

Targets vs Impacts: Understanding the impact of the Global Fund's performance based funding modality in the Nepalese health care sector

Kapil Dahal¹, Rekha Khatri¹, Sudeepa Khanal¹, Sushil Baral¹, Ian Harper²
¹ Health Research and Social Development Forum/ ² University of Edinburgh

Background

- The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) is distinct among funding agencies because of its lack of country presence and performance based financial disbursement mechanism.
- Investing for impact is its core funding strategy for the period of 2012-2016.
- GFATM demands outcome-based evaluation metrics to link disbursement of resources to performance in lieu of achievement of clear and measurable results.
- A crucial component of all grants is the reporting of proposed service delivery results against the Performance Framework. Continuation of funding is dependent on results reported against indicators and targets included in the performance framework.

Structure of GFATM:

The GFATM has a particular in country structure. The Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) submits proposals and nominates units to oversee funding. Funds are disbursed to the Primary Recipients (PRs), which can be either government entities or organizations from the non-governmental sector. These then distribute resources to their implementing partners, the Sub-Recipients (SRs) who implement programmes. Outputs, calculated against proposed targets, are measured through specific recording and reporting, monitoring and evaluation systems. The Local Fund Agent (LFA), an offshoot of Price Waterhouse Cooper, the "eyes and ears" of the GF, monitors implementations and disbursement requests.

Research Problem

- What are the institutional and programmatic consequences of GFATM performance based disbursement?
- What issues arise due to the focus on targets when the predetermined activities is linked to generating quantitative data?
- What effect does the attention towards reaching numerical targets have on broader "impact"?

Methods

- Qualitative study; data collected between February 2013 to March 2015
- Over 40 in-depth interviews conducted with those responsible for implementing the TB and HIV components of GFATM work in government departments, with PRs, SRs and people living with HIV and AIDS (PLHAs) and their networks
- Participant observation of different meetings, workshops and interactions



Results

- Different institutional histories of TB and HIV programmes; TB mainly government run while HIV more driven by civil society.
- The influx of GFATM funding has created intense competition amongst NGOs for resources. It has forged new alliances and attempts at collaboration amongst sectors, creating new challenges.
- GFATM has contributed to increasing bureaucratization in the health sector as a direct consequence of the increased demands on reporting and reporting.
- Those NGOs better able to adapt to recording and reporting are deemed to perform better.
- There have been significant delays in the selection of SRs, and subsequent disbursement in the TB programme. Consequently, there are delays in the proposed activities, and these are carried out in a short time period.
- Late disbursement of funds has placed considerable financial strain on some SRs.
- Nepal's unstable political context and the highly politicized health service delivery environment compounds these issues.
- There is a disjuncture between the government budget release through the "Red Book", which records all government planned activities and the GFATM form of disbursement.
- The National Tuberculosis Centre (NTC) as the PR has resulted in changing ideas of partnership with NGOs to one of greater control by government. This is seen as positive and negative, depending on the ideological perceptions around the role of the state.
- The running of activities through government services is complicated by NGOs having to report on activities. The division of responsibilities frequently becomes blurred. There has been a consequent deferment of blame for not reaching targets.
- There is a widespread perception of lack of follow-up to proposed activities. As financial disbursement is linked to achievement of these targets, interviewees felt the true impact of the activities has become lost.
- Reporting against outputs has become more focused on targets at the expense of evaluating programmatic impact.



Conclusion

- The impact of funding streams on programmatic activities is complex, particularly when the very metrics designed to measure success impinge on the performance of activities themselves.
- Greater awareness of the unintended difficulties of managing GFATM projects is required to appreciate the entanglement of GFATM projects with Government and NGOs.
- Appreciation of this can be achieved through qualitative research performed with those experiencing the programmes themselves.



Supported by
welcome trust

For more Information,
please write to Ian Harper :
ian.harper@ed.ac.uk