following purposes—

- To enable USAID Missions to assess a country’s health system, possibly during early phases of program development or sector planning; this assessment will diagnose the relative strengths and weaknesses of the health system, prioritize key weakness areas, and identify potential solutions or recommendations for interventions
- To inform Population, Health, and Nutrition (PHN) officers and USAID Mission health teams about the basic elements and functions of health systems
- To improve the capacity of bilateral projects to achieve USAID’s health impact objectives through increased use of health systems interventions
- To aid health systems officials at USAID to conceptualize key issues, increase the use of health systems interventions in technical program design and implementation, and to improve the role of the Health Systems Division
- To inform Ministries of Health and other stakeholders on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the health system, priority issues, and potential solutions or recommendations for interventions and programs

The approach was developed by Health Systems 20/20, Partners for Health Reform*plus* (PHR*plus*), Rational Pharmaceutical Management (RPM) Plus, and the Quality Assurance Project (QAP), as a manual to meet the above objectives. The accompanying CD includes—

- The full manual
- Component 1 data—Excel spreadsheet
- Sample Assessment Budget Template (Annex 3B)—Excel spreadsheet
- Angola Pilot Test Assessment Report
- Benin Pilot Test Assessment Report

This can also be accessed via the Web at <http://healthsystems2020.org>.

### Scope

This approach is designed to provide a rapid and yet comprehensive assessment of key health systems functions. The approach is organized around technical modules that guide data collection, and cover the following areas—

- Governance
- Health financing
- Health service delivery
- Human resources
- Pharmaceutical management
- Health information systems

Each module provides guidance for the user according to an indicator-based approach. The assessment approach is flexible and may encompass all modules for a more comprehensive view of the health care system or may focus on selected modules, according to the objectives of the assessment. A required core module provides basic background information on a country's key health indices and other important data related to its economy, health system organization, and population. Data collection entails a desk review of relevant documents and guided stakeholder interviews. A stakeholder workshop is to be held to present and verify findings and to elicit inputs into the analysis and recommendations.

Given that this is a rapid assessment of overall health systems functions and resources, it does not provide any assessment of vertical health programs. The manual does provide some guidance, however, for linking findings to the USAID Mission's strategic objectives and can inform an in-depth analysis of vertical programs (such as a family planning or malaria assessment).

The health systems assessment approach developed here will be most useful in countries where one or more of the following conditions apply—

- *The USAID Mission is beginning the strategic planning process.* The assessment findings could contribute to or inform the country strategic plan.
- *The USAID Mission is in the design phase of a new project or is starting a new project (e.g., bilateral).* The assessment findings could contribute to or inform the project's design, work plan, or both.
- *A country where a full health systems assessment has not been recently completed* (within the past two years). If a similar study has been conducted recently, a duplication of efforts, which would negate the need for another assessment, is highly likely. If an assessment has not been conducted recently, the need for one is emphasized.

## **User and Time Requirement**

The target user of the manual is a USAID country mission, particularly PHN officers at the mission. The PHN officer may decide to work through the modules independently or with a team of USAID staff, consultants, or both. Each module is expected to take one to two person-weeks to complete, depending on the depth of assessment required.

## **Pilot Tests**

The approach was pilot-tested in Angola in August 2005 and in Benin in April 2006. The current version of the manual incorporates feedback from these pilot tests. Outlines and web links of assessment reports prepared in Angola and Benin are included as annexes to Chapter 3, and the full reports are included in the CD accompanying this manual.

## **Organization of the Manual**

Chapter 1 provides a summary of health systems strengthening, including definitions of health system and its functions. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the assessment approach developed for this initiative. Chapter 3 provides guidelines for planning and conducting the assessment. Chapter 4 provides guidelines for synthesizing findings, identifying health system strengths and weaknesses, and developing recommendations. Chapters 5–11 covers the seven technical modules; Chapter 5 is the core module and Chapters 6–11 are the 6 topical modules based on health systems functions.

