

## **Donor's involvement in health system strengthening in Mongolia: differences between thinking and doing**

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Donors' involvement plays an important role in improving health outcomes in Low and Middle-income countries. Yet, it is challenging to achieve sustainable and equitable health outcomes without addressing underlying health system's issues. The Mongolian Health Sector Strategic Master Plan 2006-2015 (HSSMP) provides a benchmark in coordinating donors support towards Health Systems' Strengthening (HSS).

This research examined the extent of various actors' contribution to HSS using donor mapping exercise and Key-informant interviews. Various data sources (WHO, IHME, primary data) were used for tracking donors' contribution to HSS during 2000-2010 in Mongolia.

HSSMP played an important role for increasing an awareness of systems challenges and ways of supporting the health system. Hence, both health policy makers and key health donors had a relatively strong understanding of local health systems challenges and the importance of contributing towards HSS. Despite their common understanding of HSS, their actual contribution to HSS greatly varies, reflecting their differing approaches towards HSS. Asian Development Bank approaches have been most supportive of HSS and are largely aligned with HSSMP priorities. Bilateral and multilateral agencies still prefer to use vertical programme approaches, except GIZ (German Society for International Cooperation) which employs a capacity building approach to address health systems challenges. Donor's existing Monitoring and Evaluation processes prioritize output indicators; this shifts the focus away from process indicators that would demonstrate support of HSS.

Despite enduring commitment to a sectoral plan, donors continue to prioritize service support over broader health systems strengthening interventions, and the early promise of governance and resource management capacities shown by the Ministry of Health in the HSSMP have not been sustained. There is a need for coordinated promotion of HSS, harnessing the resources of both government and development partners to achieve the key targets identified in national health policies.