

SUPPORTING THE PALESTINIAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH TO ASSESS AND PLAN FOR REFORM

Best Practice: By supporting the Palestinian Ministry of Health to assess the public health sector for reform and development, the Flagship Project was able to build political will and ownership for far-reaching reforms and strengthen the Ministry's capacity to plan effective and sustainable interventions.

Project Overview

The Flagship Project is a five-year initiative funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)/West Bank and Gaza. Designed in close collaboration with the Palestinian Ministry of Health (MoH), the Project aims to support a functional and democratic Palestinian health sector to meet priority public health needs.

Assessing and Planning for Health Reform

The Flagship Project supports the MoH in the West Bank in implementing reforms needed for quality, sustainability, and equity of health care delivery. To initiate the reform process, the Project helped the MoH conduct a rapid needs assessment. The purpose was to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the public health system and prioritize areas for intervention that support—and update—the Palestinian National Strategic Health Plan. The MoH used the assessment findings to draft a comprehensive five-year plan for its institutional development.

Designing the Tool to Fit the Ministry

The Flagship Project believes that reform should be led from within. In recognition of the MoH's commitment to reform, the Flagship Project tailored the USAID Health Systems 20/20 Assessment Approach tool for the MoH—shifting its focus from external use (by short-term international consultants) to internal use (by MoH staff). This unique modification provided the MoH with a sophisticated yet responsive guide to assessing its needs.

Supporting the MoH Assessment Process

The assessment was conducted over six weeks in late 2008. After adapting the tool to the Palestinian context, the MoH established six technical working groups to conduct the assessment. The working groups were organized around the assessment tool's modules: (1) governance, (2) health finance, (3) health service delivery, (4) human resources, (5) pharmaceutical management, and (6) health information systems. The Flagship Project took responsibility for operations and reporting, so that the MoH staff could focus on effectively using the new assessment tool. Following

three weeks of information gathering, the working groups, in coordination with the Flagship Project, presented their findings and strategies for action to the MoH, USAID, the UN, and the wider health and donor communities.

IMPACT OF BEST PRACTICE

The success of the assessment goes beyond the critical identification of priority reform needs of the Palestinian health sector. The MoH staff benefited from professional development in self-assessment, strategic analysis, and presentation of findings to their government and stakeholders. The process also fostered democratization and decentralization, with unprecedented participation of staff at the district and health facility level. The process enabled the MoH staff to take a critical look at the system and their role in strengthening it, motivating them to engage in—and advocate for—the resulting multi-year institutional development plan. Most significantly, the assessment process helped to achieve genuine ownership, buy-in, and dedication to reforming the health sector from the MoH.

“If this project is a success, it is because of you. If it fails, it is also because of you.”

Minister of Health,
addressing MoH
staff at the first as-
sessment workshop

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

- **Adapting tool for self-assessment promotes transparency, accountability, and democracy.**
- **Involving beneficiaries creates immediate skill-building opportunities.**
- **Providing intensive support enables high-quality technical analysis, even in the absence of previous experience.**
- **Supporting self-assessment fosters effective, relevant, and sustainable reform that is owned by the beneficiaries.**