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Encouraging Results from the Midterm Evaluation of the Health Sector Transformation Plan II

(PAGE 1)

Empowering Ethiopia's Future Healthcare: Celebrating National Health Month 2023

(PAGE 3)

Launch of the Second Phase of Data Use Partnership

(PAGE 4)

Ethiopia Introduces a Three-Year Strategy for Health Sector Transformation

(PAGE 6)

Embedding Effectiveness in Coordination and Resource Utilization through Reorganizing

(PAGE 8)

Encouraging Results from the Midterm Evaluation of the Health Sector Transformation Plan II



The Ministry of Health (MOH) with health sector stakeholders conducted a midterm review (MTR) to assess the performance of the second Health Sector Transformation Plan (HSTP II), national strategic guidelines to transform health sector performance from 2020–2025. Conducted from February to June 2023, the midterm evaluation reviewed HSTP implementation in Ethiopia's 13 regions. The study focused on seven thematic areas, which also included the Information Revolution (IR).

The MTR showed that full package IR implementation started in 200 districts of which ten are nationally recognized as model (a status given to health institutions with properly functioning health information system [HIS] infrastructure and are capable of exchanging information online).

There was significant improvement in using evidence for action, particularly at the leadership level. The review found that health sector leaders are using evidence while making policy and programmatic decisions. Interviewed stakeholders

mentioned the internalization of quarterly data analytics reports as a positive sign towards a change in behaviors and actions of health workers across the health system in the country.

Local capacity building activities eventually led to improved use of advanced data analytic tools. The study also found that new initiatives, including incentives and accountability mechanisms, played a major role in increasing the use of quality information for decision-making, which ultimately contributed to positive health outcomes.

The study found that the optimization and creation of performance monitoring teams (PMT) also improved informed decision-making in most health institutions.

The study noted promising results from the activities to strengthen the country's HIS governance, especially supporting platforms for HIS stakeholders' engagement to ensure shared roles and accountability. In addition to setting up a functioning IR governance structure, particularly at the MOH level, the review highlighted the development of crucial HIS governance documents. The initiation of the annual National Health Data Week celebration was cited as a best practice to standardize HIS governance platforms across the health sector.

DHIS2 is at a higher level of maturity and is now a fully government owned national digital health tool with vast reach in implementation that enables connection and interaction across the country's health structures and institutions. Further, sufficient local capacity was created to customize, implement, and institutionalize DHIS2 at every level of the health system. The study also highlighted the success of digitizing and implementing the community health information system (eCHIS) in over 8,000 health posts. Similarly, the development and deployment of the digital health project registration and app inventory system helped to identify and register 80 systems.

Despite the notable improvements, the study also uncovered areas that require further attention and action. Some of the recommendations included improving the partnership between the MOH and Ethio Telecom to enhance connectivity services, as internet is the backbone of digitization of health tools and services; and addressing the HIS infrastructure that was destroyed from the internal conflicts. Similarly, the MTR called upon the Ministry of Health to mobilize more funds and resources for implementation of the various digital health strategies. Several digital health systems need adequate support and investment to mature as most of them are currently at its early stage.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) with health sector stakeholders conducted a midterm review (MTR) to assess the performance of the second Health Sector Transformation Plan (HSTP II), national strategic guidelines to transform health sector performance from 2020–2025.

Empowering Ethiopia's Future Healthcare: Celebrating National Health Month 2023



Ethiopia celebrated a month of the National Health Exhibition which was opened to public on June 20 with a grand exhibition, launched by His Excellency Dr. Abiy Ahmed, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Her Excellency Dr. Lia Tadesse, the Minister of Health, and other dignitaries. This special national exhibition, which was organized by the MOH and the Healthcare Federation of Ethiopia, showcased the nation's dedication to progress and innovation in healthcare.

The National Health Exhibition was marked until July 31 was organized in the in the newly inaugurated Ethiopia Museum of Art and Science. The exhibition illustrated the remarkable historical progression of Ethiopia's healthcare system, spanning from traditional medicine to the current-day integration of cutting-edge artificial intelligence (AI). The exhibition also served as an essential platform for stakeholders, particularly the HIS community of practice, to share their experiences and insights on the successful implementation of digital health initiatives.

Ethiopia's journey towards digitalization and transformation of its health information management system began following the rollout of the first Health Sector Transformation Plan (HSTP-I) in 2015. In the years since, the country has made significant progress in executing various digital health tools and fostering a culture of utilizing quality data for health program planning and implementation. Acknowledging the need to effectively utilize the power of technology and digital solutions to ensure quality of care, the event gave much attention to several digital health initiatives, such as DHIS2, eCHIS, Master Facility Registry (MFR), and the Digital Health Learning and Innovation Center (DHLIC).

The exhibition provided compelling evidence of how these collective efforts have brought about a radical transformation in health service coverage and the delivery of quality care across different levels of the nation. It also highlighted the MOH's vision and continued commitment to harnessing the power of cutting-edge technology and digital solutions to elevate healthcare services and enhance the overall well-being throughout the country. The exhibition was open to the public for over a month, and thousands of visitors came to view the exhibits.



Launch of the Second Phase of Data Use Partnership

The MOH, in collaboration with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), recently launched the second phase of the Ethiopia Data Use Partnership (DUP).

The partnership will continue to support HIS implementation across different levels of the country's health institutions until 2027.



This four-year project builds off of the work from the first phase of DUP, which was implemented by JSI from 2017 to 2023. The MOH and BMGF opted to ensure the continuation and sustainability of the interventions and progress that were accomplished over the last six years, including digitizing health data generation tools; institutionalizing information use culture; enhancing evidence-based decision-making; improving local capacities by supporting domestic universities in the implementation of HIS; and building HIS infrastructure.

While DUP made significant contributions during its first phase, there still remains a gap between the country's current status and future targets under the HIS imperatives. DUP 2.0 will continue to expand on the previous work while addressing evolving HIS aspirations that emerge from the recent national health plan, also known as Health Sector Midterm Development and Investment Plan (HSDIP).



In order to provide tailored support at all levels of the country's health system, BMGF in consultation with the MOH organized DUP 2.0 into three work-streams. The first workstream focuses on enhancing national and regional HIS capacity for the implementation of HIS and digital health initiatives, and is implemented by JSI. The second workstream, implemented by HABTECH, aims to enhance local capabilities in developing and implementing digital tools that enables the MOH and RHBs to use reliable HMIS, research, finance, supply chain and human resource data.

The third workstream will develop and prototype scalable strategies to enhance the use of reliable data at district and health facilities, and is implemented by ThinkPlace.

Wubshet Denboba, Director of JSI's DUP, remarked that the support from BMGF has greatly contributed to the overall progress in realizing the Information Revolution objectives. He also noted that the current arrangement is a comprehensive package in terms of resource allocations across the health system while enhancing implementation capacities of local institutions.

Ethiopia Introduces a Three-Year Strategy for Health Sector Transformation

The MOH, in collaboration with partners, developed the Health Sector Medium Term Development and Investment Plan (HSDIP) — a national strategic document that dictates and guides the implementation of major health sector interventions from 2024–2026. It is a midterm amendment plan of HSTP-II that has been in effect since 2020, which aims to transform health service delivery, while upholding greater quality and equity across Ethiopia.

The primary rationale behind the revision was to align health sector priorities with the latest country level National Development Plan that

was commissioned by the Ministry of Planning and Development (MOPD), an authority that is responsible for crafting Ethiopia’s general growth strategy from which various sectors can customize their respective national strategic plans. This amendment also stemmed from the need to address the impact of new developments, such as COVID-19, natural disasters like drought and flooding, and conflicts, which posed unforeseen challenges in the HSTP-II. The revision created an opportunity to identify and prioritize implementation of HSTP-II initiatives that were lagging while mobilizing resources locally for the investment.



Based on the direction from MOPD, the MOH developed terms of reference that outlined the methods and steps of the preparation of the plan. A core technical team that was comprised of representative from of the Lead Executive Offices and an advisor from the Office of the Ministry was established to lead the preparation process. In parallel a technical working group, a team of experts from all units and desks across the MOH, was organized and tasked with developing the plan through collecting, analyzing evidence, synthesizing, and using for situational analysis and formulating objectives, strategic initiatives, and core interventions.

The MOH conducted consecutive forums jointly with relevant stakeholders from regional health bureaus, professional associations, donors, implementing partners, universities, and private health sectors to gather inputs and enrich the plan, as well as creating ownership to finalize, disseminate, and support its implementation. Accordingly, the implementation of the HSDIP has started in July 2023, Ethiopia's new fiscal year.

Her Excellency Dr. Lia Tadesse, Minister of Health, wrote the forward message in the HSDIP document and noted that despite enormous success under HSTP-II, challenges were bound as internal conflicts damaged health institutions curtailing quality health service delivery. Thus, she said, "This plan aims to elevate the overall health status of our population by advancing progress towards universal health coverage, enhancing our response to health emergencies, transforming local healthcare systems, and increasing the responsiveness of our health system."

HSDIP maintains the five transformational agendas of HSTP-II, including the Information Revolution. The three-year strategic plan has over 90 indicator targets to enhance the health status of the population through accelerating progress towards universal health coverage, protecting people from health emergencies, and creating a responsive health system. An investment of more than 16 billion dollars, HSDIP will specifically focus on restoring and establishing services in conflict-affected areas, enhancing the provision of medical supplies and equipment, encouraging increased private sector engagement in health activities, and enhancing the quality and equity of health services by addressing challenges in health infrastructure, human resource development, and regulatory systems.

“ This plan aims to elevate the overall health status of our population by advancing progress towards universal health coverage, enhancing our response to health emergencies, transforming local healthcare systems, and increasing the responsiveness of our health system. ”

Dr. Lia Tadesse, Minister of Health

Embedding Effectiveness in Coordination and Resource Utilization through Reorganizing

The MOH undertook an organizational restructuring to create better coordination and collaboration among the different units of the ministry and ensure effective performance and resource management. This restructuring was mainly in response to guidance from the Prime Minister's Office who aimed at enhancing government effectiveness, efficiency and collaboration across the country's governmental organizations. This led to a nearly 50% reduction in the number of MOH Directorates through the consolidation of similar departments. This restructuring also presented an opportunity to strengthen departments that had previously been underemphasized.

A notable change was the transformation of the Health Information Technology Directorate (HITD) into the "Digital Health Lead Executive Office," now overseen by the State Minister for Capacity Building.

Additionally, the merger of the former Plan Policy and Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate (PPMED) with the Partnership Directorate resulted in the establishment of the "Strategic Affairs Executive Office," operating under the Minister's Office. Recognizing the need for expanded health policies, a dedicated "Policy and Strategy Lead Executive Office" was created under the Minister's Office, previously a function within PPMED.

These three Executive Offices hold great significance for the data utilization, digital health, evidence generation, and policy discussions essential to the project's goals. The restructuring reflects a strategic approach to aligning resources and priorities in pursuit of an optimized government structure and enhanced health policy outcomes.

