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Integrating Politics, Policy, and Participation: Governance and Health Systems

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RTI International

American Public Health Association
135th Annual Meeting and Exposition
Washington, DC
November 3-7, 2007



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Why governance and health systems?

- Poor health governance threatens to weaken health systems and undermine the effective utilization of resources and delivery of services.
- Corruption is perhaps the most dramatic governance-related threat, but also limiting effectiveness are:
 - Poor accountability and transparency
 - Weak incentives for responsiveness and performance
 - Limited engagement of citizens in health affairs.

What is governance?

- Governance encompasses authority, power, and decision-making in the institutional arenas of:
 - civil society
 - politics
 - policy
 - public administration.
- Governance is about rules that distribute roles and responsibilities among societal actors and shape interactions among them. These rules can be:
 - formal, embodied in institutions (e.g., democratic elections, parliaments, courts, sectoral ministries);
 - and informal, reflected in behavioral patterns (e.g., trust, reciprocity, civic-mindedness).

Health governance

- Governance in health systems is about developing and putting in place effective rules in the four institutional arenas for policies/programs/activities to achieve health sector objectives.
- These rules determine which societal actors play which roles, with what set of responsibilities, related to reaching these objectives.

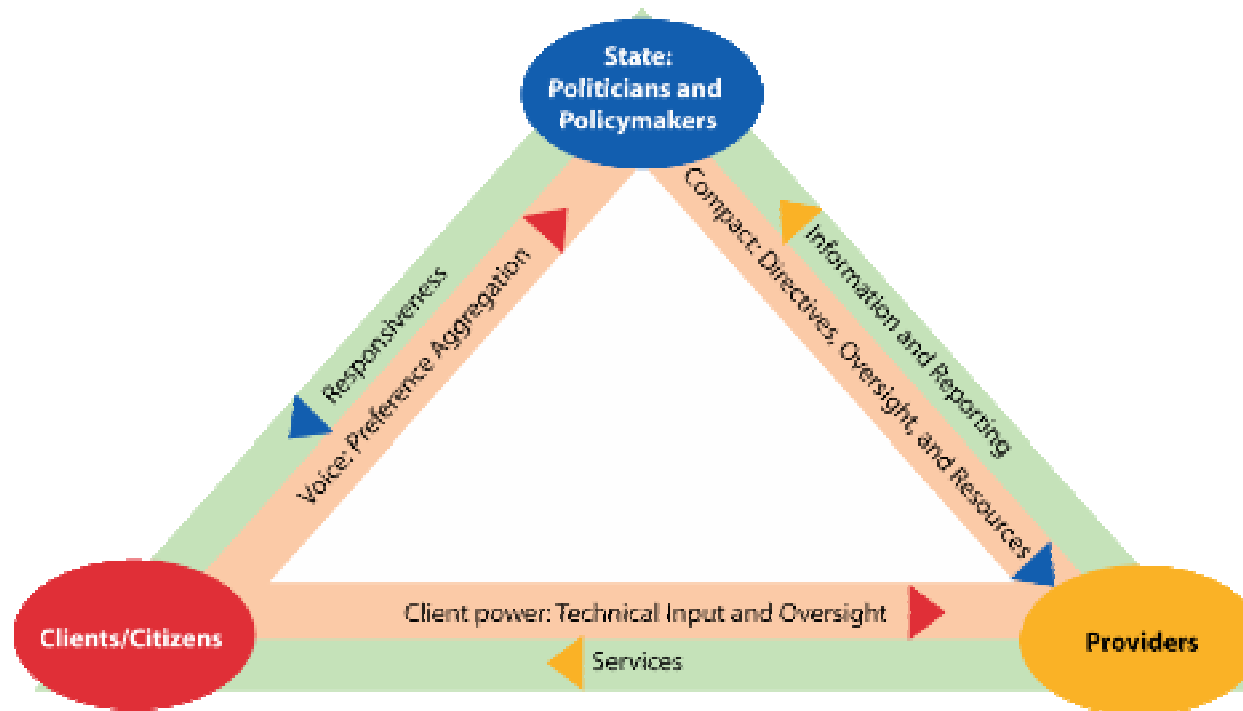
Health governance actors

- State actors: politicians, policymakers, and other government officials.
- Providers (public, private, nonprofit)
- Clients/citizens

Health governance principles

- Accountability of the key actors in the system
- Open policy process with a level playing field
- Sufficient state capacity, power, and legitimacy
- Engagement and participation of non-state actors

Health governance model



Some health governance challenges

Institutional arena	Health governance issue
Civil society	<p>Civil society groups are insufficiently organized and resourced to identify interests and exercise voice.</p> <p>Civil society stakeholders do not hold public and private health sector actors accountable.</p> <p>Civil society does not effectively socialize and educate citizens to play a role in governance.</p>
Politics	<p>Political systems systematically exclude the views and interests of poor and marginalized groups.</p> <p>Established health interests block reforms that threaten them.</p> <p>Health ministries and local governments do not have incentives and/or capacity to engage stakeholders in decision-making and priority setting.</p>
Policy	<p>Policy processes are dominated by elites and technocrats.</p> <p>Health ministries plan and initiate programs that promise results but then are incompletely implemented or see funds diverted to other purposes.</p> <p>Health policy decisions are not made on the basis of evidence regarding needs and effectiveness of services.</p>
Public administration	<p>Financial management practices in government health sector are opaque, permitting corruption and causing the unreliable delivery of critical inputs.</p> <p>Information on health sector planning, operations, and financing is unavailable, unreliable, or inaccessible thereby reducing accountability and service delivery effectiveness.</p> <p>Weak leadership, limited management capacity, and insufficient human resources damage efficiency, undermining state legitimacy.</p>

Good health governance

- Responsiveness to public health needs and clients/citizens preferences.
- Responsible leadership to address public health priorities.
- The legitimate exercise of clients'/citizens' voice.
- Institutional checks and balances.
- Clear and enforceable accountability: short route* and long route.**
- Transparency in policymaking, resource allocation, and performance.
- Evidence-based policymaking.
- Efficient and effective service provision arrangements, regulatory frameworks, and management systems.

* Short route of accountability: Providers ← clients/citizens

** Long route: Providers ← MOH ← Parliament ← clients/citizens

Strengthening health systems through better governance

- Improve the policy process in the health sector – promote more effective stakeholder engagement; strengthen MOH leadership and use of data and evidence, and provide information to the public on their rights and duties.
- Enhance participation at a variety of levels –local to national.
- Improve accountability, transparency and reduce corruption.

What can donors do?

- Programming principles:
 - Base reforms on political will
 - Balance supply-side interventions with support for demand
 - Take a health systems approach: integrate governance, financing, operations, and capacity-building
- Programming options



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Thank you

For more on health governance, go to: www.HS2020.org



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