Assessment Phase 1: PLAN

Plan Learn Analyze Share Act

The purpose of the planning phase is to design and prepare for the assessment. Conducting an assessment is typically the first stage of a larger effort to engage the private sector and raise awareness about its potential contribution to advancing national health goals. As such, the planning phase is the first opportunity to reach out to stakeholders and build relationships. Your goal should be to get a sense of the key actors and local dynamics, begin to make connections, and identify ways to build support for the action phase.

Step 1: Draft Scope of Work

The first step of the planning process is to work with the donor to draft a scope of work. Drafting the scope of work begins with a series of conversations with the donor— and in some cases other local stakeholders— to shape the direction of the assessment, covering priorities, parameters, key stakeholders, potential challenges, and intended use of the findings. In some cases the donor may take on the task of drafting the scope, although more often, the organization tasked with conducting the assessment creates the first draft. This gives the donor something to react to, and a process of refinement follows.

1.1 Initiate Discussions with the Donor

Most assessments are conducted to generate information that can be used to make better decisions about how to allocate funds, design programs, or improve policies—with the ultimate goal of improving health outcomes. It's important to understand the impetus for the assessment, from the donor perspective. With this in mind, begin to draft the scope of work—considering parameters such as which core elements [internal link to core elements section of About page] to cover, (e.g. health financing, service delivery), as well as priority health areas, geographic focus, gender, timeline, and budget.

1.2 Identify Priorities and Issues

Determine why the donor wants to conduct an assessment, what the donor expects to achieve, and how the donor envisions using the findings. Use this opportunity to surface issues that could affect the process.

Questions might include:

- Purpose—How will you use the findings? How do you envision other stakeholders will use the findings?
- Geographic focus—Should this assessment cover the whole country, or focus on specific geographic areas?
- Health domains—Are you interested in a broad assessment, covering a range of health domains, or do you have a priority in mind, such as HIV/AIDS or family planning?
- Technical areas—What technical areas are you particularly interested in or concerned about? (Examples: health financing, service delivery, demand for specific products.)
- Gender—How will you identify gender-related barriers and opportunities to accelerate outcomes of interest, while promoting gender equality?
- Potential issues—Is there anything we should be aware of as we begin the assessment? Contentious issues or reforms? Anything else that might affect the assessment process?
- Framing the assessment—Do you have any preferences with regard to structure for the assessment? SHOPS typically focuses on five core elements: policy environment, health financing, service delivery, supply chain, and demand.

TIP ► Be prepared to manage donor and stakeholder expectations, outline key steps in the process, and explain the amount of time and resources required to conduct an assessment.

1.3 Establish Basic Parameters

Conducting a private sector assessment is a significant undertaking in terms of time and budget. Ask about expectations in terms of the timeline—sometimes the donor is facing a hard deadline, for example, to submit a funding request or to inform a national strategic health plan. It is also important to confirm the level of funding available for the assessment, regardless of source. On average, an assessment takes about six months from start to finish, but previous assessments have ranged from three to nine months. Not surprisingly, assessments with broader goals and scope require more time and budget.

While the basic approach has remained the same, implementation and outputs of private health sector assessments fall along a continuum—from assessments with a narrow scope (supported by a modest budget) meant to address a specific challenge, to a comprehensive effort (funded accordingly) intended to inform planned health reforms. Examples of the former include assessments focused on contraceptive security (Central Asian Republics, Jordan), as well as examining the role of the private sector in addressing the needs of populations most at risk for HIV and AIDS (Guatemala). Examples of the latter include the

Kenya and Tanzania assessments, which covered multiple health areas, involved significant stakeholder engagement, and were jointly funded by USAID and the World Bank. Other completed assessments fall somewhere in between.

1.4 Identify Collaborators and Key Stakeholders

Understanding expectations around collaboration and country ownership is key. Collaborating, reaching consensus, and transferring skills takes time. Ask questions about process to determine how the donor expects you to conduct the assessment.

Examples include:

- Who will take the lead on which tasks?
- To what extent is the Ministry of Health aware and supportive of the assessment?
- What other key stakeholders should be involved in the assessment process? Why do you want to include them—and in what capacity? How do you envision their level of participation? Will you consult with women's organizations that are uniquely positioned to offer perspective on gender elements?

These types of questions will help you design the assessment and identify any tasks or activities that may increase the time and resources required.

Distill what you learn from these initial discussions to formulate the goal and objectives of the assessment.

1.5 Start Writing the Scope of Work

Next you'll use what you learned to develop the scope of work. The main sections of a typical scope of work are outlined below. Expect some back-and-forth with the donor (and possibly other key stakeholders) before the scope is finalized.

<u>Background</u>
Briefly describe the social, economic, and political context. Provide a broad overview of the health system including any recent reforms, and current health priorities to be addressed by the assessment. You may need to do a cursory desk review to complete this section. The desk review should draw on past gender assessments (USAID, World Bank) and, if the assessment is supported by USAID, the Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS). (Approx. 1,000 words.)

<u>Goal</u>
This is a succinct, high-level statement that describes what the assessment aims to achieve. (Approx. 30 words.)

<u>Objectives</u>
What the assessment will accomplish; priority geographic, health, and/or technical areas should be reflected here. Format as a bulleted list (maximum 30 words per bulleted item).

- Assessment objectives usually begin with an action—provide, understand, assess, describe, identify, examine, review, suggest, recommend.
- Objectives generally focus on a specific group (stakeholders, providers, underserved

populations), health issue (HIV/AIDS, maternal and child health, family planning), or technical area (health financing, supply chain, contraceptive security, service delivery, etc.)

- Objectives may be framed in terms of the five core elements [link to section on About page] of a private health sector assessment (e.g., policy environment, health financing) or other relevant structure.

<u>Approach</u>

This is an overview of how priority areas will be assessed, followed by a brief description of the assessment process. Include how the findings will be framed and used. This should follow the standard Assessment to Action approach. (600 words)

<u>Duration, timing, and schedule</u>

This section includes the period of performance, and the process for determining the schedule for each phase; and highlights key milestones and deliverables. You may include a proposed timeline for a Private Health Sector Assessment] for clarity.

<u>Deliverables</u>

List the deliverables that the assessment team will produce. At a minimum, deliverables typically include:

- Final scope of work
- Trip report
- Written report
- Workshop report (if applicable)

<u>Budget</u>

Provide a simplified budget for the donor to consider. The budget should include:

- Labor costs of team members and any consultants
- Other direct costs such as airfare, per diems (hotel and meals), visas, and local transportation
- Any costs for subcontracts (e.g., local research firms to help carry out data collection, or for local transport)
- Indirect rates, such as fringe benefits, overhead, and general and administrative costs (if necessary)

It is important to think of all possible costs when drafting the budget because the donor often uses your budget to commit funds—and making changes once the scope of work has already been approved can be difficult.

<u>Assessment Team</u>

If known, specify the individuals who will be responsible for carrying out the assessment. In the event that not all members have been identified, include descriptions of the envisioned functions, roles, and responsibilities to complete the team.

Step 2: Select the Assessment Team

Selecting the right team to carry out the assessment is critical. While individual characteristics, such as relevant expertise and country familiarity, are important, an equally important consideration is how the individuals will function as a team, as an assessment is at its core a team endeavor.

The assessment team typically includes a team leader, a team coordinator, subject-matter experts and/or local health sector experts, and a local logistics coordinator.

- International members include employees or consultants engaged by the firm carrying out the assessment, and sometimes representatives from the donor organization.
- Local members reside in the country where the assessment is taking place. They should have a deep understanding of context, a network of contacts, and the ability to speak the local language(s).
- Consider whether the assessment team represents gender expertise—include a project gender focal point or other resource such as an in-country gender expert.

Ultimately, the size and composition of the team depends on the scope of work, country context, and available budget. A typical team consists of three to six people.

For an overview of team member profiles, please review the Phase 1: Team Roles and Responsibilities.

Step 3: Identify and Engage Stakeholders

Stakeholders representing both the private and public health sectors are integral to the assessment. The level of stakeholder involvement may range from minimal to extensive, often as a function of assessment objectives, time frame, and available budget. At a minimum, stakeholders participate as key informants, sharing their perspectives, insights, and even concerns about the private health sector. As the assessment process has evolved, local stakeholders have played a greater role, ranging from providing input and direction to the assessment, to participating in fieldwork, and validating findings and helping to prioritize recommendations.

3.1 Team Discussion: Engagement Approach and Opportunities

Stakeholders represent organizations and individuals that have an interest in the health system. Discussing the team's approach to engaging stakeholders, as well as engagement opportunities and activities, is a good way to get everyone on the same page regarding rationale and messaging. At this point it's good to remember that the entire assessment process—especially in-person interviews—provides multiple opportunities to engage stakeholders, raise awareness and dispel myths about the private sector, and lay the foundation for follow-on actions.

Reaching out to stakeholders early on in the assessment process will:

- Facilitate fieldwork by building awareness and credibility (if people know what you're doing and why it's important, it will be easier to schedule interviews).
- Gauge level of interest, perceptions of the private sector, and potential role in any public-private partnerships.
- Increase the likelihood of developing actionable recommendations.
- Lay the groundwork for local ownership of the assessment process and recommendations.

TIP ► Connecting with Ministry of Health officials early in the process will shed light on any required protocols or recommended practices. For instance, in some countries the team has had to secure approval from the Ministry of Health prior to starting fieldwork. Even when explicit approval is not required, some informants feel more comfortable being interviewed if they know the assessment has been condoned by the Ministry of Health. A sample letter used in Dominica is available as a resource.

3.2 Identify Key Stakeholders

Typical stakeholders include:

- USAID and other aid agencies or development partners
- Ministry of Health, other ministries (e.g., finance)
- Professional medical and pharmaceutical associations
- Owners of large private health facilities
- Private health practitioners
- NGOs engaged in health
- **Identifying Key Informants**

  Each team member creates a list of informants for his or her assigned area and gives it to the team coordinator prior to fieldwork. As you form interview teams, consider whether the sex of the interviewer may influence results (for example, assigning a male interviewer to a female key informant in a conservative social or religious setting).Women's NGOs and professional associations working on health, GBV, other areas of interest. These actors can often provide perspective about the challenges that are unique to women and girls

Often the donor can provide insights as to which stakeholders you should reach out to, as well as introductions. Additional stakeholders will emerge from conversations with these individuals (similar to how a snowball sample functions).

RESOURCE ► As the first assessment to focus on HIV and AIDS, our experience in Namibia allowed us to identify new stakeholders in the HIV community and develop a more systematic approach to interviewing them. We developed clear objectives for interviewing each stakeholder group, and this helped to focus the assessment. This table summarizes Namibian stakeholders by sector and demonstrates their relationship to the focus areas of HIV and AIDS and/or orphans and vulnerable children.

3.3 Determine the Level of Stakeholder Engagement

Taking into account the assessment's objectives, budget, and time frame, consider the following when determining the level and type of stakeholder engagement:

- Is it necessary to engage local stakeholders throughout the process, or focus on certain phases or steps?
- Is it enough to gather ad hoc inputs from key individuals, or would your objectives be better served through the establishment of a formal advisory board?

Engaging stakeholders early on in the process lends credibility to the assessment, and can serve as a foundation for increased public-private communication and an enhanced role for the private sector. In our experience, soliciting stakeholder input to validate findings and prioritize recommendations contributes to local ownership and uptake of recommendations. If the desk review yields gendered findings or trends, it is especially important to consult knowledgeable stakeholders to gain insight about these patterns.

Other ways that local stakeholders can be involved include:

- Contributing to planning and implementing the assessment
- Participating as a key informant
- Participating as an interviewer (often jointly with one of the international team members)—this is particularly relevant if one of the objectives is to build local capacity to conduct future assessments. As you form interview teams, consider whether the interviewer(s)' sex may influence results (e.g. assigning a male interviewer to a female key informant in a conservative social or religious setting)
- Validating assessment findings and prioritizing recommendations
- Participating in a public-private forum or technical working group to help implement recommendations

TIP ► Be sure to discuss stakeholder engagement with the donor. In some instances, they may be interested in taking the lead on liaising with key stakeholders, and they may be in the best position to do so.

Step 4: Finalize Scope of Work

After thoroughly vetting the goal and objectives of the assessment with the donor and other key stakeholders—keeping in mind constraints related to timing and budget—you're ready to finalize the scope of work. This should include deciding on the team, confirming dates for fieldwork, identifying key deliverables, and securing donor approval. Send the final scope of work to all key stakeholders and members of the assessment team—this will provide a shared framework for the learning phase. With local stakeholders identified and timing of the fieldwork firmed up, it is now possible to start scheduling interviews and site visits for the fieldwork step.

At this point, the team will be confirmed—so you can update the "Assessment Team" section from general roles to specific members. Starting with the team lead, followed by members according to level of seniority, include a bio for each member, outlining the number of years worked in their area of expertise, country or regional experience, professional qualifications, and planned role in the assessment.