Conceptual Framework
For Strengthening Regional and Local Institutions

Introduction

One of the mandates of HS 20/20 is to develop the capacity of regional and local institutions to provide technical assistance and training to developing countries in health systems strengthening (HSS). These institutions include universities (e.g. schools of public health and research institutes), consulting firms, NGOs, regional networks and alliances, and government agencies. In order to be effective in supporting health systems strengthening activities and become self-sustaining, these institutions must have core competencies in the following six areas.

- ➢ Technical expertise
- ➢ Resource mobilization
- ➢ Technical assistance and training
- ➢ Management systems
- ➢ Organizational development
- ➢ Governance

The competencies in these areas apply to all types of institutions although some competencies may be more relevant to one type of institution than to another. Each of these six core competencies and the specific skills within each one are defined below. These competencies can be used as the basis for an assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses, development of an intervention plan to address the areas needing improvement, design of a workshop on institutional capacity-building, or the evaluation of the success of an organizational improvement effort. The basic premise is that technical competence, while a starting point in many organizations, is not sufficient to become a self-sustaining and successful organization.

I. Technical Expertise

Effective health systems strengthening institutions require technical expertise in some aspect of health financing, governance, and operations. These are the three technical components of HS 20/20 and although local institutions may not use the same terminology, these areas are broad enough to cover most of the technical aspects of HSS. Institutions should not be expected to be technically proficient in all of these areas since their mandate may limit their activities to just one or more of the components, or even a subset of activities within one component such as social health insurance within the area of health financing.

Skills
- ➤ Ability to readily access tools and methodologies that have been developed in the area of expertise
- ➤ Develop a workforce of staff and consultants who have the knowledge and skills to use these tools and methodologies effectively
- ➤ Establish the systems and exhibit interest in keeping up-to-date on new developments in the field and continuously upgrade technical competence
- ➤ Capture and use knowledge from projects that the organization implements

II. Resource Mobilization

In addition to technical proficiency, self-sustaining organizations must have the capacity to access adequate funding to be financially viable. The starting point is a realistic "business model" that defines the products and services that are offered, the sources of potential funding, and a strategy for accessing these resources. If, for example, a membership-based organization intends to rely on dues for the majority of its funding, then the organization must be able to provide services that are in demand and the members must have the willingness and ability to pay the dues. Similarly ministries of health must be able to access resources – both governmental and donor – to provide services. In order to implement a business model, organizations must have a set of resource mobilization or business development skills. These are defined below.

Skills
- ➤ Identify the potential sources of funding and the competition for these sources
- ➤ Market the products and services of the organization to potential funders through a variety of means including but not limited to websites, brochures, personal contacts, and presentations at conferences and meetings
- ➤ Write winning proposals to funding organizations
- ➤ Identify and access funds from organizations that do not necessarily require competitive proposals such as foundations and corporations

III. Technical Assistance and Training

The purpose of HS 20/20 capacity-building efforts is to increase the capacity of local institutions to address HSS constraints and reduce the reliance on international sources of technical assistance and training. Delivering technical assistance requires skills in the consulting process that go beyond the technical expertise of the individuals. They include a set of skills that will provide results-oriented and client-centered consulting. Effective training requires the use of modern, participatory, training methodologies and skills in the design, delivery, and management of the training process. Not all organizations should be

expected to be equally skilled in consulting and training because of their differing mandates.

Skills
- ➢ Consulting skills
  - Understand the role of a consultant
  - Use all phases of the consulting process including the contracting phase, assessment, intervention design, implementation, monitoring, and closure
  - Use interpersonal and communication skills, which are required at all phases of the consulting process
- ➢ Training skills
  - Assess training needs of the organization and individual
  - Conduct participatory, skill-focused training
  - Design participatory training and develop effective trainer and participant materials
  - Manage training including identifying and inviting the right participants, arranging training venues, production of training materials, conducting after action reviews, and tracking results to ensure training meets the training objectives

IV. Management Systems

Business or management systems include the full range of financial, human resources, information, and administrative systems needed to account for the use of funds, to plan and manage activities, to hire and retain staff, and to enter into contracts and grants. Well-run organizations have systems and procedures in these areas that are easy to use and consistent with the size and complexity of the organization.

Skills
- ➢ Establish a management system that allows an organization to plan and manage its activities including clear responsibility for planning, implementing, monitoring, and tracking resources
- ➢ Develop and implement a financial management system that budgets and accounts for the use of funds
- ➢ Establish an HR system that recruits, hires, deploys, and retains staff
- ➢ Set up a procurement system that allows the organization to enter into contracts and grants with funding organizations
- ➢ Develop and implement administrative procedures for running an efficient office including personnel policies, office procedures, information technology, etc.

V. Organizational Development

Management or business systems and procedures are necessary but insufficient to become an effective organization. In addition, organizations must also be skilled in key organizational development competencies. These include setting long-term direction, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, staff with the skills to lead and manage an organization, ability to work effectively in teams, and skills in establishing productive relationships and partnerships with external organizations.

Skills
- Capacity to develop and use strategic and operational plans
- Provide effective leadership that motivates and inspires staff and guides the organization
- Develop management systems that promote participatory decision-making, information-sharing, and open communication
- Ability to work effectively in teams
- Develop an organizational structure that clearly defines roles and responsibilities of the organizational units and staff in those units
- Establish effective working relationships with key external stakeholders

VI. Governance

All organizations should have a system of checks and balances that provides effective oversight and doesn't allow any one individual to capture or dominate an organization. This is especially important in new organizations that are often formed by a charismatic leader on whom the organization becomes dependent. The governance mechanisms are often defined in a constitution or by-laws that are formally adopted by the organization. Most countries require these formal foundation documents as part of the legalization process. The documents typically define the mission of the organization, the governance structure, the division of powers and authorities, financial oversight mechanisms, and, in the case of a private firm, ownership. The primary oversight mechanism for an NGO or private company is usually a competent board of directors, and for a university school or department, it is generally the university structure.

Skills
- Establish a legal charter under which the institution operates
- Develop a formal document such as by-laws or a constitution that defines the governance of the organization including the role and authorities of the board, committee structure, frequency of meetings, formal decision-making process, and process for amending the constitution
- Create a functioning board of directors or other type of oversight body that provides direction, accountability, and oversight